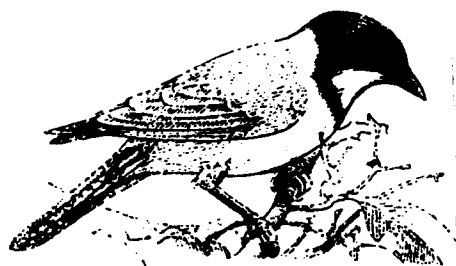


# NEWSLETTER



## 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.*

## Capertee Valley - Not Just Where The Regents Roam

AGM - February Club Night

Guest speaker for this evening needed no introduction; it was our AGM specialist David Geering. David is well known for his contributions towards the conservation of Regent Honeyeaters and has spent a great deal of time studying these birds in the Capertee Valley.

As he points out, the Capertee is a stronghold for Regent Honeyeaters in NSW. Last year he counted 130 birds and found 44 nests, the previous year he counted 260 birds and found 98 nests.

David has not spent all of his time in the Capertee looking at Regent Honeyeaters however and it is a wonderful thing to find out that the Capertee is chock full of other birds as well. During his various stays in that area, David has kept pretty good daily records of all bird species encountered as well as some of the animals.

Wombats and rabbits abound and the local rabbit population is sufficiently high to apparently support a very healthy raptor population. Wedge-tailed Eagle, Square-tailed Kite and Little Eagle all do very well. David has discovered at least eight Little Eagle nests and on one occasion saw fifteen Wedge-tailed Eagles in one paddock. Nocturnal birds of prey are well represented as well. Four pairs of Barking Owl have been located as well as heaps of Nightjars.

The whole area acts as a sanctuary for many

typical woodland birds such as Robins, Flycatchers and Honeyeaters. David once found twelve species of honeyeater within a 2ha study site. All of these birds will benefit from the rehabilitation work being carried out to accommodate the Regent Honeyeaters.

On the ground, the common birds are Painted Button-quail, Common Bronzewing, Diamond Dove and Red-rumped Parrot. The patient birdwatcher can be rewarded with good sightings of Turquoise Parrot. David has noted also the dramatic (sudden) arrivals of White-throated Gerygone and Rainbow Bee-eater to the area each year as well as the spectacular Woodswallow phenomenon of 1994.

The finches too, are well represented in the Capertee with Zebra Finch probably the most common. It is a very good place to go to find Diamond Firetail and a rare sighting of a Beautiful Firetail is even possible.

One of David's biggest worries about this terrific area is the amount of grazing by cattle along the river banks. This has the effect of maintaining zero regrowth of the River Sheoaks, a tree of great importance to the breeding success of Regent Honeyeaters. The aging existing trees will one day fall over and without replacement signals the demise of this habitat type.

Introduced bird species also are making their mark in the Capertee which adds to the pressures. Huge flocks of Common Starling are encountered and in 1995 David found Common Blackbird along the river.

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**2nd to 16th  
January 1998**

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# **HBOC Office Bearers And Appointed Positions For 1997**

## **Elected Office Bearers:**

**President  
Vice President  
Hon. Secretary  
Hon. Treasurer  
Management Committee**

**Ann Lindsey  
Peter MacLauchlan  
Peter Phillips  
Rowley Smith  
Sue Hamonet  
Wilma Barden  
Tom Clarke  
David Geering**

## **Appointed Positions:**

**Conservation Officer  
Conservation Committee**

## **Activities Officers**

**Librarian (Books)  
Assistant Librarian  
Librarian (Slides)  
Librarian (Audio/video)  
Records Officer  
Atlas Recorder  
Public Officer  
Public Relations Officer  
Publicity Officer  
Membership Officer  
Club Night Suppers  
Club Night Assistants**

**Auditor  
Newsletter Editor  
Garden Bird Survey Coordinator  
Annual Bird Report Editor**

**David Kibble  
Liz Herbert  
Ray Walker  
Michael Todd  
Liz Herbert  
Doug Biddle  
Keith Woods  
Pat Poutney  
John Cockerell  
Peter MacLauchlan  
Sue Hamonet  
Ed Hamonet  
Peter Phillips  
Marion Walker  
Judith Smith  
Rowley Smith  
NOT FILLED  
Judith Smith  
Ken Gibson  
Randall Watson  
Tom Clarke  
Peter MacLauchlan  
Alan Stuart**

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is 31st May, 1997

Mail to: Tom Clarke 28 Kokera St, Wallsend 2287  
Phone: (049) 513872 (h) (049) 401556 (w) Fax: (049) 401575

# Hunter Bird Observers Club - 16th Annual Report - 1996

Another year has flashed by during which HBOC turned 20 years of age. The birthday was celebrated at the May meeting by installing Wilma Barden as our first Life Member and by trying to replicate some of the events of that first meeting.

Individual members made extra contributions again in this year. Ray and Marion Walker visited Jesmond Public School's bird display, Keith and Margaret Woods organised and ran our second fabulous film fund raiser.

Peter MacLauchlan organised the Club's participation in the NSW and Victoria Beach Nesting Bird Survey and November saw many members walking the beaches between Foster and Swansea. The club's Clean Up Australia Day effort this year was at Throsby Creek after some harbour birdwatching with Tom Clarke who also organised the HBOC stall at the Throsby Regatta. Bird walks were organised for the Shortland Wetlands Centre 10th Anniversary celebrations as well as Bird Week.

Members attending the Bird Interest Groups Network at Toronga Zoo in March were introduced to the zoo's breeding program of the Regent Honeyeater. The HBOC hosted the August meeting where Peter MacLauchlan made an excellent presentation about the internet and the World Wide Web.

Our Twitchathon team, the Hunter Thickheads, came in third with 172 species in the twenty-four hour period and raised \$856 for bird conservation.

Several members continue to support the Garden Bird Survey collated by Peter

MacLauchlan. The 1995 Annual Bird Report came out on time with 347 species being discussed, 15 more than the previous year. In addition, Alan Stuart, the editor, has produced an occasional paper with games, puzzles and riddles for children.

The club finished the year with a handsome profit of \$1645.52 for a balance of \$8031.30. This was partly due to the income generated by charging outside Eco-Consulting firms for the use of our bird observation data.

Membership figures increased by 3 from the previous year. A total of 203 is made up of 69 single members, 128 family members and 6 junior members.

After the Conservation Charter was completed, the Conservation Committee worked tirelessly on several issues. Submissions were made regarding the Pacific Highway Charlestown Bypass and the Newcastle Council Ridglands plan of Management. A response was made to the plan for extensions to the Port Waratah Coal Services Kooragang Island terminal. We decided to oppose the erection of a fan ventilation shaft at Awaba Bay and to mount a major campaign to save the Big Pond on Kooragang Island. Other members attended public meetings about proposals for the use of land at Tenamit.

Average attendance at monthly Club Nights was 49.3 which is slightly up (0.8) from last year.

From 12 Field Outings during the year an average of 12 people attended with an average of 63 species observed. The popular Mid Week Outings also averaged 12 people in attendance. The camps to Pillaga, White Box and Munghorn Gap saw an increase in attendance but some cold and wet weather provided fewer birds.

The Book Library continues to

thrive with 75 borrowings and 6 new titles added. Thanks from Librarian Keith Woods to Margaret Woods, Pat Poutney and Max Blanch for their assistance.

The Audio-Video Library now contains a total of 79 recordings comprising 54 audio cassettes, 17 video cassettes and 8 compact discs. The calls and songs of 615 Australian bird species are now represented.

Slide library continues to get good usage but an audit of first class slides for Hunter birds highlighted some shortfalls. John Cockerell is keen to raise the standard of our Slide Library and any contributions will be well met.

It is with regret that I announce that our tea and biscuit bearers, Rosemary Waymark and Barbara Kelly, are resigning leaving room for someone else to perform this most important task. Thank you both for my personally delivered coffee after meetings. Also resigning after eight years on the Management Committee our brilliant Activities Officer, Graeme O'Connor, who knows every place in NSW and how to get there. Unfortunately, our Assistant Activities Officer, Stan Etheridge, is also retiring for the time being at least, whilst he recovers from knee operations.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic contributions of all the office bearers, our proactive Conservation Committee and the dedication of the Management Committee. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the club.

Ann Lindsey

The Annual Report for 1996, in its entirety and along with all its appendices can be found in the Club Library and is available for inspection by any member of HBOC.

## Blood Suckers At Barrington House.

Barrington House Field Outing  
Sunday 23rd February 1997.

As the sun was just peeping through the clouds on a very humid morning, a group of courageous birders enjoyed breakfast at McDonalds before hitting the road to Barrington House. Judith, Rowley and I thought we would count all the birds of prey that we saw while travelling to our destination but we only saw one, a Brown Falcon being chased by two Australian Magpies.

By the time we got to Barrington House the sun was shining brightly. On our first walk we saw an Eastern Whipbird, a Pale-yellow Robin and two Australian Brush-turkey mounds. While we were birding, there was a huge thunderous crash which turned out to be a falling tree.

After morning tea we set off down the road leading from Barrington House to observe the birdlife. We saw a Black-faced Monarch feeding two fledglings and a Brown Cuckoo-dove which was trying to hide in a tree. All around us we could hear Bell Miners. One of the ladies in our group (sorry, I don't know your name) and I stayed back a bit and got to see three Bell Miners really close to the ground.

When we arrived back at the Barrington House car park we had lunch and picked off the leeches! Max Blanch made friends with a leech that nearly sucked all the blood out of Alan Stuart!

When we were driving back to Newcastle, Tom Clarke spotted a dead bird on the side of the road so we stopped to identify it. It turned out to be a White-throated Nightjar that had been hit by a car.

All up we saw 44 bird species which wasn't such a great total.

Thanks to Judith and Rowley Smith for taking me up to Barrington House and thanks to Alan Stuart for bringing me home. All up a very enjoyable day.

Grant Brosie

## Stockton Sand Spit - Spic And Span

Clean Up Australia Day - 2nd March 1997

Despite some last minute hitches this event did happen and by any measure must be rated a roaring success. A very enthusiastic team of volunteers worked feverously through the morning to give this important bird area a clean up it desperately needed.

Six members of HBOC (Tom Clarke, Sue Hamonet, Ann Lindsey, Pat Poutney, Margaret & Keith Woods) gathered rubbish with three Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project people (Rob Henderson, John Rees and Peggy Svoboda) and two local residents from Fern Bay.

Together, this crew collected 40 bags of rubbish (small items) plus about 2 tonnes of other unbaggage larger items. The small stuff had a very big content of PET bottles found washed up amongst the mangroves while the larger items consisted mainly of building materials (sheets of cladding etc) and car parts (tyres, batteries etc). Some more interesting items collected included a television set, a lounge chair and some carpet. We tried very hard to find a coffee table and lamp to complete the setting but to no avail. You just can't depend on some things, can you.

One thing that you can depend on though is the fact that some people still prefer to throw rubbish at inappropriate places rather than make the effort to do the right thing.

Stockton Sand Spit is a little better off now as a result of this effort but it will remain an area requiring continual maintenance. Not only is the rubbish aspect a problem but the continuing battle with weeds remains an issue. Much of this problem was addressed during the initial rehabilitation of the sand spit but weeds do keep returning if left unattended. Future weeding parties (and not just on Clean Up Days) are necessary and should be encouraged whenever HBOC members are at the area birdwatching.

I would like to congratulate all those who attended and worked so hard; it was a job well done. I also look forward to an eclipsing turnout next year.

Clean Up Day is always on the first Sunday of March, so jot it down in your diaries now.

Tom Clarke

## Some Birds Of New Zealand

We recently spent three weeks in New Zealand, travelling in parts of both North and South Islands. During this time we renewed our acquaintance with many of the native birds, and managed to see a few new ones.

Fortunately many of the native birds are still known by their Maori names. For example, our common Purple Swampphen is known in New Zealand as the Pukeko, and is just as common as it is here. Sad to say, round the cities introduced birds such as House Sparrow, Common Blackbird, Common Starling and Common Myna seem to dominate the scene. It is mainly in the bush that one sees the native birds.

The Tui, sometimes known as the Parson Bird because of the white throat feathers on its otherwise dark plumage, is still quite common, even round cities. It has the curved beak of a honeyeater and has a beautiful song. When it hides in the foliage it is sometimes hard to see.

Along the seashore and the streams, Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls are the most common. The former are similar to our Silver Gull while the latter are larger than most of our gulls and their young are so different with their brown plumage that it is easy to mistake them for another species altogether. On the tidal flats near Thames we were surprised to see a large flock of Sooty Oystercatchers, over a hundred.

A common bird in the bush is the Kereru (New Zealand Pigeon) also known as the Kuku because of its gentle call note. It is a beautiful bird, similar in size to our White-headed Pigeon but in this bird it is the breast that is white. The Kereru feeds on the berries that are common in the bush especially in autumn. At other times it may resort to leaves.

A much smaller bird is the Grey Warbler, one of the Gerygone family. Like our Gerygones, it is much more often heard than seen.

Along the roads we frequently saw raptors rising from roadside kills. It was hard to identify them on the move but they were probably Australasian Harrier, the New Zealand representative of the Swamp Harrier.

We allowed a day in a camping ground not far from Napier with the aim of going once more to see the Gannets at Cape Kidnappers. My slides taken thirty years ago were now mouldy and I hoped to take some new ones for my collection and perhaps even donate a few to the Slide Library. Alas! it rained all the way there and back as we huddled under large tarpaulins on the backs of trailers drawn along the beach by tractors. As we neared the end of the beach we did see some small colonies of Gannets on outcrops of rock on the beach - something I don't remember seeing thirty years ago - but the main colony is up on the plateau near the cliff top. A few hardy souls tried the track but soon gave up when they found themselves slithering everywhere. The rest of us were glad to keep dry in a large shelter provided by the National Park. We were interested to hear that when Captain Cook sailed past here two hundred odd years ago, he did not record seeing any Gannets; though he was usually careful about such observations. Did he, like us encounter bad weather that day? Evidently the

birds arrived at a later date and their numbers have fluctuated considerably from time to time.

While visiting an historic village near Greymouth on the west coast of South Island, we saw a couple of Wekas, or Woodhens strolling around. The Weka is closely related to our Buff-banded Rail. According to one bird book they do valuable service in eliminating rats which would otherwise eat the eggs of many other bush birds. We have seen them before around Milford Sound.

Further south along the coast we heard of the "rare" White Heron which patronises a swampy area near the little settlement of Whataroa as its main nesting place in New Zealand. This "rare" bird, on investigation, turns out to be one of the Egret family, common enough on this side of the Tasman. We were already past their breeding area before we found exactly where it was and we did not go back because the breeding season was already over.

Near Milford Sound, and again near Mount Cook, we had encounters with the Keas. These are large greenish birds of the parrot tribe with long upper bills. These pesky birds are especially fond of attacking cars in car parks to get at any soft parts such as windscreen wipers and the rubber seals around the doors. On two occasions we came back to our hire car to find rubber parts had been nibbled away. Fortunately we had taken the option of paying the extra insurance to avoid any excess charge. Keas have also been accused of attacking young lambs but this probably occurs only when the lambs are sick and they perform a useful function in cleaning up carcasses. A similar bird with a grey head is called the Kaka. Still another parrot, this time nocturnal and ground dwelling, is the Kakapo. These were thought to be extinct on the mainland as their ground-dwelling habits exposed them to the attacks of dogs and other introduced animals. Not long ago these birds were found in Sinbad Gully, next to Mitre Peak. They can still be found on some offshore islands away from introduced predators.

The Kiwi, New Zealand's national bird, is also nocturnal. They are sometimes kept in special houses which are dark during the day (when visitors come to see them) and lit up at night. We visited one such house at Rotorua but were not fortunate enough to see the Kiwi.

In a wildlife park at Te Anau we were privileged to see two specimens of the Takahe, a ground-dwelling bird resembling the Purple Swampphen but much thicker in its body and its beak. Until 1948 the Takahe was thought to be extinct, but in that year two bush walkers exploring the mountain fastnesses of Fiordland came across some of them in the tussock area above the tree line where they live. Some were captured and reared in wildlife refuges, and there is still a programme to take eggs from under the sitting hen (if there is more than one egg) and hatch them in an incubator. The chicks are fed by hand but the hand that feeds them is clothed so as to resemble the head and beak of the adult bird. Adult birds are taken by helicopter to their natural habitat and released. Thus the Takahe is making a comeback.

Walking along a nature trail in the Beech forest we saw the tiny Rifleman, a friendly little bird like a thornbill which came quite close to us while constantly flitting everywhere, probing into cracks with its beak for the insects on which it feeds. Nearby we saw three Yellow-fronted

Parrakeets high among the tree tops where they can find the berries and seeds that they like. Later, in an aviary in the Dunedin Botanical Gardens, we saw their two relatives, the Red-fronted Parrakeets and the Antipodes Parrakeets. The latter found only on the Antipodes Islands in the Antarctic Ocean. According to Simpson and Day, the Red-fronted kind is endemic to Norfolk Island but I think our New Zealand counterparts would dispute that.

Another small bird sighted in the bush near Mount Cook was the Tomtit, a black and white member of the Robin family. Like the Rifleman, it is always flitting around looking for insects and larvae.

At Taiaroa Head, the southern headland at the entrance of Otago Harbour, there is an interesting wildlife area. Down below the rocky cliffs facing the sea there are sandhills up to 100 metres high and these are the home of the Yellow-eyed Penguin. When we were there some chicks had progressed to the stage where they could go out and do some foraging for themselves; and we could see them from a lookout high above the beach, surfing in on the waves, waddling across the sandy beach, and frequently stopping to rest while laboriously climbing those slippery sand hills.

On the way to see the Fur Seal colony nearby, we were fortunate to be able to snap a shot of a young penguin who had evidently lost its way. Not far away there is a colony of Blue Penguins, and in the past there has been a colony of Royal Albatross, but this year, we were told, there had been only one breeding pair.

The tidal flats inside the harbour provide plenty of pickings for the waders, including the Shags (Cormorants), Herons, and of course the Gulls.

We were happy to see many of these birds again in the video shown at our March Club Night.

Don Halliday

## NEW MEMBERS

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

Margaret Carmody of Fennell Bay

Bruce Cox of French's Forest

Diane Lamb of Milbrodale

Ross Thomson of Warners Bay

Judith Westphal of Warners Bay

we look forward to meeting you  
at Clubnights and field outings during the year.

## 1996 Annual Bird Report - Request For Bird Photographs

ABR Editor, Alan Stuart, is looking for photographs of birds suitable for publishing as either a cover picture or as additional illustration within the report.

Anyone who has photographs of local birds that can be scanned for printing is invited to contribute. Alan would only have your material for a very short time (enough to have it scanned) before returning it back to you.

All contributor's of photos that make the final print will be acknowledged within the publication. For further details ring Alan Stuart on 528569.

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# A Day In Paddy Lightfoot's Diary or Lost In The Urban Jungle

Jesmond/ Blackbutt Field Outing  
Sunday 23rd March 1997

8:00am: The world is my oyster. 27 Hunter Birdos assembled, faces shining with excitement, to say nothing of shining in the beautiful, warm autumn morning sun. My first attempt to lead a bird walk, what an opportunity!

8:05am We are off, plunging over the verge into Rankin Park bushland off McCaffery Drive. A splendid walk through dry sclerophyll forest, the track lined by small Acacias, Pultenaeas and Banksias. Down, down to a creek where a colony of Bell Miners have been in residence for some years. These inquisitive birds come right down to outstare we intruders. Like their relatives the Noisy Miners, they tend to act very aggressively towards any small birds in their territory. They are said to farm lerps, eating the sugary secretions but preserving the insects, and this, together with the exclusion of other insect eating birds, in turn leads to gradual dieback of the Eucalypt forests and the birds have to move on. Above the canopy, flocks of King Parrots and Sulphur -crested Cockatoos wheel and cry. This is Australia!

8:45am The 27 Hunter Birdos wind slowly uphill toward the "John". Spotted Pardalotes are everywhere, insect hopping their way through the tree tops. The few Eucalypts in flower attracting Lewin's and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. We pass an ancient Cycad, the Burrawang *Macrozamia communis*, in full fruit. The male and female flowers are on separate plants. Europeans watched the Aborigines use the seed pulp as flour in their cooking. When they used the seeds they became very ill. What they had not observed was that the Aborigines had carefully leached the pulped seeds for two weeks in running water. Why? - the seeds contain cyanide.

9:15am Hunter Birdos have passed through the grounds of the John Hunter Hospital and down the bike track heading towards Jesmond Park. At our next pause to look for Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters - what a shock, horror! A calamity, we are no longer 27 Birdos. The President and her entourage are missing, lost. I can't believe the facts. I have, as leader, lost a number of my charges. My trusty lieutenant, Rowley Smith, is despatched in haste to search for the group.

9:30am Bad news. Rowley, after a thorough search around John Hunter, finds no sign, not even bones, of the missing persons. My eyes glaze, I can see the next Wingspan headlines - "Promising Provincial President's Presidency Pruned (or Preened) in Prime by Feisty Featherless Fledgling".

10:00am In spite of a feeling akin to gnawing despair over the loss of our friends, we see several of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. This colony in Jesmond Park has been located in the same area on all of my visits to the Jesmond Park Bushland. The only other local colony I know of is at Green Point. And so we head back to Ridgeway Road and morning tea.

10:20am Found alive and well. What a reunion, the Lost Patrol had faught it's way clear of the urban jungle of John Hunter Hospital's grounds and were calmly partaking of their elevenses, no thoughts for their worried friends and leader!

11:30am Post hot cross buns, keeping the President and her associates in constant view, we head off into the northern end of Blackbutt Reserve. This is a known camp for the Powerful Owl. A pair has been spotted intermittently over the past few years and have raised at least two dependent young during this period. They tend to roost in the Casuarinas and Turpentine. They are large, to 60cm, and beautiful birds. We traversed their camp gully but, alas no owls. The gully in itself is worth walking through with a Gahnia line creek and smallish rainforest trees and shrubs.

We then slowly ambled over to Jo Richley Reserve. The reserve's two ponds are fenced off due to an outbreak of Blue-green Algae. This gave us a feeling of trepidation. Just where are we headed with our environment? What are we doing in the suburbs around Blackbutt? Should we be continuing to artificially feed the wild birds and to maintain the numerous exotic geese on the ponds? This artificial feeding may lead to an unecologically sustainable number of wild and domestic birds pouring nutrients into the water. On one of the ponds were five tiny, very young Dusky Moorhens. Their parents pulling weed off the pond bottom and feeding small quantities, by beak to beak transfer, to the youngsters.

In an Ironbark in the reserve two Tawny Frogmouths camouflaged themselves on their favourite branch. They have camped, during daylight, on this same branch to my knowledge for the past three to four years.

1:00pm Home for lunch. What a relief, Ann and Sue this time accounted for - all's well that ends well. We birdos were able to relax, enjoy lunch and write up the "bird call" - 47 species.

Paddy Lightfoot

# "BIG POND" LETTERS

The future of the "Big Pond" (adjacent to Cormorant Road, Kooragang Island) and therefore the future of the many small waders that frequent this shallow open habitat is in our hands. The recently completed expansion of the Port Waratah Coal Services coal handling facility is a dramatic warning of how very quickly good wader habitat can be lost. The area in question is designated for industrial development and has been so for a long time but as it is the only piece of likely habitat left suitable for small waders in the estuary, its value to wildlife conservation cannot be overstated.

It is the objective of HBOC to raise awareness of the importance of this area despite its unlikely appearance and well documented industrial future. Club member, David Geering, wrote a great article (Importance of the "Big Pond", Kooragang Is. - HBOC Newsletter Issue 5/96) outlining many of the valid points for retaining this habitat and managing its water depths. David also spoke on a local radio interview to express these thoughts more publically.

Further to that, our Conservation Officer, David Kibble has written to various politicians stating our case for the need to retain these shallow waters and a reply from the Minister for Public Works and Services was received. This reply is copied here in full on the next page. David (Kibble this time) has returned the favour and also offers a draft letter of reply which can be used as a model for others to copy.

Letters from individuals to the Minister for Public Works and Services or anyone else of influence that you can think of are required at this stage to help underscore our arguments. Feel free to use all of the draft letter or only parts as you see fit and refer to David Geering's article for other information about Big Pond as well as your own. Just the fact that you rely on this area to see species like Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper etc. is an indication of its value.

As a follow up to this exercise it would be helpful if members could let David Kibble know if they have received replies or not from the Minister.

A (draft) reply to the Minister for Public Works and Services Letter of 8th January 1997.

The Hon Carl Scully MP  
Minister for Public Works and Services  
Level 34  
Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Dear Mr. Scully

I am concerned that your department seems to have missed the point regarding HBOC's interest in Kooragang Island's Big Pond. The club is fully aware that this is an artificial wetland and that it only became flooded when earth works were carried out many years ago. We are also aware that the Big Pond's water level was not stabilised until Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS) built a small weir at the request of HBOC in 1994. In short we are fully aware that the Big Pond is not a natural feature of Kooragang Island; we are not seeking protection for the Big Pond for general environmental reasons. Artificial or not, the Big Pond is a unique and tremendously important habit for migratory waders. There is absolutely no certainty that the establishment of "ponds for wading birds elsewhere on the island" will provide a suitable alternative to the Big Pond.

The Big Pond is really a misnomer, it is not big at all. The Big Pond is less than one square kilometre in area. Please forgive the pun, but the Big Pond is only a drop in the ocean of 7% of Kooragang Island that is vacant industrial land. Your government, the people of NSW, even possible developers would not miss it. However tourists, birdwatchers, naturalists, in fact the people of NSW would certainly appreciate its preservation. And of course the thousands of birds that will continue to depend on the Big Pond.

The preservation of the Big Pond will assist Australia meet its obligation to protect shorebirds and their habitat that we assumed when we became signatories to the Ramsar Convention and to migratory bird agreements with Japan (JAMBA) and China (CAMBA).

Please reconsider the sentiment expressed in your letter and take steps to ensure that the Big Pond is protected.

Yours sincerely  
XXXXX XXXXXX





*Minister for Public Works and Services*  
*Minister for Ports*  
*Assistant Minister for Energy*  
*Assistant Minister for State and Regional Development*

RML 19961304

Mr D Kibble  
Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc  
PO Box 24  
NEW LAMBTON NSW 2305

8 JAN 1997

Dear Mr Kibble

I refer to your letter dated 16 November 1996 regarding land adjacent to Cormorant Road, Kooragang Island.

Investigations have revealed that the land in question was used for grazing purposes for many decades and apparently it only became flooded when earth works were carried out on Kooragang Island, and the water was not maintained at a constant level until dammed in 1994.

I am also aware that the vacant industrial land on Kooragang Island represents only approximately 7% of the island's area, and as there is limited industrial land close to major cities left in New South Wales, you will understand that industrial land with good road access is at a premium.

As the majority of Kooragang Island remains as grazing land or in its natural state, I have instructed my department to investigate the possibility of establishing ponds for wading birds elsewhere on the island. Once investigations are underway, the department will contact you to advise you of progress.

I trust this information is of assistance to the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. and would be obliged if you would pass it on to your members.

Yours sincerely

**CARL SCULLY MP**  
**Minister for Public Works and Services**

## OBSERVATIONS FROM FEBRUARY MEETING.

Jul/Oct	Southern Emu-wren	1	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
Sep/Nov	Pheasant Coucal	2	Bob's Farm	"
Nov 22	Black-faced Monarch	1	Bob's Farm	"
Nov 23	Powerful Owl	1	Blackbutt Reserve	P. Lightfoot
Nov 27	Pheasant Coucal	1	Diamond Beach, Forster	M. Woods
Nov. 27	Shining Bronze-cuckoo	1 juv	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
Dec	Rufous Songlark	1	Garden Suburb	J. Perry
Dec 1	Channel-billed Cuckoo	3	Shortland	K. Gibson
Dec 6	Channel-billed Cuckoo	3	Birmingham Gardens	K. Gibson
Dec 3	Ruff	2	Stockton Borehole Swamp	J. Perry
Dec 3	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	Awaba	N. Granter
Dec 4/5	Common Tern	250+	Stockton Beach	D. Biddle
Dec 4/5	Pied Oystercatcher	4	" "	"
Dec 4/5	Little Tern	3	" "	"
Dec 4/5	White-bellied Sea-eagle	2+1 imm	" "	"
Dec 4/5	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	30+	" "	"
Dec 6	Cicadabird	1	Clarencetown	L. Storm
Dec 8	Y.T.B.C.	30	Williamtown RAAF base	D. Geering
Dec 10	Painted Snipe	1	Ash Island	D. Geering
Dec 9	Red-rumped Parrot	5	Gresford	G. Brosie
Dec 11	Eastern Whipbird	3+	Blackbutt Reserve	"
Dec 25	Eastern Rosella immature	12-16	New Lambton Heights	I. & M. Hamilton
Dec 25	Variegated Wren	1	New Lambton Heights	"
Dec 25	Purple Swamphen	Pr. + 2 juv	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
Dec 31	Pacific Baza	2+2 dy	Balmoral	P. Durie
Jan	White-winged Triller	1	Cedar Hill Drive, Minmi	J. Perry
Jan	Common Koel	1	Mirrabooka	G. McCulloch
Jan	Dollarbird	4	"	"
Jan	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	4	"	"
Jan	Sooty Owl [heard]	1	Mt. Vincent	A. Zoneff
Jan 1	Striated Heron	1	Toronto	P. Durie
Jan 1-8	Rainbow Lorikeet	2 + 2 juv.	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
Jan 5	Long-billed Corella	3	Tanilba Bay	A. Stuart
Jan 9	Wonga Pigeon	1	Clarencetown	L. & J. Storm
Jan 14	Regent Bowerbird	3	New Lambton Heights	M. Hamilton
Jan 14	Eastern Spinebill	2+2 dy	" " "	"
Jan 15	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	Seaham	G. Mae
Jan 16	Sooty Owl	1	Coopersnook State Forest	J. Cockerell
Jan 19	Eastern Whipbird	2+2dy	New Lambton Heights	M. Hamilton
Jan 19	Eastern Yellow Robin	2+2dy	New Lambton Heights	"
Jan 20	Spangled Drongo	1	" " "	"
Jan 20	White-browed Scrubwren	1	" " "	"
Jan 21	Common Myna	60	New Lambton Bowling Club	T. Clarke
Jan 23	Regent Bowerbird	1	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Jan 24	Barking Owl [heard calling]		New Lambton Heights	M. & I. Hamilton
Jan 27	Brown Cuckoo-Dove	1	" " "	"
Jan 27	Arctic Jaeger	2	Pelican	R. Yank
Jan 27	Buff-banded Rail	1	Pelican	"
Jan 28	White-eared Honeyeater	1	Kurri Kurri	"
Jan 28	White-throated Treecreeper	1	" " "	"
Jan 30	Nankeen Night-heron	2	Buttaba	R. Waymark
Jan 31	Red Wattlebird feeding Koel	1	Toronto	P. Durie
Feb 1	Satin Flycatcher	1m.	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
Feb 17	Satin Flycatcher	2f.	Bob's Farm	"
Feb 5	Reef Heron	1	Merewether Baths	K. Imrie
Feb 5	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	1,000	Merewether/Bar Beach	A. Stuart
Feb 6	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	50	" " "	"
Feb 6	Pacific Baza	1	Wakefield	J. Cockerell
Feb 8	Osprey	1	Seaham Swamp	L. & C. Herbert
Feb 10	Rainbow Bee-eater	1	Kurri Kurri	R. Yank
Feb 20	Common Koel [juvenile]	1	Wingen	G. Newling
Feb 23	Brown Falcon	1	Underbank	T. Clarke
Feb 23	Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	Underbank	"
Feb 23	Brown Falcon	1	Myall Creek	"
Feb 23	Brown Falcon	1	5km. North of Eccleston T.O.	"
Feb 23	Black Kite	1	5km south of Wingen	G. Newling
Feb 26	Pacific Baza	1	Charlestown	R. Yank
Feb	Tawny Frogmouth	2	Toronto	P. Durie

Mar. 3	Arctic Jaeger	6+	50km East of Pt. Stephen	J.Perry
<b>OBSERVATIONS FROM MARCH CLUBNIGHT</b>				
Jul 7	Osprey	1	4k. South of Old Bar	M.Bell
	Brahminy Kite	1	" " " "	"
Sep	Masked Owl	1	<b>25km North of Wingham</b>	<b>M.Bell</b>
Sep 15	Striated Pardalote Nest	2	Lemon Tree Passage	M.Kearns
Oct 19	Spotted Pardalote nest	1-2	Lemon Tree Passage	"
Nov 20	Australasian Grebe nest	1	S.W.C.	"
Nov 23	Blue-faced Honeyeater 1+1juv+2dy	2	Tanilba Bay	"
Nov 30	Yellow-faced Honeyeater nb	2	Hunter Botanic Gardens	"
Nov 26	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	4	Fosterton Loop Rd	H.Tarrant
	Grey Goshawk	1f	Fosterton Loop Rd	"
Dec	Osprey Nest Pr. + 1 yng	3	Old Bar	M.Bell
Dec 8	Pallid Cuckoo imm.	1	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Dec 26	Long-billed Corella	70+	Bolwarra	"
Dec 27	Grey-tailed Tattler	36	Lemon Tree Passage	M.Kearns
Dec 29	Mallee Ringneck	6	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Dec 29	Black Swan	120	Myall Lakes N.P.	M.Kearns
Dec 31	Noisy Miner nest	1	Myall Shores	"
Jan 1	Black-necked Stork	3	Lower Myall River	"
	Black Swan	200	Lower Myall River	"
	Azure Kingfisher	4	Lower Myall River	"
Jan 5	Channel-billed Cuckoo	3+1juv	Lemon Tree Passage	"
Jan 1	Pallid Cuckoo immature		Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Jan 9	Peregrine Falcon	1	Bolwarra	"
Jan 15	Yellow-tailed Black C/too	3	Bolwarra	"
Jan 27	Pallid Cuckoo immature		Bolwarra	"
Feb	Mangrove Heron	1	Minmi [flying over]	G.O'Connor
	Swamp Harrier	1	Marmong Point	B.Kibble
Feb 14	Tree Martin	150	Bolwarra S.T.W.	H.Tarrant
Feb 15	Great Crested Grebe	10	Walka Water Works	D.Biddle
	Ruddy Turnstone	20-30	Newcastle Ocean Baths	R.Parker
Feb 18	Welcome Swallow	80+	Bolwarra S.T.W.	H.Tarrant
Feb 19	Pacific Baza	1	Newcastle University	D.Biddle
Feb 20	Crested Pigeon	110+	Newcastle University	P.McLauchlan
Feb 21	Y.T.B.C.	3	Toronto	S.Hamomet
Feb 23	Peregrine Falcon	1	Woodberry Swamp	D.Biddle
Feb 28	White-headed Pigeon	6	Mungo Brush	M.Kearns
Feb 28	Y.T.B.C.	48	Dawson's Landing, Myall R.	"
	Little Wattlebird	20+	Mungo Brush	"
	Noisy Miner nb	1	Mungo Brush	"
Mar 1	Olive-backed Oriole	16	Mungo Brush	"
Mar 1	White-breasted Sea-eagle	1	Myall Lakes N.P.	"
Mar 3	Whistling Kite nb	2	Myall Shores	"
Mar 1-10	Common Koel immature	1	Beresified	D.Biddle
Mar 8	Australian Hobby	1	Woodberry	J.Smith
Mar 10	Australian Hobby	1	Belmont South	J.Cockerell
Mar 10	Collared Sparrowhawk	1	Steelworks Golf Club	A.Stuart
	White-throated Needletail	1	Steelworks Golf Club	"
Mar 10	House Sparrow	200+	Woodberry	J.Smith
	Indian Myna	100+	Woodberry	"
	Common Starling	50+	Woodberry	"
Mar 11	Eastern Curlew	135	Stockton Sandspit	A.Ryan
Mar 12	Chestnut Teal	50+	Woodberry Swamp	D.Biddle
	Whistling Kite	1	Lemon Tree Passage	M.Kearns

Bold entries represent Category 3 species and will thus require assessment by Records Appraisal Committee.

# 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.

Sunday 20th April	Field Day: Meet: Contact:	Main Creek/ Dungog area McDonald's Raymond Terrace 7:30am Ann Lindsey 512008
Anzac Day Weekend 25th-27th April	Camp: Contact:	Swans Crossing Sue Hamonet 581023
Saturday 3rd May	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Salt Ash area. Meet: Leader:	Cr. Masonite Rd & Cabbage Tree Rd Williamtown 7:30am Ann Lindsey 512008 Intending participants must ring to confirm
Tuesday 6th May	Midweek Outing: Meet: Contact:	Marmong Point Cr. George & High St, Marmong Pt. 8:00am Keith Woods 633070
Wednesday 14th May	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm African Safari by Ann Lindsey
Sunday 25th May	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Ellalong Swamp McDonalds Cessnock 8:00am Jenny Meynell 981390
Tuesday 3rd June	Midweek Outing: Meet: Contact:	Shortland Wetlands Centre Shortland Wetlands Centre 8:00am Max Blanch 611655
Queen's Birthday Weekend 7th-9th June	Camp: Contact:	Smiths Lake (UNSW Field Station) Tom Clarke 513872
Wednesday 11th June	Clubnight: Main Feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Birds for the Olympics by Phil Straw
Sunday 22nd June	Field Day: Meet: Leader:	Wetlands Day Teralba Post Office 8:00am Ann Lindsey 512008

## Invitation To Attend

The Australian Wildlife Sound Recording Group  
is holding a workshop at Little Desert, Victoria (near Nhill) 5th-9th October, 1997  
Anyone interested, whether beginners or professional, should contact:

By post:	Fred van Gessel	1/38 Priestman Ave, Umina NSW 2257
or by FAX:	Fred van Gessel	02 9562 3181
or by Email:	Stuart Fairbairn	fbain@mpx.com.au
or by phone:	Judy Wiles	02 9498 5799