

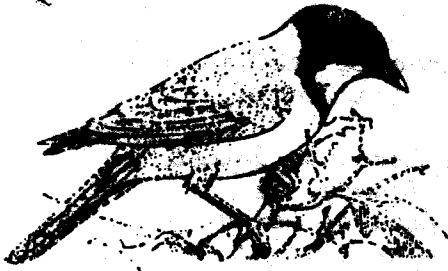
Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (049) 52 8569

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 JUNE MEETING.

The June Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 9th. No Bird Call or Bird of the Evening was presented. The meeting commenced with members watching on television the ABC programme "A Question of Survival", featuring a story on the RAOU Australian Bird Count. The ABC promoting the ABC! This was followed by the Main Feature for the evening. Arthur Austin presented two of his excellent Audio Visual programmes, on Rainforest and Wetlands.

Observation reports from June meeting

Apr. 26	Striated Heron	1	Stoney Creek	T. Clarke
May 8	Silvereye	40	Mayfield	" "
18	Australian Hobby	1	Mayfield	" "
20	Australian Hobby	1	Stevenson Pk, Mayfield	" "
24	Gt. Crested Grebe	30	Walka Water Works	B/C. Wibberley
25	European Goldfinch	3	BHP Refractories	T. Clarke
27	Glossy Black Cockatoo	6	Lenaghan's Drive	K. Imrie ?
4	Pacific Baza	2	Rankin Park	" "
6	Glossy Ibis	23	West Hexham Swamp	" "
9	Rose Robin (1m/1f)	2	Rankin Park	" "
5	Shining Bronze Cuckoo	1	Belmont South	J. Cockerill
	Spangled Drongo	2	" "	" "
6	Gt. Crested Grebe	8	Walka Water Works	M/R. Walker
	Australian Hobby	1	Walka Water Works	" "
	Glossy Ibis	24	Black Hill	" "
	Australasian Shoveller	6	Cedar Hill Drive	" "

The Crested Grebes at Walka on May 24 included 8 immature birds. Those on June 6 included 3 young. Pleasing to see the re-appearance of this species at this location, after a noticeable absence of some long months. Even better to notice the mention of immatures and young. The Spangled Drongos at Belmont South were reported as resident at that site for about two months.

Max Blanch, Jack Flanagan, Sue and Ed Hamonet and Jeanette Stephenson met at Taree to join a houseboat for a week, cruising the Manning River System.

With our belongings on board away we motored towards Coocumba Island Nature Reserve almost under the Taree bridge on the highway. We anchored alongside to have our lunch and to get the feel of being afloat, being the first time for some of us to have this type of holiday. We heard the calls of many birds and saw a pair of White-browed Scrubwrens down at the waters edge in the reeds, a most unusual place to see these birds. We were keen to have a look around this island on our return journey.

We had a marvellous trip up this beautiful wide river towards Wingham Brush. No sooner had we left the island when a young Brahminy Kite was spotted, the first of many, a good number being this far south. A White-bellied Sea-Eagle perched on a riverside tree, plenty of Pacific Black Ducks, Darters with pink feet (which was new to me, maybe breeding plumage), were some of the many birds seen along the river. Berthed for the night at the Brush.

Rowed ashore to explore the Brush. Australian Brush Turkeys, White-headed Pigeons, Azure Kingfisher and Regent Bowerbird were a few of the birds to be seen in this small pocket of rainforest which has been fenced to keep out feral animals. The gates are locked each night by a council worker. A wonderful job has been done to get this small piece of rainforest cleared of rubbish and weeds and it is well worth a visit to have a walk through the reserve which has magnificent fig trees. Had a short walk to town to get some supplies. Stayed another night alongside the Brush.

Cast off and cruised down river to have lunch, as promised, at Coocumba Island. Rowed ashore. The bird life was quiet because of overcast conditions. We walked the length of the Island and saw that much work had been done clearing rubbish etc. As at the Brush some planting of native trees had been carried out. On this walk we added Bar-shouldered Doves to the list.

Travelled along to Farquahar Park and along the way became stuck due to low tide. Spent the time waiting for high tide to view hundreds of gulls and a few waders on a nearby sandbank. With the returning tide we moved to a safe anchorage for the night. The gentle rocking of the boat assured us a peaceful nights sleep.

A lovely day followed motoring to Croki where we stopped at a delightful little caravan park. The park is well worth a visit in off peak times, the grounds being amongst the nicest I have seen. Birds seen during this little stay included Brown and Striped Honeyeaters. Later spotted about 100 Chestnut Teals, the river seems to have plenty of ducks. Arriving at Manning Point, walked to the beach and saw a lone shearwater riding the ocean waves. Got some supplies and then anchored alongside a good piece of bushland. Sue and Max went ashore and added 15 Brown Quails to an already expanding list. Jack was catching stingrays but we were all hoping for flathead for tea.

Spotted another 3 Brahminy Kites. It was really superb seeing this spectacular bird so close.

Searched for Scott Creek, where we were to spend the day, without success. A cool morning. Cruised to Charles Island Nature Reserve but were unable to drop anchor due to the low tide. Got stuck for a while on the edge of a sandbank. Max pushed us off, then we had to keep checking the depth of water along this stretch of river as the tide was running out. Anchored at Cyster Creek, a narrow spot with the bank close enough to bird from the boat. Sue, Max and Ed rowed up the creek and found Striated Herons and Azure Kingfishers darting from one tree to another. We later watched a Striated Heron fishing from the bank catching small fish.

Motored to Dawson River as the clouds closed in. It was looking like the end of the good weather. Managed to row up a small stream disturbing a Rufous Night Heron and another Azure Kingfisher. Departed quickly as the mosquitoes had found us and were having a feed off Sue and Jack. Berthed our last night nearby and next morning travelled back to Taree. We all had an enjoyable week afloat and I would like to thank everyone aboard for making this possible.
Number of birds seen was 111.

Jeanette Stephenson.

Camp at "Drummond", Nr. Murrumbidgee.

12th-14th June, 1993.

The campsite was on private property which proved to be picturesque and comfortable. A feature of the site was the number of large wombat holes. One caravan, two camper-vans and several tents were located on a flat grassy area near a dried river bank. 13 members were present at the camp. Weather conditions were initially showery followed by westerly winds which were strong and gusty. Conditions became calm on Sunday afternoon and cold overnight (-2°C) with a frost on Monday morning. Monday was mild with a blue sky.

A total of 70 species of birds were observed and Sue Hamonet advises that this count now extends the overall list for this property to 106 species. This total has been recorded on three visits in 1982, 1987 and 1993. Of the overall number recorded, 5 were waterbirds. Also Wedge-tailed Eagle, Yellow-tailed Black and Gang-gang Cockatoos, Little Lorikeet, Red-rumped Parrot and Crimson and Eastern Rosellas in the C category (21-50 birds). Rose, Flame, Scarlet, Red-capped and Eastern Yellow Robins, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Restless Flycatcher, Grey-crowned and White-browed Babbler, Oriole and Speckled Warbler (C). Brown, Yellow and Striated Thornbills, with Buff-rumped and Yellow-rumped in the D category (51-100 birds). 10 species of honeyeaters were observed.

Stan Etheridge.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT.

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

Mavis Gillies	Highfields.
Robyn and Mark Maher	East Maitland.
Keith Priestley	East Maitland.
Bill Rose	Kotara.

We welcome Mavis Gillies back from Tasmania.

LIBRARY REPORT.

No new books have been added to the Library.

SLIDE REPORT.

Donations of slides have been received from Max Blanch and Paddy Lightfoot.

AUDIO VISUAL REPORT.

Cassette - Symphony of Australian Birds.
Cassette - No. 8 in BOCA series.

4.
Lord Howe Island Nature Tours

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- . museum tour
- . all day walk to the 875m summit of Mt Gower

Lord Howe Island is 600km off the coast of N.S.W. Australia's only island on the World Heritage List for its outstanding beauty, geological formations, rare flora and abundant seabird populations, plus the world's most southerly coral reef. So much to see here on this totally unspoilt island paradise, and enjoy a good holiday break as well. This is a walking holiday where each day we explore the island by foot, some full day walks, other days short walks and boat trips.

write or phone 066 523590 for further information.

All bookings through FASTBOOK HOLIDAYS, Lord Howe Island specialists.

Note. Ian Hutton will be the guest speaker at the September Clubnight.

Field Day - Wetlands. 20th June, 1993.

Last Sunday morning, 20th June, eighteen enthusiastic early risers met their guide, Ann Lindsey, at the Shortland Wetlands Centre. Armed with binoculars, cameras and telescopes the members wandered around the B.H.P. pond, happily spotting many feathered friends on the way. The pond was crowded with Australian Pelicans, Magpie Geese, Purple Swamphens and Eurasian Coot and of course, hundreds of Silver Gulls. The shrubs in the surrounding gardens were quite busy with bird life too, Australian Magpie-larks and others were noted. There was so much to see, that it was hard to keep together at first. We were all excited by the abundance of birds.

We wandered on, around the track, to watch the many other water birds, Black Swans, cormorants and ibis. We tried to learn to distinguish between the Australian White Ibis and the Straw-necked Ibis. A special moment was when one member spotted the gorgeous Glossy Ibis, two of them in fact. At the next bend, we all enjoyed a fine view of the Freckled Ducks, all still asleep with their heads tucked out of sight. The Shortland Wetlands Centre now has an enclosure, housing 17 adult Freckled Ducks, they arrived from the CSIRO, Canberra, in late May. We followed the long trail all around the wetlands and enjoyed many good sightings of the water birds, including egrets, Chestnut Teal and even a few little Australasian Grebe.

After completing the circuit of the ponds, our group crossed the highway and spent some time studying the many wonderful birds in and around the ponds there. Among these were Pacific Black Ducks, Hardheads, some cormorants and the lovely creamy yellow Wandering Whistling Ducks. Overhead we saw a flock of corellas, a Whistling Kite and an Australian Hobby in the distance. It was beautiful there.

After a delicious morning tea in the Cafe Jacana, we set out by car for Beresfield. On the low wetland there, we saw many Black-winged Stilts, Black Swans and some ibis and egrets. The group moved on to lunch at an agreed spot, while a few of us reluctantly took our leave.

Sunday's outing at the Wetlands with the Hunter Bird Observers was a wonderful experience.

Pam Durie.

The total number of observations seen at three locations was approximately 65.

THE JULY MEETING.

The July Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 14th. Bird Call was presented by Rosemary Waymark, the Red Wattlebird and Noisy Friarbird. Bird of the Evening was presented by Ann Lindsey. Ann talked about kites, with special emphasis given to the Square-tailed Kite, which is seldom seen in the Hunter. The Main Feature was presented by Jim Scanlan, from the CSIRO, who talked about bird vocalisation, a fascinating subject which was illustrated with recordings and technical data.

Observation reports from July Meeting

Jun. 26	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	Milbrodale	M. Diemar
Jul.	Brown Honeyeater	2	S.W.C.	M. Walker
	Striped Honeyeater	1	S.W.C.	" "
	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	1	S.W.C.	" "
	Rufous Whistler	1	S.W.C.	" "
Jul. 4	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	Blackbutt Reserve	A. Stuart
9	Brown Cuckoo-Dove	4	Congewoi Valley	J. Meynell
11	Fligbird	3	Arcadia Vale	B. Kelly
11	Pacific Baza	2	New Lambton Heights	I. Hamilton
11	White-headed Pigeon	1	Charlestown	" "
12	Australian Regentbird	1	Merewether Heights	A. Brown



BARREN GROUNDS BIRD OBSERVATORY
 PO Box 3, Jamberoo NSW 2533
 PHONE: (042) 360195

GROUND PARROT CENSUS

Sunday 5 September 1993

Lots of volunteers needed to assist.

If interested, please phone Barren Grounds Bird Observatory on (042) 360195 or arrive at 9 a.m. Bookings are being taken for overnight accommodation on Saturday 4 September; casual rates apply - \$55 per day fully catered, \$40 per day evening meal only, \$25 per day uncatered.

ENVIRONMENTAL COURSES AT BARREN GROUNDS

10-12 September	SPRING COMES TO BARREN GROUNDS	Jenni Martin & Patrick Tap
24-26 September	RAPTORS AND REHABILITATION	Fred Spiteri & David Brown
1-4 October	ORCHIDS, FERNS AND WILDFLOWERS	Leo Cady & Denise Black
15-17 October	ART IN NATURE	Nicholas Day
29-31 October	WEB OF LIFE	Patrick Tap
12-14 November	BUSH FOODS	Pat Jordan
26-28 November	BIRDS OF THE BUSH	Richard Jordan

Weekends \$140 per person; long weekends \$180 per person. All meals included. Contact the wardens, Jenni Martin and Patrick Tap on (042) 360195 or write to P.O. Box 3, Jamberoo, NSW, 2533.

NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

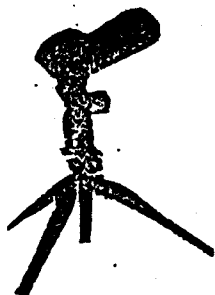
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Each year Bird Week typically closes with the RAOU's Twitchathon, 24 hours in which teams of birdwatchers set out in pursuit of birds to raise money for vital bird conservation issues in Australia. It should be stressed that the Twitchathon is not designed just for that strange breed of birdwatcher the "twitcher" but for all members of the RAOU, and other birdwatchers, interested in the conservation of Australian birds to actively participate in raising money for a worthwhile purpose. This year 75% of the money raised in NSW will be used to assist the existing Regent Honeyeater studies and habitat rehabilitation near Bundarra in northern NSW and the Capertee Valley, just outside the Upper Hunter Valley. The remaining 25% will assist the RAOU in conservation of the remaining native grasslands in Australia.

In past years the finishing point of this event in NSW has been the Australian Museum in Sydney. In an effort to allow greater participation in RAOU activities by country members, and thus increasing the relevance of the RAOU to members both outside Victoria and the capital cities, the newly formed Southern NSW and ACT Group of the RAOU (SNAG) has decided to allow teams based in Newcastle and Canberra finish in those cities. Teams in other country centres can nominate finishing points in those towns.

This year's Twitchathon will take place over the weekend of 30 - 31 October. Teams may start anywhere they like at 5PM on the Saturday but must all finish at the same location at 5PM on Sunday. In Newcastle this will probably be Shortland Wetlands Centre with a barbecue planned for after the finish. Money is raised by teams gaining sponsorship. This can take a number of forms and could merely be for participation or be based on the number of birds tallied in the allowed 24 hours. Teams typically consist of three to four members and some basic rules apply. Obviously the object is to record as many bird species as possible but for a species to be counted at least two members must see it, and agree on its identification, or it must be heard, and identified, by three members.

For those who may want to take part in the Twitchathon but don't necessarily want to be involved in the 24 hour "dash for birds" two other categories are available. The second is the "Champagne Twitchathon". Once again several rules are likely to be imposed. While details at this stage are not available they could stipulate that teams must not start before 9AM, must break for set morning and afternoon tea breaks as well as for lunch. The third category is the "Novelty Twitchathon". Once again details have yet to be finalised but it is likely that teams may be able to nominate the type of activity that their team will attempt. This may be the greatest number of birds reported by a team in a bus, on bicycles, walking backwards or even blindfolded. Prizes for this category are being offered by "Emu Tours" and will probably take the form of large fluffy toy Emus.

Complete details of the Twitchathon will be available later but I would like to encourage people to look at forming teams over the next couple of months and advising me of their interest so that Twitchathon kits with details of sponsorship can be distributed. I can be contacted at Shortland Wetlands Centre or at the club meetings.

David Geering

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

- 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

Field Outing to Wollombi - 25th July 1993

Ann Lindsey couldn't believe her eyes as she drove in to Millfield this Sunday morning. The field outing to Wollombi had been pencilled in for some time now, exactly to where was still a bit of a mystery and details of the day were hard to find. Still, the thought of missing something special must have got the better of most and a terrific group of twenty two bird watchers were there to greet her. People had already got themselves into bird watching mode before Ann's arrival and the little country township had quite a bit to offer. A pair of Blue-faced Honeyeaters browsing among the leaves of a school playground tree in company with Noisy Miners saw us all diving for our binoculars.

Millfield is in a rural setting surrounded by hilly timbered country which makes up the Wollombi National Forest. Separating the town from the mills is a creek and wetland complex which proved to be fairly productive. All sorts of wetland birds could be observed from the road bridge which had been very thoughtfully built with little bird watching platforms placed at intervals along it. A highlight for myself was the close encounter with a couple of delightful Striated Pardalotes. One bird managed to confuse the issue by tricking us into thinking that it lacked the white bar and red spot on it's folded wing. Later, after an adjustment by this bird, it became apparent and we had not discovered a new race or anything exciting like that. However, the beauty of this little bird's markings and it's interesting call were a delight.

With some reluctance we eventually moved off down the road to Sweetman's Creek where we drove onto the property of Jean Easthope. This place is perched on the side of a steep ridge and great views are to be seen from the verandah of her house. Jean has lived here for fourteen years and loves the bush and what it has to offer. Directly behind Jean's place is the National Forest and it was in here that our field outing would be focussed.

A fire trail followed an elevated gully then climbed steeply (for ever it seemed) to the top of the ridge. By far the most productive area was down in the gully where a variety of honeyeaters and flycatchers were found. A male Rose Robin was spectacular as well as a Crested Shrike- tit and some invisible birds like Eastern Whipbird and Superb Lyrebird were heard. Those people that did make it to the top of the ridge came back with a dead Boobook Owl found by Jim Perry while those that elected not to climb were rewarded with sightings of *Origma solitaria* and some nest building activity of Spotted Pardalote.

Lunchtime started out fairly relaxed in the garden at Jean's house but was interrupted by rain which eventually persisted for the rest of the day. This was unfortunate as Jean has compiled an impressive list of birds that have visited her garden. The area in general promises many hours of enjoyable bird watching and should be revisited in the future.

Tom Clarke.

*N.B. Please read Southern Boobook for Boobook Owl.
Approximately 65 species were recorded for the day.*

THE
ILLUSTRATED
NATURAL HISTORY.

BY THE REV.

J. G. WOOD, M.A. F.L.S.

AUTHOR OF "ANECDOTES OF ANIMAL LIFE," "COMMON OBJECTS OF THE SEA-SHORE AND COUNTRY,"
"MY FEATHERED FRIENDS," ETC., ETC.

Of the genus Halcyon, the Australian Kingfisher affords a good example. This bird is a resident in New South Wales from August to December or January, and then passes to a warmer climate. Like the preceding birds, it cares little for the presence of water, making its subsistence chiefly on large insects, such as locusts, caterpillars, grasshoppers and cicadae, which it seizes in its bill, and beats violently against the ground before eating them. It is also very fond of small crabs and other crustaceans. Mr. Gould mentions that the stomachs of Australian Kingfishers that have been shot were found crammed with these creatures. To obtain them, it is in the habit of frequenting the sea-shore, and pouncing upon the crabs, shrimps, prawns and various other creatures as they are thrown on the strand by the retiring tide, or forced to take refuge in shallow rock-pools, whence they can easily be extracted by the long bill of this voracious bird.

On the banks of the Hunter River this Kingfisher resorts to a very curious method of obtaining food. There is a kind of ant which builds a mud nest upon the dead branches and stems of the gum-trees, and by the unpracticed eye would be taken for fungi or natural excrescences. The Kingfisher however knows better and speedily demolishes the walls with his powerful beak, for the purpose of feeding upon the ants and their larvae.

Like the preceding bird, the Australian Kingfisher is a most noisy creature, and remarkably fond of exercising its loud startling cry, which is said to resemble the shriek of a human being in distress, sharp, short, urgent and frequently repeated. There is hardly any real nest of this species, which chooses a convenient hollow branch or "spout" as its domicile, and there lays its eggs. They are generally from three to five in number and are pure white.

It is rather a fine bird, being nearly the same size as the laughing jackass. The top of its head and the back of the scapularies are tinged with a dull green, and the throat, neck and abdomen are buff, abundantly flecked with brown spots. The wings and the tail are of a rather peculiar greenish blue, in which the latter hue prevails, and the ear-coverts and a line round the back of the head are blackish-green.

Another closely allied species is the Australian Roller Eurystomus Pacificus. This bird is popularly known to the Australian colonists by the title of Dollarbird, on account of a circular white spot upon the inside of each wing, which is very conspicuous when the bird is flying overhead. The flight of the Australian Roller is heavy and laboured, and the bird does not appear to chase insects with the activity and perseverance of the preceding species. Generally it is fond of sitting on some convenient bank overhanging the water, and from that post of vantage pouncing on a passing insect, much after the fashion of the harriers. While thus engaged, it frequently utters a peculiar chattering cry. Its most active seasons are sunrise and sunset; at other parts of the day it is but sluggish in its movements.

It is, however, a very bold and fearless bird, and will attack man, beast or bird that approaches within a certain distance of the spot where its cradle lies. True nest there is none, as the bird contents itself with a hole in a decaying tree-trunk, and depositing its eggs upon the soft wood. The eggs are from three to four in number.

This article was submitted by Margaret and Keith Woods.

COMING EVENTS.

<u>Sunday 22 August.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Buchanan area. Buchanan Galleries off John Renshaw Drive at 8 am. Irene Richardson - 375090
<u>September.</u>	<u>Atlas outing:</u> <u>Sharps Creek.</u> <u>Contact:</u>	The most likely dates for this event is the weekend of 4/5 Sept but may be changed to suit participants. Peter McLauchlan - 333224.
<u>Wednesday 8 September.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main Feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30 p. Jan Hutton - Birds of Lord Howe Island. See page 4.
<u>Sunday 19 September.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Hawks Nest/Mungo Brush. McDonalds, Hexham at 6.30 am. CR Hawks Nest side of Tea Gardens/ Hawks Nest Bridge at 8 am. Alan Stuart - 528569.
<u>2 - 4 October.</u>	<u>Camp:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Widder Valley - private property. Jeanette Stephenson - 575255.
<u>October.</u>	<u>Atlas outing:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Scone - Gloucester road. The most likely dates for this event are weekend 9/10. Jeanette Stephenson - 575255.
<u>Wednesday 13 October.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main Feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30 p. Peter West - RACU. Regent Honeyeater Project.

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

Contributions from members of the HBOC to the newsletter are welcome and
the deadline for the October/November newsletter is the 29th September.

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Editor.