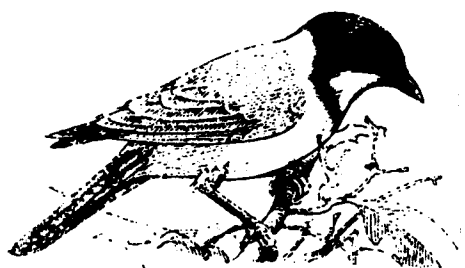


# NEWSLETTER



## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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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.*

## Fossicking For Jewels In The Littoral Belt

August Club Night

Birdwatchers spend a lot of time hunting around searching for treasures (avian) within the fabric of various habitats. While not admitting to being a birdo at all, our guest speaker for the evening, Keith Davey is like minded when it comes to crustaceans of the seashore.

Keith describes himself as a naturalist/camera man and has an interesting background of work within television, nature books and photography. One of Keith's projects at this moment is to photograph all the animals that can be found between the high and low tide levels along the east coast of Australia. Of particular interest to Keith is the section known as the Eastern Warm Temperate Zone.

Keith's presentation on the night dealt mainly with crabs and the incredible variety (and beauty) that can be found just around Port Stephens and Port Hunter. Apart from a couple of large well known types like the Mangrove Crab and Blue Swimmer Crab (which we like to fish and eat) the rest of these creatures must surely go relatively unnoticed to all but the ardent beachcomber.

Keith Davey knows where to look as well in his search of subjects for his camera. He explained to us how the seashore is divided into several narrow bands or zones from above high tide through to low tide and that different crabs live within each zone.

The Ghost Crab is almost a land crab as it burrows in the dry sand far above high water. In the evenings these animals come out and run down to the wet areas to feed. Another common species is the Soldier Crab and these can be found on the sandy flats of estuaries. Thousands of these blue coloured crabs move about in hordes over the wet but exposed tidal flat at low tide. In some of the more sheltered ocean beaches another burrowing type, the Sand Bubbler Crab can be found. Again as low tide exposes the wet sand these creatures come out to feed on the layer of organic matter that is left on the sand surface.

Crabs found in more muddy conditions such as mangrove flats include Semaphore Crabs and Fiddler Crabs. These crabs all have very interesting patterns and colours and make terrific images once photographed. Their various shades of purple contrast well with the cream, red or orange parts of their bodies and are a surprise to the observer once the mud is washed off. Another tiny crab found in the mud appears (when washed) as a vivid cobalt-green with bright orange claws.

Keith, through necessity, spends a great deal of his time wallowing about "up to his elbows" in mud or carefully picking his way along a beach looking under stones etc searching for his subjects. The time spent has been well worth while since he has obviously "discovered" many gems.

Keith is also an expert in the use of multimedia equipment and his presentation was done entirely from a computer! He has all his best slides and videos of crabs stored in a computer data base and he carries it around on a compact disk.

# Just Had To Sit There And Watch It All Go By.

Field Outing to Colliery Dam - July 1997

Colliery Dam is situated on private property next to the dirt road that takes you from George Booth Drive to Mulbring and the creek that fills the dam finally runs into Wallis Creek. For years I have driven past the place and occasionally have stopped by the dam wall for a quick look over the water and always wondered what good things, birdwise, might be found up around the bend.

So I was very excited about going to Colliery Dam when the HBOC had been granted permission to walk onto the place (as has been the case on previous outings there) and I was free to go birdwatching.

From our car park next to the muster yards, a short walk across a lightly timbered paddock took us to the south end of the dam. This timbered area is territory to a clan of Grey-crowned Babblers who provide a travelling entertainment as they continually move from tree to tree to ground to tree etc. Their antics are matched by their "yahoo" calls and other sounds not unlike that of a toy horn. Also of interest was a pair of Spotted Pardalote busy trying to make up their minds where the best place was to dig a nest hole in a small washed out gully.

With that behind us we descended upon the shoreline of the dam. At this end it more represents a permanent wetland as it bends and narrows into the feeder creek. At one particularly good advantage point on a sunny hillside, good views through a spotting scope were ours both up and down and across the waters. This is where a small section of our group spent most of the early morning taking in much of the detail of what was on the dam.

Breeding Black Swan were well represented and three distinct pairs demonstrated different stages of breeding effort. One pair was busy building a nest mound from vegetation dredged from the bottom of the dam, another pair were attending to the duties of brooding (I couldn't tell if they had eggs or nestlings) while a third pair had already successfully bred and were still caring for at least one dependant youngster.

Of most interest of course were the Comb-crested Jacana and a total of five individuals could be separately accounted for. Colliery Dam has been favoured by this species over the years and should remain that way as long as the pressures of

sub-division can be kept in check. One particular individual (jacana) was found to be an immature bird with a brown crown and without the colourful comb or face markings. This bird also appeared to be a little clumsy in getting about over the floating plants and was never too far away from an adult but we could not properly establish it as a dependant.

After a pleasant tea break back at the cars our group decided to explore the feeder creek and the woodland beyond. An excellent sighting of a Tawny Frogmouth (found by Liz Herbert who was having a great day) in classic "dead branch" pose was rewarding. The bird was about 20m above the ground and was perched near a matching dead branch of the same grey tones. The bird's tail feathers were not unlike the ribbons of peeling bark from that same tree!

We never really made it into the woodland (others who had walked off earlier did) but a cleared area slightly reclaimed by regrowth proved to be a real hot spot of activity. This area was bordered by the creek, the wooded margin of the wetland and the dense woodlands further upstream.

My first observation here was a Jacky Winter and before we had retreated a total of four individuals had been counted. A troupe of Superb Fairy-wren, a few Double-bar Finches plus Yellow-rumped Thornbills moved about over the ground and in low shrubs. Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Brown Thornbills and Striated Thornbills kept mainly to the leafy areas of taller shrubs and trees while Little Friarbird chased aerial insects from its station within the tree tops.

All these birds were busy feeding here and there while a quiet male Golden Whistler sat presumably not hungry at all and watched from an acacia. Finally a mob of Red-browed Finches moved through the place which meant that by standing still for a while we had proved it to be very beneficial for birdwatching.

Tom Clarke

It is interesting also to contemplate whether it is by accident or design that these different species find themselves feeding together at a time when territorial responsibilities are not so great (See Mike Newman's article on mixed foraging flocks in this newsletter).

# Mixed Foraging Flocks In A Woodville Woodland.

A feature of the autumn and winter months is the tendency of birds to form mixed foraging flocks. In the area which I survey each month there are three such flocks. Failure to locate them makes the difference between a good and an average mornings birdwatching. Finding these groups of birds can be a little difficult, as they move around locally. Fortunately in my area Speckled Warblers are often members of the flocks, and they are quite vocal. Indeed they appear to be the flock's alarm system. Jacky Winters also are a good indicator of a flock's presence, being conspicuous at a distance when hawking insects, by displaying their white tail flashes. I guess I have always found Speckled Warblers and Jacky Winters worth a detour from my usual route, and I now realise that they have been providing a considerable boost to the bird list.

While each of my flocks has Speckled Warblers as core members, there are subtle differences in the composition of the flocks, possibly as a consequence of differences in the structure of the habitat they frequent. One flock in an area with fairly extensive shrub understory is comprised primarily of small ground feeding species, including both Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens as well as Red-browed Finches. Thornbills, particularly Yellow Thornbills, and Brown Gerygones are also frequent members of this flock. In winter Brown Gerygones are very common in the open woodland areas, having moved out of the dense wet forest areas where they breed, forming quite large flocks at times.

The second mixed foraging flock frequents an area of woodland with very little understory. This is the flock favoured by the Jacky Winters who prefer open areas with low perches for their hawking. Here the Speckled Warblers feed on the sparsely grassed ground with Buff-rumped Thornbills. Other members of this group include Varied Sittellas and White-throated Treecreepers. In the foliage Grey Fantails are active together with a Golden Whistler, Yellow-faced Honeyeater and Fuscous Honeyeater. The impression gained is that the very mobile honeyeaters are transient, rather than constant members of the group.

The final flock frequents intermediate

habitat, combining open areas with some shrub understory. In this case the inevitable Speckled Warblers share the understory with White-browed Scrubwrens and Silvereyes as well as the Fairy-wrens. Thornbills and honeyeaters, including Lewin's Honeyeater are present in the lower foliage of the trees, together with an immature male Rose Robin.

Why do these birds form mixed foraging flocks? It has been suggested that there are a number of advantages. Collectively the flock will be more efficient at detecting predators. Although the Speckled Warblers are often the alarm system, it is unlikely that they are the most observant members of the community, because they spend much of their time foraging on the ground. However, when disturbances occur they fly up to a perch and their grating scrubwren like alarm call can be heard over considerable distances, punctuated by their surprisingly melodic song, which is reminiscent of the Striated Fieldwren. In addition the flock is collectively more efficient at obtaining food than each bird would be as an individual. For instance the birds foraging on the ground, in the foliage and on the trunks stir up insects for those feeding by hawking, which includes the Jacky Winters and Grey Fantails. As a group the flock are also more effective in finding areas where food is more abundant, at a time of year when food is relatively scarce. As each species is specialising on different types of food and parts of the habitat, they are cooperative rather than competitive. However, when they have moved through an area they have cleaned it out, so don't return to exactly the same hot spot for your bird watching a week later and expect it to be a vibrant hive of activity. However if you do go back, with a bit of luck a Speckled Warbler, or some other noisy avian alarm system will tell you where the flock has moved on to.

These notes were inspired by a walk through woodland at Woodville on 12th July 1997. As I walked away from the third group a Striated Thornbill was found building its nest, a reminder that the groups will soon disperse as the different species start nesting and find it more advantageous to be territorial than cooperative.

Mike Newman

# Bopping And Birding By Bus

Well that wasn't what the glossy travel brochure said! It indicated that we could travel by coach from Cairns over the Atherton Tablelands, then visit the Undara Lava Tubes, and travel on through Croydon and Normanton to Karumba, on the southern shores of the Gulf Of Carpentaria. From there we would travel through 'outback' Queensland towns to Carnarvon Gorge National Park, and on through Roma, Toowoomba, Tenterfield and back home via the New England Highway.

We thought it was a great opportunity to see parts of Queensland we had never visited, and decided to incorporate a BOP Watch survey en-route. BOPing by coach lets one concentrate on Birds Of Prey and the scenery, with no thought of watching the road at the same time!

Once we got over the Atherton Tablelands and started heading west and then south the most prolific bird of prey was the Whistling Kite. As well as numerous roadside sightings, they congregate over the country towns in constantly wheeling flocks looking for what they can scavenge. Wedge-tailed Eagles, Brown Falcons and Nankeen Kestrels showed up in small numbers, with a few sightings of Black Kite making the tally until we reached Longreach. The Whistling Kite then dropped dramatically while Nankeen Kestrels and Black-shouldered Kites became much more prevalent with the occasional Wedge-tailed and Little Eagle.

We visited the Undara Lava Tubes and found it an incredible experience to walk where molten lava had once flowed. At an open air cafe after the inspection we were provided with background music by a pair of Pied Butcherbirds with the ever present Peaceful Doves "doodle-doing" in the background, whilst Brown Honeyeaters, Pale-headed Rosellas and Red-winged Parrots worked around the treetops. On the road again Brolgas in small groups were frequently seen plus the occasional Australian Bustard.

At a stopover in Georgetown we had a large tree outside our motel window where a flock of 30+ Apostlebirds roosted. (No one had told them they are only supposed to have twelve to the flock.) It wasn't till well after dusk that they had finished fighting and squabbling over their favoured roosting spots. The town of Croydon remains in my memory as it was there we saw six Rainbow Bee-eaters using the power lines around the town as perches whilst hawking for insects.

As we travelled south the next day Black Kites, Nankeen Kestrels and Wedge-tailed Eagles were added to our tally. Close to 200km south of Normanton we stopped at the Burke and Wills Roadhouse for lunch. We noticed what seemed to be a Childcare group in a shelter shed there and fell into conversation with a young mum. She told us that it was in fact a travelling play group run by the Uniting Church which did the rounds of isolated towns on a three monthly basis. It catered for children aged about two to

twelve years and afforded the kids from various properties an opportunity to come together occasionally for social contact otherwise denied by their isolation. Our young mum told us they all came from 'close by', she having travelled about an hour, the furthest about an hour and a half.

On then to Cloncurry where we visited the John Flynn Museum, honouring the founder of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. We then travelled through Mt. Isa and Kyuna to Winton, the home of Qantas. That evening we attended one of Australia's last remaining open air cinemas and watched classic 'Chas E Banks' slides followed by some abridged 1940 vintage films. The following day we did a side trip to Lark Quarry where the tracks of three different sized dinosaurs were preserved about 100 million years ago when they stampeded across the soft mud on the edge of a lake. The site is preserved under cover and is easily accessed by a raised walkway. On the way there we saw 30+ Whistling Kites and two Wedge-tailed Eagles feeding on a road killed beast.

After a visit to the Stockmans Hall of Fame at Longreach we took a cruise on the 'longreach' of the Thompson River from which the town derives its name. As we cruised we were fortunate enough to see a Whistling Kite returning to its nest with food and feeding a nestling. Their large and untidy stick-nests were in many trees over and along the river.

At Carnarvon Gorge National Park I ascended Boolimba Bluff and was rewarded with magnificent views of the gorge and surrounding countryside. As I was standing there enjoying the view a Wedge-tailed Eagle soared past me at eye level and about 100 metres away. It would have made a great photo shot but I was so busy admiring it I forgot about the camera! The lower areas of the gorge supported hundreds of Rainbow Lorikeet as well as King Parrot, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Red-backed and Variegated Fairy-wren, Rufous Whistler, thornbills and pardalotes. A birdo's smorgasbord! Night time viewing saw a Southern Boobook and many Bettongs and wallabies plus a pair of Brush-tailed Possums on our verandah.

On our departure from Carnarvon Gorge we came upon a group of eight Australian Bustards who made no attempt to move away as we viewed and photographed them from within our coach. Near Emerald at Fairburn Dam we saw in excess of 300 Nankeen Night Heron, mostly adults with a few juveniles perched on trees around the water's edge.

We did this trip in early August and had fine sunny weather with cool to cold nights, a great time to visit that part of Australia.

A tally of the Bird Of Prey we observed is;  
Wedge-tailed Eagle (11), Little Eagle (4), Whistling Kite (305), Black Kite (3), Square-tail Kite (1), Black-shouldered Kite (26), Brown Falcon (5), Black Falcon (1), Nankeen Kestrel (48), unidentified BOP (74).

John & Cynthia Grebert

Further information concerning BOP Watch can be obtained by contacting Will Steele at Birds Australia, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorne East, Victoria 3123.

# Lake Macquarie Coastline Management Plan Workshop

On Saturday 16th August I attended a workshop run by *Umwelt(Australia) Pty Ltd Environmental and Catchment Management Consultants*, whose brief was to prepare a coastline management plan for Lake Macquarie City Council. About 60 people from a variety of community groups attended. The purpose of the workshop was to identify issues and options for the future of LMCC's coastline.

Coastline was defined as *the area directly affected by coastal influences, and areas directly connected by water flow or public access*. This was widened to include *context areas (Pinney Development, Awabakal, Glenrock Lagoon, Belmont Lagoon)*.

Those present were divided into several groups, each group was allocated a stretch of coastline and asked to identify issues and possible solutions. We were asked specifically to consider a *coastal walk*.

The following are a number of points that captures the mood of the workshop;

1. There should be a (very) low impact walk with disabled access at strategic points.
2. 4WD access should be severely limited and controlled and in certain places banned.
3. The preservation of heritage areas (natural & man-made) be a priority.
4. Expand existing recreation and research areas (Glenrock, Awabakal).
5. Low impact recreation favoured.
6. All groups gave conservation values a high priority, but realised the 'need' or 'inevitability' of development.
7. Extraordinary high level of (non professional) knowledge.
8. Several people advocated the establishment of a Coastal Wetland/Marine/Dune Research Institution on the wetland between Belmont North and Swansea. This idea generated great excitement and has obviously been floated before.
9. The workshop strongly endorsed a recommendation that "Little Tern nesting sites and potential sites be identified and that steps be taken to protect them. And that HBOC's aid be sought to achieve this."

David Kibble  
HBOC Conservation Officer

## NEW MEMBER

The Hunter Bird Observers Club extends a very warm welcome to new member

Maureen Turner of Toronto

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

## Are You Prepared For An Annual Migration?

In previous years a popular part of our club program was an "Annual Migration" where a bird watching trip was organised for members.

Some of the places visited, Iron Range (Cape York), Lord Howe Island, Northern Territory, were arranged through a tour operator. Other places of interest such as Cairns, Northern NSW, South East Queensland, Western NSW were accessed in our own vehicles.

There has been some interest in renewing this type of activity in 1998 but before doing so it would be necessary to ascertain the feelings of members and level of support.

Set out below is a questionnaire which we would like interested members to complete and return to PO Box 24, New Lambton, 2305 or just hand to a Committee person at the next Club Night or Outing.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

I would be interested in such a venture.

1. My preferred type of trip is;
  - a) drive own vehicle and supply my own camping gear, catering etc.
  - b) go through a tour operator fully catered.
  - c) either of the above.
2. The best time of year that would suit me is .....
3. I would prefer to be on a trip that lasts for
  - a) One week
  - b) 10 days
  - c) Two weeks
  - d) Three weeks

Signed .....

## There's More To Birds Than Meets The Eye.

Interested in finding out more about the biology, behaviour, ecology, evolution, taxonomy, biogeography and conservation of birds? And about ornithological methods too? Then Charles Sturt University at Bathurst has the course for you!

Starting in March 1998, the Environmental Studies Unit will offer a Graduate Certificate course in Applied Science (Ornithology) for those keen birdwatchers who wish to take their birdwayching a little bit further. The course is designed to satisfy the enquiring minds of amateur ornithologists who are able to demonstrate academic and/or professional qualifications and/or work experience which the university deems acceptable.

If you are keen and willing to pay the course fee of \$600 per subject (four subjects make up the course) then apply now to  
Dr Al Gibbs, Environmental Studies Unit  
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW 2795.  
Phone: (02) 6338 4382 Fax: (02) 6338 4078

## Weeders Wanted For Follow-up Effort At Stockton Sand Spit.

Sunday 2nd November is the date for HBOC members to get stuck into it once again in the war on weeds at Stockton Sand Spit.

Our previous effort last July provided a great start to re-establishing suitable habitat for roosting migratory shorebirds. However, continuing attention to this weed problem is required to maintain a consistent environment that birds like Pacific Golden Plover for instance may ultimately accept.

To that end, anyone with a couple of hours to spare and some kind of digging implement (hand tools only, its all soft sand so it is not that hard really) should assemble beneath the Stockton Bridge by 9:00am. Please come dressed ready for work in the sun and in places where you might get your feet wet.

A quick look at the tide charts indicates that waders are likely to arrive at Stockton Sand Spit after 12:30pm on that day. So don't forget your binoculars.

For further enquiries phone Tom Clarke (02) 4951 3872.

## Second Atlas Project Almost A Reality.

Birds Australia has been given a strong indication by the Federal Government that it will receive funding early next year to initiate a second Atlas of Australian Birds Project.

The original 'Atlas Project' was co-ordinated by Birds Australia (then the RAOU) from 1977 to 1981 and the results were published in 1984. Over 3,000 birdwatchers collected a total of 3 million atlas records in the first comprehensive bird survey of any continent.

The original results are now up to 20 years old and in that time over 10 million hectares of native vegetation have been cleared. As a result of this and other influences, the status of many bird species have changed but are yet to be documented. It is now time to update this information to help governments and communities act on the most appropriate and pressing conservation issues.

It is planned to officially launch the project in mid-1998 following a workshop early in the year to discuss project co-ordination and its methodology.

The Hunter Bird Observers Club has been invited along with many other bird groups by Birds Australia to play a part in this exciting work.

With this in mind, HBOC Outings Committee will be planning our new calendar for 1998 to include as many different grids of our Hunter Region as possible. If you have some good ideas and would like to have an input then you are invited to the planning meeting on Wednesday 29th October 1997 to be held at Garden Suburb Primary School at 7:30pm.

## Magpie

by David Kibble

I begin my sunrise walk,  
morning air bites at my  
teeth and jasmine floods my head.

Suddenly I'm kamikazied by  
a black and white dive-bomber.

But its morning song rippling through  
chill air redresses the 'snap'  
of its beak.

# OBSERVATIONS FROM AUGUST MEETING:

Apr 3	Caspian Tern	8	Belmont Lagoon	M.K.Laverick
Apr 10,18	Peregrine Falcon	1	Jewell's [suburban garden]	"
Apr 23	Pacific Baza	1	" " "	"
May 19	White-fronted Tern	6	Nobby's Breakwater	"
May 22	White-headed Pigeon	1	Mount Hutton	"
May 25/26	Straw-necked Ibis	300+	Junction & Adamstown Park	M.Blanch
May 29	Black Swan	2	Jewell's over suburban garden	M.K.Laverick
Jun 16	Nankeen Kestrel	1	The Junction	M.Blanch
Jun 29	Barn Owl	1	" "	"
Jul 5	Eastern Spinebill	c.27	Dungog[Fosterton Loop Rd]	H.Tarrant
Jul 5	Lewin's Honeyeater	c.21	" " "	"
	White-headed Pigeon	15	Dungog. N.E. of town centre	"
	Grey-crowned Babbler	4	Bolwarra Heights	"
	Long-billed Corella	28	Hand's Lagoon, Bolwarra	"
Jul 17	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	Nr. Williamtown	"
Jul 18	Southern Boobook	1	S.W.C. Rainforest area	"
Jul 19	Topknot Pigeon	3	Woodville	M.Newman
	Double-barred Finch	c. 25	"	"
	Grey-tailed Tattler	11	Lemon Tree Passage	M.Kearns
	Bar-tailed Godwit	50	" " "	"
	Caspian Tern	1	" " "	"
Jul 20	Scarlet Robin	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	1	"	"
Jul 22	Osprey	1	Nr. Williamtown	M.Kearns
	Pied Oystercatcher [banded]	1f.	Big Gibber Pt. Myall Lakes	M.Newman
Jul 24	Pheasant Coucal	1	Tanilba Bay	M.Kearns
Jul 27	Rose Robin	Pr.	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Aug 1	Pale-headed Rosella	1	Waratah West	G.Brosie
Aug 3	Topknot Pigeon	50+	Glendon Brook	R.Walker
	Olive-backed Oriole	20+	" "	"
	Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	" "	"
	Silver Gull	100's	" "	"
	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	20+	" "	"
	White-winged Chough	40+	" "	"
Aug 5	Regent Honeyeater	2	Widden Valley	J.Meynell
	Regent Honeyeater	2	Ellalong	"
Aug 6	Australian Ringneck	1	Jesmond High School	G.Brosie
Aug 8	Peregrine Falcon	2	Nesca Pde. Newcastle	J.Moyse
Aug 9	Olive-backed Oriole	1	Woodville	M.Newman
	Little Corella	C. 45	Scone Golf Course	G.Newling
	Australian Hobby	1	" " "	"
	Red-rumped Parrot	4	" " "	"
	Australasian Gannet	2	Boat Harbour	M.Kearns
	Sooty Oystercatcher	6	Stockton Beach	"
	Pacific Baza	1	Jesmond Park	K.Gibson
	Golden Whistler	4	" "	"
	Topknot Pigeon	32	Garden Suburb	J.Perry
	Brown Cuckoo-dove	3	" "	"
	Grey Goshawk	2	" "	"
Aug 10	Scarlet Honeyeater	1	Seaham	G.Mee
Aug 12	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	Seaham	"
	Aust.White & S/N.Ibis [mixed]	1,200	Nr. Williamtown	M.Kearns
Aug 13	Painted Quail	2	Woodville	M.Newman
	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	"	"
Aug 15	Australasian Grebe	c.20	Ellalong Lagoon	J.Meynell
	Australasian Shoveler	Pair	" "	"
	Royal Spoonbill	17	" "	"

Aug 17	Pacific Baza	1	Fishing Point	M.Hamonet
Aug 24	Common Blackbird	1m.	Karuah	K.Laverick

**OBSERVATIONS FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING:**

Jul 15	Shining Bronze-cuckoo	1	Ashtonfield	B. & S. Roderick
	Pacific Baza	2	"	"
Jul 17	Fluttering Shearwater	c.1,200	Off Caves Beach	K.Laverick
Jul 18	White-fronted Tern	2	" " "	"
Aug 3	Striated Heron	1	Bull Island, Port Stephen	M.Kearns
Aug 7	Rainbow Bee-eater	3	Clarencetown	"
	Masked Lapwing	Pr	"	"
Aug 14	Masked Lapwing	1+1dy	Salt Ash	"
Aug 15	Australasian Grebe	c.20	Ellalong Lagoon	J.Meynell
	Australasian Shoveler	Pr.	" "	"
	Royal Spoonbill	17	" "	"
	Barn Owl	1	Belmont South	J.Cockerell
	Swamp Harrier	1	Kooragang Island	M.Kearns
	Masked Lapwing	2+1dy	Lemon Tree Passage	"
	Pacific Heron	1	Williamtown	"
Aug 18	Masked Lapwing nest with eggs	Pr	Salt Ash	"
Aug 18	Black Kite	1	Marmong Point	P.Osborn
Aug 23	Australasian Gannet	6	Forster	M.Kearns
	Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	2	"	"
	Masked Lapwing nest with eggs	Pr	"	"
	Little Wattlebird	50+	"	"
	Torresian Crow	4	"	"
	Brahminy Kite	1 imm	"	"
	Topknot Pigeon	40	"	"
Aug 24	Nankeen Night Heron	25+	Shortland Wetlands Centre	R.Waymark
Aug 28	Masked Lapwing nest with eggs	Pr	Williamtown	"
Aug 30	Southern Emu-wren	1+1im.	Oyster Cove	"
	Brown Thornbill	2+1dy	" "	"
Aug 31	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	Piggy's Beach	"
	Wonga Pigeon	1	" "	"
	Pied Oystercatcher	4	Bull Island	"
Aug	Galah nest building	Pr.	New Lambton Heights	M.Hamilton
Aug 28	Powerful Owl [heard calling]	1	" " "	"
Aug 30	Brown Cuckoo-dove	1	" " "	"
Aug	Gull-billed Tern	1	Nobby's Breakwater	K.Laverick
Aug 30	Black-necked Stork nest dy	1	Coolongolook	M.Diemar
Aug 31	Black Bittern	1	Buttaba	R.Waymark
Aug 31	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Mirrabooka	G.McCulloch
Sep 4	Australian King Parrot	25+	S.W.C.	R.Waymark
Sep 5	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	New Lambton Heights	M.Hamilton
Sep 7	Pacific Black Duck	17+2dy	Seaham Swamp	M.Kearns
Sep 9	Striated Heron	1	Buttaba	"
	Pheasant Coucal	1	Bob's Farm	M.Diemar
	Rainbow Lorikeet	6	Mirrabooka	G.McCulloch
	Pied Oystercatcher	5	Tanilba Bay	M.Kearns
	Topknot Pigeon	5	Ashtonfield	S.Roderick
	Rainbow Bee-eater	6	"	"
	Brown Goshawk	1	"	"
	Grey Goshawk	1	"	"
Sep 10	Tawny Frogmouth	2	Belmont South	J.Cockerell

N.B. Zebra Finch & Chestnut-breasted Mannikin incorrectly reported from Kooragang Island in May newsletter. Location should be Walka Water Works.



# *Origma solitaria* and The Hawkesbury Sandstone Puzzle.

September Club Night

When Chris Herbert is not birdwatching he studies rocks, another area in which he is very well informed. Chris, in fact, works as a geologist so who better is there to present as Bird of the Evening, *Origma solitaria* (Rock Warbler).

Other names given to this bird help describe the habitat it resides in - Rock Robin, Sandstone Robin, Cataract-bird, Cave-bird - while 'Hanging Dick' is in reference to this bird's nest of woven fibres hung from the roof of a cave or overhang.

The sedentary *Origma* is restricted in its range to a small part of New South Wales within, it is said, the limits of Hawkesbury sandstone and adjacent limestone areas. Chris is quick to point out that Hawkesbury Sandstone is just one of the many layers of rock that surface within the gorges of the Hawkesbury River, the Colo River, and the Capertee, Grose and Cox's River etc and *Origma* is not limited to it as many texts imply.

*Origma*'s habitat is better described as "rocky ravines near water" which is exactly what the gorge country west of Sydney provides with its relatively undisturbed areas of rock faces and caves.

The call of the *Origma* is described as slightly liquid rasping notes. Chris proved this with a tape recording which featured a scratchy staccato sound "pink pink". This particular recording also produced one short phrase of soft warbles which may not be so easy to hear at any distance.

From the dark confines of some rocky ledge in the Blue Mountains we were transported to the wide open spaces of the oceans by our Club Night guest speaker Tony Palliser. Tony is one of Australia's foremost authorities on sea birds and is famous for his pelagic bird watching trips off Sydney and Wollongong.

Tony arrived in Australia in 1980 and his first bird he can recall was the Wandering Albatros. He is still finding new birds at sea off the coast of New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia. Tony does, sometimes, take time out to have a look at the "easy ones that everybody knows about" over land but despite the occasional struggle with sea sickness and the hours spent at sea he continues to search for new things off our coast.

While at sea Tony has taken many photos of sea birds and it is not uncommon for him to discover a new bird or morph while studying the slides back at home. Tony shared a great selection of his camera work with us which featured all types from the large albatros species to shearwaters, petrels, storm petrels, gulls and skuas.

Tony's slides also revealed the contrasts of sea bird trips from days of calm water and blue skies to big seas and bad weather. Pelagic trips are for the adventurous birdwatcher but an outing with Tony will guarantee new sightings for any individual.

People wishing to accompany Tony on one of his monthly outings can find out more by ringing Tony Palliser on (02) 9900 1678 (bh) or (02) 9427 7563 (ah).

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# Coming Events

Please check with the contact person for each outing in case of changed details or suitability of site for the camp or field day.

Sunday 19th October	Field Day:	Howes Valley
	Meet:	Broke Fire Station 7:30am
	Leader:	Ann Lindsey (02) 4951 2008
Weekend 25th-26th October	1997 Birds Australia Twitchathon Please support the efforts of both our teams; Main Event Team - <i>The Hunter Thickheads</i> Champagne Event Team - <i>Lesticum phoradae</i> This fundraising event will be followed by a club BBQ at the Shortland Wetlands Centre from 5:00pm on 26th October. Bring your own everything plus \$2 donation for SWC. For more details contact Tom Clarke on (02) 4951 3872	
Sunday 2nd November	Weed Watchers:	Stockton Sand Spit (see article in this issue)
	Meet:	Stockton Sand Spit Car Park 9:00am
	Contact:	Tom Clarke (02) 4951 3872
Tuesday 4th November	Midweek Outing:	Belmont Lagoon
	Meet:	Belmont Yacht Club, Ada St 8:00am
	Contact:	Max Blanch (02) 4961 1655
Wednesday 12th November	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main Feature:	Owls of the Lower Hunter - Michael Murray
Sunday 23rd November	Field Day:	Warkworth
	Meet:	Cessnock MacDonalds 7:00am
	Leader:	Liz Herbert (02) 4959 3663
Tuesday 2nd December	Midweek Outing:	Inner City/Foreshore
	Meet:	Nobby's Car Park 8:00am
	Contact:	Keith Woods (02) 4963 3070
Sunday 7th December	Field Day:	Swansea/Belmont South
	Meet:	Swansea MacDonalds 6:30am
	Leader:	Sue Hamonet (02) 4958 1023
Wednesday 10th December	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main Feature:	Xmas Party
		Bring your own slides, stories etc.

If you have something you would like to share with other members then the newsletter could be the answer. Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is 29th November, 1997

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