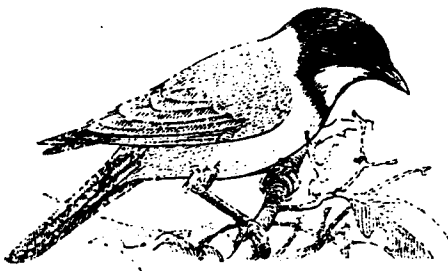


# NEWSLETTER



## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

P.O. Box 24, New Lambton, N.S.W. 2305  
Telephone: (049) 52 8569

President:  
Secretary:  
Newsletter Editor:

Ann Lindsey  
Peter Phillips  
Tom Clarke

*The aims of the club are:*

*To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat.*

*To encourage bird observing as a leisure time activity.*

### ● Annual General Meeting

#### Club votes for first female President.

This year's AGM was held on Wednesday 9th February and is significant in that our first female President was elected. The position previously held by Peter McLauchlan for five years has been taken up by Ann Lindsey.

Peter's time at the helm has seen the club grow in membership as well as venture into new areas such as The Garden Bird Survey and the setting up of our own Records Appraisal Committee. Club nights also were a feature with Peter chairing the meetings in his natural friendly manner. Peter's energy and leadership in conservation areas will of course continue as he now occupies the position of vice-president.

We all thank Peter for his great efforts and time spent devoted to the club as it's president. We also warmly welcome Ann Lindsey, encouraged that the good work will continue and look forward to club nights in her hands.

A well organised election conducted by Sue Hamonet and then Peter Phillips ensured the various positions of office were filled. Most of the volunteers seemed happy enough with the results.

This year's team of office bearers will ensure the club's various functions are well met and add to everyone's enjoyment in their bird watching pursuits.

With the Annual Report read and tabled and the other formalities of the AGM completed there was time for *observations* and a guest speaker.

The first item was fairly lively with many good sightings being recorded over the holiday break. Paddy Lightfoot proudly handed around a snap shot of a Powerful Owl seen in his own backyard and this prompted quite a few other members to share their own owl observations.

On short notice David Geering was our guest speaker and he entertained us with a selection of slides taken during his recent trip to South Africa. Spectacular views of Table Mountain beckons the would be traveller but David's enthusiastic descriptions of both countryside and birdlife makes this place a birdwatching must.

A great variety of habitats awaits; remnant forest, stoney canyons, mountains, bush, wetlands, farmlands and seabird islands were all visited by David and others who were attending the SAOS Symposium on Migration, Dispersal & Nomadism. The presentation left us with images of glorious sunbirds, majestic flamingo, waders and seabirds in abundance.

Some interesting passerines such as the *mouse bird* and the *long-tailed widow* head up a great list of little grey and brown things determined to give every birdwatcher nightmares in identification were also shown to give the overall view.

## ● 1994 Election Results

President  
Vice President  
Hon. Secretary  
Hon. Treasurer  
Committee

Ann Lindsey  
Peter McLauchlan  
Peter Phillips  
Alan Stuart  
Wilma Barden  
Tom Clarke  
Graeme O Connor  
David Geering

Activities Officer  
Ass. Activities Officer  
Librarian  
Ass. Librarian  
Slide Librarian  
Audio/Video Librarian  
Public Officer  
Public Relations  
Publicity Officer  
Newsletter Editor  
Ass. Newsletter Editor  
Newsletter Printer  
Newsletter Distribution  
Conservation Officer  
Atlas Recorder  
Records Officer  
Garden Bird Survey Coord  
Annual Bird Report Editor  
Suppers  
  
Assist. at clubnights  
  
Appointment of Auditor

Graeme O Connor  
Stan Etheridge  
Ed Hamonet  
Max Blanch  
John Cockerill  
Peter McLauchlan  
Peter Phillips  
Alan Stuart  
Judith Smith  
Tom Clarke  
David Geering  
Alan Stuart  
Jeanette Stephenson  
John Moyse  
Matthew Stephenson  
Sue Hamonet  
Peter McLauchlan  
Alan Stuart  
Margaret Woods  
Philippa Hodgins  
Judith Smith  
Adrian Ryan  
Randall Watson

## ● New Club

### Hastings ACE Birdwatchers Group

A new club has been formed on the mid-north coast, in association with Hastings Adult and Community Education - hence the name.

The group is centred on Port Macquarie and holds outings on the first Friday and third Sunday of each month, with occasional weekend camps.

Further details may be obtained from Bert Pope, 10 Hamlyn Drive, Port Macquarie 2444 phone (065) 83 6040.

## ● Birdwatch Holiday

### Tag-along Tour September 1994

Members of the N.S.W. Atlassers are planning a Tag-along style trip to areas around Wentworth in the south-west corner of N.S.W. in September 1994. Exact dates are negotiable at this stage, subject to the thoughts of interested parties. Much of this area is poorly surveyed, largely because of poor accessibility and lack of knowledge of the forests and nature reserves in the area.

Habitat will cover billabongs, ephemeral lakes, grassland, sand dune country, mallee scrubland and riverine woodland. These habitats provide a haven for a large variety of birds, and some of the more unusual include Malleefowl, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Regent Parrot, Southern Scrub-robin, Gilbert's Whistler, Chestnut Quail-thrush, White-winged Fairy-wren, Striated Grasswren, Shy Hylacola, Redthroat, Grey-fronted Honeyeater and Crimson Chat.

The trip will involve mainly bush-style camping, and due to the relative isolation of some areas, participants will of course have to carry all essentials with them, including food and water. The trip will be flexible, with no set itinerary, and movement will occur as people wish. As an atlas trip, it will involve moving from place to place, looking for birds in specific areas, but all you need to know to enjoy the expedition is how to identify birds.

Anyone interested in going on such a journey, should contact Jeanette Stephenson (ph. 57 5255) in order to be kept informed of developments as they occur.

### Vale Brian Wibberley

Members were saddened to learn of the loss of our friend Brian Wibberley, who passed away after a short illness on 4th February, 1994.

A regular and loyal member since first joining us in April 1991, he and Char at once became friends to all. Brian took great pleasure in the many experiences shared at club nights and on field outings. We will remember Brian with great respect and much affection.

We extend to Char and to Anne, Sue, Andrew and their families our deep condolences. We know that they will be able to look back on a wealth of happy memories of a friend we all loved and admired.

## Young eyes discover the magic of birdlife.

14 Lang Crescent  
Tarro, 2322  
27-1-94

Hi'

On Wednesday 26-1-94 I saw the most beautiful sight. For the first time in my life I saw a Superb blue Wren & female. I was staying at my friend Amy's house up in Lockenwar-Windella Downs looking out of the window when I saw them. The male's behaviour was quite unusual. He flew down onto a branch of the tree, wagged his tail up and down a few times, spread his wings out and started hopping from branch to branch. It wasn't until I had spent a great deal of time just sitting, watching this magnificent bird that I saw the female fly down onto a branch at the back of the tree, quite close to the window I was sitting at. At the first glance, I thought it was a Zebra finch and didn't pay much attention to it, but when I looked back the male wasn't hopping around anymore. He had stopped and moved closer to the female and before I knew it they were huddled close on a branch together. I'm afraid that's all the information I can give you because I was called for lunch at that point and when I went back to the window they were gone. I hope you enjoy reading this letter.

Love Rhiannon

The author of that wonderful letter is Rhiannon Pond who is one of our Junior Members. Yes Rhiannon, we certainly did enjoy reading it; *Blue Wrens* are an inspiration to me as well.

T.C.

## Rare parrots to keep their home

The endangered ground parrot was ensured a safer habitat last December when 275ha of south-east Queensland was devoted to national park - rather than a theme park called Spaceworld.

Premier Wayne Goss said Emu Swamp had been added to the Noosa National Park.

A developer had planned to drain and fill Emu Swamp and create housing, a hotel, resort, and a high-tech industrial park.

D.T.M. 15/12/93

## Avian throne left vacant

King Rob of Little Barrier Island (north of Auckland) is dead.

The body of the island's dominant male Kakapo was found on 25th February, just below the summit he had made his own through right of conquest.

Staff from the New Zealand Dept. of Conservation say that King Rob's death is a blow to the \$2m five-year recovery program.

There are only about fifty Kakapo left and any loss is a tragedy.

Rob was found on Stewart Island in 1982 and transferred to Little Barrier Island where he quickly established his dominance. He acquired the island's summit by killing the previous resident - a Kakapo called *Pegasus*. Since then he has been very much the king of the roost, firmly established as one very tough parrot.

Department staff could find no obvious cause of death but fighting may be a factor. *N.Z. Herald 26/2/94*

## ● March club night

### Birds of mangroves and other wetlands.

This club night was held on 9th March and opened with Peter McLauchlan presenting *Bird Call*. Most birdwatchers love the loud and musical calls of the butcherbirds and Peter is no exception.

With four species to pick from we were delighted to hear the rich tones of the Black Butcherbird. This bird lives in mangroves and associated forest in coastal Cape York and Northern Territory and it's skulking nature means that it is more often heard than seen.

New club president, Ann Lindsey, followed with *Bird of the Evening*. Ann's fondness of crakes and rails is well known in the club so it was appropriate that she present to us the Spotless Crake.

These birds are regarded as secretive types but occasionally may be found in fairly exposed situations. Certainly, their dark plumage must help to conceal these birds in amongst the reeds and mud of a swamp.

Little is known of the Spotless Crake's movements or much of it's natural history. For the patient birdwatcher it is usually a rare find but lucky Novocastrians can find it quite regularly at the Shortland Wetlands Centre.

Ann's presentation was accompanied by some excellent slides taken by herself at Shortland.

The main feature for the evening maintained the wetlands theme. Most of our members would have heard of the Kooragang (Ash Island) Wetland Rehabilitation Project but perhaps were not aware of the extent of the work or it's far reaching consequences.

An introduction to the project and it's aims was outlined by the project coordinator Peggy Svoboda.

The Hunter estuary has many natural features of great importance. In fact it has been described as "nature's nursery". It is extremely valuable to the fishing industry as a breeding ground, not only for fish but also for fish food.

And of course it has valuable mangrove and salt marsh areas utilised by many birds. The estuary is a large feeding area for migratory waders and has a RAMSAR listing as a wetland of international significance.

Much of the area has suffered from various activities such as clearing for farming and the reclamation of land for industry.

The main goals of the project are varied but all have an environmental theme. The restoration of lost fisheries habitat is a major goal. NSW Fisheries estimates that 1800 hectares of habitat has been lost to draining and filling.

Exciting news for bird watchers is the proposed creation of a nature reserve network. In effect, the existing Kooragang Island Nature Reserve would be linked once again to the Hexham Swamp system.

The opportunity to provide an environmental education facility, walking & canoe trails and a cycleway would open this area to many forms of passive recreation for the general public.

At this point in time much of the preliminary work involved in baseline studies is underway. One of the primary tasks is to get a handle on the hydrology and soil aspects of Ash Island. This work will enable sound management of drainage and tidal flushing in designated areas.

Other activities already underway include a massive clean up of the area and the securing of a disused radar station. This facility will serve as an information centre in the future.

Rehabilitation work is planned to start in 1995 and it will be most interesting to birdwatchers to record any changes in species and/or abundance as time goes on.

Further information on the rehabilitation of Ash Island may be obtained at the Shortland Wetlands Centre. A static display is on show at the visitor's centre and Peggy Svoboda does much of her desk work there as well.

## ● New members

The HBOC extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Tom & Eileen Reynolds of Salamander Bay

Bernice Dale of Taree

## ● Observations

### Reports from February meeting

Dec. 4	White-throated Nightjar	2	Mt. Sugarloaf	N.Granter
Dec.26	Baillon's Crake	1	S.W.C.	D.Biddle
Dec.26	Latham's Snipe	1	S.W.C.	D.Biddle
Jan. 1	Little Penguin	1	Port Stephens	D.Biddle
Jan. 1	King Quail	1+	Stockton	D.Geering
Jan. 1	Grey Goshawk	1	Newcastle Uni.	D.Geering
Jan. 2	Barking Owl	2	Glenrock S.R.A.	T.Clarke
Jan. 7	Superb Parrot	1	Mayfield	T.Clarke
Jan. 8/9	Fork-tailed Swift	12	Woodberry	J.Smith
Jan. 16	Southern Boobook	4	Tingira Heights	Sinclair
Jan.	Tawny Frogmouth	7	BHP Laboratories	A.Stuart
Jan. 15	Peregrine Falcon	1	New Lambton H'ts	P.Lightfoot
Jan. 18	Powerful Owl	2	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Jan. 20	Grey Goshawk	1	New Lambton H'ts	P.Lightfoot
Jan. 29	Superb Lyrebird	3	Mt. Vincent	N.Granter
Jan. 30	Black-necked Stork	1	Raymond Terrace	P.McLauchlan
Jan. 31	Royal Spoonbill	6	Morisset	T.Ross
Feb.	Fuscous Honeyeater	1	Beresfield	D.Biddle
Feb. 2	Australian Hobby	2	Beresfield	D.Biddle
Feb. 4	Pacific Baza	3	Newcastle Uni.	P.McLauchlan
Feb. 7	Cicadabird	1	Mungo Brush	K.Laverick
Feb. 9	Little Penguin	1	Nobby's Beach	D.Biddle

### Reports from March meeting.

Jan. 1	Peregrine Falcon	2	Rankin Park	J.Stephenson
Jan. 26	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	Jesmond Park	J.Stephenson
Feb.19	Welcome Swallow	1000	Kooragang Island	A.Stuart
Mar. 3	Common Starling	1000	Hexham Bridge	P.McLauchlan
Mar. 5	Rufous Night Heron	1	Mandalong	D.Halliday
Mar. 6	Regent Bowerbird	1	New Lambton H'ts	P.Lightfoot
Mar. 7	Southern Boobook	1	Ironbark Creek	P.McLauchlan
Mar. 7	Little Corella	18	Carey Bay	A.Enks
Mar. 7	Little Corella	31	Salamander Bay	T.Reynolds
Mar. 9	Spotted Pardalote	1	S.W.C.	W.Barden

The White-throated Nightjar was accidentally disturbed on a nest where it was incubating an egg.

The Southern Boobooks at Tingira Heights were an adult pair with two downy chicks. An interesting breeding record for the Hunter.

The Spotted Pardalote reported from Shortland Wetlands Centre is a new bird expanding the list for the centre.

The Royal Spoonbills at Morisset represent another unusual breeding record for the Hunter. Three nests produced at least four surviving chicks.

The following Category 3 birds have not yet been appraised by the committee:-

- Barking Owls at Glenrock.
- Superb Parrot at Mayfield.
- Little Penguins at Halifax Point seen daily over a

period of one week.

- Little Penguin at Nobby's which was washed up distressed and injured.

- King Quail seen at Stockton sandspit.

- Fork-tailed Swifts seen at Woodberry.

Sue Hamonet

## Garganey at Shortland

Well we all saw it, but nobody apparently has reported it.

First seen by NSWFOC members on 4th December 1994, this very obliging stray posed for about a week for everyone to see on the swampy patch between the railway line and the Shortland markets.

A male in breeding plumage and easily recognised by the wide white supercilium became the first ever recorded in New South Wales.

## ● Club Outing

### Yengo/Wollombi Field Outing 20th March 1994

While waiting at Laguna for members to arrive we were immediately attracted by quite a number of birds, herons and currawongs being among them. Our first stop was well before Yengo National Park where we were immediately assailed by the raucous screech of the Grey Thatched Squawker *Caninus feminitis*. Its repetitious *yeronprivateproperty* and *nobirdsourcatschasedthemaway* was unmistakable. This bird recorded we proceeded towards Yengo National Park. The day looked like being one of quality rather than quantity sightings - the first, and only bird most of us saw for quite a while was a lone male Gang-gang Cockatoo. However, while quality sightings continued quantity picked up and we saw lots of old favourites, Red-browed Firetails, some White-eared Honeyeaters and a Speckled Warbler. We were entertained at morning tea by a Rufous Whistler and a King Parrot. After morning tea we drove into the National Park to Flat Rock, where we saw a number of Emus (carved by Aboriginal people). The carvings were accessible, clear and interesting - well worth the drive.

Then back to civilisation and lunch at *Marai* a property owned by David Brown and Lesley Tyler who are building a mud brick house (a daunting task). On our arrival we were greeted by massed Gang-gang Cockatoos whose human-like antics always give pleasure. Lunch over we inspected David and Lesley's building endeavours and then set out on a pleasant birding stroll (an hour for people with small children, two hours for birders). During this walk we saw, among many interesting birds, Golden Whistlers (male & female), a Rufous Whistler and some Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. Some of our stragglers were besieged by so many White-eared Honeyeaters that their return to the cars was considerably delayed. We finally assembled about 4pm for our *birdcall*, a cuppa and left for home. A full and pleasant day was thoroughly enjoyed by the nine members who attended.

David Kibble.

## ● Annual Bird Report

Last year, the Club decided to start producing an annual report on the status of bird species in the Hunter Region. A letter of explanation and some record sheets were mailed out to all members, and many of you have since been sending in your observations. The purpose of this note is to:

- # remind you of the reasons for producing annual bird reports (ABRs)
- # provide an update on progress in producing the 1993 report
- # encourage you to submit your 1994 observations

### Why produce an ABR?

It has two main purposes - one of conservation, in that it gives an early warning that the viability of some particular species in the Region is under threat, and one of history, in that it becomes a record for future ornithologists or ecologists generally to compare against (much as we now compare things against John Gould's records of the Region, for example). The information in our Regional ABR also will be used by those compiling an ABR for NSW.

### Progress on 1993 ABR?

Data for the report have been gathered from several sources - e.g. club outings, record sheets supplied by individual members, observations reported at club nights, miscellaneous publications by other organisations. Most of the records that have been received have been processed and a draft version of the ABR will soon be available for the Records Appraisal Committee to consider. The final version is planned to be issued in about August - all HBOC members will receive a copy.

### Your 1994 observations.

Every observation record is important, not just those of rare species. What is common now may become uncommon in the future, unless we can quickly become aware that the numbers are changing. This includes keeping an eye on the breeding status of local species. To emphasise the latter, the record sheet has recently been redesigned to make it easier to note down breeding records. *A copy of the new sheet is enclosed with this issue of the newsletter.* Please use it on any of your personal outings - we will provide replacement sheets when you send it in.

Alan Stuart.



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# Coming Events

Please check with the contact person for each outing in case of changed details or suitability of site for the camp or field day.

Weekend 23rd-25th April	Camp & Field Day:	Bootawah near Taree
	Contact:	Graeme O Connor 53 1304
	The camp at Howes Valley has been cancelled due to bushfire damage	
Wednesday 11th May	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main feature:	David Blagden - professional birdlife photographer.
Sunday 22nd May	Field Day:	Ash Island
	Meet:	MacDonald's at Hexham 8:00am
	Contact:	Alan Stuart 52 8569
Wednesday 8th June	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main feature:	Allan Morris - Birds of the Northumberland District.
Queen's Birthday Weekend 11th, 12th & 13th June	Camp:	Cameron's - Mt Boss
	Contact:	Graeme O Connor 58 1304
Sunday 19th June	Field Day:	Colliery Dam Richmond Vale
	Meet:	Sportsground grandstand Mulbring 8:00am
	Contact:	Ann Lindsey 73 3519

## 1993 Club Records Report

Bird lists from all field day outings and camps for the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. for 1993 are now available.

Copies can be purchased from Alan Stuart for \$3 each.

### NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

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