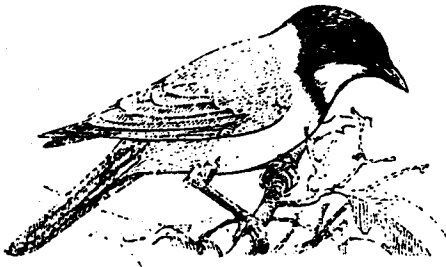


NEWSLETTER



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.

● Easter camp

Easter Dunny makes it to Munghorn Gap.

This year's Easter camp was held at Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve (35km NE of Mudgee). The last time the club was at Munghorn was in June 1991, when heavy rain caused most members to abandon the camp. Happily, this time, the conditions were near-ideal.

The camp was a joint activity with Canberra Ornithologists Group, and 8 of their members made the long drive to join the 15 HBOC participants. On previous visits, we have camped at a site on the east side of the reserve, rather than at the smaller and less shaded formal camping area. This was the case again this time, but only after protracted negotiations with NSW NPWS and after agreeing to use a chemical toilet (which we hired for the occasion from Mudgee).

Although the countryside appeared quite dry, the birding was good. Highlights included Emu, Regent Honeyeater (3 birds present), Black-chinned Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and White-fronted Chat (1 bird recorded). The Munghorn regulars Hooded Robin, Diamond Firetail and Southern Whiteface were again recorded, but, there was no sign of Turquoise Parrot.

Some honeyeaters were present in high numbers - in particular, the Noisy Friarbird (100+).

The Little Lorikeet was present in numbers of 20+. At night, we were entertained by calls from Owllet-Nightjar and Southern Boobook (a pair appeared to be present; the trilling calls of immatures was also heard).

Happily, the Easter Bilby (apparently the Easter Bunny is defunct!) managed to find its way to the campsite, with all campers benefiting from the visit.

The camp was very fruitful, with a total of 101 species recorded. There can be no doubting the significance of Munghorn Gap to Australian birdlife, representing as it does a point of overlap of eastern and western species. It is important that HBOC, and also other NSW bird clubs, can continue to record the bird of Munghorn (and supply the resulting information for data bases being developed by NSW NPWS and NSW Bird Atlasers).

As the formal camping area is unsuitable for medium sized groups, such as normally attend club camps, it is vital that our committee uses every endeavour to persuade NPWS to allow future access to the informal camping site by groups with conservation interests. As things stand just now, the future for such access is not promising.

Alan Stuart

● New members

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

Tamara & Yvonne Burston of Bellbird Heights.

Pat Pountney of Adamstown Heights.

Michael Murray of Adamstown.

Ty Hutchinson of Adamstown.

Fire management policies in our National Parks.

This club night was held on 13th April, 1994 and the main feature of the evening was a presentation by John Martindale of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. John's talk dealt with two issues currently affecting the service and which have both attracted a fair bit of adverse publicity of late.

On the subject of bushfires, and during a time of crisis and public confusion, the NPWS has been attacked by various groups over its fire management policies. Without providing hard evidence on which to base their arguments, the motives of these groups must be questioned and their actions can only be reckoned as political point scoring exercises.

Hazard reduction burning carried out on NPWS land has more than doubled in recent years. In the four years from 1989 to 1993, over 81,000 hectares of land was hazard reduced.

Endangered species legislation has no effect on hazard reduction burning because the Bushfire Act explicitly overrides all environmental legislation. These burns are carried out in national parks and nature reserves both for property protection purposes and for nature conservation reasons.

One of the worst things that can happen to a National Park is for all the bush to burn at once. Fire-adapted plants grow back, but because many parks have become small isolated bush islands, animals that may have survived a large fire cannot easily migrate to unburnt areas. Likewise, it's harder for animals from unaffected areas to move into burnt bush once it has grown back.

Hazard reduction practices that burn different blocks of bush at different times over ten or so years, help to create a mosaic of environments to suit a variety of animals and plants.

The strategy applied by NPWS is to create a burn that copies natural fire as closely as possible, while keeping it under control. In doing so, rangers create conditions most beneficial to the plants and animals in the park as well as reduce the threat to nearby private property.

John also made the point that NPWS only

manages five percent of the state and in light of the recent bushfire disasters attention should not be focused solely on these areas. The issues of fire management must be addressed across all land tenures, including private property.

Another issue confronting NPWS is that of animal relocation. When land is to be developed for housing, industry, or whatever, there is always the question of what to do with the wild animals that are losing their habitat. The easy answer is to trap these animals and relocate them in another "bit of bush".

This unfortunately is fraught with danger as the chance of the relocation being a failure is very high. This of course puts NPWS in a no win situation as it struggles to deal with each circumstance on its merits. John pointed out the high risks involved in setting down small populations in unfamiliar territory.

The meeting also contained our usual features of *Bird Call* and *Bird of the Evening* which were well received.

John Moyse played the call of a bird readily encountered among the mangroves in the Hunter estuary. The sweet, plaintive song of the Mangrove Gerygone (Warbler) which haunts the gloom of these habitats may be heard throughout spring and summer. This bird is regarded as a seasonal visitor here at the southern edge of its range.

The subject of Max Blanch's presentation was that noisy, conspicuous bird of the timbered country, the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. In the east, this bird is mainly found in coastal woodland and mountain forests, becoming uncommon and locally distributed in drier areas.

Both local and seasonal movements have been recorded but some evidence suggests that these birds are nomadic and follow various feeding opportunities about their range.

Pairs, family parties or small groups are the normal social units but occasionally large flocks congregate to feed in *Pinus* plantations or in freshly-burnt country to extract seeds from *Banksia* cones split open by fire.

While seeds, nuts and berries are sought out by these birds, the wood boring larvae of cossid moths are the staple diet. The upper mandible of their large and robust bills are elongated and pointed and perfectly adapted for digging into timber.

● Library Notes

New books for HBOC

Since the beginning of 1994, the following publications have been added to our library stock:-

253/94 Record of Club Outings in 1993

This comprehensive document has been compiled by Alan Stuart - copies are available from Alan for \$3.

254/94 Birds Of Prey and Ground Birds

This is the eighth of the ten volume series describing and illustrating Australian birds using photographs from the National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife. The book covers diurnal birds of prey, megapodes, quail and exotic allies.

255/94 Birds Of Fiji

Kindly donated by Jack Flanagan, this book contains a superb collection of most of the dominant species of the many islands of Fiji. The book will be stored in the steel cupboard with the field guides.

256/94 Learning About Australian Birds

Written by Rosemary Balmford, this is an excellent book for those first venturing into the world of ornithology.

257/94 Where To Find Birds In Australia

This is the second copy we have acquired of this splendid publication. It is a guide for travellers and members venturing beyond the Hunter Region should find it most helpful in locating those previously unsighted species.

Comments on Library Procedures

Following the 1993 stocktake, it was decided that the time was fast approaching when the receipt of further publications would present a storage problem in the library cupboard. To alleviate this situation the following adjustments have been made:

1. Books which have never or rarely been borrowed are now housed in the steel cabinet but are still available for members to borrow.
2. All field guides and similar publications are also located in the steel cabinet.
3. Back numbers of Newsletters from other organisations are being offered to members prior to disposal otherwise.
4. Some other library material which has been acquired over the last twelve years has also been made available to members on a non return basis.
5. Current Newsletters from other ornithological organisations are now displayed on the library table and members may borrow same if they wish to do so..

Ed. Hamonet

● Garden Bird Survey

Report in final stages

Charts from 93/94 now available.

Peter MacLauchlan announced, at the April club meeting, that the much awaited Garden Bird Survey Report for 93/94 is close to completion.

All data has been entered into his computer and most of the number crunching has been carried out. Peter is hopeful that members will be issued with their copies of the report by the time that the current survey charts are due for handing in.

For those interested in having a record of their personal 93/94 surveys, computer generated copies of their charts are available. Best time to collect these is at club night and Peter will be only too happy to provide you with them.

● RAOU

Nest Record Scheme

The RAOU Nest Record Scheme began in 1964. It involves thousands of volunteers collecting information on nest building, clutch size and breeding success. This information helps to increase our knowledge of the breeding biology of Australian birds.

The NRS database now has over 80,000 records stored on it.

The management of the project has been relocated just lately to the Australian Museum in Sydney where it is co-ordinated by an RAOU volunteer, Dr Richard Majors.

All HBOC members are encouraged to be part of this scheme and can contribute by offering any nesting records via our own Records Committee.

We look forward to our July club meeting when Dr Richard Majors will be presenting the main feature for the evening on the topic of nest predation.

● Campout

Bootawah (near Taree) 23rd - 25th April, 1994

Something of a bonus to have a long week-end for Anzac Day this year, and when the proposed camp-site at Howe's Valley was devastated by the January bushfires, we were most grateful to Ted and Anne Wilson for allowing us the use of their lovely property at short notice.

Two previous visits here by the Club struck extremes of weather, however this time we couldn't have ordered better than the mild days and cool, clear nights. Unfortunately recent rainfall experienced in the Hunter didn't penetrate this far north, and we found our hosts almost desperate for a change of conditions. No significant rain had fallen here since December, the creeks on the property were reduced to a few pools, and what should have been wet brush was very dry and brittle underfoot.

This is an almost idyllic campsite, shaded all day long, and so quiet and peaceful that the nine lucky campers and two day-visitors could have been the only people on earth. Ted has done much work to provide cleared tracks through the rainforest and creekside vegetation, and there was a feast of tramping to be done.

Birds, while not abundant as would be normal for the area were nevertheless there for the finding, and seventy nine species recorded seemed fairly satisfactory considering the dry conditions and the time of the year. This brings the overall list for the property to a very creditable one hundred and eighteen species.

No doubt the highlight of the week-end were the four Comb-crested Jacanas found on an adjoining dam, actively feeding amongst the blue water-lilies.

Some very large two-toed birds were observed with much interest from the safety of the track, and while it was fascinating to watch them, we had to refrain from adding an eightieth species to the week-end list, since our hosts have recently ventured into the realms of Ostrich farming and the stock were safely penned up.

Sue Hamonet.

● Club Field Outing

Pleasant surprises for bird observers at Ash Island.

Early on Sunday morning 22nd May, under a clear sky and buffeted by chill winds, about twenty enthusiasts met at Hexham. Led by David Geering, we crossed the busy, noisy Pacific Highway, and the Hunter River to Ash Island.

What a contrast...rural sights, sounds and smells, and many surprises for bird observers. Even at our first stop, outside Norma's farm house, we were treated to clear sightings of dotterels, the red-kneed variety and of plovers, the black-fronted variety. These lovely birds were foraging together in the marsh grass, and we enjoyed the chance to compare the two species.

Further along the track, amongst the mangroves, there were many Grey Fantails, Yellow Thornbills, and Mangrove Gerygones, all singing and foraging among the leaves. On the flats, around the creeks and wetland areas, there were lovely views of White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis, and even some Gull-billed Tern, one in breeding plumage.

We travelled further east, across this surprising island, and at a clearing beside the south arm of the river, we were rewarded by seeing a Striated Heron, together with egrets, Australian Pelicans and a Little Pied Cormorant.

Later on we drove across towards the north arm of the river, and among the creeks and ponds, (and the ugly discarded human rubbish), some observant folk even discovered evidence of crime: an old abandoned safe which had been cut open. In sharp contrast to this ugliness, we saw many beautiful Black Swans, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe and Chestnut Teal. Among the tall marsh grasses, and we were lucky to hear and then see two or three busy Golden-headed Cisticolas.

Another exciting sighting was the Marsh Harrier, and later on, two Brown Falcons.

The whole morning was a delightful experience, as we discovered a rich and peaceful sanctuary so close to the industrial areas of Newcastle. With some careful, expert cleaning up, Ash Island could be an even better natural resource.

Pam Duric

● May Club Night

Birds and other Natural Wonders of the Tropics.

Main feature for the club night held on 11th May 1994 was a presentation by David Blagden. David is a professional photographer with a special interest in birdlife but has an artist's eye for other forms of wildlife and the beauty of nature.

David showed off some tremendous slides taken whilst on a two and a half year sailing trip with his wife on their yacht *Isis III*. The trip took them up the east coast to Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef, then across the Coral Sea to the Solomon Islands and return via Papua New Guinea.

The slides presented were a good sample of subjects likely to be encountered on such a journey and naturally each had a story behind it. There was some fabulous underwater shots of various fish in the crystal clear waters of the reef and a swim with a whale and calf which must have been an exciting experience.

But of course David photographed birds as well. He found that many of the birds that inhabit the islands were easier to get near than their cousins on the mainland. Their apparent tameness resulted in some great shots of Beach Thick-knee and Buff-banded Rail. The reaction of the audience testified to that. Also, the habit of noddies and other sea birds of sailing on the steady breeze just overhead, presented the photographer with some great studies in flight.

While lying in shelter for several days at Willis Island, David took time to photograph Common Noddy and Red-footed Booby on their nests.

Other things that caught David's imagination were the people of the Solomon and New Guinea islands and their lifestyle. Boys in dugout canoes, women weaving and children singing and dancing were all recorded.

Back on the subject of bird photography, David does have some favourites. Believe it or not, he likes the "brown" birds the best rather than the more colourful or gaudy. In an artistic sense, David feels that birds like Jacky Winter, Owlet Nightjar and Dusky Woodswallow create images with lots of character.

And one of his favourite places to go and

photograph birds is his back verandah! David finished up his presentation with a couple of wonderful shots of Scarlet Honeyeaters taken in his own back yard at Brightwaters.

Our regular *Bird Call* segment was delivered by Barbara Kelly. Barbara has warmed to the pleasant rolling trill of the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike as this bird has become a very useful helper in her garden. Just recently, this insectivorous bird has been observed feeding its young on the "stink bugs" that have invaded Barbara's fruit trees.

On a more tropical theme, Don Halliday shared his knowledge and experience of the Comb-crested Jacana in *Bird of the Evening*.

Also known as Lotus Bird, Lillytrotter and Christbird, the Jacana is extremely well adapted to life on the lily ponds. The very long toes of this bird are a feature and effectively distribute its weight so well that they can walk over the floating vegetation of a swamp.

Another feature of the Comb-crested Jacana is that which gives it its name. The comb on the forehead of this bird can be red, orange or yellow and an individual bird can change the intensity of the colour if excited.

Of great interest and amusement is the method by which a parent carries its young from place to place. The chicks are held up under the adult's wing and the sight of a Jacana with "extra" legs dangling down while it walks about must be a special moment for any birdwatcher. Eggs are also moved about the place for various reasons perhaps not quite understood. There appears to be no real attempt to make any permanent nest.

Don referred to his own field notes taken during a time when he was teaching in Papua New Guinea to describe the various comings and goings during the breeding season. Apparently, the female bird can mate with several males, leaving each in turn with eggs to brood and young to care for. When Don first started making his notes he had assumed that the female was looking after the eggs and was having a confusing time of it keeping track.

Jacanas don't swim as such but can submerge for very long periods of time with only their nostrils and beak sticking above the water. This is generally a last resort by young birds if they are threatened by a predator. Adult birds tend to take flight and have to work hard to get airborne and drag those huge feet behind. Don also played a sound recording he had made while overseas of this bird as it takes off in alarm.

Hands Lagoon becomes a Reserve

Hands Lagoon, at Bolwarra, has been a favourite short stop on HBOC field outings over the years. It is probably best known for its nesting Black Swans and visiting Cattle Egrets.

The lagoon is on land which has been provided to the Maitland City by the owner, Gordon Hand, and is now dedicated as a wetland reserve. The Council expects to spend about \$150000 to develop the site for public use.

Works will include a pathway, siltation trap, wildlife island, vehicle access, signs and tree plantings. Further plans for boardwalks, viewing structures and picnic amenities will form Stage 2 of the project.

Asian Waterbirds Project

Wetlands are a valuable but diminishing resource on which much of our wildlife depends. These areas are often degraded or destroyed by poor land-use or development.

However, in creating management plans to save wetlands, and in particular the birds that rely on them, some of the problems which need to be addressed can be a little unusual. Take for example that which faces the Asian Waterbirds Project.

This project is a collaborative effort between the RAOU and the Asian Wetlands Bureau.

Waterbirds are a common source of food among the rural poor in many Asian countries. Overpopulation and increasing poverty are placing greater pressures on waterbird populations, including species that migrate to Australia.

The project aims to promote alternative livelihood projects for waterbird hunters. Community based approaches to projects that use appropriate technologies are emphasised.

Four key sites for migratory waterbirds are involved: central Java, southern Thailand, northern Vietnam and eastern China.

Artificial Wetland planned for Kooragang Island.

Port Waratah Coal Services is to spend almost \$500,000 to create an artificial wetland for birds within Kooragang Coal Terminal.

The site is between the coal stockpile and the main office. To date this area has been simply a depression that fills with water from time to time and has supported some birds during those occasions.

The wetland is looked on as a prototype for the replacement of degraded wetland ponds on low-lying land amid industrial land on Kooragang Island. These areas are now being reclaimed for use as future coal stockpiles at KCT.

The new 7.5 hectare wetland will be permanent, where many of the artificial wetland on Kooragang can dry out in hot weather.

The project timing is deliberate as it coincides with the end of the migratory bird season and should be completed before commencement of the next season when it is hoped that many migratory as well as local birds will inhabit the site.

The project will be monitored by Hunter Wetlands Trust which has advised on its location, design and likely bird species who may use it. The design includes two island refuges and varying depths of water to accommodate a variety of waterbirds.

It is also envisaged that public access to these wetlands will be made available so that all may enjoy the birds.

● Observations

Reports from April /May meetings

Mar. 3	Southern Emu-wren	3	Myall Lakes N.P.	B.Kibble
Mar.12	White-winged Chough	7	Bonnell 's Bay	D.Halliday
Mar.16	Southern Boobook	1	Woodberry	J.Smith
Mar.30	Scarlet Honeyeater	1	S.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
Apr. 1	Grey Goshawk	1	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Apr. 1	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	Pokolbin	A.Stuart
Apr. 1	Common Bronzewing	4	Jerry 's Plains	A. Stuart
Apr. 2	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Cooranbong	D.Halliday
Apr. 5	Pacific Baza	2	Belford	S.Owens
Apr. 8	Ruddy Turnstone	50+	Newcastle Baths	P.Phillips
Apr. 8	Sooty Oystercatcher	8	Newcastle Baths	P.Phillips
Apr. 8	Regent Bowerbird	6	Garden Suburb	J.Perry
Apr.16	Spangled Drongo	2	New Lambton Heights	P.Lightfoot
Apr.23	Blackbird	1	Polblue Swamp	D.Geering
Apr.23	Red-browed Treecreeper	2	Horse Swamp	D.Geering
Apr.24	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	5	Morrisset	R.Waymark
Apr.25	Brown-headed Honeyeater	50-100	Ellalong	J.Meynell
Apr.25	Golden Whistler	2	Ellalong	J.Meynell
Apr.26	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	Ellalong	J.Meynell
Apr.27	White-bellied Sea-eagle	2	Pt. Woollstoncraft	G.McCulloch
May 2	Brown Cuckoo-dove	1	Blackbutt Reserve	D.Geering
May 2	Black Kite	1	Aberdeen	D.Geering
May 4	Satin Bowerbird	1	Buttaba	B.Kelly
May 7	Tawny Frogmouth	1	New Lambton	A.Stuart
May 7	Little Corella	10	Carey Bay	L. & C. Herbert
May 8	Rose Robin	1	Wattagan Mountains	L. & C. Herbert
May 8	Eastern Whipbird	4	Wattagan Mountains	L. & C. Herbert
May 9	Rose Robin	2	Blackbutt Reserve	D.Geering
May 10	Red-necked Avocet	1200	Stockton Bridge	D.Geering
May 10	White-faced Heron	300	Fullerton Cove	D.Geering
May 11	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	10	Ellalong	J.Meynell

Observations outside the Hunter Region

Mar.26	Pale-headed Rosella	pair	Gum Flat (25km east of Moree)	T.Jurd
Mar.27	Red-winged Parrot	3	Yarrie Lake (25km west of Narrabri)	T.Jurd
Mar.27	Rufous Night Heron	5	Yarrie Lake	T.Jurd
Mar.27	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	pair	1km east of Pilliga	T.Jurd
Mar.28	Plum-headed Finch	5	Castlereagh River (7km east of Mendooran)	T.Jurd

Drama at Marmong Point

Tuesday, 8:00am, the noise of the birds in the back yard became so loud that we could hardly hear the 8 o'clock news. This demanded investigation, so binoculars in hand we sallied forth.

The source of the racket was a large grey gum. It was alive with birds; Noisy Miners, Common Mynahs, Common Starlings, Spangled Drongos, Pied Currawongs, Australian Magpies

and Australian Magpie-larks.

But why? Soon the reason was revealed. An owl, which moved too quickly for us to identify, flew out of the gum and into another on the reserve at the front of the house. Performers aside, it seemed that the rest of the feathered population of Marmong Point had arrived as audience.

The owl was repeatedly harassed by the growing band of locals who quickly succeeded in driving it away.

Bev and David Kibble
20/04/94

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.

Wednesday 13th July	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Predation of Bird Nests by Dr Richard Majors
Sunday 24th July	Field Day: Meet: Contact:	Mandalong/Cooranbong Coles carpark - Toronto 8:00am Ann Lindsey 733519
Wednesday 10th August	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Birds and Plants of Swan Island (Tas.) by Dr Paddy Lightfoot
Sunday 21st August	Field Day: Meet: Contact:	Awabakal Nature Reserve Field Study Centre, Dudley 7:30am Alan Stuart 528569

NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

990 Hunter Street, Newcastle
Ph: 69 4021

SPECIALISING IN SALES AND SERVICE OF:

BINOCULARS
SPOTTING SCOPES
&
TELESCOPES

Binocular Repairs done professionally, quickly and at reasonable rates.

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

COMMITTEE MEETING

is held on the first Wednesday of each month
starting at 6:30pm

Venue - Garden Suburb Public School

All members are welcome to attend and contribute
to the committee's decision making or in the
planning of various club activities.

WANTED

Articles for our Newsletter

Closing date for the next issue is 27th July, 1994
Late material will be considered for the following
issue.

Mail to : Tom Clarke
24 Ackerson St, Mayfield 2304

Phone : 671396 (h)

Fax : 672287

Contributions must be legible, preferably typed.

Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 1993

Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Incorporated,
Wetlands Centre, Shortland, 9 February 1994

President's Report

Introduction

I have much pleasure in presenting to you the Thirteenth Annual Report of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Incorporated.

Through the keen interest and efforts of members, the HBOC continued to develop links with other bird clubs and community groups. An active role in fostering an interest in birds was developed through the presentation of talks to a variety of community organisations.

The two inaugural HBOC teams in the RAOU Twitchathon could hardly contain their amazement when they learnt of their prize winning performances in the standard and champagne sections. I am thrilled to report that the 'Thickhead Hunters' and the 'Belford Babblers' made a significant contribution to the conservation of Australian birds, particularly to funds raised for the NSW Regent Honeyeater conservation program. Congratulations and a big thankyou to all participants and sponsors.

The HBOC continued to be an active participant at meetings of Bird Interest Groups Network (BIGNET) which was formerly referred to as the combined major bird groups in NSW and the ACT. Alan Stuart also represented the HBOC at NSW/ACT annual bird report committee meetings.

Meetings

Eleven regular monthly meetings were held during the year at the Wetlands Centre, Shortland. The first, in February, included the Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers for 1993. Between 26 and 54 members and guests attended each monthly meeting with an average attendance of 41 persons.

'Bird of the Evening' and 'Bird Call' continued as integral parts of the program. My thanks to all contributors who each gave an interesting and informative address in their own unique manner. A discussion segment also continued during 1993. Members and guests were encouraged to report their observations and exchange their knowledge of birds. The discussion of a nominated bird species segment, introduced into the program in 1992, proved to generate limited participation among attendees and was subsequently deleted from the program mid year.

Special thanks go to guest speakers who visited the Club to give authoritative talks on a variety of avian related topics. Other main features were presented by Club members or took the form of an audio-visual presentation.

Ruth Parker and Margaret Woods are to be congratulated for providing a much appreciated supper at the conclusion of each clubnight. Thanks also to those who contributed in any way to the running of meetings over the year, especially Judith Smith and Adrian Ryan.

Newsletter

The bimonthly *Newsletter* continued to be regularly produced in 1993. It contained interesting articles and notes on both local and general bird topics. The highly readable content was due to the skilful editing by Rosemary Waymark and Barbara Kelly.

All members who did not regularly attend meetings were kept informed with Club activities by post. The *Newsletter* was regularly exchanged with ten other bird

groups in New South Wales, ACT and Queensland and circulated to organisations who placed advertisements.

I wish to thank all those who contributed articles and reports to the *Newsletter*, and also, those who were involved in its printing and distribution, especially Alan Stuart and Jeanette Stephenson.

Membership

The Club finished the year with a membership of 154—an increase of 14 from the previous year. The membership was made up of 44 single members, 108 family members and 2 junior members. It is pleasing to report that membership has increased by around 20% since 1991.

Finance

The Club finished the year with a balance of \$698.54—this represented a profit of \$81.49 for the year. Remarkably, this was achieved without an increase in membership subscriptions since 1992.

The incoming committee will be well placed financially for 1994 thanks to Alan Stuart's competent administration. I thank Mr Randall Watson for once again auditing the Club's accounts.

Public Relations

The Club continued to maintain a telephone enquiries service listed in the Yellow Pages of the Newcastle District Telephone Directory. A brochure advertising the aims and activities of the Club was widely distributed during 1993. Also, Notices of Coming Events were circulated in community newspapers and broadcast on radio and television in the Lower Hunter.

I would like to compliment all those who promoted the activities of the HBOC, especially Alan Stuart and Judith Smith.

Field Activities

Once again Graeme O'Connor organised an interesting and challenging schedule of camps and outings. Although five atlas outings were planned, only one was conducted in February. The other four scheduled outings were cancelled due to the lack interested participants. However, additional bird surveys were conducted at Fame Cove, on the Tilligerry Peninsular and at Bayswater power station. I would like to thank Graeme for his organisation of the program and to all those who assisted in leading outings during the year.

Eleven field outings were held with an average attendance of 16. The average number of species recorded was 66 with the most productive outing being in the Wollombi/Millfield area where 85 species were recorded.

Four camps were organised with an average attendance of 14. The average number of species recorded was 77. The highest attendance was 16 at 'Holbrook' in the ever popular and favourite Widden Valley. Despite rainy conditions this camp site also produced the greatest number of species (85).

Records

During 1993 a total of 225 bird species was recorded at field outings and camps—this compared with 241 recorded in 1992. Included were 26 species recorded as breeding.

A revised *HBOC Record Sheet* was produced together

with a new *Report of an Unusual Observation* sheet. These were distributed to all members to encourage the collection of all their interesting and important observations. A map defining the Hunter Region along with a revised grid system was also prepared. Also in 1993 we saw the appointment of a records officer and a records appraisal committee. All this preparation was in readiness for the planned production of an annual bird report for the Hunter Region.

Records collected at HBOC activities were passed on to both the NSW Field Ornithologists Club and the NSW Bird Atlasers for the purpose of collecting information on the distribution of birds within NSW and the ACT. I am indebted to both Mathew Stephenson and Sue Hamonet who continued to compile and maintain all the field observations.

Wilma Barden, assisted by Sue Hamonet, continued to represent the HBOC on the NSW Ornithologists Records Appraisal Committee for 1993.

Thanks are due to Alan Stuart who prepared a booklet *Records of Outings and Camps, 1992*. The observations by members during outings and camps were compiled and collated according to location on a grid system of the Hunter Region.

Libraries

The number of books, journals and reports in the Club Library increased by 21 from the previous year to a total of 252. Five of these items were purchased with Club funds and the remainder were donated. Many thanks for your generous contributions. Seventy-five books were borrowed at least once during the year.

During the year, eleven items were added to the Audio-Video Library. At the end of 1993 the library contained 45 audio cassettes, 3 video cassettes and 6 compact discs. The recorded calls and songs of some 568 species of Australian birds (74%) were included in the Library's collection. There were 53 loans of 27 audio and video recordings by 18 members throughout the year.

Once again, the Slide Library formed an integral part of the activities of the HBOC. During the year, 185 slides were borrowed for a variety of purposes, including 'Bird of the Evening' presentations. It was particularly pleasing to note that there were 21 slides donated during 1993. The generous contributions were important to the continued Slide Library collection.

I thank my fellow librarians, Ed Hamonet and Mathew Stephenson who again provided an indispensable service to members throughout the year.

Projects

The HBOC Garden Bird Survey continued in 1993 together with the return of completed charts after the first 10 months of the survey. An initial analysis of the collected data found a total 162 species from 34 urban sites in the Lower Hunter, which gave an average of 40 species per garden. A maximum of 75 species was reported from a Garden Suburb garden. The information was collected over 1171 observer weeks and amounted to 1378 records. With this large amount of data it became obvious that the use of a computer to analyse the data and report the results would be fundamental to the continuation of this project. Our sincere thanks go to Stephen Moyses who very kindly volunteered to write and donate the specialised computer software capable of performing this arduous task. Consequently, a Garden Bird Report describing the distribution and abundance of urban birds in the Lower Hunter is in progress, but yet to be published. Meanwhile contributors continued to record their weekly observations for 1993/94.

Following a suggestion from Paddy Lightfoot, a Shortland Wetlands Centre Bird Bath Project was

initiated with a fund raising program. The majority of funds were raised from the sale of Australian native plants kindly supplied by Paddy. The Bird Bath was finally installed in the bird-rich gardens at the Wetlands Centre by a team of volunteers in December. Thankyou to all who contributed to this worthwhile project.

Members also participated in a NSW/ACT Pied Currawong Survey and the national RAOU Australian Bird Count.

Conservation

The HBOC continued to involve itself in numerous environment and conservation issues during the year and presented several written submissions at both a Local and State Government level.

Following are just a few examples that demonstrated the HBOC's commitment to the conservation of Australian birds and their habitat.

- A submission was made to the RTA which commented on the EIS for the F3 Freeway to the New England Highway. Of concern was the freeway crossing the environmentally sensitive Hexham wetlands. Subsequently a Environmental Impact Assessment Report has been released by the RTA.
- A comprehensive submission was made to the Maitland City Council which commented on the Draft Development Control Plan for the proposed Thornton Industrial Estate. Grave concern was expressed at the possible loss of a significant portion of Maitland's remnant natural woodland.
- A contribution was made by the HBOC to The University of Newcastle's Environmental Week in September. A short paper *Birds in the Environment* was presented at a seminar entitled *Conservation in the Hunter - Identifying the Issues*.

Conclusion

The HBOC continued to fulfil its objectives by encouraging members and others to enjoy their leisure time birdwatching activities.

I have already singled out certain individuals for praise. It would be remiss of me if I did not pay special thanks to several others who made outstanding contributions to the HBOC during 1993. Foremost among these is Peter Phillips, who so capably administered the demanding duties of secretary and public officer. Vice-president Sue Hamonet also deserves a special mention for her continued guidance and for being an ever reliable source of ornithological knowledge.

The success of the HBOC over the past year owes much to the efforts of the management committee members: Tom Clarke, Ann Lindsey, Graeme O'Connor and Jeanette Stephenson.

It is with some regret that I present to you my fifth and final President's Report. However, it is time for a change and to provide the opportunity for all members to realise their own aspirations as active birdwatchers. I must say that I have found the last five years to be most enjoyable and personally very gratifying. I trust the incoming president will find the challenge to be at least as exciting and fulfilling.

I extend my sincere thanks to you all for contributing to the achievements of our organisation and look forward to another rewarding year of birdwatching. The management committee has arranged a variety of activities for 1994 that I know you will find both interesting and stimulating.

Peter McLauchlan
President