

Newsletter



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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President:
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Ann Lindsey
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*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.*

Blasts From The Past Help Celebrations Go Off With A Bang.

Ballons And Party Whistles Used To Great Effect.

Clubnight on 8th May 1996 celebrated our 20th Birthday. It was on the 12th May 1976 that the Hunter Bird Observers Group was duly formed as a sub-group of the Flora and Fauna Protection Society. Fourteen people attended that Interim Meeting "to investigate the possibility of forming a Bird Observers Group in the Newcastle Region".

In those days, general meetings were held each month at the home of Wilma Barden and at the first meeting of the group a double feature with two speakers got things moving.

"Fred Van Gessel gave an interesting presentation of *Elementary Bird Study*.. (and) ..Gary Weber, a keen photographer, showed a number of his excellent slides....of local birds".

It was fitting therefore, that on Birthday Night, the evening should feature these people.

Wilma Barden talked to us about the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) as the *Bird of the Evening* presentation. Wilma got to know these birds very well during banding efforts on Kooragang Island for early wader studies of the Hunter Estuary.

Fred Van Gessel took us on a journey down memory lane with slides taken on field outings back in those early days. These included

a fabulous bird watching trip to Lord Howe Island and a famous boat trip to Cabbage Tree Island. The outing to Cabbage Tree took place in March 1977 and featured an "incident free landing". The trip coincided with the last weeks of the nesting season of the Gould's Petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*).

Other slides reminded us of what Kooragang Island use to be like when things were taken so much for granted.

Gary Weber, once again, thrilled us with slides which concentrated on birds at their nests. Gary spends a great deal of time in capturing these wonderful moments and the results are just magnificent. Birds featured were mainly honeyeaters, warblers and robins.

Each presentation was applauded vigorously but not in the usual manner. All members present found it appropriate to show their appreciation by blowing their party whistles with gusto.

Ann Lindsey presented *Certificates Of Appreciation* to original members who still remain in the club. These included Fred Van Gessel, Wilma Barden, Gary Weber, Tom Douglas and Ted & Ilma Felton.

The evening concluded with the cutting (and subsequent eating as well) of the cake which was appropriately decorated with the image of a Golden Whistler (our club emblem) in the icing.

BIRDLINE NSW

(02) 2990 1778

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 may then be used in the next update of the recording.

Birdline NSW is coordinated by RAOU Sydney Committee.

• Observations

Reports from May, 1996 meeting

Jan	9	Powerful Owl	1	Glendale	T.Peake
Feb	27	Powerful Owl	1	Buttai	T.Peake
Mar	3	Little Corella	34	Toronto	S.Eagles
	5	Powerful Owl	1	Buttai	T.Peake
Apr		Pacific Baza	1	Newcastle High School	G.Brown
	10	Barn Owl	1	Rutherford	J.Smart
	11	Rufous Fantail	1	S.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
	18	Rufous Fantail	1	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
	19	Grey Goshawk (white)	1	Belmont	S.Hamonet
	25	Black-necked Stork	3	Bulahdelah	F.Thomson
	28	Barn Owl	1	Nesca Park, Newcastle	J.Moyse
	28	White-headed Pigeon	1	Nesca Park, Newcastle	J.Moyse
		Black-shouldered Kite	2+2j	Newcastle Wetland Res.	G.Brosie
		Red-browed Finch	5	Shortland Wetlands Centre	G.Brosie
		Australian Shoveller	2	Shortland Wetlands Centre	G.Brosie
		Wonga Pigeon	1	New Lambton Heights	G.Albrecht
May	2	Caspian Tern	1	Warners Bay	R.Walker
	3	Wedge-tailed S'water(dead)	1	East Maitland	K.Priestley
	4	Glossy Ibis	31	Shortland Wetlands Centre	S.Bosanquet
	4	Caspian Tern	1	Shortland Wetlands Centre	G.Nicholls
	6	Wedge-tailed S'water(dead)	1	Stockton	S.Bosanquet
	7	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	Wallaroo State Forest	S.Bosanquet
	7	Little Eagle	1	Hexham	D.Geering
	8	Rainbow Lorikeet	20	Warners Bay	R.Walker

The two Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were reported dead following stormy weather in early May.

The Pacific Baza was rescued after an attack by Pied Currawongs. The bird was treated and released.

Waterholes Yield Great Sights

Pillaga Scrub Easter Campout 1996

It seldom happens that you experience perfect weather on a campout and Easter weather can always be tricky. But we had warm, still days followed by cool, clear, still nights with no mosquitoes or other bugs much. The occasional tick was discovered a day or two after getting home, but compared with the rigours of some Easter campouts that was of little consequence.

The area in which we camped is managed by the State Forestry. There are several camping and picnic areas and tank water is available at most spots although I wouldn't rely on it always being there. The roads are quite good though a bit dusty in parts and every corner is signposted so that you have little chance of becoming lost. For wimpy drivers such as myself it would however be a nightmare in wet weather.

The fact that it was so dry meant that the birds were not quite so plentiful around the campsite or out in the scrub; you had to walk a little further and spend more time in the field if you wanted to see the Speckled Warblers, thornbills and babblers. To make up for that, time spent around any of the waterholes yielded some great sights.

Salt Dam was particularly good. During the day, honeyeaters - Blue-faced, Brown-headed, White-eared, Plumed, Striped, Yellow-faced, White-naped, Spiny-cheeked and Noisy Friarbirds flew over the water dipping in and out or hopped down to the water's edge to drink. The water also attracted Double-barred Finches, Diamond Firetails, Restless Flycatchers, Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Doves, Emus, Pacific Herons, a Collared Sparrowhawk which very quickly quietened things down for a while, and a busload of birdwatchers from all over the place with their chairs and drinks.

But best of all were the fifty plus Glossy Black Cockatoos. They started gathering well before sunset sitting around in the trees preening and resting before flying in at sunset to then waddle to the water to drink. They were followed by the Galahs, King Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Mallee Ringnecks and in the dark by dozens of Common Bronzewing. Other highlights were White-backed Swallows, Fork-tailed Swifts, 500 White-browed Woodswallows and a few Masked Woodswallows sitting around on sandy creek beds, two Barking Owls, six

Turquoise Parrots, two Red-winged Parrots and a Diamond Dove.

On the way out we picked up Black Honeyeaters and Plum-headed Finches which was an unexpected bonus. My thanks to Graeme O'Connor for organising the venture, fellow campers for the company, Easter Bunnies for the chocolates and I recommend we repeat it soon.

Ann Linsey

Woodville Drongo And The Frogmouth

Field Trip - Woodville - 19th May 1996

Twelve members turned up at the Woodville Post Office at 8am. Early arrivals had the bonus of seeing the Woodville Drongo. Yes, it does have feathers.

Most of the morning was spent in a 200ha area of lightly grazed woodland off Butterwick Road. The vegetation varies from dense rainforest type habitat along Green Wattle Creek to open woodland with little understory. This range of habitat provided an excellent spread of species, including five species of thornbill. Good sightings were obtained of a Brown Treecreeper and Speckled Warbler, two species which are regular in the drier areas, although the Brown Treecreeper seems to be a winter visitor.

With twelve pairs of eyes and a couple of very well tuned pairs of ears, the list grew steadily; however, a sighting of a Rose Robin remained elusive despite about six winter territories being located. At last one made an appearance, sadly a female. At this point in time attention was distracted by the overhead passage of a White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, the first in this area this year.

Lunch was enjoyed on the Newman's verandah overlooking some farm dams. Jim Perry spotted a Tawny Frogmouth enjoying its day time roost in a melaleuca on the far side of the neighbour's dam. This has turned out to be a daily event; thanks Jim.

A total of 74 species were seen, which is good for this time of year and the relatively small area covered. All in all a good day with ideal weather for birding despite rather unpleasant forecasts.

Mike Newman

Great Shot

I won't be handing my SLR in, I only just bought it. I got up at 5am and drove to St Marys, where a friend has a room of SLRs. We use 36 shot ones, none of the five or ten shot muck. He grabbed one and we headed in his 4WD to Castlereagh State Forest.

We were on the track just after sunrise. It was quiet at first then an Eastern Yellow Robin popped up. Bang. Oh, it felt good! Then a Grey Shrike Thrush. Bang. Got it. A flock of Fuscous Honeyeaters swooped in. Panic. This is where the automatic reloading is essential. Got the lot!

We worked a flock of Buff-rumped Thornbills to a place where we could fire a clear shot but they eluded us. We will just have to go back.

My Nikon F90X with a 400mm autofocus lens is the best SLR camera I've ever had.

Trevor Quested

Sydney Morning Herald 11/5/96

HBOC GO TO THE MOVIES

Yes, its on again folks. So pencil in the date on your social calender.

28th July at the Twin Towers Theatre matinee showing of the action thriller

"MISSION IMPOSSIBLE"
starring **TOM CRUISE**

see Keith Woods (Phone: 695117) for further details and tickets at \$10 per head.

New Members

The Hunter Bird Observers Club extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

John Priestley of Paterson
Val & Don Moon of Wyee Point
Barbara & Ken Gibson of Shortland
Dale Carney of New Lambton
The O'Leary Family of Charlestown

We look forward to meeting you at Clubnights and Field Outings during the year.

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is

2nd August, 1996

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Conservation Committee Meeting

The HBOC's Conservation Committee had its first meeting of the year on Wednesday, 1st May. Present were Glenn Albrecht, Bruce Turnbull and David Kibble. We began by trying to clarify the HBOC's general approach to conservation issues.

We agreed that the HBOC should take an active conservation role and try to anticipate serious conservation issues before they pass into the too late basket. For example, we thought the Club might oppose the clearing of the lower Hunter's few remaining pockets of urban bushland and that we might support the preservation or establishment of nature corridors.

We thought the HBOC could take the following practical steps.

- a) The Executive, on behalf of the membership, lobby officialdom.
- b) The Executive prepare and issue press releases where appropriate.
- c) The Conservation Committee prepare sample letters that individual members could send (or adapt) to newspapers and officialdom.
- d) The HBOC develop Position Statements on key conservation issues or important species. For example the development of Kooragang Island or the status of the Powerful Owl.
- e) The HBOC could adopt an area like Kooragang Island as a priority conservation area.

The HBOC Management Committee has alerted the Conservation Committee to four issues of concern to the Club.

a) The Kooragang Island Coal Terminal:

There is a proposal to expand this facility; an EIS is being prepared and it is thought that some sort of community consultative committee is to be established.

b) The Kooragang Island Wetland Rehabilitation Project: This is a State Government initiative (under the Department of Public Works and Services) to restore the Ash Island end of Kooragang Island to something like its original condition.

c) Stockton Beach: Newcastle City Council is preparing a plan for the future of the southern end of Stockton Bight (the habitat of the

threatened Little Tern). Some issues that might come up are erosion control, four-wheel drive vehicle access and sand mining.

d) The Big Pond Kooragang Island:

The Management Committee is concerned about the "Big Pond" (next to Cormorant Road) and considers that its protection as a wader habitat to be very important.

The Conservation Committee would be more than pleased to hear from club members that have any information on, or particular interest in these or any other conservation issues. We need to be alerted to any other issue that threatens the habitats of our native birds in the lower Hunter Valley. Remember, if we don't have an environment we don't have birds; if we don't have birds we don't have HBOC.

David Kibble

But wait!..there's more!

The Conservation Committee held its second meeting for 1996 on Wednesday 29th May. We doubled our numbers - present were Max Blanch, Glenn Albrecht, Bruce Turnbull, Liz Herbert, Michael Todd and David Kibble.

We discussed the notion that interested individuals could be encouraged to take up specific issues or species, present information and ideas to the Conservation Committee, who would comment and respond before a recommendation was taken to the HBOC Management Committee.

The Conservation Committee considered that Kooragang Island was an appropriate site for a priority conservation area and that we should prepare a Position Statement on it. To this end it was proposed that the Conservation Committee (plus any interested club members) visit Kooragang Island to carry out site assessments.

It was also suggested that the Club prepare a list of important sites that are, or are likely to become, conservation issues (eg. Jewel's Swamp).

David Kibble

Comming 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 July	Mid-week Outing: Meet: Contact:	Speers Point/Teralba Speers Point Pool Car Park Margaret Woods 633070
Wednesday 10th July	Clubnight: Main Feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30am Nature Photography in Eastern Australia - Greg Little
Saturday 13th July	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Port Stephens Area Meet: Leader:	Salt Ash Public School at 7:30am Ann Lindsey 512008
Sunday 21st July	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Swansea/Belmont Park near Cold Tea Creek at 8:00am John Cockerell
Sunday 28th July	Afternoon at the Pictures: "Mission Impossible" starring Tom Cruise Where: Ticket Sales:	Twin Towers Theatre Keith Woods
Saturday 3rd August	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Port Stephens Area Meet: Leader:	Salt Ash Public School at 7:30am Ann Lindsey 512008
Tuesday 6th August	Mid-week Outing: Meet: Contact:	Dudley/Awabakal Awabakal Field Study Centre Keith Woods 633070
Wednesday 14th August	Clubnight: Main Feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30am Birds of Macquarie Island - Alan Rogers
Sunday 25th August	Field Day: Meet: Contact: Leader:	Pilchers Mountain MacDonald's Raymond Terrace at 7:00am Wallaringa Road Turn-off, (Paterson/Dungog Road) at 7:50am Tom Clarke 513872 Bill Dowling 959230

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