

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

P.O. Box 24, New Lambton, N.S.W. 2305

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President:
Secretary:
Newsletter Editor:

Peter McLauchlan
Peter Phillips
Rosemary Waymark

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

THE AUGUST MEETING.

The August Clubnight held on Wednesday the 12th commenced with the Bird Call of the Blackbird presented by Fay Thomson and the Bird of the Evening was the Red-rumped Parrot presented by Doug Biddle.

For the Main Feature Ann Lindsay gave a comprehensive illustrated talk on the Birds of Britain and of her experiences of bird-watching in Britain.

The following observations were recorded:-

Comb-crested Jacana	Mulbring.
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Mayfield.
Australian Hobby	Mayfield.
Caspian Tern	Newcastle Wetland Reserve.
Spangled Drongo	Woodberry.
Pied Butcherbird	Oyster Cove.

Black-billed Gull Boat Beach, Seal Rocks.

The immature Black-billed Gull was reported by Jim Perry. At the time of printing no confirmation was available, although the bird has been seen since by several other observers.

The Figbird was the bird discussed at the meeting.

NEW MEMBERS.

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:-

Sean McElwain	New Lambton.
Miranda Mitchell (Junior)	Raymond Terrace.
James F. Smart	East Maitland.
Phil Straw	Engadine.

New Edition to the Library:-

The White Egret.

New addition to the Audio/Video Library:-

Tape No. 7 in the BOCA series.

Field Outing to Taronga Zoo.

On Sunday 19th July, 1992, 12 members and friends met at Taronga Park Zoo for a look behind the scenes of the aviaries. Two groups were taken on a most interesting tour around the bird house headquarters by two very enthusiastic keepers, Judy Gillespie and Wendy Gleen.

The actual feeding and catering centre was similar to a hospital diet kitchen, with special mixtures scrawled on blackboards around the walls, large coolrooms and refrigerators to hold the huge quantities of fruit and vegetables, meat and fish required daily. On a bench ready to go were pans of mixes for various birds. There was whitebait for the egrets, dead mice and rats for the condors and everything in between but most mixes contained seeds, apple, corn, endive and more normal items. Because of cost factors the zoo actually breeds its own rats, mice and cockroaches.

There are 1200 birds to be fed daily, comprising of 200 species, so it is a complex operation. Occasionally they do have a diet day, as birds in the wild do not always have access to food on a daily basis.

The keepers count the birds in their enclosures whilst feeding and note any differences in behaviour or numbers. A daily report and diary are kept and any health problem such as a limp or injured wing is recorded, also the daily weight of eggs in the incubator.

Breeding cages and temporary aviaries in a rodent proof building at the rear of the centre contained Gouldian Finches, Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Striped Honeyeaters, African Grey Parrots, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Noisy Pittas, Varied Lorikeets and Golden-shouldered Parrots. A sprinkling of Senegal Doves were there also and are used to sit on eggs of other birds.

Finally we saw the brooder room for hand raised chicks and the hatchery which contained one precious Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo egg in an incubator.

There is now an Australian Species Computer Management Programme which links all zoos in Australasia and they are trying to replace zoo bred stock gradually with provenanced birds, to get pairs breeding from the same region.

Urgently needed are 3 pairs of Regent Honeyeaters, so they have asked the Hunter Bird Observers to report any sightings and location to the zoo.

Margaret Woods.

ATLAS OUTING TO BRETTI -29/30 August, 1992.

With the weather closing in and the forecasters promising a foul week-end, it was a small party of three optimists that ventured to Brettli. We were rewarded for our bravery, however, with a pleasant, if overcast day on Saturday, and a still, cool evening which we enjoyed around the camp-fire. Some light rain fell overnight, but Sunday morning dawned fine, clear, and practically perfect.

The country is very stressed - with no Winter rains at all - and the bird story was not what we would have expected, given the time of the year.

There is still water in the Barnard and Manning Rivers, but there was nothing at all in the way of blossom or fruit and a total of 70 species was all we could muster before the Westerly blew in late morning, with some rain squalls which drove us homeward early.

Red-backed Fairy Wrens, Australian Hobby, Australian Regentbird, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, many Brown Cuckoo-doves and King Parrots were amongst the birds recorded

Sue Hamonet.

Munmorah State Recreation Area Field Day.

We had perfect weather for this field day on Sunday, August 23rd. We assembled at Coles car park at Swansea and after collecting several more members at the Reserve gates we had a very good group of 13 members, plus an Adelaide visitor who belongs to two birding groups in that city. We headed for Wybung Heads where we parked the cars and after admiring the marvellous coastal views made our way down the hill for a very pleasant walk around the Reserve.

Over recent years bushfires have devastated the whole area but fortunately regeneration is well advanced and many varieties of orchids and wild flowers are popping up everywhere. Bird life has been affected by the fires but we did get good views of Tawny-crowned and New Holland Honeyeaters, Richard's Pipit and some members were fortunate enough to have a Brown Quail pose very obligingly in the middle of the path. After climbing back up the hill we drove to Fraser Park beach where we were all quite ready for morning tea.

We then drove to the Palms picnic area where we again enjoyed a very pleasant and rewarding walk with good views of Rose and Eastern Yellow Robins and a glimpse of a Grey Goshawk. It was then time for lunch followed by the bird count.

Some of the group then left and the rest continued with a drive around the Reserve with stops at Snapper Point, the camping area, Birdie Beach and finally the small wetland area, where a sighting of a Great Egret and Purple Swamphen gave a final count of 53 species seen and a further 2 heard.

Our sincere thanks go to Diane Rogers, whose expert knowledge of the area together with its flora and fauna made such an informative and enjoyable day.

Charlotte and Brian Wibberley.

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

For the remainder of the year, iron-on HBOC stickers are available at the specially reduced price of \$1 each. Normally, these stickers cost \$2 - so see me if you don't want to miss out on this rare bargain.

Not all members may be aware that the HBOC has a variety of items for sale. As well as the iron-on stickers, other items available include:

- HBOC car stickers (\$2 each)
- "A Pocket List of Australian Birds" by Richard Schodde (these check lists are suitable for use for your outings records) at \$1.50 each
- HBOC metal badges (\$5 each)
- Compilation lists of the birds seen on club outings and camps (\$5 each). A 1991 list is already available, and other compilations will progressively become available.
- Garden bird record charts (see elsewhere in the newsletter for more details about these) at \$2 for the first chart.

These items are all available from the treasurer's desk at club nights. If you can't or don't usually come to club nights and are interested in purchasing any of the above items, contact me (528569) and we'll arrange some alternative means of delivery.

Alan Stuart

GARDEN BIRD CHARTS

Where do most members spend most of their bird-watching time? - in their garden! Or, in some other urban location which they frequent (e.g. around their workplace). Where do most of our club records come from? - almost everywhere except locations like these!

With your help, the HBOC is going to try to collect more urban/suburban records. We have now had printed some wall charts which will allow observers to record, on a weekly basis, the birds that they see at their chosen location each year. Similar charts have been used by the Canberra Ornithologists Group for several years, and they have been able to use the records to track a number of changes in bird distributions - e.g. the spread of species such as Crested Pigeons and Common Mynahs through the A.C.T., and also some information on migrating species such as Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Our intention is the same - to build up better records of the seasonal and annual changes in distribution of urban and suburban birds in our region.

The charts are operated on a weekly basis, with the observer writing in the maximum number of each species seen during the week. Thus, if he or she sees 3 of a species on the first day of the week, 4 the next day and another 2 later in the week, the number entered for the species for that week would be 4 birds. Records are for any birds seen within a 100m radius of the observation point. Birds flying overhead and not using the habitat available (e.g. by feeding or hawking) are also recorded, but the record is underlined to make the differentiation.

We encourage members to participate in this project which will add to our overall knowledge about birds. A lot of people are already recording what birds they see about their homes; this is a way for that information to be put to good use.

The charts are not restricted to HBOC members only; the more people filling in charts, the more useful will be the information collected. Therefore, we encourage you to also let any friends or colleagues with an interest in birds know about this new project.

The charts are approximately 600mm by 400mm, and would fit nicely (for example) on a fridge door. There is a charge of \$2 for the first chart that each observer takes; in subsequent years, the HBOC will replace each returned chart for free. Charts are available at club nights from the treasurer's desk.

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING.

The September Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 9th and the evening commenced with Bird Call, Jenny Meynell presenting the Striped Honeyeater. The Bird of the Evening was presented by Mark Dedman, who spoke about the Eastern Spinebill which usually visits his garden but failed to arrive this year. The discussion bird was the Sacred Kingfisher.

The Main Feature for the evening was presented by Vicki Roberts from the Native Animal Trust Fund. Vicki spoke of the experiences gained by members of the Trust at the time of the diesel oil spill at Lake Liddell, September 1990. They were confronted with about 60 oil affected birds, ranging in size from Black Swans to Dusky Moorhens, they worked extremely hard and for long hours, washing, rinsing and drying the birds.

Veterinary treatment included administration of ointment to affected eyes and feet, medication for burns to the lining of the throat and tube-feeding of electrolyte solution for re-hydration. The main problem is the ingestion of oil and once this happens nothing can be done for the birds. The exercise took the volunteers about 1 week and although some birds did not survive there was much satisfaction on the release of those who did survive and the success rate was excellent.

A Video, supplied by the BOCA, was shown, which gave a comprehensive look at requirements for a successful operation and up-to-date information on how the birds should be handled.

Members were interested to hear Vicki's comments regarding Tawny Frogmouths and the strange neurological virus which affected large numbers of this species towards the end of last Summer. No explanation can yet be given as to why only this species seems to be involved and indications are that it is already being seen again. The birds appear to suffer a series of debilitating fits and eventually die. The population of Tawny Frogmouths along the East Coast almost up to the Queensland border seem to be affected.

The following observations were recorded:-

Little Penguin)	
Shy Albatross)	
Yellow-nosed Albatross	)	HBOC Seabird Outing.
Wedge-tailed Shearwater)	
Fluttering Shearwater)	
Australasian Gannet)	
Grey Goshawk	)	Kooragang Island.
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	)	Carrington and Mayfield.
Marsh Harrier	)	Mayfield.
Banded Lapwing	)	Morpeth.
Eastern Curlew	)	Carrington.
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	)	Morpeth.
Southern Boobook Owl	)	Speers Point.
Brown Honeyeater	)	Carrington.
Pied Currawong	)	Mayfield. (Gathering nest material).
Rufous Bristlebird)	
Calamanthus	)	Great Ocean Road, Otway Range, Victoria.

BARREN GROUNDS.Spring/Summer Courses.

Birds for Beginners - 13 to 15 November, 1992.

Leader: Richard Jordan. Cost: \$140 (RAOU member \$130).

A course which offers a practical introduction to the world of birds. Learn how to identify major groups with a close look at some by mistnetting and banding. Find out about field guides and binoculars. This is the time of year when birds are very vocal and are nesting.

For further details see the Secretary.

This outing was organised to give members a rare opportunity to venture out to sea to view seabirds. Sailing time was set for 7 a.m. from Nelson Bay Marina. 15 members met at Nelson Bay at 6.30 a.m. (we must have been keen), we boarded the "Kunara", a sturdy cruiser of about 36 feet and cast off right on 7 a.m.. The bird count started at this time and as we cruised toward Tomaree Head we observed pelicans, a darter, egrets, cormorants and some land birds. We then headed south toward Point Stephens Lighthouse and saw Australasian Gannets and Little Penguins (for some lucky members), we then turned north east and headed out to sea. The shipping channel was quite busy as we passed behind one bulk carrier and in front of another. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were abundant and were often accompanied by Fluttering Shearwaters. Jim saw an albatross a few hundred metres away so the captain turned the boat back towards it. This magnificent Shy Albatross flew around the boat and along both sides to give all members an excellent view, as it flew off we headed further out to sea. At about 15 miles off shore and with 70 fathoms of water underneath us we turned back toward Broughton Island. Almost immediately two Yellow-nosed Albatross flew past and soon after another came along, it followed the boat for quite a while about 20 metres behind and then sat down on the water just behind us, this again gave us all an excellent view.

As we headed toward Broughton Island we were cruising almost side on to the swell and this made it uncomfortable for a few members. I promised Ruth, Sue and James that I would not tell anyone who was seasick so I cannot mention any names. A large school of dolphins played nearby jumping and diving and two stripey mackerel were caught. I had the pleasure of reeling one of them in. We sailed into a nice protected bay at Broughton Island for lunch and to let our seasick birds recover. Within 5 minutes 5 species of raptors were recorded, including Marsh Harrier, Whistling and Black-shouldered Kites. As we dined on ham and chicken sandwiches, prepared by the crew, it was interesting to watch an Australian Kestrel chasing a White-bellied Sea-Eagle and to compare the sizes of these two raptors, also at this time a Pied Cormorant fished near the boat and a couple of Sooty Oystercatchers walked on the rocks nearby. After lunch we headed for home via Lizard Island, where we saw a turtle beside the boat and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle sitting on a nest. We tied up back at the marina at 3 p.m. and a few members were pleased to be back on dry land.

It was a most enjoyable outing, recording a total of 43 species.

Doug Biddle.

**WORRIED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?
Then you should be worried about the
NSW Coalition's Natural Resources Package**

The worst legislative attack on the environment, ever.
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and public participation laws, in one blow.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO STOP THE PACKAGE

- Ask your friends to write letters to the Premier and Opposition Leader - briefing notes available.
- Visit your local MP.
- Come to the special Briefing Session for environment groups on 3 October 1992.
- Join other concerned people at the Big Rally on 22 November 1992.

**Further Information: Nature Conservation Council
(02) 2474206; Total Environment Centre
(02) 2474714; SEFA (02) 2471737**

Maitland to have bush and wetland green belt

By ANN-MAREE LOUREY
Staff Reporter

MAITLAND is set to benefit from a 10km buffer zone in its eastern suburbs under the city's new local environment plan.

The plan moved a step closer to completion this week when Maitland City Council discussed action taken on the 66 submissions received from the public and government departments when the plan was placed on exhibition earlier this year.

A number of submissions, from groups such as Maitland Landcare, Maitland Friends of the Earth and the Hunter Bird Observers Club, brought to the council's attention different wetland and native bush areas that they considered were in need of rezoning for protection.

Under the new environment plan, due to be re-exhibited for 21 days and completed by Christmas before being gazetted by the Department of Planning, the 10km buffer zone or 'green belt' will run from the Morpeth Sewerage Treatment Works through to the Maitland Campus of the Hunter Institute, and along Four Mile Creek to the site of the council's new garbage dump at the former Delta colliery on Mount Vincent St, East Maitland.

The acting manager for strategic planning at Maitland City Council, Mr Richard Bennett, told aldermen at a special meeting on Tuesday night that the plan was a significant planning document that would direct development in the city for the next decade and beyond.

The interest shown in the draft local environment plan is

encouraging, particularly the requests from local environmental groups for protection of the city's unique collection of wetlands and the creation of a green belt at East Maitland,' he said in the report.

The green belt or buffer zone would vary in width to a minimum of 300 metres and generally follow the 1:100 flood line.

'It also takes in land that cannot be economically serviced, as well as bushland,' Mr Bennett said.

The proposal to create a buffer between the residential development of Green Hills/Ashtonfield and the mining operations at Four Mile Creek had considerable merit, the report said.

'An inspection of the area confirmed the existence of a valuable wildlife corridor and creek lowlands that in the future could provide a valuable recreational resource for residents in the locality,' it said.

The proposed zoning (environmental protection urban buffer) would have a minor effect on the development potential of the land as the majority . . . is either low-lying, waterlogged, flood-affected or cannot be economically serviced.'

In other moves following the consideration of submissions, the council will investigate the possibility of a study of urban bush areas with the aim of protecting those with significant merit, and look at studying wetlands.

'Increased urbanisation of the city is contributing to the gradual loss of native vegetation,' Mr Bennett's report said. He estimated that the cost of a bush study was \$20,000 to \$30,000 and should be given a high priority.

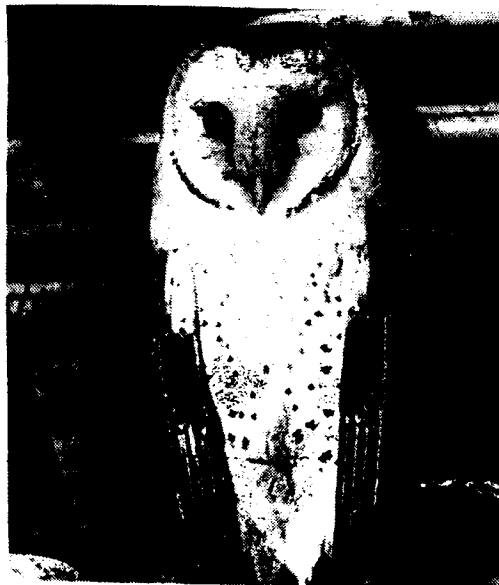
Wise owl took on a new meaning for the RNZAF 5SQN maintenance flight when a stowaway was discovered recently in an Orion.

The owl, found during a servicing inspection in a flap shroud on Orion NZ4202, is an Australian Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*. The sighting of this owl is a rare occurrence in New Zealand and has attracted strong interest from the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

Two aircraft returned from Australia a few days

before the sighting and it is thought the owl transited the Tasman as an illegal immigrant and stowaway. The

pictured owl was particularly photogenic, posing long enough for a base photographer to arrive.



RAAF NEWS.
No6/7/92.

Milbrodale Camp and Field Day - 19th and 20th September, 1992.

Delightful spring weather on the Sunday following 12mm of rain on the Saturday, produced a wet camp and an excellent birding weekend. Mr. Rodney Jones allowed the club to use his property, "Glen Ann", located on the south side of Bulga Creek, just off the Putty road. The camp site was on the boundary of the timbered Triassic sandstone country and the cleared Permian farmland of the Hunter Valley and gave us easy access to two quite different habitats. The presence nearby of a cave with aboriginal artwork depicting the half human half kangaroo God figure Biambee and the remains of the Old Bulga Road, dating back to the convict era, gave added interest.

A total of 76 species of birds were recorded during the weekend, 52 passerines and 24 non-passerines. Blossom bearing trees in the gully alongside the Old Bulga Road were producing a strong flow of nectar. This food supply was being exploited by large numbers of birds, including Little Lorikeets and no less than 13 species from the Family Meliphagidae (honeyeaters and miners). The nectar also supported numerous insects and thus insectivorous birds were also present in large numbers. A special delight was watching a pair of Spotted Pardalotes bringing insects to feed to their young in a nest burrow at the roadside.

Nocturnal calls heard during Saturday night included a racket caused by three Channel-billed Cuckoos, the pleasant chirr of an Australian Owlet-nightjar and the quiet oom of a Tawny Frogmouth.

A stroll around the farmland on Sunday revealed that Common Mynahs have spread to areas many kilometres from urban areas. The trip was rounded off with my first sighting for this spring of a Rainbow Bee-eater, proof that spring is really here.

Our thanks go to Sue Hamonet for leading this rewarding camp.

James F. Smart.



Pic. above this Lake Macquarie duck certainly chose well to bring her fourteen new born spring time ducklings to a Bonnells Bay couple's backyard swimming pool, far from any predators until they can fend for themselves.

Last Monday week, Frank looked out his Bonnells Bay kitchen window towards his pool area and then had to take a second look. There swimming around quite at home was a wild mother duck and her new born ducklings - fourteen in fact. What makes this so amazing is that mother duck had apparently walked quite

some distance half way up Mathers Drive from Lake Macquarie at Bonnells Bay, down the Thomson's path, through their pool gate and straight into the pool. "The ducklings were so tiny they couldn't get out of the pool, so I made a ramp with masonite weighted with bricks and string for them to hop in and out." At eight

Mum tucks all fourteen under her wings settled in the corner of the pool area and as the days went on by they strengthened and started to explore their hosts garden filled with colourful springtime petunias!

The Westlake Courier.
9/9/92.

9.
COMING EVENTS.

<u>Sunday 25 October.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u>	Bulahdelah.
	<u>Meet:</u>	McDonalds, Hexham. 6.30 am.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Alan Stuart. 528569.
<u>Weekend 7/8 November.</u>	<u>Atlas Outing:</u>	Upper Bowman.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Graeme O'Connor. 531304.
<u>Wednesday 11 November.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 pm
	<u>Main Feature:</u>	Dion Hobcroft and Tony Palisser. "Seabirds".
<u>Sunday 22 November.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u>	Mount Vincent. Barbecue.
	BBQ.	
	<u>Meet:</u>	To be advised.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Graeme O'Connor. 531304.
<u>Sunday 6 December.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u>	Swansea/Belmont.
	<u>Meet:</u>	Coles car park, Swansea. 7.30 am.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Peter McLaughlan. 333224.
<u>Wednesday 9 December.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 pm
	<u>Main Feature:</u>	Social Evening, supper etc.

The above information whilst as accurate as possible should be checked nearer to Field Days etc., with the contact person. An update of activities will be given at Clubnights.

Members are reminded of the distinction between Atlas and Field trips. All members are welcome to both categories of outings, however the Field Day may be the best for beginners, in that it usually consists of a larger group and a venue closer to Newcastle. Experienced members are available to assist the less experienced. Relative beginners may also find the Atlas outings interesting but numbers will be fewer and experienced 'guidance' less likely.

Contributions from members of the HBOC to the newsletter are welcome and the deadline for the December/January newsletter is 25th November.

The statements and opinions expressed in this newsletter are the responsibility of the authors concerned. The HBOC relies on the reputation of advertisers and their integrity for the quality and nature of their products and services.

Editor.

Illegal trapping of birds.

Illegal trapping of birds is not something which will go away and well-informed sources tell us that it is not declining in Australia. Birdwatchers sometimes come across evidence of trapping, and if this happens to you, **ACT QUICKLY.** Do not directly approach the people involved, as it may be dangerous to do so. As soon as you possibly can, contact the police, or the local office of the fauna authority of the State or Territory. If you see vehicles with cages, nets or ladders, or boxes of birds, or if birds can be heard calling from a car, discreetly write down the number of the vehicle, its make and colour, and a brief description of the people involved. Similarly, if you see a ladder leaning against a tree, leading to a nest-hole, watch from a distance and make notes. Your information may help to fill in some of the gaps in a known situation, or may substantially assist local authorities. Many birds taken from the wild die, and many suffer cruelly before they do. They deserve better than this, and it is up to us to assist if we can.

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**WHAT THE SPRING
MEANS**

A MORAL CHALLENGE

**HARDLY A SONG TO BE
ECHOED**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—On Sunday morning last, while deliver-
ing my sermon on the meaning of Responsibility
in Family Life, I was interrupted by a cuckoo.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSRIC CANTUAR

The Athenaeum.

