



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Associated with BirdLife Australia

Issue No. 1/14 February 2014

- The Club aims to:**
- encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat
 - encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity

Hexham Swamp and Tomago Wetland are showing the benefits to wildlife of opening up floodgates to re-introduce tidal waters. Both areas are undergoing gradual vegetation change in response to more saline conditions. During this summer season, these wetlands have provided foraging and roosting habitat to thousands of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and other waders - see page 3 for the results of the Great Sharpie Count. Birdwatchers have discovered several rarities among the flocks of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - Ruff, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper, a rarity in the Hunter Region, photographed at Hexham Swamp on 24 January 2014 by Rod Warnock.

© Rod Warnock. Taken 24 January 2014 Hexham Swamp NSW

CONTENTS

President's Column	2	Birdata - the BirdLife Australia Atlas Project	9
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Encounter	2	HBOC's Digital Photo Library	10
New Members	2	Detection or Dispersion?	11
Club Activity Reports		Conservation Corner	11
The Great Sharpie Count	3	Superb Fairy-wren - Part V	12
Latham's Snipe Surveys	3	Twitchathon Report - Dodgy Drongos	14
Myall View Camp	4	Birds at the Hunter Wetlands Centre 2013	15
Myuna Bay	5	Future Activities	15
Birding Features		Birding Books etc for sale	16
New Hunter Region Birding Routes	5	Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations	16
HBOC Records Appraisal Committee	6	Club Activities February - April	21

President's Column

That calendar on the wall just doesn't sleep. We're now in the 15th year of the 21st century and HBOC has just surpassed a milestone of sorts. Late last year our 300th financial member joined the Club, thanks in part to HBOC being such a great and active club with lots to offer, but thanks also in part to some very hard work by our ever-innovative Membership Secretary, Rob Kyte.

On the note of membership, I will include some text that I wrote at this very time last year:

"We are always looking for "new blood" to take on a variety of tasks and there is never a shortage of ways to help out. In particular we are looking for someone to carry the "conservation baton" that Ann Lindsey has carried so well for many years. It is a baton that she has had in her grasp for some time, but one that she wishes to pass on!"

I could have written these same lines today and they would have read as accurately as they did last year. The Club is eager for new people to get involved in the many ways that are available for that to happen and Ann is still looking for someone to take the reins on dealing with conservation matters. As Ann recently wrote in her Conservation Report for 2013, "conservation effort is the responsibility of every member of the Club" and

this is very true – we are just seeking someone to co-ordinate those efforts.

As birdwatchers, we know that the places that we visit which contain the highest diversity of birds are those that are the most dynamic and are also the most interesting and pleasing to us as birders. Likewise, the Club would benefit from a diversity of people to contribute to realise the Club's aims. If you feel like getting involved, come and see me for a chat. There will be plenty of guidance and support for anyone that may wish to take any tasks on.

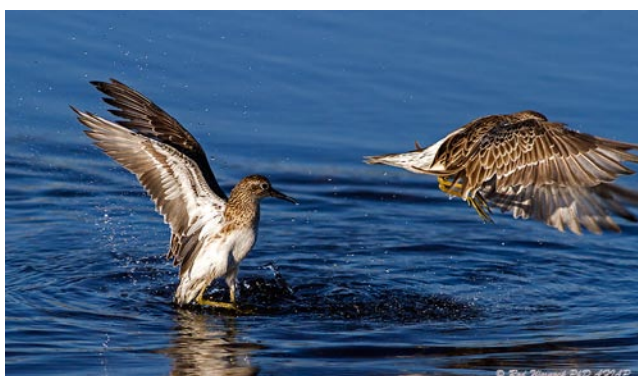
Finally I would like to acknowledge the hard work that our outgoing Treasurer, Joy Nicholls has put in over the past 4 years. Not only has she managed our finances, taken your subs and issued receipts and made some wise long-term investment decisions for the Club accounts along the way, but she has also helped in other ways such as support on membership matters, ensuring that new members receive their kits (and showing them round on Club Nights), checking the PO Box as well as other tasks. Thank you Joy.

To all members - have an enjoyable and 'diverse' 2014.

Mick Roderick

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Encounter Hexham Swamp

On 2 February 2014, two Sharpies were occupying two small mud islands at Hexham Swamp. One Sharpie started to swim towards the other occupied island. Immediately the occupier flew directly to and landed on the swimmer, driving it completely underwater. I took a series of eight images. These are the last two. The penultimate image (above) shows the swimmer about to surface as the aggressor starts to exit the scene.



Rod Warnock

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to:

Rebecca Citroni of Budgewoi

Beryl and Rob Jackson of Toronto

Mark Shanks of Kincumber

We hope to see you at Club meetings and outings.

Activity Reports

The Great Sharpie Count

10 December 2013

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers frequent inland wetlands as well as coastal sites and numbers may increase on the coast when inland wetlands are dry.

Observations of hundreds of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at various sites in the Hunter Estuary and associated wetlands during October and November 2013 led to the organisation of "The Great Sharpie Count" on 10 December 2013. This count aimed to see if there were "many birds" (say, 500+) at more than one location at the same time - for instance, we didn't know if big numbers were present at Tomago and Hexham at the same time. This coordinated effort involved twelve Hunter Bird Observers Club members counting five separate areas: Tomago Wetlands (1172); Ash Island (89); Hexham Swamp (2269); Kooragang Dykes (28); and Stockton Sandspit (0).

The total count of 3558 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers is the highest count of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers we've ever had in the estuary and represents a significant portion (2.22%) of the estimated East Asian-Australasian Flyway population of 160,000. It is an underestimate of the number of birds actually present as many were obscured by saltmarsh vegetation including walls of *Juncus*, especially in Hexham Swamp.

Another attempt to count all the Sharpies in the estuary will take place on Saturday 15 February 2014, as part of the monthly Hunter Wader Survey. If you'd like to help - and you'd be most welcome - please contact one of the organisers listed on the table of Activities.

Latham's Snipe Surveys

Sunday 15 December 2013

During the summer of 1997-1998, Michael Todd investigated the feeding ecology of Latham's Snipe in the Lower Hunter region using radio telemetry. He found a variety of movement patterns including some sedentary birds and daily local movements associated with a change in foraging habitat. Many snipe, however, were found to regularly leave the study area only to return after a period of absence. In December 1997 the maximum number of Latham's Snipe in the study area occurred at Pambalong Nature Reserve (formerly Cedar Hill Swamp), where 475 were counted by a team of ten birdwatchers.

Since that time, HBOC has conducted surveys of snipe in Pambalong Nature Reserve each December in order to monitor their numbers. Initially, surveyors tramped through the wetland from north to south, in order to drive any birds roosting in among the paperbarks and scattered *juncus*, across the disused east-west railway

line that transects the Nature Reserve. Observers were positioned at intervals along the rail line to count birds flushed in this way. Surveyors then continued to tramp through the wetland on the southern side of the railway line to flush any additional snipe. Over the years, reeds and *juncus* have become so dense on the northern side of the railway that the habitat is no longer suitable for snipe. Last year and this year we restricted our survey to the wetland on the southern side of the railway line.

This December, the wetland at Pambalong NR was fairly full of water with very limited muddy margins for foraging, so we weren't expecting to find many Latham's Snipe - we managed to flush only two birds. Another two were found in a drainage line off Lenaghans Drive, on the edge of Hexham Swamp and three more were flushed from their roost beneath casuarinas at Lenaghans Swamp. So we had a total of seven snipe in the vicinity of Pambalong NR.

Surveys conducted at other wetlands in the Lower Hunter revealed:

- one Latham's Snipe at Stockton Borehole Lagoon;
- four snipe at Windeyers Creek near Raymond Terrace;
- none at Ross Wallbridge Reserve at Raymond Terrace;
- none at Newcastle Wetlands;
- one snipe on the margin of Melaleuca Swale on Ash Island;
- twenty-three snipe at Pacific Dunes Golf Course, Medowie; and
- four snipe near Joseph Sheen Drive, Raymond Terrace.

In addition, fourteen snipe were seen at "The Little Lake", at 1871 The Lakes Way, Forster (Prior to the survey day 33 were seen). On 22 December 2013 one snipe was seen at Woodbury.

The results indicate generally low counts of Latham's Snipe in the Lower Hunter at this time. The two counts at "The Little Lake" confirm the mobility of snipe, a feature found by Michael Todd during his study.

Many thanks to all the participants in this survey.

Reference:

Todd, M. (1998). Feeding Ecology of the Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* in the Lower Hunter Valley, N.S.W. Australasian Wader Studies Group, Birds Australia.

Liz Crawford

Activity Reports cont.

Myall View Camp

25 - 27 January 2014

The Australia Day long weekend camp was faithfully attended by 13 members, completely unaware of the exciting sights ahead of a beautiful Owlet Nightjar and a chick of a White-throated Nightjar. We were very fortunate to camp at Michael McNiece's property called *Myall View*. There was rain on the Friday night but after an overcast Saturday, the weather fined up and was not stinking hot, a bit of a blessing when camping.



Maggie Adlide,
Di Johnson,
Trevor Jurd,
Michael
McNiece and
Tony Adlide
at *Myall View*
- Lorna Mee

After ascertaining the direction of east and west at the camp site, I decided to enjoy the shade in the morning and pitched my tent under some leafy trees with a great view of the cleared paddock, toilet close by and shorter stroll up the hill to some bush tracks in the Myall Lakes National Park which fringed Michael McNiece's 150 acres of lovely bushland.

During the day we could hear the piping sounds of Sacred Kingfishers, the chuckling of Kookaburras, the carolling of Magpies, the rollicking sounds of Noisy Friarbirds and the chipping of White-throated Treecreepers and Eastern Yellow Robins. Not far away was a lily pond attracting Glossy Black-Cockatoos in the evening while tiny Superb Fairy-wrens took refuge in a stand of bamboo on the edge of the water.

Around the camp in the foliage, Rufous and Grey Fantails flitted about while Brown Gerygones, Brown Thornbills, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Mistletoebirds, Olive-backed Orioles, Eastern Spinebills and Black-faced Monarchs visited the higher canopy. The property across the road extended our survey where Bar-shouldered Doves, Grey Teal, Wood and Black Ducks, Scaly-breasted and Rainbow Lorikeets, Eastern Rosellas, Nankeen Night-Heron, King Parrots and a Scarlet Honeyeater turned up.

During the night we heard the call of a White-throated Nightjar. 'It is a long sequence of musical bubbling sounds that begin with very slow notes, becoming more rapid and rising to a crescendo' (Morcombe's Field Guide). Michael mentioned that up on the ridge he'd come across a pair and he'd set up a very successful

webcam capturing the birds sitting among dry leaves, broken twigs and stones. He showed us the egg shell amongst the litter and on the Sunday morning we got up early hoping to see the adult birds in the area. The two adult birds flew as we approached and just by chance we scanned the area and lo and behold came across the chick which had not as yet fledged. Apparently they can fly by the age of 21 days. This was such an exciting find!



White-
throated
Nightjar
chick -
Lorna Mee

Further back along the track an Owlet Nightjar popped its head out of a hollow, big eyes and tiny body. Down among the tropical rainforest a Superb Lyrebird was seen and a Noisy Pitta heard. Sunday morning I woke to the shrill of cicadas above me. Apparently only the male sings as a mating ritual to attract the females. It is caused by 'tymbals' - a pair of ribbed membranes at the base of the abdomen. The contracting and relaxing of these muscles produces the sound which may be attractive to the female cicada but to the average human can cause extreme distress, loss of hearing of bird calls and utterance of unacceptable words to certain souls. We restrained ourselves to screams of anguish and facial gesticulations especially during bird call each night. Apparently some nationalities are known to roast them and the recipe follows - you pull off the wings and throw them on hot coals (this appeals to me). It has been said they taste like chicken, not the strong taste you may imagine. By the way the females are more meatier.

On Monday morning we departed after seeing a White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, adding to our total of 74 birds.

Di Johnson

Activity Reports cont.

Myuna Bay

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Twenty-five keen birdwatchers turned out for a very successful day at Myuna Bay and surrounds of Eraring. Quite a large group to lead and keep on track but my thoughts were that they were enjoying the walk and surprisingly enough getting good views of water and bush birds. Little Wattlebirds, Brown Thornbills, Eastern Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets, Magpies and Dollarbirds were spotted in the tall leafy trees at the start, followed by a delightful view and excellent photo opportunity of a Crested Tern posing atop a short pole on the edge of the Eraring Power Station Outlet. A female Mistletoebird flitted nearby and the dead branches on the water's edge further up revealed a Darter, Little Pied Cormorants, a Striated Heron and a lone Pelican.



Crested Tern
practising a
one-legged
stand after a
bad hair day.
Di Johnson

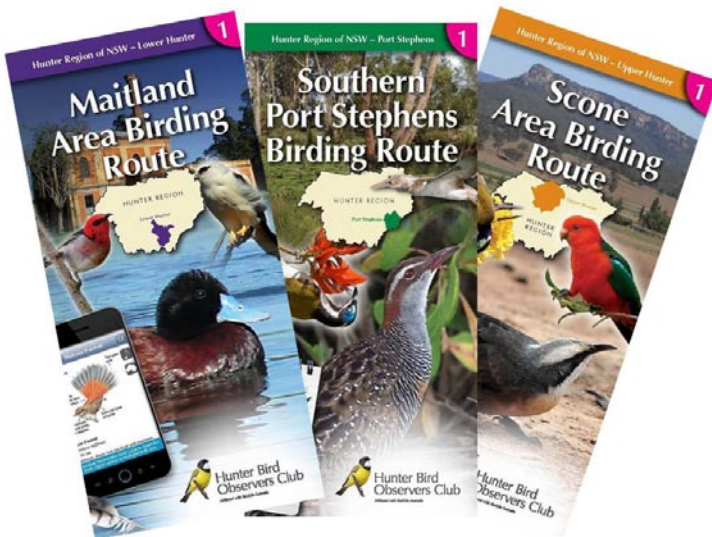
The track along the lake adjoining the Sport and Recreation Camp proved to be quite a good spot as Sacred Kingfisher, Golden Whistler, Brown Gerygone, Striated Thornbills, Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens, Eastern Yellow Robin, Nankeen Night-Heron and Yellow-faced Honeyeater were seen. A nice little clearing revealed excellent views of two White-headed Pigeons.

After morning tea, we drove around to the headland and walked along the lake's edge getting great underside views of Whistling Kite and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. We were able to add Long-billed Corella, Tawny Frogmouth and Blue-faced Honeyeater to the list which brought the total to 66 birds seen. Not a bad number for this area and a day thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Di Johnson

New Hunter Region Birding Routes

We all know that there are many great places to go birdwatching in the Hunter Region. What we don't always know though, is where exactly some of those places are located. We read in the newsletter or on hunterbirding about the birds seen at a location but sometimes don't quite know how to find the spot so that we can go there ourselves.



To help, I have been asking local experts to describe how to find good birding sites in their area and with a brief indication of what birds may be found there. This information is being included in a series of Hunter Region birding route brochures. So far, three of these have been prepared (covering Maitland, southern Port Stephens and Scone areas) and they are available from the HBOC website. More of them are planned, so keep checking the website from time to time for additions.

Many thanks to Rob Kyte who developed a very aesthetically pleasing layout for the brochures, and to local experts Grant Brosie, Lois Wooding, Trevor Murray and Greg Newling for their contributions. I'd be delighted to hear from you with thoughts for some additional brochure that you can help us to develop.

Alan Stuart

HBOC's Records Appraisal Committee

An Introduction and Summary of Roles

For the February 2012 newsletter I wrote an article about the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC), with a brief introduction on records appraisal committees in general. You can read that article at the link below:

http://www.hboc.org.au/resources/documents/HBOC_Newsletter_Feb12.pdf

As I wrote then, records appraisal committees are a part of modern birdwatching nearly as much as binoculars. As our knowledge of the status and distribution of birds increases, there is also a need to 'manage' the reliability of the information that contributes to that knowledge. I also wrote that "you may be aware that HBOC has a Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) that oversees rare or unusual bird records from our region". The purpose of this article is to elaborate on the HBOC RAC (hereafter referred to as "the RAC") and to give some background on its roles, processes and membership.

Background

The RAC was formed at the same time as the inception of the Hunter Region Annual Bird Reports in 1993 (which was in turn a concept borne out of a very early BIGnet meeting where Alan Stuart volunteered to take on the task – one he is still performing 20 years later!). Initially there were 6 members in the RAC and this was expanded to 7 members in 2008. To date there have been 14 members of the RAC, with only one original member still sitting to this day (Ann Lindsey). Sue Hamonet was the Secretary of the RAC (as well as being the Club's Records Officer) from the beginning in 1993 right up until the start of 2012 when I took over the Records Appraisal Officer reins.

As I type this, we are currently up to Case # 384, which roughly equates to an average of 20 cases that the RAC assesses each year.

Main Role of the RAC

Whilst many birders keep lists (some keep more than others!), the Club's list and various records of the birds on that list needs to have some sort of 'quality control' to ensure that the list / records are reliable and robust. The Club has earned an incredibly strong reputation not just in the birding world, but with other organisations, government departments and the general public. This has come about over time for a number of reasons, one of which is the integrity of the information we keep and share about the birds of the Hunter Region.

As I wrote in my 2012 article, "*in instances where birds considered to be particularly rare or unusual to a particular area are reported, supporting information may be required to validate the record, with a view to ensuring that the knowledge-base is credible and has been collated through a thorough vetting process.*"

Generally, these [records appraisal] committees carry a list of bird species that require a submission to validate the record (viz. a "review list")". In the case of HBOC, the RAC generally requires that a record be submitted for review in a few ways, being:

- A Category 3 bird – refer to page 5 of the 2012 Hunter Region Annual Bird Report for a list of these species. The list also includes some birds that are included on 'higher' committee's review lists (i.e. ORAC and the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee [BARC]). These birds are considered rare in the Hunter and need to be validated before the Club can accept them (though there are exceptions as we will see below);
- A species that has not been recorded or confirmed in the Region previously; and/or
- A significant report of any species that might require confirmation. A hypothetical example of this might be a 'western' species reported from a coastal location – regardless of its Category (refer to page 6 of the 2012 Annual Bird Report), the record would be considered unusual enough to warrant review (although in general the report is discussed with the observer and what happens next becomes a case-by-case situation).

Note that the RAC is a committee concerned with "records appraisal". It is not a "rarities committee" as many people refer to us. We assess all "records", not just sightings of rare birds. I expand on this in the section called "Other Roles".

The exceptions that I referred to in the first dot point above are in the instances where numerous observers have seen the bird(s) and there is no doubt about the authenticity of the record. Almost without exception these birds are well-photographed too. In these cases no formal submission is required, though agreement for accepting the records occurs after discussion with RAC members. Probably the best examples of the 'exceptions' are Category 3 birds that are seen on pelagic trips where literally hundreds of images of a 'rare' bird (for example, a Buller's Albatross) are taken and the bird is observed by up to 15 people. There are examples of rare birds seen on pelagics that are seen by many observers but an URRF (Unusual Record Report Form) was requested due to the difficulty in confirming identification, such as the Antarctic Prion seen in June 2013. Another example where a formal submission was not required was the spate of Budgerigar records in the Hunter Region in 2013. Had there been only one or two reports, the RAC would have considered requesting confirmation of the records.

I know what some of you may be thinking – there are some "grey areas" here – and that's true. But ultimately

HBOC's Records Appraisal Committee cont.

there has to be some discretion used by the RAC and in particular the convener of the RAC, otherwise the tasks would be too difficult to track, especially as each member of the RAC gives their own time to assessing RAC cases. I like to think that this "discretion" can be questioned when an observer feels it is appropriate.

The Assessment Process (in a nutshell)

A rough outline of the process that we follow for records appraisal is outlined below.

1. If a rare or unusual record (as described previously) is reported or made aware to the RAC, we decide if an URRF is required. This is where the "discretion" I referred to earlier is usually applied and I (as the Records Appraisal Officer) am mostly responsible for this. If there are multiple observers / images (e.g. Budgerigars in 2013 and the Pacific Gull at Nobbys in June 2013) an URRF is not usually required.
2. Where an URRF is required, the observer is consulted to see if they're interested in submitting an URRF and at this point a Case Number for the bird/record is applied.
3. Once an URRF is submitted it is distributed to all RAC members for appraisal.
4. Each member makes an independent assessment on the information provided and lodges their decision. They are unaware of what other members have recorded. Once all verdicts have been received a decision (in the form of a memorandum) is issued to the observer(s), summarising the feedback given from the RAC members (predominantly for non-accept cases) and RAC members are included in that communication.

The HBOC RAC follows the same rules as NSW ORAC, which can be seen on the HBOC website under Records Appraisal.

Note that when a member of the RAC submits an URRF (which does happen), they do not assess their own record.

"The URRF"

The main "vehicle" for records appraisal is usually a form that can be used as a template for the observer to fill in and submit. These forms vary in fine detail, but generally they all seek the same things and they are for the observer to:

- give details on the location, time and other circumstances of the observation;
- describe the subject bird(s) and whether the description came from notes made in the field or

from memory **before** consulting a field guide;

- consider potential confusion species;
- provide details on the experience the observer has with the subject species; and
- provide various other information about the bird(s) and the observation.

The need to take field notes at the time of the observation cannot be stressed too highly. These notes should describe exactly what you noticed at the time, and carry much more weight than notes made from memory. Ideally an observer should recognise the need for an URRF based on field notes. There are many occasions when this does not happen and I as convener of the RAC need to approach the observer(s). In such instances the evidence is likely to be less convincing when an URRF is done retrospectively because of the tendency to report what you know the bird to look like rather than what you saw.

Technically, you don't have to use this form. If you feel you can provide the necessary detail, you can submit a document that provides the pertinent information outlined in the URRF. For example, each submission I have made to BARC and ORAC in the past has been a document in the form of a very short report. But I have always included all of the details outlined in an URRF document. As I have said above, the URRF serves as a template but you can submit your observation in the format that you're most comfortable with. Another approach is to use the URRF to outline all of the details such as location, date etc, but append a short report to it. This also works well.

The HBOC URRF can be found on the Records Appraisal page on the HBOC website. I intend to post some "example URRFs" from previous cases onto the website soon as well. It is also recommended that you read the "guidelines for submissions" document provided by NSW ORAC, as this gives some good "informal" hints about how to go about filling in an URRF. There is a link at the end of the "guidelines for submissions" to a similar document put together by BARC, so there is plenty of background out there to help you in the process. If you're still unsure, please ask me or a member of the RAC.

"Accept versus Not Accept"

The role of the RAC in appraising URRFs is not to try to "increase the Hunter list" or to "bring doubt on rare bird records" – it is to verify any sightings of birds which do not usually occur in the Hunter Region or are seen in an unusual location or habitat. It is very important to note that no report is ever "rejected" and I want to stress that although an observer may be satisfied that they have identified a bird sufficiently for their own purposes, the RAC has the responsibility to either accept or not accept the sighting for the Club's records. This is an

HBOC's Records Appraisal Committee cont.

important distinction to make. Furthermore, the RAC does not ever attempt to try and say what a reported bird may have been if the record was not accepted (though potential confusion species are obviously taken into consideration and often included in the returning comments from committee members).

I repeat – the RAC merely chooses to accept or not accept a submitted record for HBOC records. Some cases are more difficult than others. The bottom line is though, that we can only assess each record on the information provided. In some cases, if further information comes to hand, a case can be re-examined. To avoid getting into too much detail here, I refer you to the Records Appraisal page on the website where this information can be found.

Other Roles

The RAC has other roles other than records appraisal. It also keeps abreast of the latest changes to taxonomy and nomenclature and makes recommendations to the general HBOC Committee about how the Club should deal with these changes. For example, the recent move from Christidis and Boles (2008) taxonomy to the BirdLife Australia Working List of Australian Birds was considered and discussed by the RAC before the Club made the decision to switch to the “new list”.

Every year, the RAC reviews a draft version of the Annual Bird Report, sent around by the editor Alan Stuart. Once the review is complete, Alan and the RAC get together to run through the report content. This is usually a pretty candid affair, with plenty of coffee and pizza (and probably a beer or wine for some of us!) and amongst other things, much discussion on the status of many of the Region's birds. And it means that we do assess all records that are published in the Bird Reports, although of course it is the rare or unusual records that receive the closest scrutiny. It is largely at these meetings that the Categories for each Hunter bird species (i.e. 1, 2 or 3) are reviewed as well.

A summary of RAC-reviewed cases for 2013 will appear in the Annual Report and I hope to be able to provide this annually from this point on.

Membership

Generally, records appraisal committees are composed of members that have advanced knowledge of the identification and distribution of bird species in a given area. As with BARC and ORAC (and presumably other records appraisal committees worldwide), members of the RAC are appointed by the committee. The ORAC rules (which we follow) state that a “*candidate for membership shall be a person who in the estimation of the existing Committee, has demonstrated an expert ability in and knowledge of the field identification of birds*”. The Club's RAC includes / has included local field ornithologists that have demonstrated that they possess this knowledge-base within the Hunter Region.

We are always looking for people who might be suitable as future members! The current RAC membership is highlighted in the RAC timeline below.

HBOC RAC membership timeline (current members are in bold font)

Sue Hamonet (Secretary 1993-2012)	1993-2012
David Geering	1993-1996
Ann Lindsey	1993-current
Jeanette Stephenson	1993-1999
Wilma Barden	1993-2007
Jim Perry	1993-2000
Jim Imrie	1997-1999
Phil Hansbro	2000-current
Terry Lindsey	2000-2005
Fred van Gessel	2000-current
Mike Newman	2006-current
Mick Roderick (Secretary 2012-current)	2008-current
Craig Anderson	2008-current
Allan Richardson	2012-current

Note that Alan Stuart is deliberately not a member of the RAC. In his own words, he “*would have a conflict of interest*” – he wants the Annual Bird Reports to be as exciting as possible and at times that might make him less impartial than he would need to be.

Concluding Remark

The final point that I would like to make is that the RAC is part of the Club and not external to it. We are more than willing to hear suggestions and feedback on how we operate. We also do not wish for the membership to see us as disengaged from the rest of the Club. We serve a purpose within the complex structure of this amazing club and we work very hard in our own time to undertake this. We look forward to working closely with the rest of the membership into the future.

Mick Roderick

HBOC Records Appraisal Officer

HBOC's Records Appraisal Committee cont.



An Antarctic Prion (with Fairy Prion in the background) seen off Port Stephens in June 2013 – an example of a difficult to identify bird where an URRF was requested to confirm the record. (Mick Roderick)



Budgerigars at Martindale in April 2013 – an easy identification of a bird seen by many observers over a protracted period of time. The RAC accepted the records, though no URRF was submitted. (Mick Roderick)

Birdata – The BirdLife Australia Atlas Project

Your records are vitally important to HBOC, in furthering some of its goals, namely of increasing the awareness, knowledge and conservation of the Hunter Region's birds. Through mediums such as this newsletter, club meetings and the online-forum Hunterbirding, HBOC members are alerted in real time to the occurrence of unusual species and good birding locations, ticking the "awareness" goal. Our Annual Bird Report series summarises each year's records for every species, both common and rare, addressing the "knowledge" aspiration. Our journal *The Whistler* provides analysis of the knowledge generated by members through their general bird watching activities and more formal projects, like the regular waterbird counts. *The Whistler* articles inform both HBOC members and very importantly, regional land managers, about the status of our birds and their "conservation" needs. Records are also channelled into conservation positions and arguments, which make the club an important stakeholder at forums where decisions are made relating to the protection and improvement of bird habitats - our final goal.

HBOC can proudly claim it does all of these things as well as any regional bird club in Australia, and arguably much better than most. We are the benchmark to which others aspire. Central to these outcomes is our ability to harness and extract the knowledge generated by your observations through a database known as Birdata, which is the focus of this article.

Birdata was developed by BirdLife Australia (BLA) to archive records from its Atlas project which many HBOC members have been supporting since 1998. The Atlas project has two purposes; firstly to map bird distributions and secondly to monitor changes in

the distributions and abundance of Australian birds. Australia is a vast continent, subject to dramatic and unpredictable swings in climatic conditions. This is well exemplified locally by rapid changes from prolonged periods of drought to flood conditions in the Hunter Region (see **Figure 1**). We need to understand how birds react to these changes.

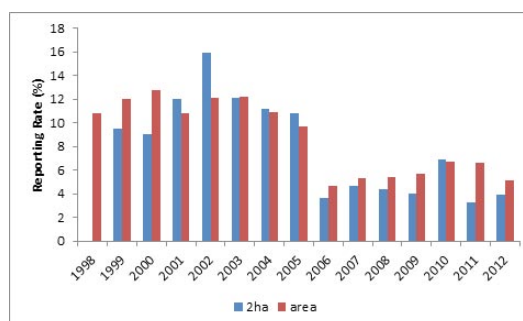


Figure 1. Variation in reporting rates (frequency of observation) of Double-barred Finch for area and 2ha 20-minute surveys in the Hunter Region showing decline following extended drought conditions and abnormally dry first half of 2006 (BLA Birdata).

Recently alternatives to Birdata have emerged for collecting bird watchers' records. Some of these have perceived advantages, including easier data entry. In Australia Eremaea has attracted many contributors, while internationally E-bird has enormous support. In a recent development Eremaea and E-bird are joining forces in a venture which will be hosted by Cornell University with a steering committee based at the University of Queensland.

An obvious question is why doesn't BLA merge Birdata with Eremaea and E-bird so that there is a single database collecting all "citizen science" bird records?

Birdata – The BirdLife Australia Atlas Project cont.

This is an outcome with many advantages, which is being seriously considered. Indeed, Eremaea already has a data entry option which allows data to be shared with Birdata, provided the contributor indicates their approval. However, there are differences in the way data is collected and submitted to Birdata compared with Eremaea and E-bird, which complicate and potentially compromise data interpretation. People submitting to Birdata are asked to make their bird list using survey procedures which indicate the amount of survey effort and precisely defining when and where the observations were made. This “structured” approach to data collection is important in determining changes in the status of birds. With Eremaea and E-bird, bird lists are often collected in a less structured manner which makes it difficult to make comparisons with conclusions which are sufficiently certain to be the basis for conservation-based land management decisions.

As indicated earlier HBOC, in collaboration with BLA, has made a large investment of time in developing systems for the interpretation of Birdata and providing our members and the community with information on the birds of the Hunter Region. Consequently, we are asking you to continue your excellent contribution to our records using the existing survey types and data submission procedure through Birdata. In the Hunter we have many data sets, with repeat effort going back over a decade. These are the most valuable contribution any birdwatcher can make to understanding what is happening to our birds and providing scientifically

sound advice to both local, regional and national government on their conservation requirements. HBOC focuses on the Hunter; BLA addresses the wider issues at the national landscape scale, including publishing its *State of Australia's Birds* series. In the short term Eremaea and E-bird may have personal advantages to you in terms of easier data entry and superior reports, but please consider what is best in terms of supporting our birds and continue to use Birdata.

BLA is acutely aware of the need to catch-up with the other systems in terms of making Birdata user-friendly. However making significant changes to database systems is both complex and expensive; a very difficult undertaking given the extraordinary rate of change in the information technology industry (no sooner have you made an investment than it is obsolete). For BLA, making the investment in Birdata upgrade comes at a time when government funding is very limited. So it is essential that it makes the best possible decision. It is in all parties' interest that we end up with one database in which all bird information is available with easy use and excellent feedback to our members, the community and government. So please keep up the good work and if you do enter your information through Eremaea please ensure it is marked to be shared with Birdata (and ultimately HBOC). Do not enter your information into both systems because that may cause duplication and compromise interpretation, resulting in misleading information in the HBOC Annual Bird Reports.

Mike Newman

HBOC's Digital Photo Library

This is a reminder to members that HBOC has a digital photo library, for members to use, and that we are always pleased to receive donations of additional images. The ultimate aim is to have high quality images of all Australian birds including those where gender, age, season, geography etc lead to differences in plumage.

Why an HBOC collection, given that good quality images can be obtained from other sources? Partly it's a service for members, not all of whom know how to find images on-line. And partly it's an opportunity for local photographers to gain some extra recognition. Also, not all of the on-line images are of such high quality that they can be used in presentations or for other educational purposes.

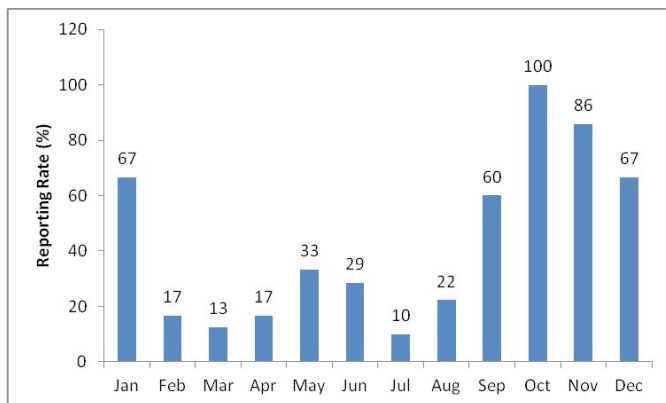
For photographers interested in donating pictures to HBOC, we would like to receive 500kB .jpeg files, with your name on the picture and/or within the file name.

John Cockerell (the HBOC photo librarian) can coach you in how to do that if you require. You will retain ownership of the original image. HBOC commits that the downsized image will not be on-sold and that it will only be used for non-commercial purposes such as community education.

For members wanting pictures for use in a presentation, contact John Cockerell (jb@cockerell.ws or 0429 435 008). John can also coach you in presentation formatting if you require. There are already more than 1,200 digital photos in the HBOC library so if you are planning a talk for an HBOC meeting or at some external community forum, the chances are that we already have some pictures that could be useful for you. There is also a slide library, dating back to when that was the medium of choice. Many of the slides are excellent quality (and they have also been digitised).

Detection or Dispersion?

Like many bird watchers, many of my records are based on call and I make little effort to actually see individual birds, particularly when I am doing bird surveys. So how do I interpret results like those shown below for the seasonal variation in the frequency I recorded Olive-backed Orioles *Oriolus sagittatus* during a 15-year period, when I made 104 visits to Black Rock Road near Martin's Creek?



One interpretation is that orioles call frequently during the breeding season (August to January), but are seldom seen by a “visually” lazy birdwatcher. Hence, outside the breeding season they may still be present, but are quiet. Some credence for this proposition is given by the slightly increased frequency of records (reporting rate) in May and June in the chart. Passerine species often have a period of increased calling during the non-breeding season.

The other alternative is that orioles disperse from the Black Rock area after the breeding season. In support of this explanation I can cite instances in which I have observed flocks of orioles feasting on White Cedars (e.g. at Cedar Hill Swamp in the 1990s).

The Annual Bird Report suggests the status of the Olive-backed Oriole is a “usual resident”, which implies that it is found in the Hunter Region throughout the year, but not necessarily that it maintains a permanent territory. I suspect that at least a degree of local dispersion occurs outside the breeding season.

Conservation Corner

As you are probably aware, the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) is constructing a rail flyover alongside Swan Pond on Ash Island. This will expand their coal capacity to allow a throughput of 66 million tonnes per annum. Construction activities include relocating the existing powerline alongside the industrial railway line further west into Swan Pond.

On behalf of HBOC, Ann Lindsey has ensured that both

Seasonal variations in the reporting of birds are often used to infer migration movements so understanding whether a regional decrease reflects a genuine departure from an area is important. Owls, species more frequently heard than seen, are an example. A recent article by Jerry Olsen and Stephen Debus in *Australian Field Ornithology* (Volume 30: pages 106-108) titled “Do Tasmanian Southern Boobooks migrate?” addresses this issue. Occasionally Boobooks resembling the darker Tasmanian sub-species are recorded on the mainland, but the literature is ambiguous as to whether these involve a migration for the winter followed by a return journey, or a one-way dispersion to the mainland. A recent statement by former HBOC stalwart Mick Todd in his PhD thesis attributes the lower calling frequency of Southern Boobooks in winter in Tasmania to breeding seasonality and winter migration to the mainland. However, Olsen points out that in sedentary populations of marked and radio-tagged mainland Boobooks, they simply stopped calling and stayed in the area.

Another example of the detection dilemma involves the HBOC studies of the Rufous Scrub-bird at Gloucester Tops. In monitoring this elusive species we rely almost exclusively on detecting it by call, particularly during the supposed breeding season between August and December, when it calls regularly. During the very dry springs of 2012 and 2013 we failed to find scrub-birds at a number of previously occupied territories. Have they left the territories or just ceased to advertise them because conditions were unsuitable for breeding?

Mike Newman

Editor's Note: Comments on this topic would make interesting reading that could be shared on hunterbirding - feel free to voice your opinions there. If you're not already registered for hunterbirding, visit <http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/hunterbirding/> and follow the on-site instructions. Alternatively you can sign up for hunterbirding by sending a blank email to hunterbirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will then receive an email asking for verification that you wish to become a member of hunterbirding. Simply reply to this email with another blank email and await your membership acceptance from the moderator.

NCIG and Ausgrid (who manages the powerlines) are aware of the need to place bird deflectors on these wires. HBOC's database of bird strike casualties (reported to Ann by several club members) was used to support the argument that bird deflectors are necessary on powerlines adjacent to wetlands used by flocks of birds.

Ausgrid has assured Ann that the lines will not be approved unless bird deflectors are in place.

Superb Fairy-wren Part V: A Sad Story

August 2013 – January 2014

After the problems reported in *Superb Fairy-wren Part IV* article (page 7 of Newsletter No. 6/13, December 2013), August started the potential revitalisation of the clan. Bluey and his new partner Brownie spent time feeding on mealworms and foraging and bathing together in the birdbaths. On 25 August 2013, half a hatched shell of a fairy-wren egg was found embedded in cuttings being pruned from the skeleton of our dead Grevillea Yamba Sunshine, indicating that Bluey and Brownie had nested somewhere near. Their behaviour had changed during August, when we observed mealworms being ferried to the same nest site in next door's Lavenders where three chicks had been successfully fledged in 2012. On 5 September 2013, they were moving in and out of the Lavenders to stir any new offspring to leave, and on 6 September there was plenty of activity in the Callistemon foliage at our place, where a small stumpy-tailed wren was hiding and being fed. Bluey had two vigorous episodes chasing Brownie and she made a number of trips to the Bush Cherry Hedge over our back fence, which might have signalled an imminent new nesting episode.

From 6 September onwards, Bluey was very busy carrying out the usual behaviour of feeding the fledgling and supervising activities, but Brownie also spent time with the baby, moving it from one hiding place to another. On 11 September she was busy collecting fibre from our hanging baskets and carrying it to the previous nesting site. In late afternoon she was gathering mealworms as well as food from the next door lawn to feed the baby hiding in the Callistemon. At 1625 h, Brownie and Bluey were collecting food to deliver to the baby where it was loafing in the Banksia. Brownie landed beside it to cuddle for a considerable time (see photo). Just after Brownie had left, I photographed the baby alone before it moved to the depths of Callistemon Taree Pink. Brownie returned to the Callistemon to deliver a mealworm and then foraged in the back lawn and wooden retaining wall until dark.



Brownie cuddling up to the only successful fledgling baby from the August nesting event

The baby fledgling was on its own very briefly in the Banksia before taking off to hide in Taree Pink



14 September turned out to be a disaster and foreshadowed more problems. We were booked to travel to Port Stephens for a whale watch. As we drove out we noticed the neighbour's cat loafing on their driveway, close to the former wren nesting site. Although Bluey and Brownie were active on 15 September, there was no sign of the baby then or at any time subsequently - the last sighting was on 13 September. Once again we were not present to observe the event, but the bird's disappearance and the cat's appearance were too coincidental to be ignored.

By 18 September, we concluded that a dramatic change had occurred in the clan as Bluey had disappeared and had been replaced by another adult blue male which did not respond to calls and did not collect mealworms. During the next couple of weeks, we had several visits from the neighbourhood cats, making the birds very nervous. From 10 October on, we were again observing frequent carriage of mealworms from the front porch and patio mealworm stations to the same Lavender nesting site as before, suggesting the presence of fledgling wrens.



Three fledglings produced by the early October nesting event were seen snuggling in Callistemon taree Pink on 15 October 2013

Our speculation was confirmed on 15 October, when three fledglings were seen huddled together in the Taree Pink Callistemon in Garden 2, while Brownie was busy collecting mealworms. On 19 October, our new adult male, now called Bluemale, was bolder than usual in my presence, but Brownie was very busy ferrying mealworms between the porch station and the Callistemons. The three fledglings were seen out flying but not very skilfully; one of them flew to the porch and then back to Garden 2. Eventually they were observed regularly divided into a single bird and a pair.

By late October, Bluemale had progressed to collecting mealworms and demonstrating dominant male behaviour. He was leading the two fledglings to and from the Lavenders. He fed the two fledglings with worms and they followed him back to our Callistemons in Garden 2. There, Bluemale and the fledglings worked mostly on or close to the ground and thus were vulnerable to a prowling cat. When Bluemale collected mealworms the fledglings flew out to meet him and follow him back in to the shrubs. On 11 November, the first of the three fledglings was photographed, revealing scraggy fluffy dark plumage. (photo left). Bluemale began training the fledglings to be helpers and the two of them were flitting from shrub to shrub and at intervals flying onto the lawn to forage and then quickly returning to the Lavender. A Nankeen Kestrel arriving at the Lavender site revealed the protective value of other bird species which feed on the same



foods and use the same space as the fairy-wrens. The Kestrel swooped into the lawn being used by Bluemale, juvenile wrens and a Willie Wagtail that were foraging close together. The Willie Wagtail swooped on the intruder and pursued it high into the sky, while the wrens scattered. At first I was unable to confirm whether any of the wrens were casualties but later at 1555 h I was relieved to locate all safe and sound. On the next day, Bluemale and the two helpers were flitting around the shrubs beside the Lavenders and Bluemale was caught on camera (Photo below).

Superb Fairy-wren Part V: A Sad Story cont.



Bluemale perched in a shrub on guard, looking towards the Lavenders' nest on 13 November 2013

On 14 November 2013, the wrens made two visits to the new Lavender nesting site and on 15 November at 1300 h, Bluemale and one of the fledglings were at the Lavender wren's nest. However, by 1730 h the garden had been torn up and loaded into a trailer thus destroying any chance of the nest succeeding to produce more offspring. We are assuming that the new owners had no knowledge of the nest and the important role of the site as part of the clan's territory when they decided to remove the garden. The value of the nesting site had been recognised by the previous owners in October 2012 when the wrens first nested there and they had kept us informed of the wrens' progress. They subsequently sold to the current owners and we regret that we had not been able to make contact with them to alert them to the wrens' nest. All the information reported and the photos obtained here were obtained from the street.

The focus of the wrens' loafing changed, gathering food at our place and moving to other parts of their territory. On 17 November the fledglings that had paired off were loafing on the skeleton of the dead Grevillea Yamba Sunshine.



The pair of baby wrens loafing in the Grevillea Yamba Sunshine skeleton 17 November 2013

On 18 November, Bluemale was looking after the two fledglings that had paired up loafing in the Red Rover Banksia.



On 19 November the fledgling that had chosen to work alone was hiding in one of the shrubs and ultimately, with no evident reason, disappeared permanently. On 23 November, the remaining two fledglings were bathing in the Garden 2 birdbath (see below), and on 25 November they were bold enough to collect mealworms from the front porch food station (see below), where they were closely followed by



Bluemale. From then up to our departure on 13 December for a Christmas holiday with family in New Zealand, the feeding from the mealworm station predominated and when no worms were available, biscuit crumbs were chosen. Bluemale and the two fledglings frequently fed together. The wrens were frequently visiting the food station when there were up to 20 Red-browed Finches in the nearby porch feeding in their millet food station, and at short intervals the finches repeatedly flew off en masse. These activities tended to disturb the wrens, which flew off with them.

We returned from New Zealand on 7 January 2014 to find much had changed in our absence. On 8 January, a cat came sneaking along the front of the bedroom early in the morning and we chased it off but on 9 January it was sneaking back again at 0700 h. The behaviour of the wrens in our gardens was completely different to that we had observed before we left home. At 1000 h a male blue and two juveniles were foraging in the back lawn and vegetable patch. There were no reactions to a bowl of mealworms and no response to our usual calls. At the same time a brown female was busy taking nectar from the Grevillea Honeybird in the front garden. No wrens were seen all day on 10 January. At 0900 h on 11 January, an adult female wren was on the back lawn and a blue and a brown adult were in the front garden. Mealworms were untouched all day and when fresh mealworms were put out at 1900 h the wrens ignored them.

On 12 January there was no wren activity until late afternoon. The blue male, the brown female and two juveniles were having energetic splashing games in the water, flying up to preen in the branches and then returning to the water, but they ignored our calls. On 13 January, two juvenile wrens flew into the Red Kangaroo Paw close to the front door and remained for a considerable period. I had time to examine them closely and they resembled the two fledglings at the mealworm bowl (see above). I called but unfortunately the Red-browed Finch clan chose that moment to fly off en masse and the wrens took off with them, ignoring my call. They were the closest in size, features and behaviour to the wrens we had observed before we left for New Zealand. While writing this on 14 and 15 January, there were still no signs of wrens. At 1800 h on 16 January, a blue adult wren and two juveniles were active in Garden 3 and on the driveway and Grevillea Yamba Sunshine skeleton. The visit was very brief and the wrens ignored our calls and mealworms.

It seems that the Ballydoyle Fairy-wren Clan that we knew and enjoyed so much has been unforgiving of our 26 days in New Zealand. The hope we had of re-establishing a healthy wren population has not been realized and it remains to be seen if a new clan will become established in the future. Our observations of our birds in the garden nearby, have convinced us that the issues are very complex and interactive between different avian species, cats and people. If urban avian populations are to be sustained, there will need to be a vast increase of people with a knowledge and understanding of the needs and requirements of bird species using our common grounds.

Max and Heather Maddock



Twitchathon 2013 - Dodgy Drongos

2013 saw the Drongos celebrating our 10th Twitchathon. We had decided to do our usual Liverpool Plains run in keeping with tradition. Sadly young Maxie Drongo couldn't join us this year due to his sitting the HSC but luckily the Co-Pilot, Robbie Drongo and I were super keen and ready for a big result.

Pre-twitch oiling was almost non-existent and caused many delays during the race. The value of oiling, whilst sometimes proving very frustrating, can't be underestimated and even in our 10th year the Drongos are forever learning the tools required to reach the top.

We arrived on the Plains a day early and got in some much needed birding before the race. It was clear that the area is slipping into drought with lesser numbers of seed-eating species present and almost a complete lack of small insectivorous species. The complete lack of Weebill in the area was a sure sign that things weren't right. Despite the conditions we managed to find a good selection of 'western' birds like Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Plum-headed Finch, Black-eared Cuckoo, Hooded and Red-capped Robin, Painted and Singing Honeyeater, Banded Lapwing, Diamond Dove and both western thornbills.

Race day arrived and after a relaxing sleep-in (I was pacing along the Namoi River at 7:30am) we headed west for some last minute oiling and a quiet lunch at our starting point, Borah TSR. Just before kick-off we located some desired species so decided to change our route around Borah. At 3:55pm a Hobby patrolled overhead and the bush fell silent. At 3:58 the same bird made another pass overhead and the bush remained silent. Of course when 4pm ticked over the Hobby had gone and the bush was still silent. Our first bird was a Black-fronted Dotterel that we'd been watching for a good 10 minutes. Robbie Drongo then spots our one and only Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo for the race. Bee-eater, Jacky Winter, Tree Martin, Fuscous Honeyeater and Rufous Songlark were added as was the well-oiled pair of nesting White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Sadly we dipped on the pre-race Shrike-tit and Black-chins. Diamond Firetail and Brown Treecreeper were flushed from the grass and Peaceful Dove and Striated Pardalote were heard above. The creek had the usual Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird and Little Friarbird while a Wedge-tailed Eagle soared overhead. We left Borah a little disappointed but still confident.

The birding was very slow along the road and it wasn't until we stopped at a small farm house on Kelvin Road that the list started to move along. Speckled Warbler, Southern Whiteface, Double-barred Finch and Zebra Finch were sitting on the property fence. White-winged Triller and Blue-faced Honeyeater called as they flew around the gardens and nearby 4-5 White-backed Swallow danced above the road. As we headed south we ticked up Yellow-throated Miner, Painted and Singing Honeyeater, Red-winged Parrot and Mistletoebird.

The long drive to Leard State Forest (which we all agree gets longer and longer every year) added some quality birds like Cockatiel, Blue Bonnet, Restless Flycatcher, White-browed and Masked Woodswallow, and White-winged Fairy-wren. We entered the State Forest with high hopes but in the end we only managed two new species, Common Bronzewing and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill. Earlier in the day we had seen Red-capped Robin, Western Gerygone, Inland Thornbill, Leaden Flycatcher, Plum-headed Finch and Diamond Dove.

We were now running very late and the sun was sinking fast. We barely slowed the car to tick off Brown Honeyeater and Musk Lorikeet in Boggabri before racing down the highway to bag our final two western birds, Blue-billed and Pink-eared Duck at Gunnedah STW. Apparently Freckled Duck and Shoveler were also present but in the failing light we had no hope of scoping the roosting ducks on the levee. As we had our dinner Robbie did the maths and quickly shattered our dreams...98 species, our lowest Saturday run score in many years. The rest of the night continued how it started, birdless. Our only night bird was a pair of Boobook calling at Allyn River as we slid into our sleeping bags for a leisurely 4.5hrs sleep.

The dawn chorus had us wide awake at 5am but we weren't complaining. Magic. Eastern Yellow Robins got the choir started, closely followed by Black-faced and Spectacled Monarch. By the time we had packed up camp we had ticked off Russet-tailed and Bassian Thrush, Catbird, Lyrebird, Noisy Pitta, Yellow-throated Scrubwren and Fan-tailed Cuckoo. A quick walk produced Brown Cuckoo-dove, White-headed and Topknot Pigeon, Large-billed Scrubwren, Rose Robin and Brown Thornbill. We then crossed the Allyn, ticking Shrike-tit, Crimson Rosella, Leaden Flycatcher, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Riflebird and Satin Bowerbird before crossing the hills and down on to the Salisbury Road.

As we headed south we picked up the usual 'northern' species like Channel-billed Cuckoo, Torresian Crow and Pheasant Coucal. Clarence Town turned into a little list saver with Rufous Fantail, Cicadabird, Varied Sittella and Bar-shouldered Dove, but where were those Scarlet Honeyeaters?! Scaly-breasted Lorikeets flew across the road as we entered Seaham, and at the swamp we flushed a Latham's Snipe, watched a Long-billed Corella waddle across the lawn, and heard a distant Pallid Cuckoo.

After a fruitless stop at Green Wattle Creek we headed for Maitland where we managed to find all the usuals like Nankeen Night-Heron, Golden-headed Cisticola, Common Blackbird, Brown Goshawk, Goldfinch, Banded Lapwing and Great Crested Grebe. Having dipped on Weebill out west we decided a quick detour to Gosforth was needed and after a stressful wait we finally heard one. A Red-kneed Dotterel were seen nearby. We then pushed towards Kurri but not before dipping on Plumed Whistling-Duck at Majors Lane. Black-chinned and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were our only ticks in HEZ. The pressure was mounting. So much driving for such little return.

The lookout at Lenaghans was our next stop and in the distance we could see Intermediate Egret, Whiskered Tern, Black Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle and the Dry-throated Buzzards! Pambalong provided our race highlight in the form of a young Black-necked Stork. Little Grassbird was heard in the reeds and after much stressing we finally ticked up our first Silvereye for the race!!!

Ash Island was tough as usual but it was nice to see some waders in the form of Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers. A female Black-fronted Chat was acting very stint-like and several Swamp Harriers were seen. The biggest surprise was not seeing a single Pipit on the island; maybe all the rev-head twitchers had scared them off.

We had anticipated a poor showing at Stockton Sandspit and we weren't disappointed. Eastern Curlew, Pied Oystercatcher,

Twitchathon 2013 - Dodgy Drongos cont.

Red-necked Avocet, Red-capped and Pacific Golden Plovers, Pied Cormorant and Mangrove Gerygone. Tereks, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Whimbrel and Darter were ticked around the corner...as was a female Eclectus Parrot which flew out of the mangroves and into the opposite pines!!

Newcastle Baths proved to be the highlight of the afternoon with 6 species added (not including the previously seen Silver Gull and Crested Tern). A feeding frenzy was happening just off the rocks and within it we ticked Common and Little Tern, Short-tailed and one Wedge-tailed Shearwater and two Gannets. Our last bird was an Osprey.

We decided to risk the last hour and headed in the opposite direction to the Wetlands Centre...Awabakal. We had sussed out the fire damage before the race and knew the bluff had been spared so we raced there and found New Holland and

White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebird and Variegated Fairy-wren. On the drive to the Wetlands we found our second last bird of the race, a magnificent Grey Goshawk perched above the Newcastle bypass.

We rolled into the Wetlands Centre with 15 minutes to spare but our only tick was Magpie Goose. The Drongos huddled and emerged with a sad old 218 total, one of our lowest scores in years. As usual though we had great fun (well maybe less fun than previous years) and managed to record some cracking species. Well done to the Hunter Home Brewers for their record total and also to the Grafton-based Black-necked Stalkers who bumped us down to fourth place!

Until next year,

Drongo

Birds at the Hunter Wetlands Centre in 2013

The late Wilma Barden began compiling monthly statistics of birds at the Wetlands Centre and surrounding areas in 1986. From 1998 she made a separate list specifically for the Wetlands Centre. At first, records just indicated whether a species had been seen, but from 2010 numbers in each species have been recorded. These records are now kept up to date by Margaret and Robert Stewart and Paddy Lightfoot. Over these 27 years 217 different species have been recorded.

127 species were sighted in 2013, which is about average for recent years. Of these 45 were seen in at least 10 months. This included the common waterbirds such as Grey and Chestnut Teal, Hardhead, Pacific Black Duck, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot. (In May we had the highest number of Coots ever recorded - 221). Many waterbirds breed at the Centre and regular counts are made of nests of the four species of egret and the Australian White Ibis. Figures for these active nests in December were lower than 2011 but up on 2012 with 13 Great Egret, 10 Intermediate Egret, 5 Little Egret and 312 Cattle Egret. There were 304 Australian White Ibis nests in July. Bush birds continue to thrive, especially honeyeaters when the bottlebrushes are in blossom. There has been a decline in the presence of introduced birds, such as Common Myna and Common Starling, with no House Sparrows seen in the last three years.

In 1987 forty-four juvenile Magpie Geese were released at the Centre and in June this year we had 115 present – the highest count recorded. Over the 12 months there was an average of 88 Magpie Geese present.

When water levels drop several edge feeders drop in, and in October we had both Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and 62 Black-winged Stilt.

Unusual sightings for the year included Black-necked Stork seen on two occasions and Brown Quail several times. Unusual raptors seen this year included a Brahminy Kite (last seen in 2000), Spotted Harrier (last seen 2005) and both light and dark morphs of Little Eagle, seen together in June when the Hunter Bird Observers Club had their New Members Day. There was one species recorded for the first time ever at the Centre – an Australian Brush-turkey, spotted by Paddy Lightfoot.

2014 has started very well with the first sighting of a Blue-billed Duck since separate records began in 1998, a Pink-eared Duck (an uncommon visitor), a Wandering Whistling-Duck with ten ducklings, and five Latham's Snipe.

Margaret Stewart

Future Activities

The second **Great Sharpie Count** in the Hunter Estuary and associated wetlands will take place on Saturday 15 February 2014 as part of the usual monthly wader count - if you can help out, please contact one of the organisers listed on the table of Activities.

BirdLife's **Powerful Owl Project** will be focussing on detecting and monitoring Powerful Owl breeding attempts in the Sydney, Central Coast and Newcastle urban areas between March and October 2014. Of the ten owl territories identified in the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie area last year only four had confirmed breeding. Contact David Bain, Project Officer, if you would like to be involved: email powerfulowl@birdlife.org.au

Clean Up Australia Day will be on Sunday 2 March 2014, with focus on two shorebird sites: Stockton Sandspit and Kooragang Dykes - see details on the Activities list.

HBOC will be manning an information stand at **Tocal Field Day** from Friday to Sunday 2-4 May 2014. As well as info on birding in general, there will be an emphasis on birds on farms. Thousands of people visit these field days, providing an excellent opportunity for HBOC to promote birds and birding. Lots of volunteers to help man the stand are needed - ideally, three people from 9am-1pm and three more from 1pm to 5pm each day. Please contact Alan Stuart on 0409 978 171 if you can assist.

Birding Books etc for sale

\$15 for the following titles:

Cayley, What Bird is That? (1987 large format reprint)

Berulsdon, Aust Birds & their nests & eggs

Hollands, Kingfishers & Kookaburras

\$10 for the following titles:

Flegg, Photographic Field Guide (2nd edition)

Trounson, Aust Birds Photographic Field Guide (1st edition)

Simpson & Day Field Guide (8th Edition)

Debus, Birds of Prey field guide (1st edition)

Blakers, Davis & Reilly, The Atlas of Australian Birds (1984 edition, with complete set of transparent overlays)

Guide to Bird Habitats in NSW

Christidis & Boles, Systematics & Taxonomy of Aust Birds

McKilligan, Herons, Egrets & Bitterns

Jones & Goth, Mound Builders

Kaplan, Tawny Frogmouth

Birds of Australia Collectors Series, Nos 1, 2, 3 & 4 (Grey Fantail, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Red-capped Robin & Fuscous Honeyeater)

Dengate, Attracting Birds to your Garden

Adams, Birdscaping your Garden

Grant, Habitat Garden

Bird Calls:

Lindsay, What Bird Call is That? (set of 2 tapes and a booklet in plastic case)

Binoculars:

Nikon Egret II 8 x 40 bins for sale, excellent condition: \$50

Please contact **Darryl Eggins**

(02) 4981 0145 mobile 0404 878 145

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations

Please note that all sighting reports published in HBOC's newsletter or its on-line forum (Hunterbirding) are unofficial and have not been confirmed by the Club. Such reports are publicised in order that others can be made aware of the sighting(s) reported and have the chance to help verify them. Official records of bird sightings in the Hunter Region appear in the Annual Bird Report, for which written submissions supported by field notes and photographs are a vital part of the process for acceptance of locally uncommon/rare species.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer	Source
Australasian Bittern	1	27/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australasian Figbird	2+2dy	15/01/2014	Pokolbin	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Australasian Shoveler	17	17/01/2014	Deep Pond	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australian Painted Snipe	2	8/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australian Painted Snipe	11	7/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	2ad+2imm	4/12/2013	Stockton Sandspit	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	2ad+2imm	6/12/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	30+inc.2juv	11/01/2014	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Australian Spotted Crake	2+1dy	16/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
Azure Kingfisher	1ad+1imm	4/12/2013	Weston	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Banded Lapwing	2ad+3juv	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	M. Kearns	Hunterbirding
Banded Lapwing	10	31/01/2014	Phoenix Park	G. O'Connor	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	1	12/01/2014	Thornton	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	1	13/01/2014	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	1	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	1	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	2	26/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	J. Stiles	Hunterbirding
Black-fronted Dotterel	2+dy	16/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
Blue-billed Duck	1	3/01/2014	HWC Shortland	T. Williams	Hunterbirding
Broad-billed Sandpiper	3	16/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1	27/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Broad-billed Sandpiper	5	17/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	M. Kearns	Hunterbirding

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations cont.

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Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer	Source
Broad-billed Sandpiper	6	27/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Brown Honeyeater	2	Oct - Nov	Elmore Vale	M. Fisher	Club Night
Buff-banded Rail	1	5/12/2013	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke	Hunterbirding
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1	18/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	R. Warnock	Hunterbirding
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1	24/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	D. Williams	Hunterbirding
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	c.12	8/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	28/12/2013	East Maitland	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Comb-crested Jacana	2+1dy	8/12/2013	Cattai Wetlands	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Common Bronzewing	2+nest	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Common Greenshank	20	1/12/2013	Ash Island	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Common Greenshank	17	14/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Common Greenshank	46	14/12/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Common Noddy	1	5/01/2014	Nobbys Head	D. Williams	Hunterbirding
Cox's Sandpiper	1	27/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Curlew Sandpiper	113	14/12/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Curlew Sandpiper	101	23/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Diamond Firetail	6	27/12/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Dollarbird	3ad+3juv	27/12/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Eastern Koel	4	Oct 2013	Kotara	J. Nicholls	Club Night
Eastern Osprey	2+dy	Dec-13	Tea Gardens	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Eastern Osprey	2ad+1imm	11/01/2014	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Eastern Spinebill	2	Oct - Nov	Elmore Vale	M. Fisher	Club Night
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	1	20/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	1	7/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	T. Williams	Hunterbirding
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	6	10/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
European Goldfinch	3	27/12/2013	East Maitland	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	20/11/2013	Blackbutt Reserve	J. Nicholls	Club Night
Fork-tailed Swift	c.10	3/01/2014	Myall River	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Fork-tailed Swift	8	5/01/2014	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	23	1/12/2013	Louth Park Road	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	1	14/12/2013	Earthcare Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	2	5/01/2014	Total	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	1	7/01/2014	Pokolbin	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	1	8/01/2014	Pambalong NR	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	1	17/01/2014	Deep Pond	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Gang-gang Cockatoo	2	16/12/2013	Wollemi NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	3	2/12/2013	Charlestown	G. Ayre	Hunterbirding
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	2	16/12/2013	Wollemi NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Great Knot	1	14/12/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Great Knot	1	Dec-13	Myall River	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Greater Sand Plover	1	10/12/2013	Bennetts Beach	T. Faulkner	Hunterbirding
Green-headed Yellow Wagtail	1	8/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Grey Butcherbird	2ad+2juv	12/12/2013	Belmont South	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Grey Butcherbird	2ad+2juv	13/12/2013	Carey Bay	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Grey Plover	1	6/12/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations cont.

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Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer	Source
Grey-crowned Babbler	6	30/11/2013	Beresfield	H. Boyce	Club Night
Horsfield's Bushlark	2	27/12/2013	Pitnacree	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Horsfield's Bushlark	c.5	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
King Quail	4	6/01/2014	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
King Quail	2+	8/01/2014	Ash Island	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
King Quail	4	16/01/2014	Ash Island	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	1	14/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	2	15/12/2013	Pambalong NR	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	5	15/12/2013	Lenaghans Drive	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	1	15/12/2013	Stockton Borehole	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	4	15/12/2013	Windeyers Creek	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	1	15/12/2013	Ash Island	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	5	29/12/2013	Wallsend Bunnings	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	14	8/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Latham's Snipe	5	31/01/2014	HWC Shortland	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Lesser Sand Plover	5	26/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	E. Vella	Hunterbirding
Lewin's Rail	ad+imm (h)	14/11/2013	Floraville	W. Lambkin	Club Night
Lewin's Rail	1	30/01/2014	Mambo Wetlands	D. Eggins	Hunterbirding
Little Eagle	1	3/12/2013	Shortland	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Little Eagle	2	1/12/2013	Weston	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Little Eagle	1	4/12/2013	Singleton	P. Alexander	Hunterbirding
Little Eagle	1	27/12/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Little Eagle	2	28/12/2013	Tocal	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Little Friarbird	1	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Little Tern	142	4/12/2013	Stockton Sandspit	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Little Tern	144ad+30dy	6/12/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Long-billed Corella	273	7/01/2014	Keinbah	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Long-tailed Jaeger	1	Dec-13	Bennetts Beach	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Long-toed Stint	2	14/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	11	1/12/2013	Ash Island	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	1	5/12/2013	Tocal	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	23	11/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	19	14/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	48	14/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	47	23/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Marsh Sandpiper	54	17/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	M. Kearns	Hunterbirding
Masked Owl	1	Dec-13	Myall Lakes NP	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Nankeen Night-Heron	96	4/12/2013	Raymond Terrace	P. Slack	Club Night
Nankeen Night-Heron	4	4/01/2014	Stockton Sandspit	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Oriental Plover	1	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	T. & D. Williams	Hunterbirding
Oriental Plover	1	31/01/2014	Phoenix Park	G. O'Connor	Hunterbirding
Pacific Baza	1	28/12/2013	East Maitland	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Pacific Black Duck	1+7dy	5/01/2014	Tocal	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Pacific Golden Plover	164	14/12/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Pacific Golden Plover	301	16/01/2014	Stockton	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding

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Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer	Source
Painted Button-Quail	2	6/12/2013	Duns Creek	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Painted Honeyeater	1	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	23/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	14/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	M. Kearns	Hunterbirding
Peregrine	1	7/01/2014	Pokolbin	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Pilotbird	7	16/12/2013	Wollemi NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	100+	14/12/2013	Earthcare Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	11	27/12/2013	Bolwarra Wetlands	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	8	5/01/2014	Tocal	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	53	7/01/2014	Pokolbin	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	130	15/01/2014	Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	419	15/01/2014	Muswellbrook	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	31	17/01/2014	Deep Pond	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Plumed Whistling-Duck	6	1/12/2013	Louth Park Road	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Plumed Whistling-Duck	232	7/01/2014	Pokolbin	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Powerful Owl	1	13/12/2013	Kahibah	L. Grenadier	Hunterbirding
Powerful Owl	1	11/01/2014	Glenrock SCA	D. Allen	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	15ad+1imm	11/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	24ad+1imm	11/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	23ad+2juv	14/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	23	5/01/2014	Tocal	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	c.170	6/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	D. Williams	Hunterbirding
Red-necked Avocet	c.3000	4/12/2013	Stockton Sandspit	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Red-necked Stint	c.100	6/12/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Red-rumped Parrot	2+1imm	2/11/2013	Thornton	M. Fisher	Club Night
Restless Flycatcher	1	31/12/2013	Towarri NP	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Ruff	1	10/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Ruff	1	16/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Ruff	2	27/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Ruff	2	14/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	A. Benson	Hunterbirding
Rufous Fantail	1	20/11/2013	Blackbutt Reserve	J. Nicholls	Club Night
Sanderling	14	6/12/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Sanderling	1	Dec-13	Myall River	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1172	11/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2269	11/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1977	14/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	3199	17/12/2013	Tomago Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	c.3100	23/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	5000+	27/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2500-3000	16/01/2014	Kooragang Dykes	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	c.1500	16/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
Sooty Owl	1	11/01/2014	Glenrock SCA	D. Allen	Hunterbirding
Spotless Crake	1	16/01/2014	Wallsend Bunnings	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
Spotless Crake	1	28/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	16/12/2013	East Maitland	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding

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Spotted Harrier	2	Dec-13	Bennetts Beach	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	29/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	G. Little	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	1	25/11/2013	Raymond Terrace	P. Slack	Club Night
Square-tailed Kite	1	28/11/2013	Raymond Terrace	P. Slack	Club Night
Square-tailed Kite	1	26/12/2013	Floraville	R. Howie	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	1	7/01/2014	Mount Hutton	D. Allen	Hunterbirding
Striated Heron	1	4/01/2014	Stockton Channel	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Striated Heron	1	11/01/2014	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Stubble Quail	h	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Stubble Quail	1	29/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	G. Little	Hunterbirding
Tawny Frogmouth	2+3dy	15/12/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Tree Martin	700+	26/01/2014	Phoenix Park	M. Kearns	Hunterbirding
Wandering Whistling-Duck	10dy	14/01/2014	HWC Shortland	M. Stewart	Hunterbirding
Whimbrel	c.60	11/01/2014	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
White-breasted Woodswallow	2+dy	16/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	N. Livanos	Hunterbirding
White-browed Woodswallow	5+2dy	14/01/2014	nr. Scone	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-fronted Chat	c.12	10/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-tailed Tropicbird	2	12/01/2014	Port Stephens Pelagic	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	c.50	28/11/2013	Warners Bay	P. Slack	Club Night
White-throated Needletail	c.150	4/12/2013	Shortland	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	400+	4/12/2013	Stockton Sandspit	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	60+	9/12/2013	New Lambton	A. Fawcett	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	50+	9/12/2013	Raworth	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	c.60	9/12/2013	Galgabba Point	J. Adams	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	c.90	11/12/2013	Swansea	J. Adams	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	700+	Dec-13	Myall River	S. Gorta	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	c.500	8/01/2014	Ellalong	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-throated Needletail	c.75	10/01/2014	Teralba	S. Cox	Hunterbirding
White-winged Tern	1	7/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
White-winged Tern	4	8/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
White-winged Tern	1	11/12/2013	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-winged Tern	6	16/12/2013	Ash Island	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
White-winged Triller	1	4/01/2014	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke	Hunterbirding
Willie Wagtail	2+dy	31/12/2013	Towarri NP	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Willie Wagtail	2+dy	1/01/2014	Dungog	D. Jenkin	Hunterbirding
Wood Sandpiper	1	14/01/2014	Hexham Swamp	A. Benson	Hunterbirding
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	c.33	12/12/2013	Williamstown	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding

Note: dy means dependent young

Club Activities February to April 2014

FEBRUARY 2014

Wednesday 12 February	AGM & Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Tom Clarke - 20 years of changes to birds at Tighes Hill
Friday 14 February	Port Stephens Waterbird Survey	Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 All positions filled
Saturday 15 February	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30 am Ash Island 9.00 am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 0412 722 644 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Peggy Svoboda 4984 2701 – Tomago
Sunday 16 February	Field Outing – <i>Old Brush</i>	7.30am Junction of Lieberts Lane and Leggetts Drive, Brunkerville	Dan Williams 0408 023 262 Entry by gold coin donation
Tuesday 18 February	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm

MARCH 2014

Sunday 2 March	Clean Up Australia Day	8am - 12noon Stockton Sandspit 7.30am – 11am Kooragang Dykes Boat Ramp	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785 for Stockton Sandspit Liz Crawford 0412 722 644 for Kooragang Dykes
Tuesday 4 March	Mid-week Outing - Morpeth	7.30am Ray Lawler Reserve Park, Edward St, Morpeth	Dinah Stehr 4933 2134
Wednesday 5 March	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Wednesday 12 March	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Lindsay Smith - Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association Bird of the Evening: Tom Kendall
Saturday 15 March	Hunter Wader Survey	8.00am Ash Island 8.30am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 0412 722 644 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 4952 2818 – Tomago
Sunday 16 March	Field Outing - Ash Is and Stockton Sandspit	7.30am Car park after crossing Ash Island bridge	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Tuesday 18 March	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm

APRIL 2014

Tuesday 1 April	Mid-week Outing – Grahamstown Dam area	7.30am Finnan Park, Grahamstown	Ray McLean 4987 4512
Wednesday 2 April	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Wednesday 9 April	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: TBA
Tuesday 15 April	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Wednesday 16 April	Hunter Wader Survey Newcastle High Tide 8.55am 1.6m	8.00am Ash Island 8.30am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 0412 722 644 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 4952 2818 – Tomago
Easter 18 -21 April	Easter Camp	Borah Travelling Stock Route near Barraba - directions in April Newsletter	Lorna Mee 4987 2913 mobile 0499 015 500
Anzac Day 22-25 April	ANZAC Day Camp	Migration to Guy Fawkes NP after Easter - directions in April Newsletter	Lorna Mee 4987 2913 mobile 0499 015 500