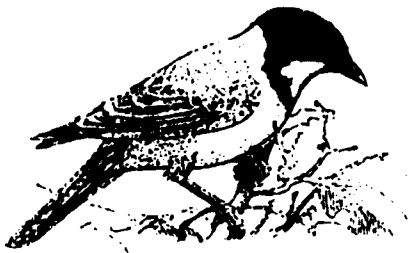


# NEWSLETTER



## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (02) 4958 5942

President:

Alan Stuart

Secretary:

Peter Phillips

Newsletter Editor:

Tom Clarke

*The aims of the club are:*

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

*To encourage bird observing as a leisure time activity.*

## Another First For The Thickheads.

For the 1998 Twitchathon, the mighty Hunter Thickheads boasted a new line-up and a change of tactics. Chris Herbert and Yours Truly were poached, at great expense, from the champagne team to join regulars Ann Lindsey and Jill Warner.

Based on the theory that less travel equals more sleep and more birds it was decided to start at Bulga. However, some one forgot to tell the birds and we had to work hard for the 46 species ticked off by dark. The "best tick" was the Brown Quail that flew off it's nest from under Ann's foot.

After tasty hamburgers at Singleton, and ticking a Boobook on the way, we arrived at Barrington House with the party still in full swing. Unfortunately for Ann and Jill, their accommodation was in the main building and the revelry shot their "more sleep" theory to pieces. Although their claim that the prospect of little sleep prompted them to go and sample the house wine list had a dubious tone!

An early rise and hearty breakfast saw us head off into the rainforest with renewed confidence. Once again, however, several "certainties" evaded us and we only added 26 ticks to our list.

Next stop was "the Largest Small-leaved Fig Tree in NSW" and we were greeted with the amazing sight of 8 male Regent Bowerbirds in one tree; how spectacular! Although, as the leader of *Lesticum phoradae* later pointed out, "its still only worth one tick!" Thanks, Tom! Still, at the end of the day, it was good to find something to boast about.

Then someone called, "look, black cockies - 6, 7, 8 Yellow-tails". Then, "no, seven cockies and a Grey Goshawk!". The cockies then landed in a dead tree and quietly observed us observing them while we ate morning tea and searched (unsuccessfully) for Azure Kingfisher.

Apart from Mike Newman's "patch" at Dunn's Creek, which added several species to our list (the highlight being Pacific Baza) the next few stops (too many, perhaps, in hindsight?) added very few. And when we reached Stockton things were looking decidedly grim; the worst prospect being, not beating the champagne team!

To all HBOC members and their families

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

Happy Bird Watching For 1999

After adding 10 species at Stockton (why wouldn't those large flocks of waders land; had Alan Morris really paid them to keep circling till 5 o'clock?) we had to rush to Shortland where we managed to increase our tally to the mighty total of.....143! Another record for the Thickheads, the first time we'd finished last!

Despite the disappointing tally it was a great weekend and the barbecue and good fellowship at the Wetlands Centre made it all worth while.

Congratulations to all teams, particularly *Lesticcum phoradae* for coming second again in the Champagne event.

Once again our thanks go to our many sponsors, and to Barrington House for their wonderful hospitality. Also, the display of scopes and binoculars put on by Northern Instruments created a great deal of interest.

Greg Newling.

## Yes. Let's Tick 'em For A Day

Twitchathon is not only a fund-raising activity and a great way to spend a weekend, but an exercise in logistics and bird diversity. The aim is to locate as many different species as possible within 24 hours and that means locating a wide variety of habitats within as short a distance as possible.

Our Champagne Team (*Lesticcum phoradae*) has a relaxed approach to twitching - no birdwatching is permitted between 10pm and 6am (so you can sleep) and morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea are mandatory. Furthermore, consuming at least one bottle of champagne adds to the level of enjoyment!

We started at Richmond Vale Colliery Dam on the Saturday afternoon and two hours later we'd identified 55 species - a great start to the Twitchathon. Searching for species makes one look carefully at every bird, just in case it's different. It really hones your spotting skills.

Our Sunday itinerary included Blackbutt Reserve, Kooragang Island, Stockton, Newcastle Wetland Reserve and Shortland Wetlands Centre. Highlights were Crested Shrike-tit in Blackbutt, Pacific Golden Plover at Kooragang and a Forest Kingfisher at Newcastle Wetland Reserve.

Next year's Twitchathon may have a slightly different focus, perhaps a search for rare species instead of sheer numbers..... whatever the search, it's a wonderful way to enjoy birdwatching.

Liz Herbert

## President's Column

Most of us would probably agree that "things aren't as good as they used to be" in matters to do with birdwatching. Many good local patches have disappeared as a result of "development", and many others seem to be under threat. At almost every HBOC Committee meeting we hear of some new issue and spend time working out how HBOC can help.

The "Big Pond" at Kooragang Island is an important conservation issue. This significant wader habitat is on land earmarked for industry. It is also now in the middle of where some people want to have a new airport built. The Big Pond is the body of fresh water across the road from the wind power generator. Many rare visiting waders have utilised the Big Pond. Recent examples include Ruff, Pectoral Sandpiper and Banded Stilt. Lots of other birds are regularly present there too - a bird list compiled by HBOC contains more than 70 species.

We've been campaigning for many months to have the land preserved. Many letters have gone to and from the NSW government, but with no useful outcomes. It's time for us to widen the campaign and involve local MPs and councillors. You can help - by writing to your local politicians explaining how important the Big Pond is as a bird habitat and asking them to help preserve it.

*Otherwise we (and the birds) may lose it!*

Changing to another subject; the 1997 Hunter Region Bird Report was finalised a couple of months ago and most HBOC members have now received their copy of it. All being well, the remaining copies should be distributed by Christmas time. Let me know if you have missed out.

A few people have asked me what else is done with the Bird Reports. Some organisations receive a complementary copy e.g. Newcastle Library, NSW Library. We also sell quite a number of copies which helps considerably to defray the printing costs. For example, several Hunter region councils purchase a copy as do some environmental consultancy companies. Many other copies are sold to individuals who are not members of HBOC.

Please remember that your records are important. Share them with others.

Happy birding, Alan Stuart

## New editions to the Library

## Bird Atlas Project

### Raptors. The Birds Of Prey

This book is a comprehensive reference of diurnal birds of prey for the birder who wants to go beyond the fundamentals. An almanac of hawks, eagles and falcons of the world. All inclusive, it covers evolution, behaviour, nesting, migration and conservation efforts.

Beautifully photographed and illustrated it is well worth a read.

### Fairy-Wrens & Grasswrens

- Ian Rowley & Eleanor Russell

The brilliant coloured Fairy-Wrens, enigmatic Grasswrens and tiny Emu-Wrens have a fascinating social organisation with resident social pairs and their progeny retained long after independence. All members of the group help to raise the young. This book looks at the family as a whole describing evolution, biology and behaviour.

All species are fully illustrated in colour by Peter Marsack.

Take it home and enjoy.

### Finding Birds In The Northern Territory

I picked this book up at Tennant Creek on the way home from a two month trip to the Top End last winter. I wish I had it at the beginning as I think it is an essential birdwatching companion for the Northern Territory.

It helps the reader find the Territory's 384 terrestrial birds and regular migrants, it details best birdwatching sites with easy to follow maps and it provides information on access, accommodation and camping. It also gives concise information on habitats and where to find the birds.

If you are planning or just thinking about that around Australia trip you will enjoy this book. It is sure to give you itchy feet. When I head that way again it will be in my glovebox for easy reference.

### Portraits Of Brazilian Birds

(donated by Peter Scaife)

Brazil possesses around 1610 species of wild birds including migrants from northern and southern hemispheres. Portraits of Brazilian Birds presents a small selection (182 species) of the magnificent bird fauna in this beautifully photographed volume.

Pat Poutney  
HBOC Librarian

By now I would hope that most of you would be aware that Birds Australia have started a new four year Atlas project. The project is funded by Environment Australia.

Why don't you consider becoming involved in the Atlas as an occasional or more frequent surveyor?

The Atlas project has several objectives. One important one is to update the information on species distributions that was obtained in the first Atlas project around 20 years ago. There have been a lot of habitat changes, and losses of habitat, in the meantime. What effect has this had?

Another key aim is to understand the importance of habitat types for each species. This information will of course be of most use for endangered species, especially for the planning of conservation strategies for them.

Consequently, there are two main types of surveys that can be carried out - sporadic searches of medium to large areas (much like those for the first Atlas project) and more regular searches of 12 hectare areas. Participants can elect to do either or both kinds of surveys.

About 10% or so of our members have registered to do surveys and have received their Atlassing kits. In future, they'll receive a regular newsletter from Birds Australia telling them how the project is going and what the results are showing.

Why not join in as well? You probably have a favourite patch or two that you're already keeping records for, or maybe you are planning a trip away. Make sure that what you see gets recorded - birds will benefit.

Contact Jim Perry (4943 2496) or Ann Lindsey (4951 2008) to register and become part of this important project. And get some added satisfaction from what is already a fantastic hobby.

Alan Stuart

## Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. to be held at the Shortland Wetlands Centre on 10th February 1999 commencing at 7.30pm.

**Business of the meeting:**

- Confirmation of minutes of 1998 AGM
- Annual Report including Financial Report
- Motion to elect Life Membership (see separate notice)
- Election of Office Bearers (see separate notice)
- Filling of other positions
- General Business

The AGM will be followed by the February Club Night.

Peter Phillips. Public Officer.

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### Notice of Motion

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned intend to move the following motion at the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. to be held on 10th February 1999.

"that Ed and Sue Hinneman be elected to Life Membership of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc."

Moved Alan Stuart, Seconded Peter Phillips

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### Election of HBOC Office Bearers for 1999

Nominations are called for the following positions for 1999:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Ordinary Members of the Management Committee. (6 max.)

Nominations shall be made in writing and signed by two members of the Club and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. Written nominations shall be delivered to the Secretary by 3rd February 1999.

If insufficient written nominations are received by 3rd February 1999, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall then be received at the AGM.

Peter Phillips. Public Officer.

The new number for Birdline NSW is  
(02) 9439 9536

Birdline NSW is sponsored by  
Birds Australia  
NSW Field Ornithologists Club  
Cumberland Bird Observers Club  
Hunter Bird Observers Club  
Illawarra Bird Observers Club

Articles for our Newsletter are always  
welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is 29th January, 1999

Mail to: Tom Clarke  
28 Kokera St, Wallsend 2287  
Phone: (02) 4951 3872 (h) or (02) 4910 1384 (w)

**OBSERVATIONS FROM OCTOBER MEETING**

Jun 30	Black-necked Stork	2+1 juv	Tea Gardens	T. Wright
Jul 20	White-headed Pigeon	18	"	"
Aug	Wandering Whistling Duck	8	University of N'cle	H. Tarrant
Aug 24	White-throated Gerygone	1	Wingen Village	G. Newling
Aug 20	Brush Cuckoo	1	Bobs Farm	M. Diemer
Aug 14	Shy Albatross	1	~4kms off Port Stephens	J. Perry
Aug 12	Brown Goshawk	2	S.W.C.	M. Kearns
Sep 2&9	Tawny Frogmouth	2	Lambton High School	B. Cockerell
Sep 3	Peregrine Falcon	2	Bayswater Colliery	G. Newling
Sep 3	Black-fronted Dotterel	4	" "	"
Sep 2	Western Gerygone	3	" "	"
Sep 18	Pheasant Coucal	>2	New Lambton Heights	M. Hamilton
Sep 7	Scarlet Honeyeater	3	Woodberry	J. Smith
Sep 17	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Dungog	"
Sep 27	Black-necked Stork	3	Woodberry	"
Sep 23	Sacred Kingfisher	1	New Lambton Heights	M. & I. Hamilton
Sep 25	Regent Bowerbird	1	"	"
Sep 21	Channel-billed Cuckoo	2	University of N'cle	H. Tarrant
Sep 13	Rainbow Bee-eater	1	Lostock	"
Sep 19	Rainbow Bee-eater	4	Goulburn R. nr Wollemi NP	"
Sep 19	Brown Falcon	2	Denman	"
Sep 6	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Garden Suburb	J. Perry
Sep 6	White-throated Gerygone	1	East Seaham	R. Carlton
Sep 9	Black-chinned Honeyeater	6	Mt. Vincent	G. O'Connor
	Superb Lyrebird	1 juv	" "	"
	Rockwarbler	1	" "	"
Sep 7	Eastern Whipbird	2 juv.	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Sep 11	Spotted Harrier	2	Jerry's Plains	A. Stuart
Sep 29	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Woodberry	J. Smith
Sep 23	Double-barred Finch	6-8	Bolwarra STW lagoon	H. Tarrant
Sep 10	Laughing Kookaburra on	4	Lemon Tree Passage	M. Kearns
Sep 12	Pheasant Coucal	Heard	Malabula	"
Sep 13	Osprey	1	"	"
Sep 13	Yellow Thornbill	10	"	"
Sep 19	Pheasant Coucal	1	Medowie	"
Sep 22	Australian Wood Duck	1 + 3dy	Salt Ash	"
Sep 22	Topknot Pigeon	6	" "	"
Sep 22	Masked Lapwing on	2	" "	"
	" "	2 + 2dy	" "	"
	Brown-headed Honeyeater	1	Medowie	"
Oct 1	Dollarbird	1	New Lambton	A. Stuart
Oct 1	Peregrine Falcon	1	4kms South of Scone	G. Newling
Oct 12	Black Kite	1	2kms South of Aberdeen	"
Oct 12	Cicadabird	1	Blackbutt Reserve	A. Stuart
Oct 12	Dollarbird	3-4	Clarencetown	J. Smith
Oct 14	Wandering Whistling Duck	Pr + yng	S.W.C.	W. Barden
Oct 14	Grey Goshaws [white]	1	Wallsend	G. O'Connor
Oct 14	Y.T.B.C.	21	Edgeworth	"
10-12	Pacific Baza	1	New Lambton Heights	M. Hamilton
Oct 11	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Wingen Village	G. Newling
Oct 12	Little Eagle	1	Bayswater Colliery	"
Oct 14	Common Koel	2	Wingen Village	"

Oct 12	Satin Bowerbird Nest	Pr.	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Oct 15	Black-shouldered Kite	1	S.W.C.	"
Oct	Pacific Baza	1	Blackbutt Reserve	P. Lightfoot
	Black-faced Monarch	Pr.	" "	"
	Golden Whistler	1m	" "	"
	Eastern Yellow Robin	1	" "	"
Oct 13	Collared Sparrowhawk	1	Lemon Tree Passage	M. Kearns
	Australian Hobby	1	Mayfield	"
	Swamp Harrier	2	Tanilba Bay	"
	White-faced Heron	2 n 2y	Lemon Tree Passage	"
Oct 24	Brown Quail Nest	1	Bulga	A. Lindsey et al
Oct 25	Regent Bowerbird	>15	Allyn River	"
Oct 24	Brush Cuckoo	1	Bulga	"

**OBSERVATIONS FROM NOVEMBER MEETING:**

Jun 7	Pacific Baza	1	Jewells	K. Laverick
Oct 23	Brown Goshawk	1	New Lambton Heights	M. Kearns
Oct 24	Southern Emu Wren	15+2dy	Grahamstown Dam	"
	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	4	" "	"
	Great Crested Grebe	4	" "	"
	Musk Duck	5	" "	"
	Black Swan	8+4dy	" "	"
Oct 25	Superb Fairy-wren	3+1dy	Malabula	"
	Brown Thornbill	2 + 1dy	" "	"
	House Sparrow nest bldg	2	" "	"
Oct 29	White-throated Treecreeper cf	2	Lemon Tree Passage	"
	Laughing Kookaburra cf	1	" " "	"
Oct 31	Osprey	1	" " "	"
	Bar-tailed Godwit	>60	" " "	"
Nov 4	Long-billed Corella	6	Salt Ash	"
Nov 2	Australian Wood Duck	2+8dy	Tanilba Bay	"
Oct 20	Black-necked Stork	1	Raymond Terrace	S. Roderick
	Latham's Snipe	2	" "	"
Nov 9	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	~1,000	Off Newcastle Baths	"
Nov 9	White-throated Nightjar	1	Clarencetown	"
	Fluttering Shearwater	20-50	Off Newcastle Baths	"
Oct 17	Grey-crowned Babbler	>10	Paterson	H. Tarrant
Oct 24	Grey-crowned Babbler	17	"	"
Oct 29	Bar-shouldered Dove	1	Bolwarra	"
Oct 31	Black-fronted Dotterel	2	Bolwarra STW	"
Oct	Long-billed Corella	~20	Bolwarra	"
Oct 31	Yellow-rumped Thornbill fy		"	"
Oct 21	Nankeen Kestrel	1	Walka Water Works	"
Oct 23	White-necked Heron	1	Gillieston	"
Oct 21	Satin Flycatcher	1m	Newcastle University	"
Oct 21	Leaden Flycatcher	1m	Newcastle University	H. Tarrant
	Black-faced Monarch	1	" "	"
Oct 26	Wandering Whistling Duck	4	" "	"
Oct 30	White-breasted Woodswallow	6	" "	"
Oct 29	Swamp Harrier	1	Hexham	"
	Swamp Harrier	1	N.W.R.	"
Nov 8	Scarlet Honeyeater	~10	Paterson Park	"
Nov 8	Peregrine	1 imm	6km SW Gresford	"
Nov 5	Rufous Fantail	1	Bolwarra	"
Nov 2	Rufous Fantail	3	Walka Water Works	"

Nov 10	Australian Hobby	1	Lorn/Martland	"
Nov 9	Wandering Whistling Duck	3	Newcastle University	"
Nov 2	Rufous Fantail	1	" "	"
	<b>Black-faced Monarch</b>	1	" "	"
	White-browed Scrubwren fy		" "	"
Nov 6	Rufous Fantail	1	" "	"
Oct 15	Peaceful Dove	2	Salt Ash	M. Kearns
Oct 18	Superb Fairy-wren	2+2dy	Malabula	"
Oct 22	Pied Currawong cf	1	Lemon Tree Passage	"
Oct/Nov	Satin Bowerbird	1f	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Nov 4	Regent Bowerbird	1m	" " "	"
Nov 2	Pheasant Coucal	1	Merewether Heights	M. & K. Woods
Nov 3	Regent Bowerbird	2m	Glenrock Lagoon	"
Nov 8	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2+1dy	Lemon Tree Passage	M. Kearns
	Rainbow Lorikeet	10+1dy	" " "	"
	Crested Pigeon on	1	Malabula	

## ○ A Colourful Day Out At Harrington

Harrington Bus Trip - 22nd November 1998

Crimson dawn heralded a fine weather Sunday for our coach trip to Harrington. Twenty-eight early risers joined the coach at the Wetlands Centre for a technicolour wide-screen tour of the Lower North Coast. By 8:45am we were at Harrington, trading stares with an Osprey family of four on their large stick nest in an old dead tree near the light industrial area. Further on, heathland surrounded the sewage treatment works and we saw Tawny-crowned, New Holland and White-necked Honeyeaters; Red-backed, Variegated and Superb Fairy-wrens; Silvereyes and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins. White-throated Needletails soared overhead, a Black-shouldered Kite hovered nearby and a pair of White-breasted Sea Eagles fled smoothly through blue skies.

Beside Harrington Caravan Park is a patch of littoral rainforest being painstakingly weeded by local enthusiasts who are making steady progress against ubiquitous asparagus fern. This leafy, deep green haven provided a delightful contrast to the open heath. Families of Spectacled Monarchs, Rufous Fantails and Lewin's Honeyeaters provided colour in motion as they busily searched for food. On the other side of the rainforest was the complex of dunes, sandbars and shallow lagoons associated with the entrance to the Manning River. On the margins of a shallow lagoon, Southern Emu-wrens and Superb Fairy-wrens twittered in

the spike-rush and low acacias. Along the water's edge, Red-capped Plovers trotted quickly in their characteristic trot-stop-trot-stop pattern. On the dunes, beside red-flagged sticks, several Little Terns sat on their nests. Out along the breakwater a party of pelicans waited patiently by the fish-cleaning trough while Eastern Curlews, godwits, cormorants and Pacific Golden Plovers rested on the sand spit opposite.

Our final stop was Wingham Brush, a tiny remnant of the rainforest scrub that once covered the Wingham-Taree area. It is dominated by tall figs crowded with Grey-headed Flying Foxes, restless and squabbling in the drowsy afternoon. On the leaf-littered floor below the flying foxes, Yellow-throated Scrub Wrens flitted after insects and several brightly wattled Brush Turkeys stalked about importantly in the vicinity of large nest mounds. Just outside the Brush, beside the tarred roads and tiled roofs of Wingham was a final delight; more than fifty Scarlet Honeyeaters feeding on mauve jacaranda blossom.

We left Wingham at 3:10pm, stopped for icecream and fuel en route, and arrived at the Wetlands Centre by 5:50pm. In all, we saw 105 species and had a very relaxed drive, thanks to Paul Burgess of Aldinga Tours.

Liz Herbert

### NEW MEMBERS

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

Russ Berry of Paxton  
Bev & Mark Fidler of Eraring  
Paul Freeman of Holmesville

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

# 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.

Saturday 12th December	Regent Honeyeater/Atlassing Day in the Milbrodale area.
Meet:	Cessnock MacDonalds 6:30am
Leader:	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
	Intending participants <u>must ring</u> to confirm.
Saturday 19th December	Latham's Snipe Count at Cedar Hill
Meet:	Minmi Pub 7:30am
Contact:	Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Sunday 24th January	Field Day: Tahlee/Carrington
Meet:	Raymond Terrace MacDonald's 7:00am
Leader:	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Tuesday 2nd February	Midweek Outing: Kooragang Island
Meet:	Stockton Sand Spit carpark. 8:00am
Contact:	Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 10th February	Clubnight: Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
Main feature:	Annual General Meeting.
Sunday 21st February	Field Day: Main Creek via Dungog
Meet:	Raymond Terrace McDonald's 7:00am
Leader:	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Sunday 7th March	Clean Up Australia Day - Stockton Sand Spit
Meet:	Under the bridge 9:00am
Contact:	Tom Clarke 4951 3872

## Regent Honeyeater & Swift Parrot Surveys

The surveys carried out during the year in May and August have been rated "a resounding success" by the respective coordinators. Despite a couple of rain affected weekends (particularly in the Hunter) the response was "the best yet".

The Regent Honeyeater and the Swift Parrot are both nomadic and move over great distances in search of food. They are also both suffering from greatly diminished numbers.

There seems to be no problem finding these birds during the breeding season when large numbers are settled in well known established sites. But since they apparently

break up in to very small groups to forage through the winter the task of locating them requires people looking all over the place.

Locally, Regent Honeyeaters were found feeding in Swamp Mahogany during May at Wyee Point and Ellalong. August surveys included Regent Honeyeaters feeding in Spotted Gum at Ellalong and Pokolbin

Other trees favoured by these birds include Mugga Ironbark and Narrow-leaved ironbark. The birds not only feed on the nectar produced by the flowers of these trees but also seek the lerps, the sugary coverings of the eucalypt leaf-sucking psyllid insect, from the backs of the leaves.

Official survey weekends in 1999 will be carried out on 22-23 May and 7-8 August but of course any sightings of Regent Honeyeaters or Swift Parrots will continue to remain important.