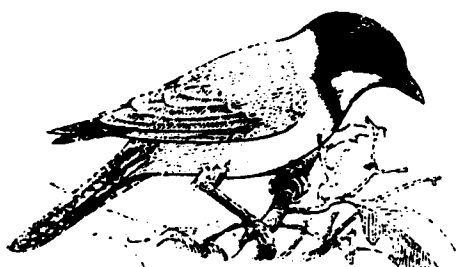


NEWSLETTER



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (049) 585942

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.

● April Club Night

Lewin's Honeyeater Bites Off More Than It Can Chew.

Bird of the Evening was presented by Bruce Turnbull and the subject was a bird that he has got to know fairly well over the years. Bruce lives just west of Blackbutt Reserve and regularly sees the Pacific Baza both in the reserve and in his own back yard!

What a great Garden Bird Survey sheet he must have.

The Pacific Baza is a hawk which preys mainly on insects and small reptiles. Their hunting grounds are mainly within the tree tops of coastal forests where they are usually quiet and unobtrusive, allowing them to be often overlooked, even by vigilant birdwatchers.

Identification is assured by the bold barring on this bird's chest and wing tips. The upper parts are a medium to dark blue-grey with a black crest which contrasts well with its golden yellow eye.

These birds are never really in any great abundance and are even considered rare here in the southern part of its range.

As an added bonus, Bruce produced a slide of a very strange looking honeyeater. It proved to be a clever fabrication but amply illustrated a behaviour witnessed by Bruce at Myall Lakes.

A Lewin's Honeyeater was observed trying to extricate a Leaf Curling Spider from its curled

leaf shelter. Eventually, with the honeyeater's beak completely sheathed within, the bird took off, ripping the leaf and presumably the spider from its web. An unusual sight indeed, a Lewin's honeyeater with a brown "cigar".

Our guest speaker for the evening was Anne Heinrich who spoke of the Ecology of Balikera Canal.

The Balikera Canal is used to pump water from the Williams River at Seaham to Grahamstown Dam, a distance of about 10km. It makes its way through Mosman Swamp, along the southern boundary of Wallaroo State Forest, under the Pacific Highway and into Campvale Swamp which becomes part of Grahamstown Lake.

Anne describes herself as a botanist and an aquatic biologist but freely admits to being a bird watcher as well. Anne plans to centre an Honours Project around the ecology of Balikera Canal with particular reference to the problems of wetland management.

Anne described the various habitats encountered along the canal and the birds she has observed.

The 'grasslands' areas attract many of her favourites in Golden-headed Cisticola, Clamorous Reed-Warbler and Superb Fairy-wren.

The migratory Latham's Snipe is prominent along the swampy areas in association with the more obvious waterbirds of the region.

A sighting of an Australasian Bittern was another exciting discovery for Anne.

● May Club Night

Bird Discoveries....For Science And For Pleasure.

Like most of us, Pat Pountney loves to "discover" new birds and must have been thrilled to bits when she finally found, not one but five!, Southern Emu-wren on a recent Mid-week Outing to Bob's Farm.

So taken was Pat by these beautiful birds of the low dense grasses that she just had to share it with the rest of us as a *Bird of the Evening*.

The incomplete structure of the tail feathers have the same appearance as Emu feathers and it was for this reason that it became known as Emu-wren. To illustrate the skeletal nature of the tail feathers, Pat handed around an Emu's feather for all to admire.

The wings of these birds are short and rounded and are not used much at all. A weak flyer, the Emu-wren spends much of its time on or near the ground in dense grasses usually associated with coastal wetlands and heaths.

Early observers were very fortunate as this bird was abundant around Sydney and were known to frequent the Domain near the Botanic Gardens. Today the situation is very different and although the Emu-wren has a wide distribution it is not considered common and is always hard to find.

Our guest speaker for the evening has also been busy discovering. Micheal Todd is an honours student and his project is to study the biology of the Red-browed Finch.

After twelve months of intense field work at three local sites he is in the throws of deciphering the data and writing up his findings.

Micheal described the methods of trapping and measuring that he used and of some of the difficulties in sexing and aging these birds.

Red-browed Finches inhabit a wide range of habitats. Traditionally a bird of coastal forests and along water courses these birds have become common around settled areas and in parks and gardens. They can be trusting and confiding and Micheal found that Blackbutt Reserve birds were regular visitors of the aviaries, flying through the wire mesh and feeding from the seed trays.

These birds are extremely social birds and tend to keep in flocks. Micheal's birds displayed

fairly sedentary lifestyles although some birds did "disappear" to parts unknown.

A twelve month survey will tell a part of the Red-browed Finch story but must remain qualified until a lot more work over other years with different seasons and circumstances can substantiate some of the apparent discoveries.

Concern over Pacific Golden Plover decline.

The most important wader habitat in NSW is Kooragang Island and waders have been banded at this site since the early 1970s. An analysis of historical and recent data on the Pacific Golden Plover from the Kooragang efforts was presented by Graham Fry of the NSW Wader Study Group at this year's Australian Bird Study Association's Scientific Day in February.

The banding data shows that Pacific Golden Plovers that spend the austral summer in NSW are significantly different in size from other Pacific Golden Plovers that have been studied overseas. Despite extensive studies in Alaska and Siberia, no Australian banded bird has been recovered at either of these locations. Graham deduces that this would indicate that the birds using Kooragang Island and the east coast of Australia breed in some area yet to be identified.

Of very serious concern is the decline in numbers of Pacific Golden Plovers and as the decline is consistent across all the count sites it is unlikely that local developments are affecting this as numbers of other species are stable.

● New members

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

Graeme Baldwin of Glendale
Kevin Doust of Bolwarra
Angela Gleeson of Jewells
Harold Hodgson of Thornton
Bonnie Orr of Bolton Point
Travis Peake of Swan Bay
Dorothy Pritchard of New Lambton
Bob & Joan Sargent of Whitebridge

● Field Outings

Dunns Creek 23rd April 1995

The promise of a fine autumn day and a gentle starting hour brought a crowd of almost thirty to the East Maitland meeting place at 7:30am. After rationalising vehicles in anticipation of limited parking, we set off through Morpeth and Hinton to Dunns Creek, situated in a valley between Paterson and Seaham.

Our destination was the 75 acre property of Rob and Vicki McLaughlin, on the northern side of Dunns Creek Road. The land is steeply sloping and bisected by Dunns Creek, which was not flowing.

The family have owned the property for four years, have built a home and have attempted to control some of the large thickets of lantana. The land had previously been cleared for grazing so there are not many stands of very old trees, but lots of regrowth.

We started well, with good views of a male Regent Bowerbird and the discovery of a Satin Bowerbird's bower.

There were also pleasing views of White-headed Pigeon, Eastern Spinebill, King Parrot, Golden Whistler and a good variety of thornbills and honeyeaters.

It was an outing on which far more species were heard than seen, including the incessant call of a distant Wonga Pigeon, and many cuckoos. A total number of 48 species was recorded for the morning, of which 40 were passerines.

An early lunch was

consumed on a shady grassy bank overlooking the valley, and was accompanied by a discussion with Rob McLaughlin about the birds and other native animals he has observed on the property over the years.

Philippa Hodgins

Kooragang Island 22nd January 1995

Despite being cold and overcast with a few showers hanging around, fifteen avid birdos descended on the sand spit at Stockton Bridge to spy out the wader population. Leg-flagged Bar-tailed Godwits were evident, some members having seen the flags for the first time.

On to the sewerage treatment works for a quick look

before heading up the road to Fullerton Cove and David Geering's place.

On the way we paused just past the turn-off for a look in the scrub to see what we could find. Numerous small scrub birds were spotted. The highlight of this stop was the arrival of a dozen or so Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

Next stop was David's back yard which backs onto Fullerton Cove itself. With the tide on the ebb, waders started to arrive with the larger ones first and gradually tapering off to the smaller Curlew Sandpipers which arrived by the dozen.

Further out into the bay approximately fifty Little Tern were spotted wheeling about.

With 93 species, most called it a day.

Graeme O'Connor

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● Observation reports from the April meeting.

February '95				
	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Ironbark Creek	S.Morris
March '95				
	Grey Butcherbird	2	Woodberry	J.Smith
11	Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	Birubi Point	D.Biddle
11	Little Penguin	1	Nelson Bay	D.Biddle
12	Common Tern	34	Newcastle Harbour	D.Biddle
13-15	Arctic Skua	3	Newcastle Harbour	P.Phillips
23	Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	15	Toronto	R.Waymark
23	Black-shouldered Kite	2	Burke's Creek	A.Stuart
April '95				
2	Leaden Flycatcher	1	Belmont South	J.Cook
5	Southern Boobook	1	Woodberry	J.Smith
6	Royal Spoonbill	53	Tarro Swamp	J.Smith
8	Flame Robin	34	Gloucester Tops	L.Hansen
9	Southern Boobook	1	Beresfield	D.Biddle
9	Zebra Finch	7	Rothbury	A.Stuart
	Darter	1	Booragul	D.&B.Kibble
	Tawny Frogmouth	1	Jesmond	G.Brosie
	White-throated Needletail	6	East Maitland	G.Brosie
11	Spangled Drongo	1	Belmont South	J.Cook

● Observation reports from the May meeting.

April '95				
23	Wonga Pigeon	1	Bellbird	R.Yank
23	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Payne's Crossing	R.Yank
28	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	300	Fort Scratchley	M.Blanch
May '95				
1-7	Little Corella	50+	Buttaba	R.Waymark
1	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	100's	Rankin Park	J.Stephenson
2	Regent Bowerbird	3	New Lambton Heights	P.Lightfoot
2	Satin Bowerbird	3	New Lambton Heights	P.Lightfoot
7	Spangled Drongo	2	Jesmond	G.Brosie
10	Black-shouldered Kite	2	New Lambton	S.Owen

WANTED

Articles for our Newsletter

Closing date for the next issue is 28th July, 1995
Late material will be considered for the following
issue.

Mail to : Tom Clarke
24 Ackerson St, Mayfield 2304
Phone : 671396 (h)
Fax : 686390

Contributions must be legible, preferably typed.

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.

● Camps and Outings

Ferndale Park 2nd-4th December 1994

Beth and I travelled up to Ferndale Park on the Friday night after work and until Saturday lunch thought we were going to be the sole HBOC representatives, however three more came and joined us between then and Sunday morning.

The weather was fine until tea time Saturday when a light drizzle settled in for the night. This put paid to going out looking for owls but the possums certainly entertained us around Max's fire with their antics. And not to worry, the ten foot fall out of the trees during the bun fight certainly didn't seem to hurt them.

We walked around the immediate area and up to the dam on Saturday morning and I have never seen as many Eastern Spinebills in the one place before as there were in the trees at the dam.

We were told that there were Glossy Black-Cockatoos in the area but we did not sight them and up until a few days previously, several Regent Bowerbirds had been hanging around the camping ground.

We were fortunate to see both Black-faced and Spectacled Monarch and on Saturday morning Beth heard a Green Catbird up the gully across the river. After lunch we took a "little" stroll across the river up to the old railway line and followed it around. I don't think that Edwina will go birding with me again. We found a Green Catbird, a Superb Lyrebird and a large goanna that watched us carefully as we walked past.

On Sunday morning we spent some time watching a pair of Brown Gerygone nest building. It was very interesting as we sat down about three feet from the nest and the birds totally ignored us.

We listened to the Eastern Whipbird calling and explained to Pat that they are very shy and difficult to see and as we finished speaking it flew out of the scrub in front of us and landed on the grass! Oh well.

We sighted fifty two bird species and I think my favourite would have to be the Rufous Fantail for the continued displays that they gave us.

We had to leave early Sunday but will certainly go back to follow up on a very interesting area.

John Cockerell

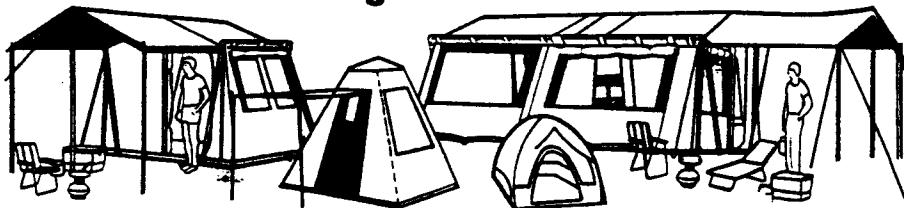
Birdwatchers' Code of Ethics (gleaned from various sources)

- The welfare of birds must come first.
- Habitat must be protected
- Nests, eggs and the immediate vicinity must not be disturbed.
- Keep disturbance to birds and their habitat generally to a minimum.
- Abide by the bird protection laws at all times.
- Keep your pets at home.
- When you find a rare bird, think carefully about whom you should tell.
- Make your records available to the club's Records Officer.
- Respect the rights of land owners.
- Respect the rights of other people in the countryside
- Be an ambassador for birdwatchers generally. We do not want to be unwelcomed in the future.

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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.

Tuesday 4th July	Midweek Outing: Meet: Leader:	Wangi area Wangi Picnic Area at 9:00am Rosemary Waymark 751819
Wednesday 12th July	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm An Audio-Visual presentation by Arthur Austin
Sunday 23rd July	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Buttai area. R/bout at junction of John Renshaw Drive and Leneghans Road at 8:00am Peter McLauchlan 333224
Tuesday 1st August	Midweek Outing: Meet: Leader:	Munmorah State Recreation Area Munmorah SRA turnoff at 9:00am Diane Rogers 761686
Saturday 5th August (That's right; not the Sunday!)	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Howes Valley Meet: Leader:	"Corner Shop" - Broke at 8:30am Ann Lindsey 733519
Wednesday 9th August	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Little Tern Management at Botany Bay by Geoff Ross from NSW NPWS
Sunday 20th August	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens Botanic Gardens Car Park at 8:00am Tom Clarke 671396

*

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