

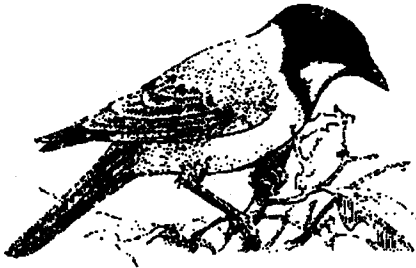
NEWSLETTER

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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<http://users.hunterlink.net.au/hboc/home.htm>



President: Alan Stuart

Secretary: Tom Clarke

Newsletter Editor: Pat Carlton [this issue: Harold Tarrant]

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.*
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Are You Still Unfinancial for 2000??

Just can't get around to writing cheques for trivial amounts??

Congratulations!

Well you might have *saved* yourself some money. If you care to pay for three years at three times the rate, then you will be recorded as financial until the end of 2002, regardless of any increase in membership fees that may occur, whether through GST or inflation or our Treasurer's thirst for funds!

Three-year subscriptions: \$60.00 family, \$48.00 single, \$6.00 junior

(\$20.00, \$16.00, and \$2.00 for 2000 only)

And while you are writing cheques, consider this one:

BIRD CALLS ON COMPACT DISC.

Fred van Gessel has now committed his bird calls to this format, and after a recent preview of the master discs Sue Hamonet, can heartily recommend these. The sound quality is excellent—a much more life-like reproduction of the birdsong with all background noises eliminated.

They will be available shortly in four CD's viz: Bushbirds, Volume 1 and 2, Honeyeaters, Australian Nightbirds at a cost of \$15 per disc. If members are interested in ordering any of these please give details to Sue, our Records Officer.

Abridged 1999 Annual Report by Alan Stuart¹

There were many highlights during 1999, but, in some ways, it could be described as a "*Year of Living Dangerously*", in that we had several conservation scares during the year. Here I discuss HBOC's performance in 1999 against the two stated objectives for the Club (as listed on the front page!).

Without doubt, we are meeting our objectives, and HBOC continues to prosper as one of the premier bird clubs in Australia.

1. STUDY AND CONSERVATION

(i) Sightings and Highlights

The Hunter Region is a great one for birds, and as usual there were lots of species recorded during the year. The total will be in excess of 300 species, and will be reported in the Annual Bird Report later this year.

There were lots of rarities too, and our Records Appraisal Committee has received 14 submissions so far for sightings in 1999. Already the highlights include Oriental Cuckoo at Shortland Wetlands Centre, Common Noddy at Crowdy Head, Red-winged Parrot at White Box Camp and Black Bittern at Walka Water Works. Also, reports of Australasian Bittern seem to be on the increase.

I thank the members of the Records Appraisal Committee² for their diligent work during the year.

(ii) Bird Studies

We can be very proud of the involvement by HBOC in bird studies that help to increase the knowledge about Australian birds.

We are actively involved in the Birds Australia Atlas project, with Jim Perry as Regional Organiser for the Hunter, ably assisted by Ann Lindsey. Our records are now routinely forwarded to the Atlas project, and to NSW Bird Atlasers.³ From April 1999, we commenced our continuing monthly program of surveys of shorebirds in the Hunter River estuary. These surveys have involved essentially simultaneous visits by sub-groups to all of the high tide roosting areas around the estuary. They have gene-

rated a wealth of data about these shorebirds, many of which are migratory. The precise counts serve to confirm the importance of the Hunter Estuary to many of these species.

HBOC members participated in the two national Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot surveys, and carried out four special surveys.⁴ In December, we did our third annual survey of Latham's Snipe at the Cedar Hill Drive Swamp—numbers were down on previous years but were still significant (115 birds). Many members continued to keep weekly records for the Garden Bird Survey, and our 1998 Bird Report was published in August, with 94 reporters supplying data about a total of 314 species.

(iii) Conservation

Here we had a tough year. David Kibble, our Conservation Officer, was kept busy, and lots of others were drawn into the battles that we fought. Some favourite spots were under significant threat—none yet safe.

Our biggest scare was the proposal for an international airport on Kooragang Island. This would have severely affected both the Big Pond and the main rehabilitation areas on Ash Island, and would have taken out a part of the Nature Reserve. We fought hard, and Max Maddock was a great ally.⁵

Colliery Dam ('John Brown's Lagoon') near Mulbring, is another favourite spot and probably the southernmost place where Comb-crested Jacana are breeding residents. The Dam became subject to development plans—a proposal to ring it with tourist cabins and the usual hotel, golf course etc. Again, after intensive lobbying, the threat has eased temporarily. Our thanks go to Tom Clarke for his efforts on this matter.

During 1999, Keith Laverick and David Kibble were involved in issues about development around the Belmont wetlands. Although we probably can't stop a planned subdivision altogether, we are arguing for the main assets to be preserved. Towards the end of the year we learnt of the plans to develop the Tomalpin area near Pelaw Main. The proposal causes some concerns, and looks like being a continuing issue.

On more pro-active matters, we participated in a weeding day at Stockton Sandspit, where we went also for Clean Up Australia Day. The Club had two teams (coming 3rd

¹ The full written report, with appendices from the Treasurer, Activities Officer, and so on, is housed in the Club library.

² Sue Hamonet, Ann Lindsey, Jeanette Stephenson, Jim Imrie, Jim Perry and Wilma Barden

³ Incidentally, it was a pleasure in 1999 to welcome Dick and Barbara Cooper to the Club, following their move into our area. Dick has long been the Coordinator for the NSW Bird Atlasers Group.

⁴ Thanks to coordinators A. Lindsey and D. Johnson.

⁵ This threat seems to have lapsed, but we must remain vigilant, and there are other threats to the Big Pond's future.

and 4th) in the Twitchathon, with the teams raising several hundred dollars towards research for albatross conservation projects. As a supporter of the NSW Bird Interest Groups Network (BIGNet), the club hosted the March meeting at Shortland Wetlands Centre, and Rowley Smith represented us at Wollongong in September.¹

2. ENCOURAGING BIRD OBSERVING

(i) Program

For the year there were 41 organised activities, 8 more than in 1998.² All activities were well attended, except for the December outing to Forster. The highlight was surely the Easter camp at Borah Reserve near Barraba where we were wonderfully looked after by local enthusiast Russ Watts, and where we recorded 104 species including lots of Turquoise Parrot.³

(ii) Club Nights

We held 11 meetings during the year, with lots of fun and good participation by members—on average 43 of them. We had main speakers at most of the meetings, and were addressed on a wide range of topics.⁴ Our sincere thanks to all speakers for preparing such excellent presentations.⁵

(iii) Community

Marion Walker continued to be our telephone contact point and once again fielded many calls. Adrian Ryan re-vamped our Website and continued to keep it up to date.⁶ In September the Club again had a display at the Wildflower Spectacular at the Wetlands Centre, providing bird walks round the site.⁷

¹ Conservation matters are a major theme at these meetings, and now also the Atlas project.

² This includes 12 regular monthly outings, 12 mid-week outings, 8 wader surveys, 4 Regent Honeyeater surveys, Latham's snipe survey, and 3 camps, plus a special weekend program at Barren Grounds Nature Reserve.

³ Particular thanks go to our Activities Officer, Liz Herbert, for organising the main program, to Keith and Margaret Woods and Max Blanch for taking care of the mid-week outings, to Chris Herbert for coordinating the wader surveys, and to Ann Lindsey for helping out with just about everything.

⁴ Effects on birds from land clearing; large forest owls of Lake Macquarie; Birds & rafting in Alaska; Birds of the Falklands; Sound recording for bird identification; Kooragang/Ash Island rehabilitation program; Birds of Tasmania.

⁵ At two meetings, we were faced with the late withdrawal of the speaker, but we more than made do with two excellent video programs—*Lord Howe Island, Lure of the Daintree*. Thanks go to Peter McLauchlan, the custodian of our audio-visual library, for quickly recommending these to us.

⁶ We apparently now have had the first instance of a new member coming through initial contact through the Web.

⁷ Our thanks to those members who assisted with this activity, to Peter Phillips who made sure all our meetings were well advertised in local press and radio, and to Sue Hamonet who was again our

3. GENERAL CLUB OPERATION

Our membership declined by 15 to a total of 188: a disappointing outcome, as our numbers had been fairly stable for some years. We need to keep the numbers up, to keep fees down, and to spread the word about the pleasures of birds, and the importance of preserving suitable habitat.

We made a loss of \$631.80 for the year, although this included a grant of \$500 from the Alan Keating Fund for a snipe study that we sponsored.⁸ Reserves stand at \$8,955.06, including \$3531.60 in the Keating Fund.⁹

We continued to publish a bi-monthly newsletter, issued to all members. Pat Carlton took over as Editor and soon got into stride, delivering a high quality production.¹⁰ Our three libraries—books, slides, tapes & videos—grew in 1999, and are now terrific resources for all members to access at no cost.¹¹ Our Management Committee worked well together all year,¹² but special mention should be made of Peter Phillips, our Secretary extraordinaire. For the past 11 years, Peter has been the backbone of the Committee and thus the Club. His services to HBOC have been phenomenal. Peter has now stepped down from the Secretary's position, and I'm sure all will join me in acknowledging our gratitude to him for his hard work over the past 11 years. Many other members have done their bit to help with the smooth running of the Club.¹³

ambassador-at-large, being a regular contact for interviews etc that helped to publicise our interests.

⁸ The Keating Fund is dedicated to activities that will provide benefit to Hunter Region birdlife.

⁹ Our thanks go to our Treasurer Rowley Smith for his stewardship of our funds, and to Lesley Marshall who so ably assists him. We also thank Katrina Thornton who once again has audited our accounts.

¹⁰ Tom Clarke has continued to look after the printing and distribution of the newsletter. We thank both Pat and Tom for their efforts.

¹¹ We now have 231 books, magazines and reports in the library. In the electronic library, we added 11 new videos (this includes 2 multi-cassette sets) 3 audio cassettes and 2 CD-ROMs. There are now 105 different items in this library. Thanks go to the three librarians: Pat Pountney, John Cockerell and Peter McLauchlan.

¹² Some new faces—Di Johnson, Harold Tarrant and Chris Herbert—quickly settled in along with the stalwarts Tom Clarke, Ann Lindsey and Peter McLauchlan. Our new Vice-President Liz Herbert has weathered her first year in the role and filled in admirably in my absences, and Rowley Smith has the Treasurer's job well under control. Sue Hamonet also attended every Committee meeting where her contributions were always welcomed.

¹³ Judith Smith is the welcoming person to attendees at our meetings, and Judy Westphal makes sure we all can have a cuppa and a biscuit at the end of them, and a small army of volunteers helps out with setting up and clearing away each time. Ed Hamonet reformat all of our records and sends them to the Atlas project, while Sue Hamonet just does so many things for the Club all the time. *I apologise to anyone I have left out!*

Finally, I'd like to thank all members for their involvements with the Club during 1999. The enthusiasm you show at our meetings, outings and camps is infectious and is the major factor in HBOC being the great club that we know it to be.

Alan Stuart,
HBOC President, 1999
almarosa@hunterlink.net.au



Message from Hugo Phillipps

BIRDER AWARENESS CALLING CARDS

Birds Australia have taken up the idea of hand-out cards that could be given to businesses patronised by birders in places near, or en route to, good birding locations. The cards follow fairly closely the format mentioned by Ian Temby when he started the thread, with the following wording:

Bird Watchers Supporting Business

I am here because I am interested in Australian native wild birds. Your support for protection of their habitat will bring more visitors to this area and benefit your business.

There is also the BA logo and, on the back, the opportunity for the business to fill in contact details and send the card back to us to be put on a mailing list for further information about birding or bird conservation developments and events. This is, incidentally, NOT an endorsement of the particular businesses but an awareness-raising exercise. We are not going to make a profit out of the cards, but hope to recover the cost of printing and postage.

They are available from the Birding Shop. (email: sales@birdsaustralia.com.au). Price is \$10 for 50 including postage within Australia.

Hugo Phillipps
 Communications Coordinator
 Birds Australia
[<h.phillipps@birdsaustralia.com.au>](mailto:h.phillipps@birdsaustralia.com.au)

Hunter Birdo Quailing at Finches in Kununurra

From Mick Todd, 2-3-2000

Having been lost to the Hunter Bird Observers Club for a year (I forgot to renew my membership last year) I received my first HBOC Newsletter for 12 months just recently, and read with interest what has been going on down in the sunny Hunter. I thought I might alert people to what a wonderful place Kununurra is for birdwatching.

I've been studying the ecology of the Star Finch and the Crimson Finch, since October, 1998 and am now into the last 12 months of the project. For the first year of the project I was on Cape York Peninsula, mostly Lakefield NP (visited by Philip Rankin, in the Feb/March HBOC Newsletter) and Pormpuraaw (on the west coast). Since November, 1999 I have been based near Kununurra in the East Kimberley Region of Western Australia. Around Kununurra, the Star Finch and the Crimson Finch (different subspecies) are doing particularly well, and I am looking for potential reasons for why this is so, and why these species have declined elsewhere in Australia. However, I won't bore people with the details of my day-to-day grind- I thought people might be interested in the birdlife that I am fortunate enough to come into contact with during the course of my work.

The wet season is finally in full swing in the East Kimberley, and is above the average rainfall for this time of year. For most of November, December and January there was rainfall interspersed with periods of hot, dry weather thus allowing access to many spots which by early February are but a dream! Still, the change in the seasons has brought about changes in the birds. I probably won't get to see a complete dry season here, but the changes through the wet season that I have seen suggest that this would bring about even more dramatic changes.

Kununurra is an absolute hotspot for finches. Star Finch, Crimson Finch, Double-barred Finch, Masked Finch, Long-tailed Finch, Zebra Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin and Yellow-rumped Mannikin are all very easy to see around Kununurra and north on to the Ivanhoe Plain, most of which is now irrigated agricultural land. During the dry season Gouldian Finch and Pictorella Mannikin are seen at sources of water through the wooded country in the East

Kimberley. During the wet season, they seem to disperse making them very hard to see. The Ivanhoe Plain without doubt supports the highest density of Star Finch in Australia and would be the easiest place to see them. The Yellow-rumped Mannikin is probably the most special finch in the Kununurra area, being noticeably common on the Ivanhoe Plain, but not being very widespread. While the Star Finch can be found along the lower-lying floodplain areas of the Ord River, the Yellow-rumped Mannikin seems to stop before getting down towards Wyndham. The reasons for its patchy distribution aren't obvious. Close observation can yield the occasional hybrid between Yellow-rump and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin.

Apart from its great finches it is also the most diverse place I've found for quail. Brown Quail are the most abundant quail in the area, being both widespread and common. During November and December Red-chested Button-quail were quite common in remnant patches of native habitat on the Ivanhoe Plain between the cultivated paddocks. Red-backed Button-quail could be found in a couple of locations, Little Button-quail at a dryer well-drained location, on the plain and I identified a King Quail on one occasion. Since the wet season has gone into full swing a lot of the remnants on the Ivanhoe Plain have flooded and the Red-chested Button-quail have left. They can still be found here and there, notably around the edges of the flooded Marlgu Lagoon in the Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve, near Wyndham. At this site, Brown Quail are still common, but seem to be using the Sorghum covered rocky hillsides within and around the Lagoon with the Red-chested Button-quail preferring the more diverse grassy edges. Discussion of rocky hillsides suggests the Chestnut-backed Button-quail which I am yet to locate around Kununurra. A lot of suitable habitat does exist for it in the area however, much of it being difficult to access! I've so far only found them at a few locations in the Northern Territory, closest spot to Kununurra being in the Timber Creek district, also a good spot for Red-backed Button-quail, although in completely different habitats. However, Kununurra is a great spot to practice quail identification. After the first hundred flushed unidentified quail, distinguishing features become obvious!

Kununurra is also a fine place to come across some of the rarer birds. Zitting Cisticolas have become more obvious now with

their calling and display flights drawing attention to themselves. They seem to be patchy here though- I've only found them at one location near Kununurra, although they are in a couple of spots that I can still get to in the Parry Lagoons NR.

A large flock of almost a hundred Red-rumped Swallows and as many Barn Swallows resided on the Ivanhoe Plain during December. They have been almost certainly confirmed as belonging to the Japanese subspecies, *Hirundo daurica japonica*. The identification of 'red-rumped' swallows in Australia was a matter of contention until recently, with these birds being the first to have been conclusively identified. A friend had to collect one for me though! Yellow Wagtails, almost in breeding plumage, brought back memories of that golden summer a couple of years ago in the Hunter when Yellow Wagtails and that Black-backed Wagtail dropped in to visit the Glendale Shopping Centre. Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens are surviving in a few locations along the Ord River towards the enormous Lake Argyle and can be seen on the various tour-guided boat trips. Yellow Chats were once regularly seen on lake Argyle, but apparently there have been none seen this summer. Oriental Cuckoos are occasionally seen.

At this stage I will probably remain at Kununurra for another six to eight weeks before returning to Cape York for the final six months of the study. I still have a few birds that I haven't caught up with in WA, so I can't leave yet! Oh and there is the fact that I'm supposed to be working up here as well.

CONCLUSION:

If you get the chance, spend some time birdwatching around Kununurra and you shouldn't be disappointed!

Mick Todd,
Tropical Savannas Co-operative Research
Centre,
C/o Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service,
Far Northern Region,
PO Box 2066, Cairns, Qld, 4870

Ash Island turns it on again!

Up to two yellow wagtails in the usual place (third double power pole down), black-necked storks, rails and crakes, and freckled duck. For details see reports from the March meeting and also the March Field Outing.

The Great Central West Regent Honeyeater Hunt

In New South Wales, one of the best places to look for Regent Honeyeaters is the Capertee Valley. However, after breeding these birds usually disperse and there are few sightings to indicate where the birds may go. This information is vital if we are to develop strategies to help conserve this endangered species outside the core breeding areas. The scant information that we do have suggests that areas to the north of the valley are worthy of closer investigation. While the Munghorn Gap area has long been known as a place where Regent Honeyeaters can be seen at times there is a lot of country surrounding this area that also contains suitable habitat.

In an effort to determine the importance of the Dunedoo-Gulgong-Wollar forests north-west of Mudgee and, hopefully, locate an important refuge for Regent Honeyeaters a series of surveys are planned for the area this autumn and winter. Obviously the more people involved the greater the area that can be covered and the greater the likelihood of discovering Regent Honeyeaters. Surveys are planned for the weekends of 8-9 April, 10-12 June and 8-9 July. A base camp will be established at a suitable location central to the forests to be searched.

In addition, the national Regent Honeyeater/Swift Parrot search days will take place on 20-21 May and 5-7 August. People are encouraged to visit areas of suitable Regent Honeyeater habitat on these days in an effort to locate errant honeyeaters.

If you can help out with any of these surveys, or require further information, please contact David Geering, coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort, on 6883 5330 or Freecall 1800 621 056.



David Geering

Notice: Submitting Records

When submitting records on HBOC Record sheets [RS1/99] it would assist greatly if members could give an indication of approximate length of time spent surveying, and time commenced. Just a note at the head of report forms is all that is required. This is information required by the RAOU Atlas scheme, and is used by the Atlas Recording Officer when forwarding data not already submitted by individual members. Leaders completing record sheets on field outings and mid-week outings should also kindly note this requirement.

Sue Hamonet,
Records Officer.

AOC 2001

The inaugural Australian Ornithological Conference will be hosted by Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, NSW, from 25-28 September 2001. At present we are interested in your suggestions for symposia topics. To this end a web site has been established to enable you to submit your ideas and provide your details so we can keep you informed as the conference takes shape. The address is:

<http://clip.mit.csu.edu.au/aoc2001>

Note: the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG) will hold a one-day Conference on Sunday 3 July, in conjunction with SHOC 2000. Interest can be indicated on the SHOC 2000 registration form.

RECENT FIELD DAY REPORTS

A Plethora of Pigeons

Copeland Common, 19th-20th February

Ticks, leeches and rather long grass did not dampen the enthusiasm of the 14 campers at Copeland Common. After setting up the tent, a stroll across the creek to a delightful rain-forest pocket led to a fascinating encounter with a Noisy Pitta. Ann Lindsey succeeded in calling in the juvenile, who happily posed for sometime on a fallen log in this sheltered, shady canopy. Rufous Whistlers, Black-faced Monarchs and Golden Whistlers were just some of the birds that delighted us for most of the afternoon until quite late.

On the Sunday, 21 birdwatchers strolled along leaf-littered tracks near Mountain Maid Mine. We were aware that we'd entered the rainforest as birds were difficult to get a good look at due to the density of the undergrowth. Necks craned to see Rose Robins high up in the treetops. Stinging trees harboured Golden Whistlers and Rufous Fantails. Many birds were only heard (recognised by the experienced). However, I love the size of a pigeon in this environment!!!! A flurry of wings would give away their whereabouts. Wongas, White-headed, Top Knot, and Brown Cuckoo Doves were appreciated sitting out on limbs affording great views even to the naked eye.

Alan Stuart proved to be a 'good birdo' as looking up into one of the thousands of trees along the way, spied a colourful Wompoo. Just great! Discussion ensued as to the various calls of pigeons and throaty imitations could be heard coming down the paths.

We took another path in search of a Noisy Pitta seen the previous trip. However, try as we may he could not be encouraged to turn up. However, Satin and Regent Bowerbirds showered the forest floor with fruits and twigs from the huge fig trees above. Back at the camp our bird count came to approximately 60—the end of a thoroughly enjoyable weekend camp.

Di Johnson

Stockton—Kooragang—Ash Island 19th March 2000

A group of eleven people turned up for the Field Day and Wader Survey at Stockton Sand Spit. After a very hot and humid Saturday it was a blessing to be greeted by a cool, pleasant, overcast day. The wader survey formed part of the normal monthly

monitoring exercise that the club has been conducting over the past year.

Chris and Liz Herbert and Phillip Rankin surveyed Fullerton Cove, and then on to the dykes by boat. The rest of the group surveyed Stockton Sand Spit, and then on to the Big Pond and Ash Island.

Fullerton Cove was quiet this month due to the large high tide covering the beach, and no waders were seen. The highlight was four White-Bellied Sea Eagles patrolling the beach. The boat trip along the dykes was excellent, with a lot of migratory waders coming into breeding plumage. Species counted along the dykes included 1778 Bar-tailed Godwits, 145 Black-tailed Godwits, 38 Eastern Curlew, 27 Great Knots, 1 Red Knot, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 35 Greenshanks, 3 Marsh Sandpipers, 5 Whimbrel together with Pelicans, all four usual species of cormorant, Stilts, Caspian Terns, Gull-billed Terns, and other water birds. There were also other waders on the dykes, but they disappeared when a Sea Eagle cruised over the roost site. When we got to the far end where the smaller waders are usually seen a Whistling Kite was perched on the dyke. No more waders!

The rest of the group surveyed Stockton Sand Spit, where quite a good list of birds was seen. Highlights included 38 Eastern Curlews, 13 Grey-tailed Tattlers, and 66 Terek Sandpipers. The group moved on to the Big Pond, which by then had water in it as a result of some heavy rain. Birds that were seen included Stilts, Silver Gulls, Chestnut and Grey Teal.

Ash Island was the next destination, where the Yellow Wagtail was the target bird. Despite searching all the spots where it has been seen no wagtail was to be found. Highlights for the island included 1 Black-necked Stork, numerous White-fronted Chats and Black-fronted Dotterels, 1 Black-shouldered Kite, 1 Swamp Harrier, and Red-rumped Parrots. Numerous Stilts, Black Swans, Masked Lapwings, and Chestnut Teals were also present.

Lunch was had at the car-park on the island where tallies were recorded. After lunch a group of four went back to have one more look for the Yellow Wagtail. After searching for about 45 minutes Alan Stuart finally spotted it standing on the railway track next to a Richard's Pipit. It was observed for about a minute before it flew off. For

the sceptics among us, it really does exist! On the walk back a Restless Flycatcher was seen, a first for the Ash Island list.

The small group then drove to Newcastle Harbour and walked along Nobby's breakwater. Highlights included 128 Common

Terns, 1 Little Tern, 1 Arctic Jaeger, and 13 White-winged Black Terns, some of which were coming into breeding plumage. A most enjoyable day was had by all, with 88 species seen.

Phillip Rankin

FORTHCOMING PELAGIC TRIP

HBOC is organising a one-day pelagic seabird trip on **5th August 2000**. We will probably depart from Swansea at 7am and head out to the continental shelf and depending on weather conditions, even further. We will have a couple of seabird experts from the Southern Ocean Seabird Study Assoc. on board to assist with identification and return around 5pm that afternoon. Given that the club has not conducted a proper pelagic trip before, this could be an exciting day for all who attend. For those who like to tick new birds they see and have not been on a pelagic trip before you will get to see about twenty new birds in ONE day, as well as gain an insight to the southern ocean offshore migrants which frequent the Newcastle area.

I predict we will add between 5 and 10 new birds to the HBOC bird report by the end of the day. It is difficult to say exactly which birds will be seen on the day, but the time of year chosen is the peak time for winter migrants such as Albatross and Storm Petrel.

The following bird list is based on observations from the Sydney and Gold Coast pelagic trips.

Definite:

Wandering Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Yellow-nosed Albatross, Shy-Albatross, Providence Petrel

Probable sightings:

Cape Petrel, Fairy Prion, Southern Giant Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Fluttering Shearwater, Great Skua, Wilson's Storm Petrel, White-faced Storm Petrel

Possible sightings:

Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Northern Giant Petrel, White Headed Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Slender-billed Prion, Hutton's and Sooty Shearwater

In addition to the above there is a chance of seeing any number of rarities, such as Sooty or Grey-headed Albatross, Blue Petrel, Southern Fulmer, Arctic Tern or Kermadec Petrel. On nearly every Wollongong or Sydney Pelagic at least one or two rarities turn up.

If the above list has wet your appetite here are a few tips that should make the day more enjoyable.

TIP 1—The trip will start at 7am and finish at 5pm. Some will have to get up very early so it will be a long tiring day. Have a good night sleep, this will also help with seasickness.

TIP 2—Prepare: Wear warm, wet weather clothing. Even in summer, spray can come over the side of the boat and if your standing in the wrong spot, it doesn't take to long to get wet. The perfect clothing will be waders, waterproof parka and pants.

TIP 3—Seasickness—The pelagic disease. Seasickness is the strangest thing, it affects so many people in different ways. Some manage to be sick and continue birding as though nothing had happened, others have their head in a bucket for the entire trip and others just don't get sick at all. Even if you think you may be seasick, take tablets. I use Kwells, but they do make you a little tired. I also take one the night before, which most people do and this seems to help. Ginger is also supposed to settle the stomach and can be eaten once on board.

TIP 4—Keep active—If your feeling a bit ill it is easy to sit down with your head in your hands and pray for a fast trip to shore, but I don't think this really helps much. My tip is to get involved and keep looking at the birds. Go to the back of the boat and help with the chumming and feeding of the birds. If birds are being caught and banded, then see if you can assist. On the July 99 Wollongong pelagic we surfed home a 5 metre swell in horrendous conditions and I was a bit ill until a Northern Royal Albatross and Buller's Albatross appeared simultaneously at the back of the boat. My seasickness immediately disappeared for the next hour as I watched these birds.

TIP 5—Classic seasickness results from your stomach, ears and eyes all receiving conflicting signals. So minimise the motion of your

head by surfing the boat and keep your head upright and concentrate on the horizon.

TIP 6—Don't eat or drink citrus on board or before you go. Your stomach doesn't need more acid. Drink water. Sickness makes you dehydrated. I also avoid alcohol the night before and any type of fizzy drink on board. Take some dry biscuits such as BBQ shapes, these help soak up any nasty stomach acids.

We will definitely see lots of exciting birds and for many the early drive to Wollongong or Sydney makes these trips otherwise impossible, making this the perfect opportunity to see these birds without the travel. Exact numbers are not known as yet but we expect to take between 15 and 20 on board. Several spots are already taken and the price will be \$50 for the day, so if you wish to come along contact Alan Stuart or Email me at: randrbaxter@yahoo.com.

Richard Baxter

Internet Banter

G'day all. *You know you're a birder if:*

1. You travel to a foreign country and the only words you learn to speak are bird names.
2. Your idea of a great vacation is to travel to Alice Springs to spend a day at (wait for it!) the sewage ponds.
3. You have ten large bird pictures on the wall at work and one small photo of your spouse in the desk drawer.
4. Your vacation of a lifetime is spent at a place called North Keeling Island.
5. You spend your entire wedding anniversary scoping the tidal flats in Cairns.
6. You spend every daylight hour on your Caribbean cruise looking for pelagic birds.
7. When shopping for new clothes you check that the pockets are large enough to hold a field guide.
8. After finding a second Regent Honeyeater you refer to it as a trash bird.
9. The Rare Bird Hot Line is #1 on your speed dialer.
10. All the magazine subscriptions you receive have the word 'bird' on them.
11. Only a fellow birder can understand your slang and codes.
12. You know the difference between a pelagic and a passerine.
13. Your New Years resolution was to start a new millenium list.
14. When you talk about the World Series you're not talking sports.

15. You own more optical gear than a university astronomy department.
16. You know how to pronounce *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and you know what it means.
17. Your idea of an exotic dancer is a Sarus Crane.
18. When someone says that there is more to life than birding you question their sanity.
19. You only win Final Jeopardy when the category is 'birds'.
20. These jokes make you smile.

The above was shamelessly plagiarized and modified from a BirdChat USA posting by:

Tom Nelson Corvallis, Oregon

2ND SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Griffith University, Brisbane
27 June-2 July 2000

Cost: Special Early Bird \$465; Early Bird \$495; Late \$595; Student \$285. Two-day registration: \$320; One-day registration \$200. Congress dinner: \$65.

Registration forms can be found on:

<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/shoc> or contact:
SHOC 2000 Congress Secretariat,
Conventions Queensland P/L, PO Box 4044
St Lucia South, Queensland 4067 (fax: 07
3371 9514).

Information just to hand

from Andrew Isles Natural History Books

This may interest the globetrotters among our membership. Copies have just arrived of Robson's Asian field guide—a field guide to the birds of south-east Asia. The first field guide to the region to be published for 25 yrs. Describes and fully illustrates all 1,251 bird species found in south-east Asia. Covers Burma, Thailand, Malaysia Peninsular, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Also shows wide range of species found in the Indian subcontinent, China, Taiwan, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Borneo and Phillipines.

Limited stocks.

Price \$65.00 + \$8 postage.

Andrew Isles Natural History Books,
113-115 Greville Street, Prahran, 3181.
or E-mail- books@AndrewIsles.com

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2000

Nov. 1999 to Mar. 2000

| | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Nov 11 | Spotted Harrier | 1 | Ash Island | M.Roderick |
| Dec 17 | Black-necked Stork | 1imm. | “ “ | “ |
| Dec 28 | Cockatiel | 1 | Tenambit | “ |
| Dec 31 | Red-winged Parrot | 1 | Hamilton | “ |
| Dec | White-bellied Sea-eagle | 1 | Cooranbong | L.Tolhurst |
| Dec 1 | Black Falcon | 1 | Bayswater Colliery | G.Newling |
| Dec 27 | White-throated Needletail | 20 | Fosterton Loop | D.Jenkin |
| Jan 13 | Peregrine Falcon | 1 | “ “ | “ |
| Jan 22 | Nankeen Night Heron | 1 | Wingen Village | “ |
| Dec 26 | Peregrine Falcon fy | 1+1imm | Bolwarra | H.Tarrant |
| Jan 1 | Swamp Harrier | 1 | Woodberry | J.Smith |
| Jan 6 | Tree Martin | 100's | “ | “ |
| Jan 22 | Spotted Harrier | 1 | “ | “ |
| Jan 28 | Powerful Owl [injured. Died] | 1 | Salamander Bay | M.Roderick |
| Jan 31 | Australasian Bittern | 1 | Tomago | “ |
| Jan | Stubble Quail | 3 | Fosterton Loop | D.Jenkin |
| Jan 5 | Wandering Whistling Duck | 8 | Dungog Golf Club | “ |
| Jan 12 | Australian Hobby | 2+2juv | “ “ “ | “ |
| Jan 18 | Barn Owl | 1 | Fosterton Loop | “ |
| Jan 21 | White-headed Pigeon ne | 1 | Dungog | “ |
| Jan 31 | Emerald Dove | 1 | Chichester Dam | “ |
| Jan | Channel-billed Cuckoo | 1 | Blackbutt Reserve | P.Lightfoot |
| | Red Wattlebird/Common Koel | 1 | Charlestown | “ |
| Jan 15 | Arctic Jaeger | 1 | Stockton Breakwater | H.Tarrant |
| Jan 19 | Black Kite | 1 | Carey Bay | C.Herbert |
| Jan 26 | Buff-banded Rail | 1 | Shoal Bay | A.Stuart |
| | Arctic Jaeger | 1 | Port Stephen entrance | “ |
| Jan 29/30 | Sooty Oystercatcher | 2 | Little Gibber [Hawks Nest] | K.Musicka |
| | Pied Oystercatcher | 4 | “ “ | “ |
| Jan 11 | Sooty Shearwater | 1 | Newcastle Harbour | K.Laverick |
| | Darter | 1 | “ | “ |
| | Common Tern | >6 | “ | “ |
| Jan 31 | Crested Shrike-tit | 1 | Chichester Dam | D.Jenkin |
| Jan 9 | White-headed Pigeon | 1 | New Lambton Heights | P.Lightfoot |
| Jan 24 | Sacred Kingfisher | 1 | Cardiff | J.Westphail |
| Jan 22 | Arctic Jaeger | 2 | Blacksmiths | C.Goodenough |
| Jan 31 | Sooty Oystercatcher | 3 | Dudley rockshelf | “ |
| Jan 15 | Scarlet Honeyeater | 1 | S.W.C. | “ |
| Jan 15 | Tawny Frogmouth | 2 | Swansea Caravan Park | J. Adams |
| | Nankeen Night Heron | 3 | “ | “ |
| Jan 24 | Osprey | 1 | Coon Island | “ |
| Jan 20 | Australian Pelican | ~70 | Stockton Borehole | P.Freeman |
| Jan 22 | Fluttering Shearwater | >200 | Newcastle Ocean Baths | “ |
| Jan 30 | Wedge-tailed Shearwater | >3000 | Stockton Beach | “ |
| Jan 30 | Black-fronted Dotterel | 2 | Bayswater Colliery | G.Newling |
| | Australasian Grebe | 4 | “ “ | “ |
| Feb | European Goldfinch | ~30 | Bolwarra | H.Tarrant |
| | Blue-faced Honeyeater | 7 | “ | “ |
| | Zebra Finch | 5 | “ |“ |

| | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Royal Spoonbill | ~20 | " Hands Lagoon | H.Tarrant |
| | Intermediate Egret | ~12 | " " " | " |
| Feb 2 | Collared Sparrowhawk | 1 | Salt Ash | M.Roderick |
| Feb 2 | Spangled Drongo | 1 | Hamilton | J. Adams |
| Feb 5 | Brush Cuckoo | 1 | Barrington House | C.Anderson |
| | Pale Yellow Robin | 4 | " | " |
| | Russet-tailed Thrush | 2 | " | " |
| | Bassian Thrush | | " | " |
| | Glossy Black Cockatoo | 2 | " | " |
| Feb 9 | Red Wattlebird ny | 2 | Charlestown | P.Lightfoot |
| Feb 9 | Yellow Thornbill | 1 | Woodberry | J. Smith |
| Feb 6 | Black-faced Monarch | 2 | Main Creek, Dungog | D.Jenkin |
| | Thrush spp [unidentified] | 1 | " " " | " |
| Feb 7 & 8 | White-breasted Woodswallow | 6 | Belmont South | J.Cockerell |
| Feb 6 | Sacred Kingfisher | 1 | " " | " |
| Feb 3 | Little Eagle | 2 | Bayswater Colliery | G.Newling |
| Feb 11 | Arctic Jaeger | 2 | Birubi Point | K.Laverick |
| Feb 12 | " | 1 | Nelson Bay | " |
| Feb 14 | " | 1 | Nelson Bay | " |
| Feb 17 | " | 2 | " | " |
| Feb 18 | " | 1 | " | " |
| Feb 12 | Fairy Martin | >90 | Bootawah | T. Wilson |
| | Welcome Swallows | >8 | " | " |
| | White-throated Needletail | >15 | " | " |
| | White-winged Chough | 11 | " | |
| Feb 14 | Common Koel | 1 | New Lambton | F. Jones |
| Feb 16 | White-throated Needletail | 21 | " | " |
| Feb 20 | Yellow Wagtail | 1 | Ash Island | T.Langworthy |
| Feb 26 | Wedge-tailed Shearwater | ~1,000 | Off Newcastle Harbour | A.Stuart |
| | Sooty Oystercatcher | 1 | Nr Newcastle Baths | " |
| Feb 19 | Australian Wood Duck dy | Pr | Woodville | M.Newman |
| Feb 13 | Spotted Harrier | 1 | " | " |
| Feb 12 | Black-necked Stork | 1 | Ash Island | " |
| Feb 27 | Aust. Magpie-lark | >60 | Williamtown | M. Roderick |
| Feb 29 | Arctic Jaeger | 2 | Stockton Beach | " |
| Mar 5 | Dollarbird | 1 | Woodville | M.Newman |
| | Royal Spoonbill | 60 | Seaham N.R. | " |
| | Wandering Whistling Duck | 1 | Anambah [nr. Rutherford] | " |
| | Australian Hobby | 1 | " | " |
| | White-bellied Sea-eagle | 1 | " | " |
| | Australian Hobby | 1 | " | " |
| Mar 6 | Royal Spoonbill | 104 | Cedar Hill Drive | S. Roderick |
| | Glossy Ibis | 4 | " | " |
| Mar 4 | Spotless Crake | 1 | Ash Island | M. Roderick |
| | Australasian Shoveler | 4 | S.W.C. | " |
| Mar 6 | Australian Spotted Crake | 1 | " | " |
| | Buff-banded Rail | 3 | " | " |
| Mar 7 | Dollarbird | 1 | Morpeth | " |

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Ross Dixon of Mulbring; Nick Talbot of Newcastle; Nick Livanos of Cardiff; Lyn Wallace of Millfield; Len Tolhurst of Cooranbong; Lindy & Fred Holland of Morpeth; Alan Ward of Merewether; Pauline Murray of New Lambton; Moreen & Allen Woollett of Kilaben Bay; Nerida, Stephen, Philip & Kate Paterson of Waratah; and to returning member Maureen Turner of Toronto

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 8 April | Hunter Wader Surveys | 11.00 a.m. (if poor weather, Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed | Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 Intending participants must ring to confirm |
| Wednesday 12 April | Club Night Shortlands Wetlands Centre | 7.30 pm | Speaker: Peter Phillips Topic: Birds of Western Australia |
| EASTER: Friday 21 April to Tuesday 25 April | Camp at The Aloes, Pilliga State Forest | The Aloes, Pilliga State Forest, from Friday 21 April | Directions available from Liz Herbert, 4959 3663. **Take all drinking water. |
| Tuesday 2nd May | Mid-week Outing: Morisset Hospital area | Cnr. Macquarie St/Fishery Pt. Rd, Morisset at 8.00 am | Keith or Margaret Woods, 4963 3070 |
| Wednesday 10th May | Club Night Shortlands Wetlands Centre | 7.30 pm | Speaker: David Geering: Regent Honeater Recovery Update |
| Saturday 20th May | Hunter Wader Surveys | 9.30 a.m. (if poor weather, Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed | Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 or Alan Stuart, 49528569 Intending participants must ring to confirm |
| Saturday 20th May | Camp at Congewai | Any time at Congewai | Directions: Liz Herbert, 4959 3663. |
| Sunday 21st May | Field Day at Congewai | 7.00 am. MacDonalDs, Cessnock | Liz Herbert, 4959 3663. |
| Saturday 27th May | Atlassing Outing: Allyn River, north of East Gresford | 7.00 am. Tucker Park, Paterson | Ann Lindsey, 4951 2008, Chris & Liz Herbert, 4959 3663, or Mike Newman, 4930 5564. Please ring first. |
| Tuesday 6th June | Mid-week Outing: Woodberry/Tarro Swamp | Car Park, Tarro Rec. Reserve | Keith or Margaret Woods, 4963 3070 |
| Saturday 10th to Monday 12th June | Camp at Apple Tree Flat, w. of Jerry's Plains [Private property] | 'Wongalee' Property | Directions available from Liz Herbert, 4959 3663. **Take all drinking water. |
| Wednesday 14th June | Club Night Shortlands Wetlands Centre | 7.30 pm | Fred van Gessel: <i>Birds of Iron Range</i> |
| Saturday 17th June | Hunter Wader Surveys | 8.30 a.m. (if poor weather, Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed | Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 or Alan Stuart, 49528569 You must ring to confirm |
| Sunday 25th June | Field Outing, and Wetlands Day | 8.00 am. Walka Water Works | Leader: Phil Rankin, 49460022 |
| Wednesday 4 th July | Brunkerville (private property) | Mulbring Park, the Kurri Kurri/Branxton Road, Mulbring at 8.00 am | Keith or Margaret Woods, 4963 3070 |
| Wednesday 11 th July | Club Night The Wetlands Centre | 7.30 pm. | |
| Saturday 15 th July | Hunter Wader Surveys | 7.30 a.m. (if poor weather, Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed | Chris Herbert, 4959 3663 or Alan Stuart, 49528569 You must ring to confirm! |

NEEDED URGENTLY:

'BIRD OF THE EVENING' PRESENTERS: CONTACT HAROLD TARRANT 49301054 or clhast@cc.newcastle.edu.au

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?

Dear HBOC member

The HBOC Committee wants to be sure that the best services are being provided to members. Sometimes, because club nights are busy affairs or because you may only be able to attend them infrequently, it can be hard to catch the ear of a committee member to raise any problems or to pass on any suggestions. The questionnaire below is one other way for you to put your views.

We feel proud of the club's record in general, but there may well be room for improvement in some cases. Please help us to identify these, by placing a in the that matches your thoughts on each topic raised below, and making other comments where appropriate.

Alan Stuart, President
March 30, 2000

Club Nights

i) HBOC holds a monthly meeting, in every month except January. The meetings are held at Shortland Wetlands Centre (SWC) on the second Wednesday of the month, starting at 7.30 pm.

I/we attend: Regularly Sometimes Rarely Never

The SWC venue is: Suitable Not suitable Reason:

ii) Regular or occasional features at meetings include bird of the evening, observation reports, announcements, conservation items.

| | Duration | | | Preferred frequency to have | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Too long | Too short | About OK | Each month | Occasional | Delete it |
| Bird of the evening | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Observation reports | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Announcements | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conservation items | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

iii) The main feature at meetings is usually a guest speaker, or sometimes a film or a study night. Have you a suggestion for a main feature?

Suggestion:

iv) Although the majority of HBOC's members live near Newcastle, many members live elsewhere in the Region.

If you feel that Newcastle is too far away to attend meetings, would you attend occasional additional meetings held in regional centres (e.g. Morisset, Muswellbrook, Bulahdelah)? Yes No

Do you know of any other bird enthusiasts who might join HBOC if there were regional activities in your area? Yes No

What location(s) do you suggest as suitable for holding regional meetings?

Activities

i) HBOC organises two outings each month - one on a Sunday and one on a weekday (usually Tuesdays). These outings are intended to be suitable both for beginners and for more experienced bird watchers.

i) I/we attend HBOC outings: Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

If you rarely/never attend club outings, please state why:

Reason:

If you sometimes/frequently attend club outings, please indicate:

An aspect of outings that I/we like is:

An aspect of outings that I/we would like to see changed is:

ii) HBOC also organises camps on long weekends, and occasionally on ordinary weekends. These events are intended to allow individuals to go birding at their own pace and to share their experiences with others while socialising (e.g. around a campfire).

i) I/we attend HBOC camps: Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

If you rarely/never attend club camps, please state why:

Reason:

If you sometimes/ frequently attend club camps, please indicate:

An aspect of camps that I/we like

is:

An aspect of camps that I/we would like to see changed

is:

iii) Need for additional activities?

HBOC should organise more social activities (outings, camps, barbecues, afternoon teas, etc) Yes No

Type(s) of activity I/we would like more of:

Miscellaneous

i) If you joined HBOC within the past 3 years, how did you first find out about us?

From a friend/workmate From Yellow Pages entry Heard an advertisement on radio

Saw brochure at Wetlands Centre Saw brochure elsewhere (Where?)

Other means (How?)

ii) HBOC publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, which is available for collection at the club night immediately following publication and which is then mailed to members who did not attend that club night.

i) I/we receive club newsletters: Always (every 2 months) Mostly Rarely Never

If you don't always receive newsletters, please say why you think there might be a problem (e.g. don't notice them at club night, our postal address is incorrect, etc):

Reason:

ii) The content of the newsletter is: Excellent Good Fair Poor

I/we would like to see the following changes:

More items/articles about:

Less items/articles about:

iii) Finally

If you could change just one thing about the HBOC, what would that change be?

.....
.....
.....

Please return your completed questionnaire, either by hand to any committee member or by post to HBOC at P.O. Box 24, New Lambton NSW 2305. Your reply by (date to be decided) would be appreciated, but there is no deadline for responding. Probably, the survey will be repeated from time to time.

If you would like an opportunity for some follow-up discussion on any of the points you have raised, please **print** your name here (this part is optional).

Name: