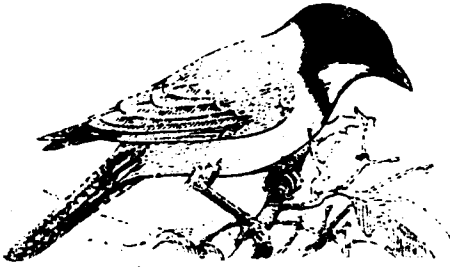


# NEWSLETTER



## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (049) 585942

President: Ann Lindsey  
Secretary: Peter Phillips  
Newsletter Editor: 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.*

### ● October Club Night

## Rare Insight And Vision For Rare Seabirds.

Club night guest speakers are always well received and we have enjoyed some special evenings over the years, but people who attended the October meeting were treated to a rare experience indeed. Nicholas Carlile, an Officer for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, was our guest speaker and his accounts of the nature of Cabbage Tree Island, and therefore, Gould's Petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*) captured the imagination of everyone present and the topic remained a point of conversation for weeks after.

Just when you feel that life is getting a bit tough and you're desperate for some inspiration, spare a moment to consider the plight of Gould's Petrel. These dove sized seabirds are forced to overcome all sorts of adversity to survive the daily rigors of life on Cabbage Tree Island, the only known breeding place in the world for them.

Nicholas has been involved in a conservation

program for these birds by monitoring and studying aspects of their biology for the last three years and has built up a very detailed picture of their lives.

To understand Gould's Petrel is to understand Cabbage Tree Island. Both are amazingly unique and Nicholas certainly demonstrated a very high level of understanding of the ecology of the island. Cabbage Tree is a rocky island of about 20 hectares and lies just 2 kilometres off Port Stephens. The island is 1000m long by 500m wide and rises about 130m above sea level. On its western side is two gullies sheltered by a dense canopy of rainforest! It is within these rainforest areas (about 1.5ha) that Gould's Petrel roost and nest on the ground in hollows of the rocky scree or under fallen palm fronds.

Cabbage Tree Island was made a conservation reserve in 1954 and named the John Gould Fauna Reserve but being so close to the mainland will always be vulnerable to invasion by exotic predators.

Life for Gould's Petrel is fraught with danger during the breeding season. The most direct threats come from the seeds of *Pisonia* trees and from Pied Currawongs. Fledglings sometimes become entangled by the sticky seeds and die of starvation. Pied Currawongs have gained access to the rainforest floor because of the destruction caused by rabbits!

To all HBOC members and their families

We Wish You A Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year  
and of course

Happy Bird Watching For 1996

## October Club Night Cont.

The lower levels of shrubs and vines have been cleared and regeneration halted by the rabbits' browsing.

Latest estimates tell us that the world population of Gould's Petrel is about 1000 individuals containing a breeding population of only 150 pairs. However, since the actions of the conservation program has been going on a 25% increase in the breeding success rate has been recorded.

During the non-breeding season, these birds disperse, presumably into the Tasman Sea where it is difficult to distinguish from other subspecies from New Caledonia and Fiji. Interestingly enough and despite having an intimate knowledge of Gould's Petrel, Nicholas has never seen this seabird at sea!

Conservation measures in place for this bird's survival include restricted access to Cabbage Tree Island, selective removal of *Pisonia* trees and the eradication of the island's rabbit population. The absence of predators needs to be confirmed regularly as well and the destruction of Pied Currawongs is seen only as a short term remedy. Nicholas is adamant that proper long term solutions should employ the natural processes of ecological sustainability.

Our *Bird of the Evening* segment established the seabird theme with Don Halliday's presentation

of the Australasian Gannet, *Morus serrator*.

Don has previously lived for some time in New Zealand where he regularly watched gannets at Cape Kidnappers near Hawk's Bay on the east coast of the North Island.

Cape Kidnappers is the largest (and most famous) land based breeding colony for these birds in the world. Gannets in their thousands breed in noisy, crowded colonies with nests only about a metre apart and Don can vouch that the screeching roar of a gannet colony is not easily forgotten.

The New Zealand connection is very relevant when considering gannets since most of the gannets seen off the coast of Australia come from the breeding grounds in and around New Zealand.

Don also loves to watch gannets when they are fishing at sea. Their spectacular diving prowess enable them to plunge into the water slightly behind their intended prey and secure the fish on the way back to the surface. Gannets can also be seen using teamwork to capture a meal. In turn, some birds will swim and herd fish while others dive upon them.

## FIG - Ecology In Three Letters.

20 km. on Murwillumbah

During our holidays Caryl and I were lucky enough to revisit Ralph Kraemer's Crystal Creek Rainforest Retreat. The property is an old banana plantation being revegetated by Ralph and his partner Judy. They have cleared some of the massive lantana infestation allowing the regrowth of the rainforest as well as planting 6,000 rainforest plants, many grown in their own nursery.

Bird species so far listed for the Retreat numbers 176 and Ralph feels this will eventually stand at over 200!

They have just purchased another 100 acre adjacent farmlet. In one cleared paddock stands a magnificent Small Leaved Fig - *Ficus obliqua*. This was massively in fruit. The fruit were single in the leaf axils. They were orange coloured and about 1 cm in diameter.

We lay on the ground for an hour at a time on several occasions to watch the activity in the tree. Six splendid Barred Cuckoo-shrikes came daily to the smorgasboard. This was a new bird for we twitchers. The birds are a dark grey with a prominent yellow eye, (they are sometimes called Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrikes). The belly is the really striking feature with heavy grey bars right up to the throat. The bars seemed to extend much higher than the picture depicts in Slater's Bird Guide.

The tree was always host to noisy and greedy Figbirds. They often stored three figs in their bills before swallowing in an attempt to get more food than the others. They were accompanied by their rels, the Olive-backed Orioles, more sedate and not as sociable or greedy.

Also feeding on the fruit were Lewin's Honeyeaters. Although a honeyeater, this bird loves fruit. In our garden

at home they consume the fruit of my small shrub Midgen Berry, *Austromyrtus dulcis*, and the fruit of the Umbrella Tree, *Schefflera actinophylla*.

In the top branches, the fish tailed migrants, Spangled Drongos, chattered in a harsh metallic voice before launching themselves into the air for a short erratic flight to catch the many insects attracted to the maturing fruit of the fig. Spangled because of the iridescent blue spangles on the chest of the otherwise dark black birds. Another fruit eater on site was the Satin Bowerbird. There were large numbers of these and we discovered three separate bowers on Ralph's place. The bowers nearest the cabins were adorned by blue plastic as well as seeds and flowers. The bower furthest in the rainforest had fruit from a lily pily and flowers from the Tobacco Tree, no modern art for this fellow!

Back to our fig, on the lowest branch was a Tawny Frogmouth doing its best tree branch imitation on a firmy stick nest settled lightly in a fork. On our several visits the position always looked the same as the last.

Just behind the Fig was a small creek with Lantana. There were two species of wren at play, and feeding, in the Lantana. These species being the lovely Variegated Fairy-wren and the splendidly coloured Red-backed Fairy-wren. One of the male Redbacks had an orange coloured back quite different to another with a crimson hue. This is probably just the condition of the plumage rather than a definite colour variation within the species. This was nature at its showiest, no wonder we could sit, or lie - to ease our necks, under this tree for an hour at a time.

If you would like to rent a cabin at Crystal Creek I have some brochures.

Paddy Lightfoot.

# HBOC CONSERVATION POLICY

1. An important aim of the HBOC is,

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

2. There are many important reasons for wild bird conservation:

\* the maintenance and understanding of biodiversity.

\* the preservation of an enormous, valuable and largely unstudied genetic resource.

\* wild bird behaviour provides a valuable educational resource.

\* wild birds are an integral part of ecosystems and cannot be studied in isolation.

\* wild birds are important indicators of environmental change and provide valuable data upon which ecological theory and conservation management depend.

\* wild birds provide immense, largely cost free pleasure for people worldwide.

\* wild birds provide a spiritual dimension to the lives of many people.

\* wild birds provide the basis for a hobby that is of scientific, ethical, physical and aesthetic value.

\* wild birds are beautiful in their own right and should be protected for this reason.

3. HBOC Conservation Action

\* The membership of the HBOC is its most important resource, and includes many people with expert and specialist knowledge of wild birds, their habitats and their conservation needs, as well as those with experience and skills in other fields. The HBOC encourages all of its members to use their talents and their

commitment to promote conservation by voicing their concerns, providing advice and recommendations and being active participants in projects that contribute to the effective conservation of wild birds.

\* The HBOC will concentrate (but not necessarily limit) its conservation activities to the Hunter Region.

\* The HBOC will seek to identify current and/or potential threats to wild bird populations. This undertaking may include (but not be limited to)

- the monitoring of the conservation status of a particular species, population or habitat.
- the accumulation of scientific data.
- the support of research that increases human understanding and appreciation of the ecology of wild birds.

\* The HBOC aims to take a proactive role in conservation issues which impact on wild birds. The HBOC involvement in these issues may include (but not be limited to)

- lobbying official bodies.
- examining and commenting on Development Applications and Environmental Impact Statements.
- seeking legislative protection, preservation and management of wild birds.
- supporting existing local, national and international strategies, agreements and treaties which aim to help the conservation of wild birds.
- developing and publishing additional conservation strategies and policies to suit local needs.
- raising public awareness through education and publicity of conservation needs and values.
- cooperating with and supporting other organisations involved with wild bird conservation.
- supporting rehabilitation and management of wild bird habitats.

## **Alan Keating Memorial Grants**

*Alan Keating was a keen birdwatcher, and a member of the Hunter Bird Observers Club for many years. The memorial Grants have been established in recognition of his bequest to the Club.*

### ***Purpose***

To encourage projects and activities that further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitats, within the Hunter Region.

### ***Details***

- \* Grants are available for projects and activities of up to 12 months duration.
- \* Grants may be used to fully or partially defray the costs associated with:
  - carrying out and reporting a project or activity
  - purchase or hire of equipment necessary for successfully carrying out the project or activity.Labour related costs are not eligible for support.
- \* Individuals and organisations are eligible to receive Grants. Preference is given to residents of the Hunter Region, but all applications will be considered.
- \* Applications may be submitted at any time. Grants may be for any amount up to a maximum value of \$1000.
- \* The Hunter Region is defined to be the area of NSW formed by the boundaries of fourteen Local Government Areas - the Cities of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock and Greater Taree, and the Shires of Murrurundi, Scone, Gloucester, Merriwa, Dungog, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Port Stephens and Great Lakes.

### ***Conditions***

- \* A written report must be submitted to HBOC within 6 months of completion of the project or activity. HBOC reserves the right to publish a copy of the report, or a summary of the key results, in any of its own publications, with appropriate acknowledgement to the authors.
- \* Recipients of a Grant must make suitable acknowledgement of support from the Grant, including in any separate publication of their results.
- \* Successful applicants will receive 50% of the agreed funding at the commencement of their project or activity, and the balance when a final report, satisfactory to HBOC, is received.
- \* Written applications, of maximum length three A4 pages, must clearly state
  - the purpose and duration of the project or activity
  - who will carry it out
  - the funds requested, with supporting detail
  - how support from the Grant will be acknowledged
- \* The awarding of Grants is at the discretion of HBOC. No correspondence will be entered into.

## Paterson River Birds - 80 Regent Honeyeaters - nil

Since we started doing the regular surveys in the Paterson Valley for Regent Honeyeaters (to date there has been three organised outings), those people who have attended have been treated to some very good birdwatching indeed. This is despite the fact that nil Regent Honeyeaters have been found so far.

I particularly look forward to these Saturday morning starts at Paterson, firstly because if we were ever lucky enough to actually find a Regent Honeyeater it would be a great thrill but also because of what is being discovered about the area.

As far as records go, the Paterson Valley has not been looked at in much detail by our Club so these surveys have given us a great opportunity to see just what it has to offer. Of course, for local people there are no real surprises but for us visitors the prospects are exciting.

One of the things that has really impressed has been the variety of breeding birds in this area. In three visits we have found such diverse species as Brown Falcons and White-bellied Sea Eagles to Spotted Pardalotes and White-browed Scrubwrens; Rainbow Bee-eaters, Grey-crowned Babblers, White-winged Trillers and Tree Martins. We know that Eastern Yellow Robins, for instance, are nesting on the banks of the Paterson River, along with Silvereyes and Jacky Winters.

Many places up and down the valley look promising enough for honeyeaters but unfortunately they usually prove to be a bit skinny on the habitat side of things. Undaunted, we will continue to explore the place; a zero count is still meaningful at this stage.

Anyone interested in participating in the Regent Honeyeater Surveys should refer to our Coming Events section of the Newsletter or contact the Survey Coordinator, Ann Lindsey on her new telephone number, 512008.

Tom Clarke

## Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia

GPO BOX 3428 SYDNEY NSW 2001  
TELEPHONE & FAX (043) 43 4708

The annual Garden Bird Count will take place on January 1st, 1996.

The Wild Life Preservation Society asks any interested person to walk around the garden between 7am and 8am recording, not only the kinds of birds they see or hear, but also the numbers present in the garden, or flying over.

Post your list with your address and postcode to WLPS of Australia and enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a copy of the results. These may take a long time to evaluate so do not get disheartened if no immediate reply arrives.

Facts obtained will help our study of urban birdlife.

Vincent Serventy  
President

### Note to all HBOC members:

With regard to the above notice, please send a copy of your data to HBOC Garden Bird Survey Coordinator, Peter McLauchlan. Even if you don't regularly fill out a Garden Bird Chart, your data will be welcomed.

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# RAOU TWITCHATHON

## Twenty Four Hours With The Hunter Thickheads.

Somewhere near Blandford David swung the car into a U-turn and screamed to a halt. We jumped out still wondering what he had seen. "Over there, just above the cows!"

Flying just above the hill line was a dark bird of prey with pointed wings which could only have been a Black Falcon. We watched as it flew along. Suddenly it went into this fantastic dive its wings closed hard against its body. Up again, it climbed out of its descent and glided lazily around before disappearing into the distance.

But of course we couldn't count it; it wasn't four o'clock yet!

Thus started the 1995 Twitchathon weekend for the *Hunter Thickheads* in the twenty-four hour category. We drove on to our dry-country spot where excitement continued with Budgies turning up - not unknown - but quite a way out of their normal range. We twitched our Turquoise Parrot, Western Gerygone, Brown Treecreeper, Rufous Songlark, Painted Button-quail, Striped Honeyeater and many others before it was time to race back to the Sewerage Treatment Works for the Little Corella. By now, however, the ever threatening storm had turned day into night and we lost at least half an hour of good birdwatching time, and the Little Corella.

The long drive over the Great Dividing Range yielded a Tawny Frogmouth, Greater Glider and Southern Boobook calling at every stop. At our camping place near the rainforest we were greeted by a howling gale which abated somewhat during the night, but it still remained windy - not so good for birdwatching. This is a great place for Logrunner, Topknot Pigeon and Regent Bowerbird.

David set a cracking pace - indeed he almost lost two of his passengers, but we hung on for grim death and made it back to the Wetlands Centre in good shape with only one or two bruises.

We were in for a shock as we travelled our route down through Crowdy Bay National Park. The road through to Harrington has been closed. With some backtracking we reached Harrington for early lunch, the Brush Turkey, and joy oh joy, amid the walkers, fishermen and four-wheel-drives, four Sanderlings trying to rest on the sand bar. Another new bird for the current Hunter List!

By the time we reached the finishing post we had twitched Red-necked Avocet, Marsh, Terek and Curlew Sandpiper, six Royal Spoonbill in breeding plumage, Gull-billed and Whiskered Tern, ten species of raptor and Little Corella at the Wetlands Centre!

In all 183 species and we enjoyed every moment of it.

Ann Lindsey.

## "Let's Tick 'em For A Day"

- Champagne Team.

The Champagne team, *Lesticum phoradae*, consisted of 4 to 8 people depending on the weather, the time of the day and how close to the champagne drinking we were.

We began at Blackbutt Reserve at 4:00pm sharp with 4, then 5 people, who wandered the bush as the clouds rolled in. The best bird we saw in the bush was an Emerald Dove.

At 7:00pm the thunder shook the entire area creating a cacophonous response from the birds especially the cockatoos and rosellas. Finally, after walking to the lower ponds in the rain, we realise that birding was over for the evening and we would miss our Powerful Owl. It rained fairly heavily all night while we were snug in our beds.

The next morning was sunny and clear as we met at 6:30am at the Stockton Bridge at low tide. The waders present were Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Terek Sandpiper, and both Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits among others.

We then crossed the bridge to Kooragang Island, walked through the mangroves to a river beach, stopping for the Mangrove Gerygone and ticked off Royal Spoonbill, Red-necked Avocet and Black-winged Stilt.

The next stop was in the bush at Awabakal Reserve. The wind came up by 10:00am and we did not see as many species as we had anticipated. We walked to the cliff face and looked down on a Wedge-tailed Shearwater. In the area around the melaleuca forest, we spent a great deal of time trying to flush a Southern Emu-wren only to have several hop out for us later as we regathered on the trail!

We had morning tea and drove on to Ash Island which was also windy. We saw only a few species, the best one being a flock of White-fronted Chat.

We went to the Shortland Wetlands Centre for a lunch break and then regrouped and walked across the road to bird the Wetland Reserve and the edge of the golf course. We flushed Latham's Snipe and saw a Whistling Kite.

It had warmed up, so we took a break, and then did our final walk around the Wetlands Centre.

We thought our total of 115 species was pretty good but it wasn't good enough to win the contest. First place went to *Just a Little Cuckoo* with 154 species; second place went to *Grey-headed Wood Knots* with 122 species. Our efforts gained us third place out of eleven teams from NSW.

Bonny Orr.

## What's Cooking?

Cormorants actually spread their wings and fry. The reason these birds loiter with their wings spread has finally been solved by German ornithologists - they are "defrosting" their dinner.

Birdwatchers had assumed they were drying their feathers. But research at the Neumunster Zoo shows that they spread their wings to soak up more heat from the sun. By flapping their wings in an upright pose, they warm their bodies to speed digestion of cold fish.

An experiment conducted by Dr David Gremillet, published in the Journal of Avian Biology, showed that when the birds were fed cold fish, they sat with their wings spread for about 20 minutes.

Fewer than a quarter of those fed with fish warmed to body temperature spread their wings - and even then, they spread them for only a few minutes.

Sunday Telegraph 12-11-95.

## Mighty Hum

**The hummingbird is nature's strongman.**

It has been shown to be the Arnold Scharzenegger of the animal kingdom in a muscle power test conducted by scientists.

The flying experiment reported in the journal Nature, demonstrates that the Ruby-throated Hummingbird has proportionally more power than any other vertebrate.

Scientists say its maximum power level, at 133 watts per kilogram of muscle, is dramatically greater than previously thought. Humans can sustain only 15 watts per kilogram.

To make the measurement, Professor Robert Dudley and Dr Peng Chai, from the University of Texas, coaxed the birds to fly in heliox, the mixture of helium and oxygen used by deep-sea divers.

Sunday Telegraph 12-11-95.

## NEW MEMBERS

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

Douglas, Elke & Lauren Howarth of Rankin Park.

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is  
5th February, 1996

Mail to: Tom Clarke 28 Kokera St, Wallsend 2287  
Phone: 513872 (h) 686316 (w) Fax: 686390

## BIRDLINE NSW (02) 252 1404

This is a service for Birdwatchers by Birdwatchers.

Just ring the Birdline number and you will get a recorded message of all the latest information on sightings and other things of interest.

If you have anything to add which may be useful to other birdwatchers then you can leave a message at the end of the recording. Your contribution will then be used in the next update of the recording.

Birdline NSW is Coordinated by  
RAOU Sydney Committee.

## Sticky Frog's Tongues a feature on Twitchathon Day

Twitchathon Day this year wasn't just for boring adults with a desire to act like twits etc., it was also a day for children to have some fun and games.

The Children's Day Activities were conducted at the Shortland Wetlands Centre and very ably managed by our own Marian Walker. Marian regularly supervises this type of event at the Wetlands Centre and it is no wonder that they are becoming very popular as theme birthday parties.

Twelve children altogether, enjoyed such outdoor activities as dip netting for water bugs and wrigglers from the ponds, basic bird identification and a noisy and energetic game of "Kangaroo Come Home". Slightly more sedate indoor activities included sponge painting dinosaurs, kite making and Sticky Frog's Tongues!

Definitely rated as a great success (one very discerning ten year old reckoned "it was alright") and in the process raised \$24 for the Twitchathon.

Also, with all the children plus their minders plus the Twitchathon teams (five teams finished at Shortland) the BBQ get-together at the end of the day was the best attended yet.

Thanks to all who participated and to Marian who went overtime with the children, such is her enthusiasm.

Tom Clarke

## ● Observations

### Reports from October and November meetings

<b>Jul.</b>	15	Rose Robin	1	Woodville	M.Newman
<b>Aug.</b>	11	Topknot Pigeon	16	Woodville	M.Newman
	25	Eastern Curlew	2	Throsby Creek	T.Clarke
	26	Rufous Whistler	1	Woodville	M.Newman
<b>Sep.</b>	2	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	11	Regent Bowerbird	3	New Lambton Heights	I & M.Hamilton
		Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (several)		New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Olive-backed Oriole	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Lewin's Honeyeater	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Pheasant Coucal	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Brown Cuckoo-dove	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
	14	Mistletoebird	3	Woodberry	L.Marshall
	22	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Buttaba	R.Waymark
		Dollarbird	1	Buttaba	R.Waymark
	23	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Buttaba	R.Waymark
		Wandering Whistle Duck	2	S.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
		Powerful Owl	3	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
	24	Brown Cuckoo-dove	1	New Lambton Heights	P.Lightfoot
	25	Australian Hobby	1	Mayfield	T.Clarke
		Sacred Kingfisher	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	27	Australian Raven	2	Mayfield	T.Clarke
	28	Brown Honeyeater	-	Swansea	A.Stuart
	30	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Krambach	A.Stuart
		Leaden Flycatcher	1	Woodville	M.Newman
<b>Oct.</b>	1	Dollarbird	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	2	Sacred Kingfisher	6+	Rowley's River	A.Stuart
	2	Common Koel	1	New Lambton Heights	I&M.Hamilton
		Port Lincoln Ringneck	2	Boat Harbour	M.Harmonet
		Square-tailed Kite	2	Munghorn Gap	J.Perry
		Black-faced Monarch	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	3	Southern Boobook	1	Jesmond Park	T.Clarke
		Black-faced Monarch	2	Wattagan Mountains	M.Newman
	4	Common Koel	1	New Lambton Heights	A.Stuart
	6	Common Koel	1	Buttaba	R.Waymark
	8	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	15+	Buttaba	B.Kelly
		Peregrine Falcon	1	Hawk's Nest	T.Clarke
	9	Spotted Harrier	1	Hinton	M.Newman
		Dollarbird	2	Minmi	J.Smith
	17	Red-kneed Dotterel	1	Irrawang Swamp	K.Preistley
	24	Black Kite	1	Woodberry	M.Hugginson
		Port Lincoln Ringneck	2	Broke	K.Preistley
<b>Nov.</b>	4	Nankeen Night heron	1	Myall Lakes N.P.	B.Turnbull
		White-bellied Sea Eagle	1	Goulburn River N.P.	J.Smart
	5	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	Warners Bay	R.Walker
		Frigatebird (spp)	1	Speers Point	C.Mann
	6	Figbird	1	Arcadia Vale	B.Kelly
		Australian King Parrot	2	Minmi	J.Smith
	8	Australian King Parrot	1	Minmi	J.Smith
	11	Hardhead	12	Seaham Nature Reserve	K.Preistley



## OBSERVATION NOTES

A report of a single Port Lincoln Parrot in June 1993 from Waratah West was accepted as a probable aviary escapee. Subsequent sightings at Boat Harbour (Oct. 2) and Singleton Road at Broke (Oct. 24) are interesting and cause for some speculation.

The Square-tailed Kite and the Black-tailed Kite are both Category 3 species and will therefore require Unusual Record appraisal.

A Frigatebird (species undetermined) was sighted flying over the northern end of Lake Macquarie heading south-east into an approaching storm. An Unusual Record report has been requested.

Sue Hamonet

## Black And White Boobook?

This is the story of a curious incident in the night. The night in question was in late September this year. For about a week before, a Southern Boobook had been calling every night near my house in New Lambton, and I had heard it at all sorts of hours during that time.

On this particular night, I woke just before 4am, and again could hear, I thought, the owl calling from some distance away. At the same time, an Australian Magpie made its carolling call - the owl's call came in the middle of it. The same thing happened again, then again, and again.

By this time, I was beginning to find the coincidence a bit unusual, and was fully awake. It happened again - this time, I noted that the "book-book" part wasn't quite right - the tempo was correct but it was too "musical". I listened on - each time, there was a second or two of carolling, then "book-book", then a bit more carolling.

I eventually concluded that it was a magpie doing all of the calling that I was hearing. The calling stopped after about ten minutes, and I didn't see the bird.

It may be significant that a single newly fledged magpie was in residence, with its parents, near our place at the time. They nest each year in a tree across the road from us. Magpies are a species that learns to call, and perhaps the young bird was trying out a sound it had been hearing fairly often at the time.

The Southern Boobook still calls at night near us, from time to time, but I haven't heard the curious carolling version of the call again.

Alan Stuart.

## Hard to swallow

LONDON: Birdwatchers who had travelled from all over Britain to glimpse a rare, migrating bird watched in horror as a giant fish gobbled it down.

The Sun newspaper quoted the "twitchers", as birdwatchers are known, saying a 1.2m Pike gulped the exotic Red-necked Phalarope down in one bite as they were enthusing over it.

Only a few brown and red feathers remained to prove that the bird had visited the reservoir in Leicestershire. "It was like a scene from Jaws", one witness said.

Sydney Morning Herald 21-9-95.

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and endangered species.

## ● November Club Night

### Aussie Birdwatchers Go Berserk Up The Orinoco.

November Club Night featured a lively and entertaining glimpse of the birdlife, and other things, of Venezuela. Our guest speaker for the evening was Trevor Quested who shared with us some of his experiences whilst on a South American birdwatching holiday during the January and February of 1992.

South America is renowned for the richness and variety of its avifauna, being home to about 3,000 indigenous species. These numbers swell, of course, when that part of the world is host to millions of visitors retreating from the cold winter of the Northern Hemisphere.

Trevor spent about three weeks in Venezuela, accompanied by his wife and a couple of friends and visited most of the main habitats available. During this time he was able to identify 501 new species! That's new, at least, for Trevor and a solid looking Field Guide of the Birds of Venezuela was constantly required as many species exist within each genera and Trevor was keen not to hastily tick a bird he wasn't sure about.

As well as setting a cracking pace twitching along the banks of the *Orinoco* or down some jungle path high in the *Gran Sabana*, Trevor still managed to capture many of these exotic birds on his camera and the resulting slides shown during his presentation were just great.

Fabulous birds like the Scarlet Ibis, Double-striped Thick-knee and the Red-and-green Macaw were only a taste of what can be found there. The parrots are magnificent, the hummingbirds are spectacular; and the kingfishers, and the woodpeckers and the tanagers. All these groups have so many species; all special and well worth the journey and the effort to discover.

A feature of Venezuela is how 'local' some species can be. Trevor explained that for each kilometre you travel up the *Escolera*, for instance, new birds will be available and old ones not. The difference in altitude providing the new habitat and the boundary. Trevor found km67, 117, 121 and 135 particularly productive on his way through.

Also, the major river system that is the Orinoco is so wide for much of its course that it acts as a barrier between species as well.

More great slides, and commentry, followed depicting some coastal regions in the north as well as the inland *Llamos*, a steppe grassland which is parched throughout the long dry season but is transformed into an aquatic environment by the torrential rains of the wet season. This area is just great for ducks, grebes, herons, storks and the real Jabirus!

An especially interesting experience by Trevor was his encounter with the Oilbird. These birds are a bit like nightjars but they frequent very dark caves within the forests. This is their roosting place during the day. At night, they fly out of the caves to feed on such things as the fruit of palms

The Venezuelan holiday was followed by a short stop in Argentina before heading back to Australia and another 120+ species.

A trip to South America would not be complete without a visit to Iguazu Falls; not just for the lasting impressions of the magnificent sight of megalitres of water falling off the plateau but also for the birdwatching. Even from the gardens of the five star hotel overlooking the falls, Trevor still managed to find a couple more "lifers".

*Bird of the Evening* was presented by James Smart who has had a long time fascination with the Babblers. Early days for James saw him well and truly out in Babbler country on the Western Plains of NSW where the habitat can be common ground to the four species.

Three species - White-browed, Hall's and Chestnut-crowned Babbler - are endemic to Australia. The Grey-crowned Babbler (our local bird) also occurs in southern New Guinea.

Babblers are sedentary and maintain communal territories where they roost, breed and forage for food together.

James offered a list of common names for Babblers and pointed out that collectively these names describe very well some of the characteristics of the bird.

*Cackler, chatterer, babbler, barker & dogbird* are suggestive of the constant contact calls. *Yahoo* describes the antiphonal duet between female (ya) and male (hoo) during courtship while *happy family, happy Jack & twelve apostles* alludes to their communal spirit.

## Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. to be held at the Shortland Wetlands Centre on 14th February 1996 commencing at 7:30pm.

Business of the meeting: Confirmation of minutes of 1995 AGM  
Annual Report Including Financial Report  
Election of Office Bearers (see separate notice)  
Filling of other positions  
General Business

The AGM will be followed by the February Club Night.

Peter Phillips. Public Officer.

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### Election of HBOC Office Bearers for 1996

Nominations are called for the following positions for 1996:

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Four (4) Ordinary Members of the Management Committee.

Nominations shall be made in writing and signed by two members of the Club and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. Written nominations shall be delivered to the Secretary by 1st February 1996.

If insufficient written nominations are received by 1st February 1996, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall then be received at the AGM.

Peter Phillips. Public Officer.

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### NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice is hereby given that,  
at the 1996 Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.  
the following motion will be moved

**That Wilma Barden be elected to Honorary Life Membership**

Motion proposed by Ann Lindsey and seconded by Sue Hamonet.

Peter Phillips. Public Officer.  
16th November 1995.

# 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 2nd January	Midweek Outing: Contact:	T.B.A. Jeanette Stephenson 575255
Saturday 6th January	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley Meet: Leader:	Park by the river at Paterson 8:00am Ann Lindsay 512008
Sunday 21st January	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Kooragang Island Stockton Sand Spit (under the bridge) 6:30am Tom Clarke 513872
Australia Day Weekend 26th - 28th January	Camp: Contact:	Gloucester Tops Graeme O'Connor 531304
Saturday 3rd February	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley Meet: Contact:	Park by the river at Paterson 8:00am Ann Lindsay 512008
Tuesday 6th February	Midweek Outing: Contact:	T.B.A. <i>MYUNTA BAY</i> Jeanette Stephenson 575255
Wednesday 14th February	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Annual General Meeting.
Sunday 25th February	Field Day: Meet: Contact:	Jerusalem Creek / Telegraphy S.F. McDonald's Raymond Terrace 6:30am Peter Phillips 547118

## NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

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