

NEWSLETTER

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

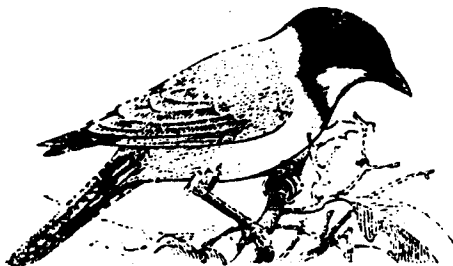
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Secretary: Peter Phillips

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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.*
-

Happy Christmas,



***Happy New Year,
And Happy Birding To All Members***

BIRDS AUSTRALIA WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

At the recent BIRDLIFE WORLD CONFERENCE held in MALAYSIA Queen Noor of Jordan, BirdLife Honorary President, presented one of only two Global Conservation Achievement Awards to BA for its Gluepot project. This was a tremendous accomplishment and congratulations to all involved in this project of international significance.

Source: Galah 40, 10 November 1999



President's Column

It's probably too early to be thinking that the proposal for an international airport on Kooragang Island has withered away. Just the same, we're feeling a little more relaxed about it than was the case a few months ago.

There are many reasons why the decision-makers appear to have given up on Kooragang Island as an airport site. Bird-related concerns were one important factor. Max Maddock deserves a lot of credit for his role in making this the case. Realising that facts were sometimes being overlooked, or misrepresented, Max set about to correct this. Over the course of several months, he produced a total of 10 Fact Sheets, each of 1 or 2 pages in length. These addressed the case against the airport for reasons relating to aircraft safety, bird safety and environmental. All were based on Max's own deep knowledge of birds in the lower Hunter and supplemented by additional surveys and by information gathered from many sources. Some of these other sources were readily available, others were obscure and took quite a deal of tracking down.

As each Fact Sheet was published, copies were sent to all the stakeholders and decision-makers. This had the additional effect of being a regular reminder that an opposition to the airport proposal existed. At times, some people needed such reminders.

HBOC supported Max Maddock in a number of ways during the production of the Fact Sheets. We provided data from our past records, several members took part in special surveys which Max designed, and we also contributed towards the production costs. This was a cause which we were determined had to be won.

We are very thankful for the time and energy that Max dedicated to preparing the Fact Sheets. Without a doubt, they were a significant aspect of the anti-airport

campaign. HBOC has a complete set of the Fact Sheets. Contact me if you're interested in looking at them in detail.

This year's Twitchathon took place over the final weekend of October (a very wet weekend). HBOC members were in two of the teams competing in the main event. Congratulations to the "Home Brew" team, entering for the first time and achieving 3rd place. With a total of 170 species, they pipped HBOC's regular team, the "Hunter Thickheads", by 1 species. The competition will no doubt be fierce next year!

Twitchathons are a bit of fun for the participants, but also raise funds for special projects. The funds raised this year will be used by Birds Australia for projects related to albatross research. Australia has 20 species of albatross, and most are considered to be endangered. In most cases, their habits, feeding needs and breeding needs are poorly known.

Finally, I'd like to thank those members who came along to the Weeding Day at Stockton Sandspit on October 17. We joined a group of 15-20 volunteers from the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project. After a morning of hard but satisfying work, we were treated to a BBQ lunch, followed by cake and a cuppa. In my case, I returned home tired and well fed, and slept for half the afternoon!

Happy birding.

Alan Stuart

NEW MEMBERS

The Hunter Bird Observers Club extends a very warm welcome to the following new members: Terry Langworthy, Gwandalan; Tom Cordingly, Blackalls Park; Jack Adams, Edgeworth; George Oakes, Woodford; Ethel Raine, Charlestown; and Chris Syme, New Lambton.

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

1999 BATwitchathon

1. The Hunter Experience

The 1999 Twitchathon could be described in one word - WET! For 1999, the mighty Hunter Thickheads, this year made up of Ann Lindsey, Chris and Dan Herbert and Yours Truly, started their campaign at Eileen Toombs' delightful bush haven near Wollar. With 4 p.m. approaching, three questions were being asked. Would the Wonga Pigeon keep calling? Would the Emu that we saw on the way in still be there? Would the !?!*# rain stop? The answers were: yes, no, and no! An hour at Eileen's in the pouring rain yielded 21 species and we left wondering how many this wonderful spot would have produced in fine weather!

Several short stops before dark (christened "3-bird-stops" by Dan) brought the tally to 52, the highlight being Spotted Quail-thrush (a "tick" for me). As darkness fell, our about to be twitched "Emu" vanished into gloom when Ann declared "Well, actually it has ears." The long night drive to Barrington House, stopping for a tasty Chinese meal at Singleton, added a Barn Owl to the tally.

Once again, we enjoyed the warm hospitality of Barrington House and the enthusiasm of owner, Brad Lewis, for our quest. The daylight walk through the rainforest added 26 species to the score, highlighted by both species of Ground Thrush calling in close proximity to each other. Red Browed Tree Creeper was another "special". However, no Pittas!!!

The morning's drive down the valley kept the scorer busy, and after Mike Newman's well-trained Babblers greeted us at his front gate, we headed for Rathluba Lagoon where Plumed Whistling Ducks were an unexpected sighting, making up for the absence of Jacana. Then on to Kooragang Island and more rain! Anyone seeing 4 soaked birdos, 3 under one small umbrella, standing on the dykes in the pouring rain trying to identify waders, must have either marvelled at our enthusiasm, or questioned our sanity! Finally (thankfully?) we arrived at Shortland, where we were able to bring our tally to 169, ending on a high note with Emu Wren. Considering the conditions, 169 was a satisfying result, and 4th place a vast improvement on last year.

Once again, we'd like to thank our many generous sponsors, and extend our appreciation to Brad Lewis at Barrington House - we can certainly vouch for it as a place to stay or visit, enjoy great hospitality and see great birds. This year we raised \$760.50, an increase of \$236.50 compared with 1998.

Finally, congratulations to the Hunter Home Brewers, who beat us by one bird. It's good to see other people taking part in this enjoyable and worthwhile event.

Greg Newling

2. The NSW/ACT Experience

The Grey Toilet Thrushes won the Main race with 185 species in spite of all the rain. The team was Keith Brandwood, Sacha Adin and Dean Portelli and they have won the first prize, which is a \$100 book voucher from Andrew Isles Book Shop. The Grey Toilet Thrushes are no strangers to first place, great effort to you all and well done.

Second place went to the Central Coast Champions who saw 176 species. Not far off the pace and another creditable effort. Congratulations to Alan Morris, Stephen Edwards and Craig Arms. They win accommodation at Barren Grounds Bird Observatory. The Champions are also used to doing well, having been joint winners last year.

Thanks to our sponsors at Andrew Isles and Barren Grounds for their support.

In the Champagne race the winners were the Wonga Wonga Wanderers who had a total of 124 species on their list. Not bad going considering the compulsory stops for lunch and tea etc. Congratulations to Jillian Albrecht, Glenn Albrecht and Stuart Pearson who win (of course) some champagne. (some private donations supported this prize). Full results are:

Main Race:

Grey Toilet Thrushes	185
Central Coast Champions	176
Hunter Home Brewers	170
Hunter Thickheads	169
Bristlers	165
Cheerful Drongos	164
Silly Coots	158
Just a Little Cuckoo	154

Champagne Race:

Wonga Wonga Wanderers	124
Mickey Mouse Birders	122
Eastern Whiplashes	117
The Steamed Chats	114
Silver Eyed Secretary Birds	112
Larus Circus	109
Mathieson Mopokes	88
Bottle Forrest Birders	88
Batty Babblers	83
Sacred Red Rumped Tomaree Shrike Tits	78
COGnoscenti	73
Just Watching	40
Kandos Back Yard	

Once again to all of you, whether the weather was good or foul, whether you were on crutches or running, whether you were sitting at home in the back yard or travelled 1200 km, it was a great effort. Hope to see you all next year.

Source: Galah 40, 10 November 1999

Bird Spotting

by Antechinus

Opposite is the solution to the cryptic crossword puzzle from the previous newsletter. The following people submitted correct entries to the Secretary by December 1: Ted Wilson, Tinonee; Jeanette Stephenson, Rankin Park; John Gilbert, Redhead; Margaret Woods, Merewether Heights; Judy Matheson, Caves Beach; and Robyn Stuart, New Lambton.

A draw will be held at the December club meeting to decide who will receive the prize that is available. Our congratulations go to all the successful entrants

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Club Outings..

Tailors Beach/Birubi Point

October 24 1999

led by Michael Kearns

It was a small group of only 9 people – three of them visitors – who met at 7 a.m. at Salt Ash for the October outing. Undoubtedly, the very heavy rain of the day before, and some during the night, was a deterrent to many others. As it turned out though, we had several hours of sunshine, and some very pleasant birding, before more rains came at around noon.

Tailors Beach (part of Port Stephens) is a secluded and pretty spot with an adjoining flora and fauna reserve. This had some good walking tracks and we spent a couple of hours exploring them. Our visitors included a couple from Canada who were delightedly adding lots of birds to their Australian list. We were having a good time too, and saw 47 species there. Highlights were Nankeen Night-heron and Cicadabird; and a group of 19 Whimbrel roosting together on the shores

of Fenninghams Island opposite us. Also, quite a lot of Sacred Kingfisher were present – at least 10 of them from our estimate.

After morning tea by the waterside, we drove around to Birubi Point. A few birds were using the shore, including a group of 3 Sooty Oystercatcher and a solitary Bar-tailed Godwit. However, the main excitement was found looking seawards. We saw huge numbers of shearwaters – mostly Wedge-tailed but some Short-tailed were also present – and miscellaneous cormorants. Then, about 500m out and sitting on the water – two Black-browed Albatross. We eventually got them into sight with our telescopes. It took us a while to identify them as they mostly had their backs to us, and kept disappearing behind waves. Later, they took off and gave us some brief views in flight, before they again dropped back down to the water. There

wasn't much of a wind blowing for them to utilise.

Then, a similar distance out and also sitting on the water, another large bird. This one was all dark. We quickly realised it was a Giant-Petrel – but which one, Southern or Northern? Based on the frequency of sightings at sea off Sydney, it is more likely to have been the Southern Giant-Petrel. However, we couldn't make a positive identification, since this requires to see if the tip of the bill is green or red.

By now the weather was beginning to threaten. We drove round to Fenninghams Island as intended, and to the caravan park there. Lots of Long-billed and Little Corella were flying about, and plenty of other birds seemed to be there too. It looked promising, but then the heavens opened up and we scurried back to our cars and eventually abandoned the day. Up until then, it had been an excellent day out and we managed to record 60 species altogether.

Alan Stuart

Mud, Sweat, then Cheers

White Box Camp, October Long Weekend

I love going to White Box Camp, it's always full of birds and mostly the only other people there are other birdwatchers. At White Box Camp you will always wake up to the sounds of Brown Treecreeper, you will always see honeyeaters, and you will always enjoy an evening's campfire - even if it rains! This last occasion had all those things, of course, and more. For a start it was breeding season for most of the species present and a short walk around the perimeter of the camping area was good enough to reveal plenty. Common Bronzewing were found displaying, Brown Treecreeper and Dusky Woodswallow were busy inspecting hollows, Spotted Pardalote were burrowing, Fantail Cuckoo duetted, Willie Wagtail was defending a nest and Fuscous Honeyeater were building nests here and there. Wonderful stuff. This was going to be a weekend of high quality birdwatching with so much going on right at our doorsteps (if tents can have doorsteps) and three days to lap it all up.

Well, Saturday was just fine and a drive down to the crossing for a swim in the river was a pleasurable experience on such a warm, sunny day. I managed to see an immature White-breasted Sea Eagle fly downstream as I lay in the river enjoying the

scenery and dodging the skimming stones being thrown by my son, Joseph.

It was probably about midnight when it started raining and the first real break came at about 3 o'clock, Sunday afternoon! So why was half the camp packed up and making a run for it? The sun had come out and they were leaving! Not us, but we were hanging around because things were going to get better. Half an hour after that mob left it started raining again (probably not continuous but never far away in any case) and stopped at about mid-day Monday. Good decision that!

So what do you do as the hours tick by and the rain just doesn't relent? You sit on your fold-up chair under the verandah of your tent and think of anything that will amuse you. For a challenge we thought we might see if we could get the fire going and keep it going. Between showers we were out there (Joseph and self) fanning like mad the almost spent embers trying to get wet paper burning so we could get wet sticks burning to get wet wood burning. At times we actually had flames, enough to get a billy boiling (wonderful cup of milo) but mostly we had lots of smoke.

In between times, when it was raining too much we contented ourselves by watching the comings and goings of a family of resident Brown Treecreepers. Looking through a scope across 15m was tremendous and identification of males, females and

juveniles is a snap. The birds were constantly interested in our fire and appeared to be feeding on small items. At first I thought it may be some scrap from our meal but perhaps it was little crawly things coming out of the wood we had gathered. I never solved that one - too wet.

Monday came around and the task of getting our vehicle up the hill loomed as a daunting prospect. An over-curious driver of a camper bus had arrived and promptly bogged it completely and the first bend of the track had been churned up by his efforts and the previous day's traffic. It was now an absolute quagmire. Various propositions were put forward as to the best way out of the bog and a couple of lucky drivers did actually manage it up the hill and to the road.

Another wasn't so lucky and, after getting bogged, a massive effort with hand winches together with much pushing and shoving while wheels were spinning and mud was going everywhere, only managed a paltry 10 mph (that's "metres" not "miles"). It looked like we were never going to make it. Just then the driver of the bus returned from a very long walk to seek help, and announced that a friendly farmer with a big green tractor was on his way. What a relief, and when the big green tractor easily dragged everyone's car/bus up the hill to firm ground we were all smiles again.

I love going to White Box Camp - but this time I felt pretty good about going home!

Tom Clarke

Balickera (Bush Haven)

November 21 1999

led by Jenny Musicka/Chris Herbert

Our November outing turned out to be rather special – birds galore! And, we didn't have to travel far to find them.

We went to a property known as *Bush Haven*, owned by former members Jenny and Ken Musicka and located on Italia Rd, between the Pacific Highway and Seaham. Most of the 20 attendees were there for the day, but 3 people took the opportunity to camp on the property on the Saturday night.

Bush Haven is on 300 acres and the Musicka's run cattle there. Walleroo State Forest lies opposite, and the property is adjoined by some Hunter Water Corporation land that stretches down to the Balickera Canal. There are many habitat types present, ranging from a large wetland to some wet sclerophyll forest.

We found birds everywhere, of many different species. Sometimes it was hard to keep up, and sometimes it seemed just about impossible to do so. To add to the pleasure and excitement, we found many nesting species. A highlight for me was a female Scarlet Honeyeater on a nest hanging over the middle of a creek – but within about a metre

of a footbridge across the creek. We had very nice views, and we managed to be unobtrusive while getting them.

The biggest highlight though was to find a pair of White-throated Nightjar, with a "nest" having one egg. While walking in the late morning, we disturbed one bird, and some people had fleeting glimpses of it. About 50 metres further on, we disturbed the bird again – or so we thought, until we saw the egg that it had left behind. Up close it didn't seem to be very well camouflaged, but from a couple of metres away it was quite hard to locate.

After a morning of intensive birding, our lunchtime bird count totalled 108 species! Although the list was bolstered by a few night birds heard on the Saturday night, it is a marvellous tally and just reinforces to my mind what a wonderful area for birds the Hunter Region is.

15 or so of the species were breeding. Also, Jenny showed us the hollow in a creek bed where Azure Kingfisher regularly breed. They had done so this year too, but lost the young when the creek rose after heavy rain and remained high for too long.

A free plug seems appropriate on this occasion. The Musicka's have a modern well equipped cabin (two bedrooms) for hire at

Bush Haven, at what seemed to me to be reasonable rates. I would thoroughly recommend it as a place to spend a night or

two, with some great birding prospects in store.

Alan Stuart

Undercovered Atlas Areas

Here is a list of 10-minute areas that have no records submitted to the Atlas project. If you are looking for an excuse to go birding, or if these areas are close to you, please consider carrying out an atlas survey in these areas.

- Area bounded by Branxton, Cessnock, Kurri, and Gosforth (eg Cessnock State Forest)
- Area bounded by Williamtown, Pacific Highway, western Port Stephens and northern end of Stockton Bight (eg Saltash, Moffats Swamp Nature Reserve)
- Allyn River valley between Allynbrook and Wallarobba
- All of the Myall Lakes National Park and Smiths Lake
- Either side of Bucketts Way from Booral to Craven and east to Bulahdelah

- West of Tuncurry/Forster almost to Gloucester
- Moonan Flat
- Rouchel Brook
- Area surrounding Muswellbrook and east to McCullys Gap
- Large areas of Wollemi N.P. and Yengo - 4WD required (see Chris for details)
- Extensive areas east of Murrurundi, north of the Barrington Tops Rd, encompassing Ellerton to the Upper Manning and Barnard Rivers
- North and west of Willowtree
- Liverpool Range south to Merriwa and west to Cassillis

Chris Herbert

Hunter Estuary Wader Survey

We are now 7 months into our project to monitor the migratory and non-migratory waders using the Hunter River Estuary. Abundance of birds of each species and the diversity of species are both recorded. However, we are not ignoring other birds. These too are recorded for the Atlas project and our own HBOC records.

Thanks to the twice-daily tidal cycle most waders have a compulsory siesta while their foraging areas are covered by high tide. This forces the birds to congregate at what they perceive to be secure high-tide roosts. Happily for those trying to count them, they concentrate in only a few locations. Most waders using the estuary can be found at the Kooragang Dykes, the Big Pond, Stockton Sandspit and adjacent oyster leases, a beach in Fullerton Cove, and ponds on Ash Island.

Our surveys started in April as the migratory waders were departing for their northern hemisphere breeding grounds, and now in October, we are observing them returning. An exciting and busy time for all the counters and recorders. Some of our results to date are displayed in the bar charts below for non-migratory waders such as the avocets and stilts, and for the migratory waders such as the godwits and curlews. Many other waders have been identified and our expertise in doing so is increasing correspondingly! We hope to report more comprehensively on all observations at the end of a full year of monitoring, about April 2000.

Ann Lindsey, Liz and Chris Herbert monitor the Big Pond and Kooragang Dykes, Alan Stuart monitors Ash Island, and Pat and Ross Carlton monitor Stockton Sandspit and Fullerton Cove. We would really appreciate assistance from any members with wader

enjoyable challenge and a chance to contribute invaluable information which can be used to help preserve this most important wader habitat from future development.

Chris and Liz Herbert

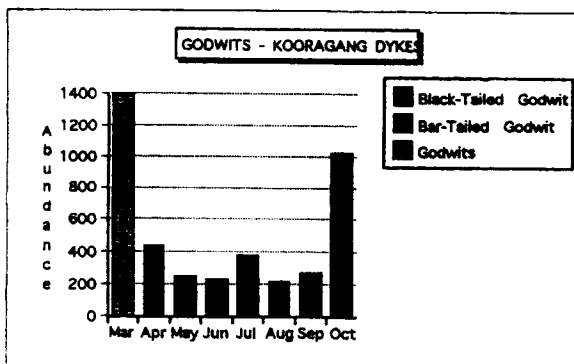
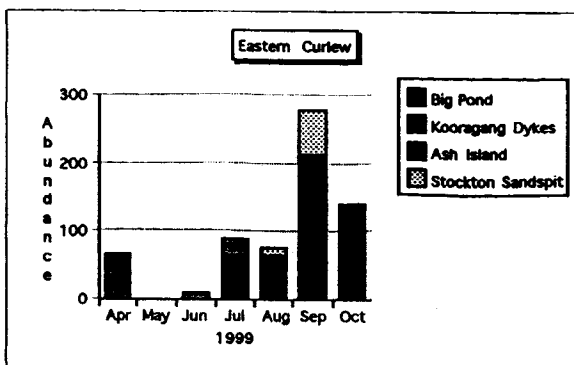
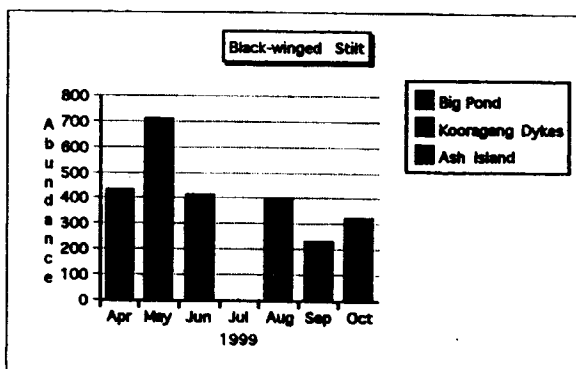
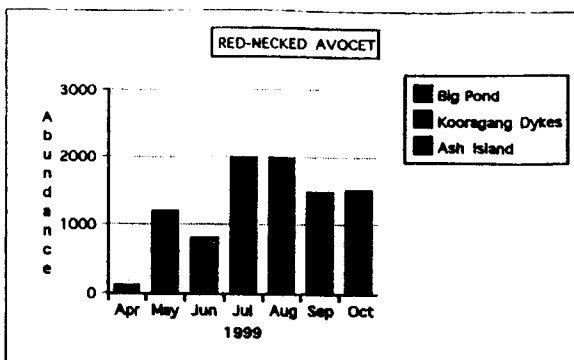
Wader Population Monitoring Project

George McKay, of GM Biological Services Pty. Ltd. has been awarded a contract by Environment Australia to investigate statistically sound methods for monitoring populations of waders. The Australian Wader Survey Group (AWSG) are cooperating with George in this project and have offered to assist with field trials. Although no major changes are expected at the present core counting sites of the AWSG population monitoring project, this study will refine present data collection and design a new database. It will also look at methods of population monitoring at sites which have not been possible to monitor by the method of total counts, through a sampling regime. Field trials will be conducted in January and February and AWSG will be asking for assistance at some chosen sites to conduct the trials. Counters should continue to monitor the core sites as in previous years.

Source: The Tattler No. 21 October 1999, AWSG

More Wader Snippets...

Over 50,000 Bar-tailed Godwits stage on the west coast of Alaska during their migrations. The non-breeding destinations of these birds have been surmised from a mere handful of records. For example, birds banded in the Alaska/ Bering Sea area have been detected in New Zealand, with one in Queensland. To improve the understanding of Bar-tailed Godwit migration, researchers looked for tagged godwits for a week during the recent (northern) autumn migration. They chose a 10km stretch of shoreline along the Alaskan Bering Sea coast, where mudflats extended more than 3km seawards from the vegetated intertidal zone. Although several



difficulties of observation meant that only a relatively small number of complete band combinations could be determined. Difficulties identified included birds standing on one leg, foraging birds feeding in water deep enough to cover the bands and the fact that birds behind the front row were obscured. These difficulties notwithstanding, 89 banded birds were observed, 34 of which were banded in either eastern Australia or New Zealand.

Several researchers have hypothesised that Bar-tailed Godwits in the East Asian-Australasian flyway actually consist of two separate populations. North-west Australia apparently hosts the Siberia-breeding race, while eastern Australia and New Zealand support primarily the Alaska-breeding race. These latest observations are claimed to support this theory. Despite the fact that

nearly twice as many Bar-tailed Godwits have been colour-flagged in north-west Australia than in all of eastern Australia and New Zealand combined, no colour flags were detected from the former region. All the colour-flagged godwits seen were not only at the same site, but in the same flocks.

In addition to the Alaskan observations, several waders banded in Australia were observed in Korea during last August. They were: 5 Bar-tailed Godwits banded in North-western Australia, 2 Sanderlings banded in Victoria and one Sanderling banded in South Australia. Also, a Bar-tailed Godwit banded in North-western Australia was observed on the Kamchatka Peninsula in north-eastern Siberia.

Source: The Tattler, No. 21, October 199, AWSG.

**Articles for our newsletter
are always welcomed.**

Closing date for next issue:

31 January 2000

Mail to: Pat Carlton,

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Ph/fax: 02 4988 6026

Email: carlton@dragon.net.au

HBOC Library Acquisitions

*"Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia",
edited by Stephen Garrett (RAOU Report 82)*

CDRom - *"Birds of Australia"*, by John Gould

FOR SALE

**Spotting telescope 25*65 GEOMA-65-A -
\$360 (\$570 new). Contact Chris Herbert,
49593663 (home) or 43932423 (work)**

Extra outing for Mid-Week Group

Don't miss this extra excursion. A ferry trip has been organised with the Australian Plants Society for 22 February 2000, to view birds on the breakwaters. The "Lady Joy" departs

from Queens Wharf at 10.00 a.m. Cost is \$15.00 (or \$13.00 concession), which includes morning tea. There is a limit of 60 people, so book early. Contact Sue Newman, 4930 5564, by the first week in February.

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT.OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 1999.

Jul 24	Glossy Ibis	1	Cedar Hill Drive	R.Baxter
Aug 1	Scarlet Robin	Pair	Broke	"
Aug 10	Rockwarbler	1	Mt. Vincent	"
Aug 15	Glossy Ibis	28	Cedar Hill Drive	"
Aug 11	Wonga Pigeon	1	" " "	"
Aug 10	Red-capped Plover	36	Stockton Beach	K.Gibson
Aug 4	Bar-tailed Godwit	12	" "	"
Aug 25	Black-necked Stork	2	Cedar Hill Drive	A.Lindsey
Aug 31	Grey Goshawk	1	Fullerton Cove	D.Cooper
Aug 26	Brown Quail	1	Arrowfield Vineyards	P.Alexander
	King Quail	8-10	" "	"
Aug 19	Southern Boobook	1	Wingen	G.Newling
Sep 12	Torresian Crow	3	Malabula	M.Kearns
Sep 21	Barn Owl	1	Parkville	G.Newling
Sep 20	Barn Owl	1	Bayswater Colliery	"
Sep 28	Rufous Songlark	1	Wingen Village	"
Sep 13	Topknot Pigeon	5	Lemon Tree Passage	M. Kearns
Sep 15	Black-necked Stork	1	Lemon Tree Passage	"
Sep 1	Black-fronted Dotterel	4	Ellalong [street]	J.Meyell
Sep 6	Blackbird	1	Lorn	"
Sep 24	Australian Hobby	1	Ellalong Lagoon	"
Sep 2	Brown Quail	1	Kooragang Is. [Tourle St]	D. Cooper
Sep 15	Channel-billed Cuckoo	2	Medowie	"
Sep 19	Maggie-Goose	5+ 12 dy	S.W.C.	R. Waymark
	Nankeen Night Heron	30-40	"	"
Sep 30	Peregrine Falcon	1 f	Gwandalan	T.Langworthy
Sep 26	Common Koel	1	Adamstown	D. Cooper
Sep 11	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	Oakhampton	H.Tarrant
Sep 27	" " "	1	Goulburn River N.P.	"
	" " "	4	Rutherford	"
Sep 11	Grey-crowned Babbler	10	Bolwarra Heights	"
Sep 12	Leaden Flycatcher	1	Myall Lakes N.P.	"
Sep 21	Dollarbird	1	Newcastle University	"
	Wandering Whistling Duck		" "	"
Sep	Wompoo Fruit Dove [died]	1	Bolwarra Heights	"
Sep 29	Grey-crowned Babbler	2	Rutherford High School	J. Smart
Sep 17	Wandering Whistling Duck	38	S.W.C.	M. Kearns
Oct 29	White-winged Triller	1m	Bolwarra S.T.W.	H. Tarrant
Oct 1	Rainbow Bee-eater	2	Lostock	H.Tarrant
Oct 2	Logrunner	Pair	Barrington Guest House	"
	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater		" "	"
	Black-faced Monarch	Pair	" "	"
	Regent Bowerbird	1	" "	"
Oct 3	Hoary-headed Grebe	2	Melville	"
Oct 4	White-winged Triller	1	Hands Lagoon	"
Oct 5&13	Black-faced Monarch		Newcastle University	"
Oct 6	Black-fronted Dotterel	1	Melville	"
	Bar-shouldered Dove	2	"	"
Oct 9	Brown Quail	Pair	Walka Water Works	"
Oct 10	Blue-faced Honeyeater	4	Rutherford High School	J. Smart
Sep - Nov	Southern Boobook	Calling	Wangi Wangi	D.Johnson
Oct 3	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	Melville	H.Tarrant

Oct 6	Masked Plover	1 + 1fy	Toronto	P. Durie
Oct 10	Magpie-lark nest	2 + 3fy	Toronto	"
Oct 12	Channel-billed Cuckoo	5	Toronto	"
Oct 8	Common Blackbird	1m.	S.W.C.	W. Barden
Oct 8	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Seaham	G. Mee
Oct 9	Striped Honeyeater	1	"	"
	Black-faced Monarch	1	"	"
Oct 10	White-breasted Woodswallow	2	Throsby Creek	R. Parker
Oct 13	Bell Miner	>100	Teralba -off James St.	R. Young
Oct 19	Latham's Snipe	1	Belmont Golf Course	S. Hamonet
Oct 24	Singing Honeyeater	1	Wingen Village	G. Newling
Oct 30/31	Spectacled Monarch	1	Woodville	M. Newman
Nov 8	Paradise Rifle Bird	2	Jerusalem Creek	D. Jenkins
Nov 10	Rufous Scrub Bird	1	Gloucester Tops	"
Nov 6	Spectacled Monarch	1	Eccleston	M. Newman
Nov 3	White-headed Pigeon	1	Merewether Heights	M. Woods
Nov 6	Rufous Scrub bird	6	Barrington Tops	P. Ekert
Nov 7	Pied Oystercatcher	Pair	N'cle Ocean Baths	R. Parker
Nov 7	Stubble Quail	>6	East of Scone	G. Newling
	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	Nulkaba	A. Stuart
	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	3	Wybong Road	G. Newling
	Stubble Quail	>6	Segenhoe vicinity	"
Nov 6	Great Crested Grebe	8	Grahamstown Dam	M. Kearns
	Australian Hobby	1	" "	"
Nov 2	Ruddy Turnstone	1	N'cle Ocean Baths	R. Baxter
Nov 4	Superb Lyrebird	3	Watagan S.F.	"
Nov 8	Glossy Ibis	6	Ash Island	"
	Common Greenshank	2	" "	"
Nov 1	Powerful Owl	1	Medowie	C. Anderson
Nov 7	Regent Bowerbird	3m.+1f	Glenrock S.R.A.	P. Rankin
	Rufous Fantail Nest	Pair	" "	"
	Grey Fantail Nest	Pair	" "	"
Nov 6	Australian Brush Turkey	2	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot

Interpretive birding - online

Interpretive birding is now online at website www.ibirding.com. It is designed to accomplish three goals:

1. to provide a venue where ideas and observations on bird behaviour can be shared;
2. to extend the coverage of new information published on bird behaviour; and
3. to support a worldwide community of interpretive birders.

If you are a subscriber to the IB Bulletin you are entitled to download the current

issue of the bulletin from the website and freely post your behavioural observations. You are also welcome to freely participate in online discussions.

The IB Bulletin is issued 6 times a year and acts as a forum for anyone interested in bird behaviour. The latest issue has excellent descriptions of Regent Honeyeater behaviour written by David Geering. For a subscription of \$30 a year you can receive the bulletin and avail yourself of the services at the website. Write to: Dr. Wm. James Davis, PO Box 362, Toowong, Queensland 4066, or email: editor@birding.com

Homebush Bay Bird Monitoring Project

*A Birds Australia project commissioned by
The Olympic Co-ordination Authority (OCA)*

Field survey of the Sydney 2000 Olympics site at Homebush Bay recommenced on the 12th of September 1999 with sites being surveyed on a fortnightly basis. The main survey areas include, the Silverwater Nature Reserve, Bicentennial Park, Haslam's Creek, Hen & Chicken Bay (Parramatta River), and Mason Park. In the near future surveys will commence across four Western Sydney venues these being the Regatta Centre, Equestrian Centre, Shooting Centre and the Velodrome. A total of 35 x 2ha plots are currently being surveyed, with 2-3 more plots in the Haslam's Creek and Western Sydney regions scheduled for survey in the coming weeks.

The field survey method involves volunteers searching a 2ha plot for a 20-minute period. During this time, observers record the composition and abundance of the birds seen and heard within the 2ha plot. Birds flying over the plot are recorded whilst birds heard and seen after the 20-minutes are recorded as 'incidental sightings'. Other data including the temperature, time, percentage of cloud cover and where applicable the water depth, are also recorded. Surveys only occur on days where there is little wind and no rain, thus when bird activity is maximised.

Recent surveying has revealed the return of some summer migratory species. In particular, the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Latham's Snipe, Common Greenshank, and Ruddy Turnstone have been recently recorded across the survey area. Last week a massive 268 Bar-tailed Godwits were recorded at Prince Edward Park, Hen & Chicken Bay. Other records of interest include a pair of Rufous Night Herons with breeding plumage at 2SM pond whilst the same species was recorded with young at Bicentennial Park. In the Silverwater Nature Reserve, Eastern Rosellas, Crimson Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets, Sulphur-crested

Cockatoos and Red-rumped parrots have all been seen using the hollows in the local population of Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus haemastoma*. Excellent views of a pair of Brown Goshawks foraging in the Nature Reserve were also reported. This species has been quite aggressive to volunteers and in the past chased a volunteer surveying the area. Last month one Brown Goshawk was observed attempting to prey upon a group of Chestnut Teals in the 2SM pond. Other raptors recorded recently include a Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite, Black-shouldered Kite, Nankeen Kestrel and a pair of White-bellied Sea Eagles who are still nesting nearby. Other species of interest that have been recorded lately include a pair of Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoos at Bicentennial Park and the Silverwater Nature Reserve, a Striated Heron at 2SM Pond, a Chestnut Breasted Mannikin at the Brick Pit Pond, a Black-faced Monarch, a Rufous Song Lark and numerous White-fronted Chats in the Silverwater Nature Reserve.

The recently modified and re-vegetated areas near Haslam's Creek ('Freshwater Wetlands') have been providing habitat for Clamorous Reed Warblers, Little Grassbirds, Golden-headed Cisticolas, Purple Swampheens and many other species. The areas of longer grass on Kronos Hill (near Stadium Australia) are providing habitat for Brown Quails with a pair being flushed on regular occasions. Both Mason Park and the Eastern Water Quality Control Pond have, in the last couple of weeks, been used by Latham's Snipe with some individuals seen flying from their foraging areas of dense vegetation.

In the Silverwater Nature Reserve a channel is being constructed from the Parramatta River estuary to the Main Lagoon. This channel is hoped to increase the quality of water in the lagoon, which in turn may increase the amount of food and foraging opportunities for wading birds. The site has been closely monitored over the past six weeks and this will continue in the coming weeks.

There has been an excellent response from volunteer bird watchers wishing to

participate in the fortnightly field surveys. A total of 30 volunteers has now been entered onto the volunteer database and all receive the bi-monthly 'Homebush Bay Birds' newsletter. Next month will be an opportunity for all Homebush Bay volunteers to get together for the Homebush Bay Birds BBQ whilst in the coming weeks some nocturnal surveys will be performed. There are still opportunities for those wishing to participate in surveys and opportunities for those keen to assist in the

Birds Australia (SNAG) office at Crows Nest. Those who are interested should contact me:

Peter A. Ekert

**Manager - Homebush Bay Bird Monitoring Project
Birds Australia (Southern NSW & ACT
Group)**

02 94361349 or 0410566104

peter_ekert@one.net.au

Monitoring Rufous Scrub-birds (*Atrichornis rufescens*) in North East New South Wales



The Rufous Scrub-bird (*Atrichornis rufescens*) is a small ground-dwelling passerine that occurs in the moist forests of north-eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland (Ferrier 1984; Christidis and Boles 1994; Pizzey and Knight 1997). The Rufous Scrub-bird is a cryptic species with a loud and penetrating call which is often the only way in which the species can be detected (Ferrier 1984). Habitat destruction from various activities including fire regime alteration, logging, clearing of land for agriculture as well as predation by foxes and cats have been suggested as the major factors leading to a decline in the abundance and distribution of the species (Ferrier 1984).

From September 1999 to January 2000, Birds Australia (Southern NSW & ACT Group) has been commissioned by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) to undertake monitoring of the Rufous Scrub-bird in central eastern reserves in New South Wales.

The data collected during the monitoring program will assist the NSW Scientific Committee in its decision of whether to upgrade the species status from Vulnerable to Endangered under the

Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. In addition, the information collected will assist the NSW NPWS in the management of particular reserves.

Field survey commenced on the 16-17th of October and will conclude on the 12th of December 1999. The main areas for survey include the Barrington Tops, Werrikimbie, New England, Gibraltar Range, Washpool and Border Ranges National Parks. For each of these main areas, field survey is undertaken by the Project Co-ordinator and a team of 10-12 volunteer bird observers. At this stage, there are 35 volunteers that have registered with the NSW NPWS and Birds Australia. Volunteers are paired into 5 teams with preferably each team having at least one experienced bird watcher.

A total of 300 survey sites (areas of suitable habitat) have been identified based on computer models and ground truthing across the main survey areas. The survey sites are located along roads and walking trails with sites being situated 400 metres apart. The survey method involves a 5-minute listen for Rufous Scrub-bird calls, a 2-minute call broadcast (using a megaphone attached to a compact disc player) of calls followed by an

8-minute listen making the total time spent at each point being 15-minutes. During this 15-minute period observers record data including the site no., location, time, weather, plant community type, description of the structure of the vegetation as well as the type of disturbance (e.g. logging, fire, natural tree fall, etc) at each site.

There are still some opportunities for volunteers to be involved in surveys (*only the last date applicable at the time of going to press: Ed*). Accommodation ranges from camping to NSW NPWS cabins. The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service will assist with fuel and some accommodation costs.

The survey dates (subject to weather) are as follows:

Location	Date
New England NP (Mt Killiekrankie)	13 th November, 1999
Border Ranges NP	20th & 21st November, 1999
Washpool/Gibraltar NP	27 th November, 1999
Barrington Tops NP	4th December, 1999
New England NP (Mt Killiekrankie)	11 th December, 1999

The surveys are a great opportunity for enthusiastic bird watchers to spend a weekend in the most species rich World Heritage listed rainforests and wet-eucalypt forests in eastern Australia. If you are interested in participating, please contact:

Rufous Scrub-bird Monitoring Project Co-ordinator
 Peter Ekert
 02 94361349 or 0410566104
 peter_ekert@one.net.au

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

Date	Event	Meeting time/place	Contact
Saturday 18 December	Latham's Snipe Count	7.00 am Cedar Hill Swamp	Ann Lindsey, 4951 2008
Saturday 22 January	Hunter Wader Surveys	10.00 am (if poor weather Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 Intending participants must ring to confirm
Sunday 23 January	Field Day: Tahlee/Carrington/North Arm Cove	7.00 am Macdonalds, Raymond Terrace	Alan Stuart, 4952 8569
Saturday 29 January	Atlasing outing Tomaltin area	7.30 am Kurri Kurri P.O.	Ann Lindsey, 4951 2008, Chris & Liz Herbert, 4959 3663, or Mike Newman, 4930 5564
Tuesday 1 February	Mid-Week Outing: Fern Bay/Stockton	7.30 am End of Vardon Rd, Fern Bay	Keith or Margaret Woods, 4963 3070
Wednesday 9 February	Club Night	7.30 p.m.	Speaker: Paul Clark Topic: Regeneration of roadsides & mine sites
Saturday 19 February	Hunter Wader Surveys	9.00 a.m. (if poor weather, Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 Intending participants must ring to confirm
Saturday 19 February	Camp: Copeland Common		Liz Crawford, 4959 3663
Sunday 20 February	Field Day: Copeland Common	8.00 am. Car Park, Mountain Maid Mine, Copeland	Ann Lindsey, 4951 2008
Tuesday 22 February	Extra Mid-Week Outing: Ferry Trip to breakwaters (see special notice in this newsletter)	10.00 am "Lady Joy", Queens Wharf	Contact: Sue Newman, 02 4930 5564, by first week in February.