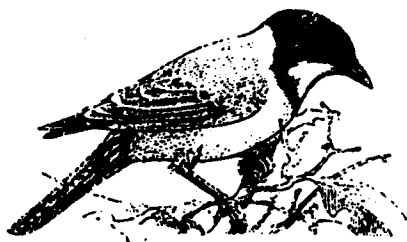


NEWSLETTER

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (02) 4958 5942



President:
Secretary:
Newsletter Editor:

Alan Stuart
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.

HBOC Gets New President Plus New Look Committee.

AGM - February Club Night

After two years enjoying life as an ex-treasurer and missing out on management committee meetings etc., Alan Stuart is back in a big way. Voted in unopposed as President of HBOC, Alan becomes the fifth person to hold this office as the club continues to go from strength to strength.

Stepping down from the position, but not disappearing altogether, Ann Lindsey will continue to contribute to the running of the club as a member of the Management Committee.

Other new faces on the Management Committee include Liz Herbert, Jim Perry and Michael Todd who all have plenty to offer by way of experience and dedication.

Two notable omissions from that committee are Wilma Barden and David Geering.

Wilma Barden has given a great deal of time and effort to HBOC right from the word go and has been constantly involved for the past twenty two years. We all thank Wilma for her extensive service, she has certainly earned the rest.

David Geering's energy will be sorely missed and Newcastle's loss will certainly be Melbourne's gain as he pursues a career in that part of the country. David's new job, National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team Coordinator, will ensure that our Regent Honeyeaters will continue to benefit from David's drive and commitment.

Long serving elected officers, Peter Phillips (Secretary - 9 years) and Peter MacLauchlan (Vice President - 5 years) both indicated that this year would be their last in those respective positions and they would be looking to find new challenges in the future.

Prior to the election of office bearers, a special resolution was put forward to change the rules of HBOC to accommodate a larger committee. These changes were accepted by unanimous vote and so it is now possible for HBOC to have a committee of ten. This is in part a reflection of the size of organisation that HBOC has become and also a way of getting more ideas and views within the committee.

A change to the way the club handles its conservation matters sees the disbanding of a formal conservation committee as such. Most of the previous members of that committee are now members of the management committee. A Conservation Coordinator, David Kibble, will report to the management committee but can co-opt others to run with special projects as the need arises.

A swapping of Librarian duties between Pat Poutney and Keith Woods keeps that duo working together on club nights and Lesley Marshall has agreed to be Assistant Treasurer after serving her apprenticeship for most of last year.

Other new faces (happy volunteers) among the appointed positions include Judith Westphal and Neil Granter who have agreed to help out at club nights with suppers and slide projectors etc.

President's Column

I'm intending to write a brief column for these newsletters, as a way to pass on items of potential interest to members about club activities and about some of the things that are going on in the background.

Ann Lindsey has stepped down after four years as Club President. I'd like to acknowledge the great job she did over that time. HBOC kept doing the good things it had always done, and at the same time became much more involved with other organisations both locally and within the birding community. I'm personally very pleased that Ann has agreed to remain on the committee, so that the club can continue to benefit from her ideas and enthusiasm.

As the incoming President, I don't expect that there will be major changes in direction for the club. I think that most members are happy with the way that HBOC is run and with the services it provides. However, I would like the club to become more active in trying to stimulate the interest of others in birds. The WEA course we ran last year is a good example of how this might be done, and I'd like us to look at what other initiatives could be possible.

Birdwise, this year has already been quite exciting, particularly with a group of six Yellow Wagtail making a sustained stopover on Ash Island and obliging many of us with good views. The year will also be exciting on account of the new Atlas Of Australian Birds project that soon will start up. HBOC will be doing whatever we reasonably can to support the project. Birds Australia (new name for RAOU) is currently planning the details of how the project will be carried out. We'll report information to you as it becomes available.

I'm a fan of some of the opportunities for sharing information about birds that come from the Internet and in future columns I'll tell you about some aspects of this. In the meantime, for those of you who have the technology, my e-mail address is almarosa@hunterlink.net.au - send me a message and I'll add you into my address book.

Alan Stuart

HBOC Office Bearers And Appointed Positions For 1998

Elected Office Bearers:

President
Vice President
Hon. Secretary
Hon. Treasurer
Management Committee

Alan Stuart
Peter MacLauchlan
Peter Phillips
Rowley Smith
Tom Clarke
Sue Hamonet
Liz Herbert
Ann Lindsey
Jim Perry
Michael Todd

Appointed Positions:

Conservation Coordinator
Activities Officers

Assistant Treasurer
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
Chris Herbert
Lesley Marshall
Pat Poutney
Keith Woods
John Cockerell
Peter MacLauchlan
Sue Hamonet
Ed Hamonet
Peter Phillips
Marion Walker
Peter Phillips
Rowley Smith
Judith Westphal
Ann Lindsey
Michael Todd
Neil Granter
Randall Watson
Tom Clarke
Peter MacLauchlan
Margaret Carmody
Alan Stuart

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is 29th May, 1998

Mail to: Tom Clarke 28 Kokera St, Wallsend 2287

Phone: (02) 4951 3872 (h) (02) 4940 1384 (w) Fax: (02) 4940 1373

Hunter Bird Observers Club - 17th Annual Report - 1997

1997 was a year during which members made many contributions to the running of the Club and during which we had enlightening talks and exciting field trips to as many different parts of the Hunter as we could fit in.

Attendances at field outings and camps continue to rise and as a result the number of species observed has risen as well. The bus trip to Harrington was not a financial success but the species count of 105 birds made it very enjoyable to those who did attend. The midweek outings were well supported by a regular group of enthusiastic birdos.

Five Regent Honeyeater surveys took place with visits to the Dungog area, Dunns Creek, Lemon Tree Passage, Tomago and Bulga. Alas, we saw no Regent Honeyeaters but we did increase our knowledge of the avian population.

Other activities undertaken by club members during the year included;

- Clean Up Day at Stockton Sand Spit. This was followed up with two more weeding days in July and November.

- Elementary Bird Watching Course held at the Shortland Wetlands Centre introduced 10 potential birdwatchers to the pastime and raised \$500 for the SWC.

- Bird Walks about the SWC on International Wetlands Day in February and later again for the SGAP Wildflower Spectacular in August.

- Twitchathon in October. Two teams from the club both came second in their respective events and raised \$1412 for birdlife conservation.

- playground bird census at Mayfield East Public School.

- \$300 donation to Birds Australia to help pay for the purchase of Glue Pot Station, a mallee scrub habitat and home to six endangered species. The donation was made possible by a collection taken up one Club night.

- two \$500 payments from our Keating Fund went to the Latham's Snipe Project conducted by David

Geering and Michael Todd. The money was used to pay for radio transmitters used to track the birds at night.

- fourth Annual Bird Report recorded 311 birds for 1996 with 8 new species and 3 new breeding records for the Hunter region.

Under the leadership of David Kibble our conservation committee investigated and supported several claims for maintaining or improving bird habitat. A submission was made about the Big Pond on Kooragang Island and it received a sympathetic response from the Minister for the Environment. Submissions were made about the proposed Charlestown Bypass expressing concerns about Powerful and Masked Owls; a proposed development at Apollo Drive, Charlestown again concerning the Masked Owl; about conditions of use in Wollemi National Park and support was gained for the Little Tern at the Coastline Management Workshop organised by Lake Macquarie Council.

We also supported the successful campaign to stop a chemical plant being built on Orange-bellied Parrot habitat, and the colliery at Teralba did not build its fan shaft in Awaba SRA. An altogether active and successful year for conservation.

Issues to be confronted in 1998 will include the continued effort to secure the Big Pond for small shorebirds, a development on Hillsborough Rd which threatens to destroy 11.61 hectares of mixed bushland, the proposed development of Colliery Dam which will destroy a tremendously diverse bird community and the widening of the Five Islands Bridge should have HBOC input to ensure the construction is bird friendly.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic contributions of the people running our club.

Judith Smith is our welcoming person on Club nights and has been our Publicity Officer for a number of years and we thank her for her efforts. We also thank Marion and Ray Walker, Randall Watson our auditor,

Liz Herbert, our Activities Officer, Pat Poutney for filling in as Library Assistant and Tea Person, John Cockerell who sorted many slides last year, Ken Gibson who gets the room and slides ready for our meetings and Lesley Marshall for filling in as Treasurer.

A special thankyou to Margaret and Keith Woods for their library work over the past three years and it is with regret that I announce Keith's resignation from this position.

I would like to pay a special tribute to David Geering who is the new national coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort and he and his family have already moved to Melbourne. David was a strong conservationist, an active committee member, the leader of one of the teams in the Twitchathon, and he was just very good at getting things done. He was always full of ideas and plans which he shared willingly and he gave us some great talks at Club nights. We shall indeed miss him.

It is with mixed feelings that I now announce to you that I have resigned as President of this Club. I feel I have had a fairly easy time as President because of the absolutely marvellous committee who have been constantly helpful, infinitely patient, and who are a hardworking bunch of high achievers.

On behalf of the club and myself, thankyou Peter MacLauchlan, Tom Clarke, David Geering, Wilma Barden, Sue Hamonet, Rowley Smith and Peter Phillips for the encouragement and support during the past four years.

But I have not gone, I have not retired from the Club. I intend to continue working in one capacity or another and I dare say I will never give up my interest in, and concern for, our wonderful birds.

Thank you.

Ann Lindsey

The Annual Report for 1997, 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.

Hundreds Of Snipe Turn Up For Important Study

Our guest speaker for the February Clubnight (AGM) was Michael Todd who provided us with an update of the work being carried out on the Latham's Snipe project. The project's main aims are to investigate the feeding ecology of Latham's Snipe with a view to better planning and implementing habitat remediation for this species. The knowledge gained will prove beneficial to those managing the rehabilitation of Latham's Snipe habitat at Homebush Bay and the project was in fact set up that way specifically by Birds Australia.

Originally, David Geering was to be doing the research and it was he that gave the project its initial momentum and direction. Since then he has called on the services of Michael Todd to carry on with the work as it became obvious he would be leaving the area.

It is particularly exciting for HBOC to have this project carried out in the Hunter and part of its funding was made through a grant from the HBOC Keating Fund. The duration of the study is the summer of 97/98 with a final report due later this year.

The study sites used for this project have been the various wetlands at Shortland and Birmingham Gardens as well as at Cedar Hill. Prior to Christmas, a very successful Latham's Snipe count was conducted at Cedar Hill where nine HBOC members including David and Michael managed to record well over 460 birds!

This proved to be the largest concentration of this species ever recorded in Australia and represents more than 1% of the total East Asia - Australia Flyway population of 36,000 (RAOU Report No.90 - 1993). Suddenly we have another wetland of international importance at our doorstep, given the number of Latham's Snipe using it to roost and feed in.

Some results so far from the study has shown that Latham's Snipe do not move much at all between their roosts and feeding grounds once established at a site. Feeding can take place at day probing in mud covered with water and at night amongst the grasses bordering these wetter areas. Roosting sites are mainly in long grasses nearby.

Some birds were captured in mist nets and fitted with radio transmitters to facilitate tracking of the birds between feeding and roosting areas. When it was proved that these movements were so slight the importance of being able to track the birds was thought to be of little benefit. However, it was found that a bird with a transmitter was easily found (with others) at night feeding spots which proved to be different from the day sites.

Kakadu Walkabout

Paddy Lightfoot has entertained our group with talks about various places he has been for holidays in the past but his latest adventure is going to take some topping.

The main feature of the March Clubnight was a presentation by Paddy as he recalled an eight day bush walk through Kakadu National Park. Paddy had not planned to put himself through such an ordeal as walking for days, out of sight of any other humans, following compass bearings and land forms; it just happened that way.

Paddy's son had planned such a trip but at the last moment was in a bit of a fix when it looked like there would not be enough starters to allow it to happen. So he talked his dad (and some of dad's mates) into making up the numbers.

Essentially, the plan was to travel by four wheel drive to Jim Jim Falls, then walk overland to Twin Falls, climb the escarpment, cut back across the plateau looping back to Jim Jim Falls.

Of course the walk was led by a very capable guide who had excellent knowledge of the place as well as plenty of initiative and bush skills. Initially, it came as a surprise to the all male party that their guide was in fact a female. However during the course of the trek, she continued to impress them all with her ability.

Paddy obviously benefited from the experience despite a bad start with blistered feet as a result of some practice hiking with loaded back pack around the streets of New Lambton Heights. The walk took him through some very different country where he did manage to see some very different birds. The Rainbow Pitta with its 'we-wik-to-wik' call remains a solid memory.

The spectacular White-throated Grasswren is a real gem and only exists on the sandstone escarpment of Arnhem Land. Paddy did get to see this bird and rates it as one of the highlights of the trip. The Silver-crowned Friarbird is not so confined in its range preferring to move about nomadically and follows the blossoming of eucalypts and melaleucas. Another bird of the woodlands up north is the Blue-winged Kookaburra and Paddy likes to refer to its call as appalling (a la Pizzey).

Paddy knew he was far from civilization when he discovered the decorated bower of a Great Bowerbird which did not contain any plastic or man made objects. All natural ingredients like shells, bones, white stones and leaves made up the bulk of the trinkets on the floor.

Prior to the walk Paddy and his family went on a cruise on Yellow Waters and was overwhelmed by its beauty and the abundance of birdlife. Magpie Geese (of course), Black-necked Stork, every egret, heron, ibis and spoonbill all thrive there on these wetlands. Ducks do pretty well too and Burdekin Duck, Green Pygmy-goose, Plumed Whistling Duck and Wandering Whistling Duck are all commonly encountered.

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Far North Queensland



Please note the change of phone numbers:

Phone: 07 4065 5181 Fax: 07 4065 5197

Yellow Wagtail

The directions
were precise.

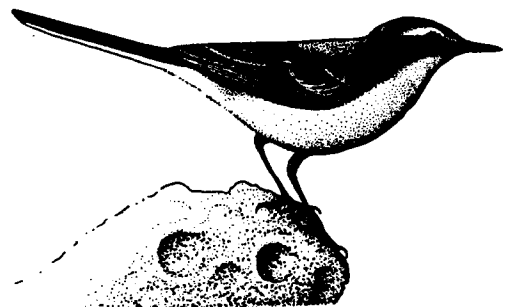
*Follow the track,
just past the
sub-station.*

*You'll see them,
bright yellow
against the road.
Between
posts 21 and 22.
Tails bobbing.*

There they were,
rare visitors
from distant shores.
Driven south by
El Nino's
scorching breath
to share Kooragang's
abundant mud with
resident Chats.

There was
a warning.
*Be early.
Before Sydney
arrives. It'll be
like Pitt St
by eight.*

David Kibble



World Bird Count 1997

During October 1997, over 180,000 birdwatchers in 87 countries recorded and reported all the bird species they had seen for that month. In return, the Japanese telecommunications company, NTT, promised 1000 yen (A\$13) to be donated to Birdlife International for every species reported.

A grand total of 5659 species was reported which equates to A\$73,567 raised for conservation work.

NTT's support has been a very important source of funding for Birdlife International work in Asia. This donation raised from the 1997 World Bird Count has also been used to fund work in the region. This is of particular importance in Asia because of the rapid economic growth in the region, and very high demand for natural resources.

During 1996, the project concentrated on important bird areas in Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. These are high priority countries because of the large number of endemic and threatened species that they support. In all three countries, Birdlife International is working with the relevant government agency to advise on expanding the current network of national parks and nature reserves. This work will benefit many of the birds using the East-Asian Flyway to Australia.

(Extracted from article in March 1998 issue of Wingspan)

Good Question

While going slowly down the lower Myall River in our cruiser on 15th December, 1997 we observed an adult Swamp Harrier flying above a Whistling Kite, harassing it at about tree top level near a bend in the river called Bill's Elbow. When the kite moved on, an immature White-bellied Sea Eagle, which had been sitting in a tree with an adult, flew down behind some low shrubs bordering the river near where the Whistling Kite had been. While it was hanging just above the grass the Swamp Harrier dived at it and chased it away.

As far as I know Swamp Harriers are not normally that aggressive to other birds of prey, so was it just chasing the other birds away from an item of food, or did it have a nest somewhere in the grass?

I have marked the spot where the Swamp Harrier was on the map on the boat.

Michael Kearns

Thankyou Cleaners, Thankyou Weeders, Thankyou Pacific Golden Plovers.

Clean Up Australia Day - 1st March 1998

Clean Up Day was a success, a resounding success and very rewarding. The Stockton Sand Spit site is definitely benefitting from our attentions at Clean Up Days and Weeding Days.

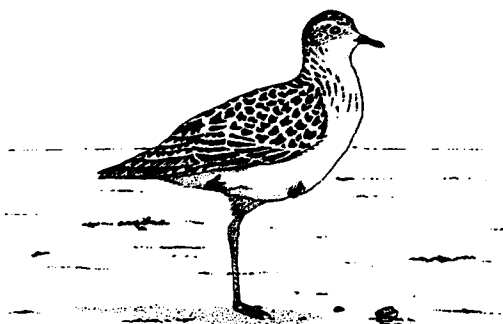
This year the effort covered a much larger area since the section we concentrated on last year didn't take that long to go over. So we were able to clean up right back to the turn-off at Fullerton Street and along the old exit track on the river side.

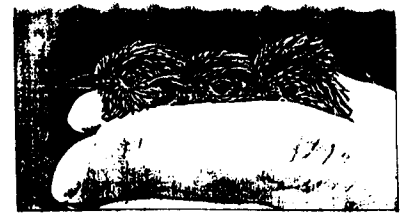
Our band of volunteers comprising 14 "bird people" and 5 "friends of birds" put in a tremendous effort and collected 66 bags of rubbish. Also an hour or so of weeding afterwards took care of the tall stuff on the island and behind the bird hide, as well as some general pulling of bitoe about the place. With continuing maintenance of the site I now feel positive that we can keep on top of it.

And the birds do appreciate it. The best thing about this Clean Up Day was the sight of 180 Eastern Curlew and 7 PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER on the salt marsh ROOSTING! Even better, they are roosting there again in exactly the same spot (between the island and the feeding beach) as they were back in the summer of '90/'91. And, in previous weeks scores of Pacific Golden Plover have been seen at this site.

Thankyou everyone who turned up and got involved, your efforts are making a difference.

Tom Clarke









SPECIES	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	DATE	DURATION	No. PEOPLE	SPECIAL REQs/COMMENTS
Albert's Lyrebird 	1. Census of calling males 2. Flora/fauna surveys 3. Conservation advocacy	N-E NSW " "	June-July T/out year "			
Bird of Prey Watch 	4. Surveying for raptors	Australia	T/out year	1/2 day+	As many as possible (a.m.a.p)	Survey from car, on trips, etc.
Black-eared Miner 	5. Checking colonies, banding, nest watching	Murray Mallee, SA	Feb-April Aug-Dec	3-5 months	2 per trip	Suitable for Biology graduates; food and accomm. provided
Coxen's Fig-Parrot 	6. Watching food trees 7. "	N-E NSW Bundaberg, Qld	Sept-Jan March 14-22	1 week 9 days	30 per trip "	Funds permitting
Eastern Bristlebird 	8. Searching for/monit'ing colonies 9. Restoring habitat	Coastal S-E Aust "	T/out year "	1-2 days "		Details to be developed through year "
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (Kangaroo Is. Subspecies) 	10. Annual count 11. Searching for nests 12. Planting	Kangaroo Is., SA " "	Sept Feb-Aug Aut-Spr	1-2 days Various w/ends	a.m.a.p " "	Need own transport and accom.
Gouldian Finch 	13. Surveying for pres./abs. & habitat variables 14. Surveying	G'town/C'don Ch'goe, Qld Y'berrie Hills, NT	Sept-Oct July-Aug	4 days 2 weeks	40-50 10+	Keen birdwatchers; BYO camping gear
Gould's Petrel 	15. Banding	C'tral coast, NSW	March, Nov-Dec	1 week	1-2 per trip	Experienced banders
Grey-crowned Babbler 	16. Planting 17. Seed collection	Central/N-E Vic "	July December	w/ends "	a.m.a.p "	
Ground Parrot 	18. Searching for/monit'ing colonies	Coastal S-E/ S-W Aust	T/out year			Details to be developed through year
Helmeted Honeyeater 	19. Surveying 20. Planting 21. Assisting the operation of indigenous nursery	Yellingbo, Vic " "	June 27/28 April-May T/out year	1-2 days 2nd Sunday /month Last Sun./ 2nd & 4th Thurs/m'th	a.m.a.p " "	Birdwatchers with reasonable fitness; wet-weather gear. Reasonable fitness; gumboots & gloves.
Hooded Plover 	22. Surveying & flagging 23. Surveying 24. Data entry	S-W WA S-W Vic Melbourne	Jan-Feb, August May March-end of year	1-7 days 1-2 days 8hrs/week	a.m.a.p " 1	Co-ord. by BA WA Group; some travel funds for v. remote trips Warrnambool-SA border Own computer and some comp. knowledge an advantage
Little Tern 	25. Monitoring breeding colonies & banding 26. Writing articles 27. Fundraising	-Gipps., Vic -Botany Bay, NSW Gipps., Vic "	Nov-Feb " T/out year "	1 week 1-2 days Various Various	2-4 per trip 1-2 per trip 1-2 a.m.a.p	Boat handling skills useful " For newsletters and newspapers

♦ To register your interest in an activity, contact:
Michael Fendley
 Threatened Bird Network - Birds Australia
 415 Riversdale Rd
 Hawthorn East 3123
 pH. (03) 9882 2622

⇒ PTO



Volunteering for Australia's threatened birds

SPECIES	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	DATE	DURATION	No. PEOPLE	SPECIAL REQs/COMMENTS
Malleefowl 	28. Searching grids for signs of nest activity 29. Joining the community awareness, surveying & other work of the Malleefowl Preservation Group	Mallee of Sthn Aust. S-W WA	Aug-Nov T/out year	1-4 days Various	8-15 a.m.a.p	Reasonable fitness
Night Parrot 	30. Searching for feathers, listening for calls, spotting	Inland Aust.	T/out year	Various	a.m.a.p	Search particularly near water
Orange-bellied Parrot 	31. Surveying	S-E SA/Sthn Vic	May 24 July 25/6 Sept 12	1-2 days	a.m.a.p	Birdwatching experience
	32. Monitoring breeding	W & S-W Tas	Oct-March	2 weeks	2-4 per trip	Food expenses, travel and accommodation provided
Painted Honeyeater 	33. Searching for wintering sites	E NT/W Qld	April-Aug	Various	a.m.a.p	Gulf Carpentaria drainage area
	34. Incidental observations	E'tern Aust.	T/out year	"	"	Record habitat, behaviour, landuse etc.
Peregrine Falcon 	35. Abselling/telescope training	Vic	Feb-March			
	36. Observing adults at nests	"	Aug-Nov	1-2 days	2 per site	Tertiary students & exp. birdos
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (S-E Subspecies) 	37. Annual count	S-E SA/W Vic	Feb 28/ March 1	2 days	a.m.a.p	
	38. Nest monitoring	"	Jan 24/5	"	10-20	
Regent Honeyeater 	39. National survey	S-E Aust (Qld-Vic)	May&Aug	1-2 days	a.m.a.p	Combined with Swift Parrot s'vey
	40. Incidental observations	"	T/out year	1/2-1 day	"	
	41. Planting and fencing	"	April-Oct	1 day	"	Assist Friends groups, BA, Land-care and others
Mt Lofly Ranges Southern Emu-wren 	42. Surveying	Fleurieu Pen. SA	Sept-Nov	1 day	a.m.a.p	Deep Creek Conservation Park; exp. birdos; own vehicle.
	43. Cataloguing/data entry	Adelaide	T/out year	Various	1-2	Org. slide library; enter data; computing skills an advantage. Muddy conditions; own vehicle
	44. Training course	Fleurieu Pen. SA	To be conf			
	45. Propagation trials for swamp plants	"	T/out year	1 day		
Superb Parrot 	46. Annual count	Nathalia, Vic/ D'Quin & W. Wagga, NSW	1st or 2nd w/end Dec	1 day	a.m.a.p	
	47. Nest monitoring	D'Quin, NSW	October	2 weeks	1-5	May involve boating
Swift Parrot 	48. National survey	S-E Aust (Qld-SA)	May&Aug	1-2 days	a.m.a.p	Combined with Regent H survey; exp. birdos.
	49. Admin. assistance	Bendigo, Vic	Aug/July/ Nov-Dec	1-2 days/ month	1-4	Mail-outs for surveys & n'letter
	50. Habitat restoration	S-E Aust	April-Dec	1-2 days	a.m.a.p	Join Tas. school gps, Greening Aust etc.
	51. Survey advocacy	"	March-Apr June-July	2 days	"	Encourage bird gps etc. to participate in national surveys

OBSERVATIONS FROM MARCH MEETING

1997				
Aug 29	Emerald Dove	1	Stroud	C.&L.Herbert
Aug 31	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	4	Rathmines	"
Sep 4	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Carey Bay	"
Sep 7	Spotted Quail-thrush	1	Wattagan Mountains	"
	Green Catbird	1	"	"
	Rockwarbler Nesting	1	"	"
	Zebra Finch	10	Big Pond, Kooragang Is	"
Sep 9	Figbird	5	Toronto Boulevard	"
Dec 27	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	23	Ash Island [Scotts Point]	D.Biddle
	Chestnut Teal	50+	"	"
	Masked Lapwing	100+	"	"
	Striped Honeyeater	5	"	"
Dec 28	Chestnut Teal	50+	"	"
	Masked Plover	100+	"	"
	Striped Honeyeater	3	"	"
1998				
Jan	Channel-billed Cuckoo	2	Mirrabooka	G.McCulloch
Mar 3	Spangled Drongo	1	"	"
Feb 13	Brown Quail	1	Tanilba Bay	M.Kearns
15	Nankeen Night-Heron	3	Snapper Is. [Pt.Stephen]	"
	Channel-billed Cuckoo	7	"	"
17	Brown Goshawk	2	S.W.C.	"
	Peregrine Falcon	1	"	"
21	Brown Gerygone	6+2imm	Swan Bay [Pt.Stephen]	"
	Pheasant Coucal	1	Tanilba Bay	"
24	Swamp Harrier	1	Kooragang Is.	"
	Grey Goshawk	1	Fullerton Cove	"
Mar 1	Australian Hobby	2	10km.West of Barrington	"
	Large-billed Scrubwren	2	Gloucester R. Barrington NP	"
2	Dollarbird	1	Mayfield	"
Feb 28	Southern Emu-wren	2	Myall Lakes NP	B.&D.Kibble
	Musk Duck	1	"	"
Mar 4	Tawny Frogmouth	1	Marmong Point	"
11	Australian King Parrot	14+	New Lambton Heights	P.Lightfoot
Mar 3	Common Greenshank	11	Ash Island	M.Kearns
10	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2	Lemon Tree Passage	"
11	Swamp Harrier	3	S.W.C.	"
Mar 7	Pacific Baza	2+	Stroud Hill nr Dungog	N.Hodgins
Mar 10	Pacific Baza	2+1juv	Tingira Heights	R.Walker
1	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1imm.	Eleebana	"
Mar 11	Little Eagle	1	Carey Bay	C.Herbert
	Aust. Magpie [white-backed]	1	Maitland Golf Course	N.Foster
Mar 17	Noisy Friarbird	500+	Woodberry	R&J.Smith/L.Marshall

Shorebirds Start To Show Their Colours

Kooragang Island Field Outing - 22nd March 1998.

When we first got out of our cars under Stockton Bridge it was still a bit dark but I could make out that there was plenty of godwit parading on the feeding beach on the upstream side of Stockton Sand Spit. As the light improved it was good to find that many of these birds were showing the emergence of breeding plumage. This is what I had come to see and one bird in particular was well advanced with colour all over its chest and belly. Others had colour about their heads while some of course showed not a trace.

Well it was all Bar-tailed Godwit at this stage, plus a Red Knot, a single Whimbrel and four Black-winged Stilt. One of the stilts was an immature bird and sported a black eye patch only while lacking the black nape saddle.

Later on when these birds lifted and took off up river it was plain to see that a small proportion of the godwits were in fact Black-tailed Godwit. The white wing bars and rumps easily distinguishing them from their bar-tailed cousins.

Also of interest, standing on the beach, were four Gull-billed Tern all looking very neat and tidy with complete black breeding caps. A Caspian Tern with a rough head stood close by and the comparison of each species' bill illustrated the great variety within the type.

Away from the beach our interest was mainly in the resident White-fronted Chats of the sand spit and these birds provided good entertainment being very active early in the morning. It was while we were chasing these fellows about (through binoculars) that we made the great discovery. In my binocular view, half hidden by the low grasses and looking just brilliant in the soft light of dawn was a Pacific Golden Plover. This bird had moulted into breeding colours and was very black on the throat, chest and belly. It also had a very well defined white line from the forehead, curving over the eye and down the side of the neck then curved back along the flank.

The more we looked the more we found and a total of 28 birds were all standing there on the "traditional" roosting site. It was great to see these birds actually roosting here again after all the efforts by various people to make the site shorebird friendly again.

Swimming about on the lagoon were four ducks; its agreed they are teal, but what species? A puzzle for at least two birdwatchers determined to get to the bottom of it. First guess is Grey Teal since there are no males about with dark heads and colourful chests. But still we are not convinced, two birds appear to be a paler grey than the other two and

have whiter throats. The shape of the bird's heads are different as well with the darker birds having a squarer shape and a definite change of direction of the outline from the bill to the forehead. Two female Chestnut Teal and a pair of Grey Teal is a reasonable conclusion but still there is a doubt. Later in the day, a quick session around at Flouride Point proved that both species were in fact in the estuary.

When the tide had dropped further (about 4 hours past high tide) the nearby reef was exposed and so we tried our luck with more wader watching. When you first look at the reef it hardly promotes itself as a haven for birdlife but through binoculars or scope and with a little patience the shorebirds start to materialise.

Of course the pair of White Ibis were hardly a challenge but soon we had found a small group of Grey-tailed Tattler and five Terek Sandpiper which were standing about preening themselves. The hardest birds to find were three Lesser Sand Plover which were standing absolutely still and just right in front of us! One bird had a broad chest band that appeared to be brown in colour compared to the grey of other parts of its plumage.

Further upstream from our position the now exposed sand bank was filling up with birds as well and of particular interest to us was two Little Tern. One bird was identified as an adult in breeding plumage; it could be seen to have a white forehead and a continuous line from the bill through the eye. Also, as it struck certain attitudes the yellow bill colour was detected. The second bird had to be either a non-breeding adult or a juvenile as it lacked the neat form about the head like the first.

A colourful interruption to our efforts with camouflaged shorebirds came in the form of an active Sacred Kingfisher which delighted us all with a very close fly by as it dashed about the rocks and the mangroves.

On over to the Big Pond and out in the heat for more wader watching was just as rewarding. Again, first look at this place doesn't do much to inspire but on closer inspection its amazing what you will find moving about the sticks at the northern end.

Small waders identified here included Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plover and Red-capped Plover. All these birds were represented in pretty good numbers with the sharpies in greatest supply. One particular bird was highly suspected to be a Pectoral Sandpiper but we lost it among the sticks and never found it again despite an intense search.

While working hard at identifying these waders our efforts were occasionally interrupted with very close views of Golden-headed Cisticola and White-fronted Chat. These birds would appear just in front of us in amongst some low tangle of weeds etc at the edge of the bank and every now and then would jump up on some exposed perch for all to admire.

Meanwhile other things were happening overhead and sightings of three different raptors all had something special about them. The first sighting was that of a Whistling Kite that changed into a Wedge-tailed Eagle that finally became a juvenile (1st year) White-breasted Sea Eagle. These changes took place as the bird first approached our position, flew overhead and sailed away with wings held in a shallow vee. The final nomination was

of course correct but it just goes to show how sometimes first impressions can be deceiving.

The second raptor sighting was a wonderful event as a pair of Black-shouldered Kite engaged in aerial courtship display. This action took place almost directly overhead and only 10-20m above the ground. The birds flew about in a circular path with fluttering wing beats (as opposed to strong direct flight) and occasionally touched talons. They also called a fair bit to each other with soft squeaks.

Finally, an Australian Hobby raced by in typical low flight as it dashed along the slag wall of a high dyke heading west. This particular bird had deep rufous colour in its chest and flanks and was grey above.

After a lunch break at the foot of the nearby wind power generator (it provided good shade on a beastly hot day) a quick look around at Flouride Point was rewarded with sightings of Common Greenshank and Royal Spoonbill. This is a great spot to watch the larger waders assembling before moving onto the dykes to roost. Eventually waves of godwit were observed flying in from feeding areas now becoming inundated with the rising tide.

Tom Clarke

Hunter Region Annual Bird Report (1996) Bird List Index

For those that have trouble finding that particular species in the 1996 ABR, help is at hand. Thanks to HBOC member Maree Burgoyne, a bird list index is now available to guide you to the appropriate page. Anyone wishing to have a copy of this index should contact Tom Clarke (4951 3872) and it will be sent to you with your next newsletter.

NEW MEMBERS

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

Anne Carey & Mathew Chambers of Morpeth
Paul Gibbs of East Maitland
Margaret & Neil Kearns of Lemon Tree Passage
Jenny Musicka of Balickera

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

Limited stocks of

FRED'S TAPES

still available through HBOC

Tape 1: Bush Birds

calls of 52 species from Boobook Owl to Figbird.

Tape 2: Honeyeaters

songs, contact calls, greeting calls and alarms of 31 species
from Red Wattlebird to Scarlet Honeyeater.

Recorded by Fred Van Gessel.

These sound recordings of bird calls of the Hunter Region can still be purchased and are available to members for \$10 each. See Rowley Smith (Treasurer) or Lesley Marshall (Assistant Treasurer) at club nights.

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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 April	Field Day:	Congewai
	Meet:	Cessnock McDonald's 7:00am
	Contact:	Chris Herbert 4959 3663
Tuesday 5th May	Midweek Outing:	Maitland Park, Maitland
	Meet:	Elgin Street entrance 8:00am
	Contact:	Keith Woods 4963 3070
Weekend 9th/10th May	Regent Honeyeater & Swift Parrot Survey Weekend	
	Wanted:	Small groups to survey these areas
		- Goulbourn River N.P.
		- Widden Valley & Baerami Valley
		- Howes Valley
		- Wollombi/Cessnock area
	Coordinator:	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Survey for whole or part of the weekend. Recording sheets and more information from Ann Lindsey		
Wednesday 13th May	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main feature:	African Safari (Part 2) - Ann Lindsey
Saturday 23rd May	Field Day:	Taronga Zoo - behind the scenes tour plus Kodak Free Flight Bird Show
	Cost:	\$24 per person
		Money to Rowley Smith by May Clubnight
	Meet:	Main Entrance (Mosman side) 10:30am
	Leader:	Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Tuesday 2nd June	Midweek Outing:	Yuelabah Track - Charlestown/Warners bay
	Meet:	Corner EK Ave & Lara Close 8:00am
	Contact:	Max Blanch 4961 1655
Queen's Birthday Weekend 6th-8th June	Camp:	White Box Campsite - Goulburn River N.P.
		Bring your own water
		Enjoy big camp fire at night
		Big frost in the morning
	Contact:	Chris Herbert 4959 3663
Wednesday 10th June	Clubnight:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
	Main Feature:	Is Pure Energy for the birds?
		Paul Myers - Energy Australia
Sunday 21st June	Field Day:	Wetlands Day - first stop Cedar Hill
	Meet:	Minmi Pub 8:00am
	Leader:	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008