

# NEWSLETTER

## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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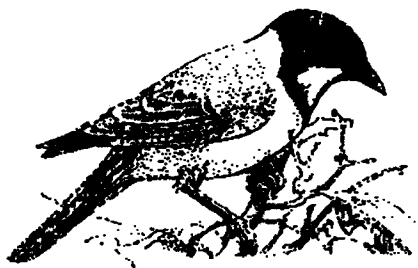
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*The aims of the club are:*

- *To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat*
  - *To encourage bird observing as a leisure time activity*
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### John Browns Lagoon Is Out Of Bounds

John Browns Lagoon near Mulbring is known by many birdwatchers in NSW. Often referred to as Colliery Dam, the area has been great for birding activities over the years. Members of Hunter Bird Observers Club as well as other bird groups have always enjoyed the great variety of species present and especially the threatened species Comb-crested Jacana and Black-necked Stork. The size of the water body makes it a major local component of waterfowl habitat and during dry spells of course it acts as a valuable refuge.

John Browns Lagoon is located on private property that was once owned by the mining company Coal & Allied. Permission to access the place by HBOC and others was never too difficult to arrange and over a period of eight years our two organisations enjoyed a very good relationship.

The current owner of the property is the developer M&R Civil and it is their intention to build a golf club/resort with high density accommodation. HBOC has been active for two years now in sending submissions to Cessnock City Council and otherwise promoting our view that the valuable Jacana habitat needs to be

managed carefully and with proper monitoring. At first, M&R Civil were happy to grant HBOC continuing access to John Browns Lagoon but recently their attitude has soured somewhat and as of 16<sup>th</sup> June they have cancelled any such permission.

HBOC has a policy of respecting the wishes of property owners and managers (Birdwatchers Code of Ethics) and will always seek permission for access for any Club activity. It is understood, however, that some individuals may act differently in their pursuit of good birding sites. HBOC would like to draw to the attention of all birdwatchers the importance of steering clear of the John Browns Lagoon site at this point of time.

Given our high profile in this matter it would be very unfortunate if the issues we are fighting for became clouded because of acts of trespass. Please help us out by acting responsibly and it will go a long way to keeping our (that's all birdwatchers') good reputation.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Tom Clarke

## President's Column

Wasn't it wonderful how obliging the pair of Powerful Owl was recently in Blackbutt Reserve? Firstly the pair both roosting directly above a wide easy-walking track for several weeks, then the female nesting in a nearby hollow easily seen from where the male continued to roost each day. Well done Paddy and Caryl Lightfoot for finding the birds initially and for spreading the news more widely. Lots of Club members were able to see them (for many, it was a tick) and lots of other people too. Most of the times when I went to the site, 6-10 other people would be coming and going while I was there.

The presence of the pair was well publicised in the wider community, starting with a segment in a Prime news bulletin and articles in the Newcastle Herald and The Post. Later, ABC radio interviewed Paddy Lightfoot, with Paddy doing a marvellous job of both informing listeners about Powerful Owl and publicising the attractions of HBOC membership. I was concerned at first about the initial publicity (which originated from outside the Club) because it mentioned that the birds were breeding. I felt that this might somehow jeopardise the chances for breeding success. In retrospect I now think that the publicity was a good thing. There was enormous interest raised as a result. I lost count of how many times some total stranger told me excitedly about the female being on the nest "in that hollow over there". I now think that birds generally, and the pleasures of watching them, have benefited from the publicity.

There has been some positive news on the conservation front lately. Firstly, the proposal for a new sub-division at Belmont has apparently been shelved, and the land instead has been offered to the State government. The development would have affected Belmont Wetland and HBOC has been actively opposed to aspects of it. We have also been very involved in trying to protect the Comb-crested

Jacana habitat at John Brown's Lagoon (or Colliery Dam as some know it) in the face of a major development that has been proposed there. For a long time now, we've campaigned for a more limited development to take place. It seems now that the would-be developer has decided to submit a more reasonable development application to Cessnock City Council.

We're still concerned about airport proposals, which don't seem ever to go away. Our initial concerns were to do with the impact of planes on birds - especially migratory waders. However, the impact of birds on planes is another important factor. The lower Hunter valley teems with large birds such as swans, ibis and spoonbills that could easily bring down a plane. Estimates of ibis numbers from some quarters are of around 10,000 birds. We need much more information about feeding and roosting sites for ibis - please send us details of any sightings you make over the next month or so.

I'm sometimes asked what's happening about the Garden Bird Survey (GBS) for which many people continue to keep records. This will be the final year of the project, after which we will complete the data analysis and publish a report. The original intention was to publish an annual report. However, the GBS has generated a massive amount of data that have proven complicated to handle. The GBS began in late 1992, and will finish in June 2001. An interim report published in 1994 was brimful of fascinating information about our local birds. The results from the overall GBS will be even more interesting. (By the way, if you could be interested in helping us to process the GBS data, we'd love to hear from you).

Happy birding

Alan Stuart  
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## **CLUB OUTINGS.....**

### **"Wongalee", Apple Tree Flat**

**June 10-12**

#### ***The Weekend of the Elusive Scarlet Robins***

The overriding consensus among the 21 lucky campers at "Wongalee" on the June long weekend was "What a lovely place, when can we come back?"

Set in a lovely little valley a few kms out of Jerrys Plains, the camping spot, kindly slashed by genial host, Jim Williamson, had it all - a running creek, spectacular scenery and great birds!

A small number of flowering trees were full of honeyeaters, and we had our work cut out identifying other species among the seemingly endless streams of Lewin's, but were rewarded with Yellow-faced, Tufted, White-eared, White-plumed, Brown-headed, Scarlet and a lone Striped. Lots of White Cedars were in fruit and attracted large numbers of Orioles, Currawongs and Satin Bowerbirds.

A few people were lucky enough to sight Rock Warblers, and Tom's Turquoise Parrot was a "special", while on Saturday afternoon, a few of us had a "special moment" with a Painted Button Quail. Most people were lucky enough to get great views of Scarlet

Robins, however despite much searching they eluded yours truly.

Fortunately, the predicted rain did not eventuate, and apart from a bit of wind, the weather was great, although the extra keen campers who arrived on Friday nearly froze that night. The expected "day trippers" who were obviously deterred by the rain on the coast missed out on a treat!

The final count of 84 species was very satisfying, and left us speculating what the birding would be like in spring!?!

Special thanks must go to Jim Williamson for allowing us to camp in his beautiful valley, and a special mention to young Joseph Clarke for his tireless efforts in setting up the toilet tent (and thanks to Rowley for loosening the purse strings and purchasing two new tents and thunder boxes) and starting and maintaining the campfire, he must surely have been coached by Ed Hamonet!?

All in all, a great weekend, with lots of highlights (like watching Ann and her party trying to cook a baked dinner in her "100 year old antique" camp oven) and much camaraderie and good cheer around the fire at birdcall.

*Greg Newling.*

### **Bulga field outing,**

**July 23**

On Sunday morning, 16 intrepid bird watchers dragged themselves out of their warm toasty beds to assemble at Bulga Store. I know the sun was shining, but only one of us was under the mistaken impression that it was warm enough for shorts and a T-shirt!

Perhaps it wasn't the sight of the bare legs or the gaggle of bird-watchers peering intently at Striated Pardalote, Jackie Winter and Zebra Finch which provided the local residents of down-town Bulga with entertainment as they turned their binoculars on us. And it wasn't only the two-footed residents who were curious, the horses checked us out too! A painted colt (not a new bird species) raced around his paddock with head high and tail flying.

After the excitement of downtown Bulga, we headed for the woodland valley leading up to the foothills of Wollemi National Park. It wasn't long before we were all watching a Red-capped Robin which perched cooperatively on a bright sunlit branch. After tracking down Speckled Warbler, Hooded Robin, Yellow and Buff-rumped Thornbill, Double-barred Finch and Grey Shrike-thrush, we found a family of Scarlet Robins near one of the dams. What a delight these little round birds were! There were plenty of raptors around too - Nankeen Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite and several Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen during the day. We saw a total of 62 species at Bulga. It was a great day for newer bird watchers as the more experienced birdos made sure that everyone managed to identify as many birds as possible, particularly those tricky little brown ones!

*Jenny Powers*

## **Atlassing 2000 - The First Six Months in the Hunter**

I thought I would just update you with a few interesting sightings in our area which came through the Birds Australia Atlas Project from January to June. Black-necked Storks which were first sighted late last year continued to grace our wetlands during January and February, mainly at Cedar Hill, Ash Island and the Shortland Wetland Centre. Two birds flew over my house just last week.

The excitement continued in May when the Powerful Owls were found again in Blackbutt. These owls have now starred on television, been talked about on radio and had various articles written about them in the local newspapers especially since they are now breeding. Birdwatchers and others are trekking up the Blackbutt trails at sunset to see the male bird fetch the female from the nesting hollow to fly off into the night to hunt for their meal, ringtail possum being common on the menu. Delight turned into joy when in June up to 25 Regent Honeyeaters and 90 Swift Parrots were seen in Aberdare SF and on a housing development at Ellalong respectively. Keen atlassers have also been rewarded with myriads of White-naped, Yellow-tufted, Yellow-faced, Black-chinned, and Fuscous Honeyeaters, Noisy Friarbirds and Musk Lorikeets slurping their way through the flowering eucalypts of Aberdare and Cessnock State Forests.

In between these highlights the nursery at Newcastle Wetlands has produced numerous Darter and Pied Cormorant chicks and the Great Cormorants with their marvellously glossy plumage and white thighs were "wing-waving" and "pointing" in preparation for breeding when I last looked.

A record sheet from Boondelbah Island reveals nesting Buff-banded Rails, Sooty Oystercatchers, Tawny and Little Grassbirds, Brown Quail and Little Penguins along with sightings of Gould's Petrel, Wedge-tailed and Sooty Shearwaters and Eastern Reef Egrets. Sooty Oystercatchers continue to roost on the rocks at Newcastle Baths and are often seen on

Dudley Rocks. In June the Pied Oystercatchers on the Kooragang dykes were clearly claiming their territory as they chased their adolescent chick with arched necks and pointed bills. Summer migrants such as Black-faced Monarch, Rufous Fantail and Channel-billed Cuckoo were sighted flying north in March and April. Simultaneously, the winter migrating Rose Robin made its appearance in April, becoming common in May and June. Diamond Firetails have been seen from Martins Creek to Battery Rocks and a sighting of Plum-headed Finches at Wollar caused me to hope that the dozens seen near Binnaway at Easter might fly further east into our region. But it hasn't happened so far as I know. The wader watchers were thrilled by the return of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and Zebra Finches (of course they're not waders!) to Big Pond in May when the Phragmites was in seed. The Glossy Black-Cockatoos turn up regularly at Wyee Point and a Brush Bronzewing inhabits the patch of a well-known birdwatcher near Belmont Swamp. A Black Kite, a species not often seen in the Hunter, was spotted at Carey Bay and the Yellow Wagtail revisited Ash Island in March. Those who hadn't twitched it in 1998 were out there trying again, as well as those who just wanted to see this fabulous little bird again anyway. The least common wader for the season was Wood Sandpiper, two at Cedar Hill in February. The Comb-crested Jacana seems to be having a good season with sightings at Maitland, Tarro and Stockrington as well as at their breeding site at John Browns Lagoon. In the rainforests Noisy Pitta was seen at Copeland and Avon SF, Emerald Dove at Fish Hole Creek and Mt Vincent, and Paradise Riflebird at Copeland on two separate occasions in February and March. White-backed Swallows reappeared in April and May at Denman and Bulga (where they come from, nobody knows). It is encouraging to see Hooded Robins, a species seriously affected by the loss of our woodlands, turning up on a regular basis on three sites at Howes Valley, Jerrys Plains and Bulga. The ones at Bulga are usually in the company of Red-capped Robins who live and breed happily on the same patch.

For many of us atlassing has provided a focus for our birdwatching activities and I am hoping that we will be able to concentrate our efforts on tracking down as many breeding birds as possible this season and next since field work for the Atlas will close in December, 2001.

*Late press:* two separate Barn Owls were spotted on the same night in the Morpeth/Tenambit/Hinton area after a couple of years' absence. Are they responding to a mini mouse plague?

Have fun and happy atlassing

*Ann Lindsey*

### National Atlas Website

The new Atlas website is up and running at:  
[www.abc.net.au/birds](http://www.abc.net.au/birds) At this site you can:

- View current distribution of Atlas surveys.
- Type in your own Atlas Observer Number and see the location of your surveys (after typing in your number instead of 'All Surveys', then press 'Enter').
- Get a list of birds seen in each one-degree grid square across Australia.
- Map the distribution of about 50 bird species.
- Look at seasonal movements of a range of species.
  - Zoom into a particular state.

Read the Help instructions carefully. Unfortunately, you do need a recent web browser to read the maps. You can download the latest browsers from the following locations (latest version in brackets):

Internet Explorer - <http://www.microsoft.com/ie/default.htm>  
[IE5.01]

Source: *Galah 45*

## Restless Flycatchers in the Hunter

When I moved into the Hunter at the beginning of 1994 I had little idea which of the birds here were of interest. It was a time of learning for a Sydney refugee like me, and my very first year here enabled me to see species that I had seldom, if ever, sighted or heard before. The Barking Owl that disturbed us on several evenings in May as it sat and called from our lemon-scented gums was probably the most exciting bird to have appeared then in Bolwarra, but I was not to know that I would not hear it (and only once see it) since. A little later these eucalypts came into a profusion of flower, presumably attracting many flying insects, for it also attracted a single Restless Flycatcher, which became known to the family as the 'farting flycatcher' because of its loud and distinctive call. I had seen this bird around Bolwarra wetlands, usually around the narrow part of the lagoon, always on its own, except for the fact that it seemed rather fond of joining the Willie Wagtails. It stayed throughout the winter, and was never seen more than a kilometre from its usual haunts. It was also quite easy to find, not only because of its call and its distinctive tendency to hover low over grasses, but also because of its tendency to come and investigate activity.

For four successive winters the bird (presumably the same one) arrived, and it was

easy to assume that the species belonged to the area. But after arriving on or before 19<sup>th</sup> April 1997 it was seen, by me at least, for only about six weeks. In 1998 I cannot recall seeing it, and in 1999 the nearest Restless I recorded was a single bird at Melville Ford, a couple of kilometres up the Hunter. My notes do not recall the dates of the last sighting each year, but I do recall that it disappeared roughly when might be expected for a southern migrant: the end of August or the beginning of September. I remember asking at club night whether we knew what happened to the Restless in summer time, and Sue Hamonet replying that it looked like a good research project! Finally, I have got around to working on five years of our records, as supplied by the Annual Bird Report for '95, '97, and '98 and by both Sue (short forms) and Alan Stuart (long forms) for '96 and '99.<sup>1</sup> I have supplemented this with some records of my own and some other 2000 reports, but I have not been out and done any serious field research.

To begin with, data for Shortland and the Wetlands Centre in 1999, supplied by Michael Kearns and Ann Lindsey, has been an excellent indicator that my Bolwarra records were not unusual. Between them they recorded

<sup>1</sup> I have not tried to check out all the data with sources, but I have adopted a cautious policy concerning claims based on call only in the months when other monarch flycatchers, such as the Leaden and Black-Faced, might be uttering comparable if less dynamic calls.

one bird several times from April 30th to August 13th, so that it clearly did not move around much once it had found a welcome winter home. However, it has not stayed into spring. This winter a bird has been around Bolwarra for a couple of months already again (April to June). By far the majority of sightings across the region have in fact been in the winter period, starting in late March, going on until about August, and less frequently into early spring. There are no records for February at all for the period under review. So there is a good chance that the bird is some kind of migrant, not necessarily to places outside the Hunter, but at least to areas that we all seldom visit. Two grid-blocks have produced a sufficient range of sightings for me to assume that some birds are there all year: H4 and H10, Wingen and Howes Valley. Other western areas such as White Box Camp may also fall into this category. Data may presumably be rather thin for most of the western blocks, but it is fairly certain that none but the rare straggler is ever found in the more populated areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, and Maitland in the summer months.<sup>2</sup>

It is perhaps interesting that reports from the Manning Valley locals have provided a few records that suggest a different picture. To the north of the Manning one bird was seen in January at S3, one at R3 in November, and a pair at R5 for November, and records around there do not show a winter bias at all. In fact there are HBOC records for 6+ birds right up in O2 for the end of September and beginning of October. The westward path of the north coast birds in spring would not result in their coming to the same dry and open valleys as in the Hunter, but rather to damper forested areas, so perhaps their movements are more restricted. Similarly it would not be easy for the Restless to move inland into the Blue Mountains in the Sydney region, so it is not surprising that I have seen these birds on December 26th at the Mount Annan Botanical Gardens in Sydney's south-west. For these reasons I propose to set our NE corner aside, and concentrate on the rest of our region. I am not sure whether to set aside the coastal Lake Macquarie region too, as the only sightings there are two from April (Belmont), and one each from September 19th (Warners Bay) and October 2nd (Swansea), precisely the times when one might imagine a few birds to be

passing through on a coastal migration. One would certainly welcome more data here.

Otherwise one is left with a picture of thin summer records, and in cells I-P, east of a line north from Howes Valley to Wingen, there are only 1 September sighting (HRBG), and reports of birds heard in November in Singleton and Balickera, which must be regarded as doubtful in the circumstances. Birds usually reappear in this Lower Hunter area in April (I8, J10, L9 & 11, M9, and M4), but in 2000 a bird was found on Ash Island in late March. The records for Restless Flycatcher at Wingen and Howes Valley both include September and January sightings, and we have an HBOC October record for H5, south of Wingen too. I deduce that the birds could probably be found in these areas throughout the year. Moving west of this line to cells C-G, we are probably in a region that is grossly under-reported, and records will be skewed by the presence in particular of HBOC Camps in the area. We have plenty of records for March to June, 2 for August and 2 for October, so although birds seem more common, or more common in accessible regions, in the winter, one might assume that birds are spending the summer there unseen.

So what exactly is the status of the Restless Flycatcher in our region? Pizzey and Doyle describe it as 'nomadic or part-migratory'. I am reluctant to call any bird that winters in the same place for successive years as nomadic, so 'part-migratory' would seem to be the answer. But what sort of migration are we dealing with? The data do not seem to support the view that it migrates south in summer like most of our monarchs. There seems, then, to be two other main possibilities: i.e. that it tends to move towards the coast in Winter like the Rose Robin for instance, or that there is a general dispersal after breeding that brings some birds towards the coast, like the Scarlet and Red-capped Robins. Or is there a significant difference? After all it is logical that dispersing members of all these species should tend towards areas where the winter is mild enough to support plenty of flying insects.

It seems reasonable to suspect that Hunter birds tend to migrate between coastal regions in winter (where warmer nights will mean that insects are less scarce), and dry semi-open inland valleys in summer, where one might suspect that they find plenty of food along water-courses in particular. It seems entirely possible, given the pattern of records available to me, that birds tend to move up and down watercourses. If this is the case then I

<sup>2</sup> I admit that I have discounted an HBOC report of a bird heard in November 1999 at Balickera, because I recall that it came from one person only and related to an area where many Leaden Flycatchers had been seen and heard.

should assume that they mostly breed unnoticed quite high up creeks, where roads have often terminated in private property.

#### Numbers:

I have tended to work in terms of sightings rather than birds. Multiple sightings are not frequent, occurring in the following cells:

6+ birds:

E9, Table Bay Creek (April, June); O2, Rowleys River (Sept/Oct)

2-5 birds where numbers available:

C6, White Box Camp (June, August, October); H4, Wingen (April): 'some'; G8, Martindale (April): 4; G7, Denman (March): 3; I8, Bulga (April): 2; F7, Martindale (August): 2; R5, Hallidays Point (November): 2

One point to be noticed here is how usual it is for more than one bird to be discovered along the foothills from Bulga to the Widden Valley by about April, and this may suggest that birds are still in family parties or pairs after successful or unsuccessful breeding. Whether or not this is so, records probably confirm the importance of locations close to drier hill-country in the south of the Hunter Valley in the middle and west of the region. The valleys leading down from the Watagans, which should be regularly reported, seem less attractive to this species, though I have encountered the birds at some time close to Lostock and Clarence Town: sadly I have not recorded when.

It stands to reason that I should welcome further data, whether it corroborates or questions this picture.

*Harold Tarrant*

### Bird attracting plants

There is an increasing body of literature giving advice on what to plant to attract birds to your garden, but a lack of critical review on this advice.

As an example, I read in a Burke's Backyard magazine that rainforest pigeons will travel long distances to feed on the fruit of the native Blueberry Ash, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*. According to John Dengate, the Blueberry Ash can be great for migrating rainforest pigeons, currawongs and tiny silvereyes. In a book "Birdscaping Your Garden", it says that the

fruits are eaten by cockatoos, parrots and currawongs. Regular observation of several large (7m) specimens growing naturally and two self-planted specimens, all growing in wet forest, has yet to provide any evidence of the berries having been eaten.

This is in contrast to the ability of the introduced and ubiquitous Privet to attract birds. The two species flower and fruit at similar times of the year. The mere mention of the word "privet" is sure to send a bush regenerator's blood pressure sky-rocketing, and someone who values native flora as much as birdlife would not get much pleasure in watching a currawong or silvereye gorge themselves on Privet berries. But if you value only birdlife, then in my opinion Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) is a superior plant to have in your garden than the Blueberry Ash.

If introduced bird-attracting plants are present in "natural" bushland, and do not take over to the extent that they reduce the total biodiversity of plant species in the area, then their presence will increase the plant diversity in the area, which may in turn increase the bird diversity.

Camphor laurel originated in China and Japan and was once described to me as "green cancer". But in previous winters its berries have supported about six White-headed Pigeons at Charlestown and around 50 Topknot Pigeons at Ourimbah on the Central Coast. Also at Ourimbah, a creek lined by dense thickets of lantana and privet is inhabited by a family of Variegated Fairy-wrens, Red-browed Firetails, Eastern Spinebills, and at least one Eastern Yellow Robin. At Shortland Wetlands Centre I have seen White-cheeked Honeyeaters and a Scarlet Honeyeater drinking from the flowers of the introduced Moth Vine, and White-cheeked Honeyeaters drinking from Lantana flowers. In both locations Acacias were also present, suggesting that the introduced plants had not completely taken over, but were instead increasing plant diversity in the area.

Another advantage of Lantana for smaller birds is that it provides a refuge into which cats and foxes cannot penetrate. Sure, there are native alternatives, like *Hakea sericea*,

but in reality these alternatives aren't doing the job.

Red-browed Finches love eating the unripe seeds of *Paspalum dilatatum* and *Paspalum urvillei*, both of which are natives of South America. Along the Victorian coastline, the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot uses as food sources the introduced *Hastate orache* and Capeweed along with six native species during their winter sojourn.

If you want to attract Noisy Miners, large parrots, Magpies, Kookaburras and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, plant a Eucalypt or two in your garden. Noisy Miners maintain their territory by colonial cooperation. Unobstructed vision of their territory is advantageous to this species, as it enables the colony to quickly flock to the aid of any bird that makes a warning call. A mobbing of the intruder often follows. A single large Eucalypt in your yard provides an ideal vantage point from which the Noisy Miners can keep watch, and also makes for a satisfactory reconstruction of an open woodland habitat, which is the natural stronghold of this species.

Quickly diverting from garden regeneration to bush regeneration, in my opinion the real floral foes of the birds are those introduced plants that don't attract them. Bitou Bush and Kikuyu are good examples.

My "top ten" bird-attracting plants that I have seen for sale in nurseries are:

| Scientific name                          | Common name                 |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Eucalyptus sideroxylon</i>         | Red Ironbark/Mugga Ironbark |
| 2. <i>Grevillea robusta</i>              | Silky Oak                   |
| 3. <i>Syzygium australe</i>              | Scrub cherry                |
| 4. <i>Archontophoenix cunninghamiana</i> | Bangalow palm               |
| 5. <i>Banksia integrifolia</i>           | Coastal banksia             |
| 6. <i>Grevillea barkliana</i>            |                             |
| 7. <i>Angophora costata</i>              | Smooth-barked apple         |
| 8. <i>Eucalyptus saligna</i>             | Sydney Blue Gum             |
| 9. <i>Melia azedarach</i>                | White Cedar                 |
| 10. <i>Banksia spinulosa</i>             | Hair pin banksia.           |

Colin Goodenough

**Note:** As a member of the Australian Plants Society my blood pressure did indeed rise somewhat on reading the above article. I trust that one of the many knowledgeable people out there will submit a counter article on bird-attracting plants, illustrating the ease with which we can attract numerous beautiful native birds with countless beautiful native plants - which "do the job" excellently - and without threat to the environment! (Ed.)

## Swift Parrots - May National Search Day

The May survey achieved very good coverage, and the best count result to date, eclipsing the result of 765 birds in May 1999. Some 998 Swift Parrots were found, with most of these in Victoria.

The Maryborough-Dunolly region (west of Bendigo), in which only 8 birds were found in May 1999, supported 580 birds. Conversely, the North-East region of Victoria, in which 518 birds were found in May 1999, supported only 95 birds, of which 80 were in one flock. Many of the birds have returned to previously known locations. Grey Box lerp was the food source of a majority of the Swift Parrots found this year. All the large flocks found were feeding on this resource, which was abundant on lower slopes and drainage lines. Big numbers were in Tunstalls State Forest (146 birds), Timor State Forest (121 birds), a private property at Clunes

(95 birds). These locations are all in central-west Victoria.

Observers who have participated in this survey for a few years may remember that a similar result occurred in 1998. Curiously, large areas of Red Ironbark flowering were virtually ignored by the parrots this year. Given that lerp is generally less abundant in this area by August, the birds may be using nectar more by that time.

The North Coast of NSW featured on the count weekend as a "positive" for the first time, with Moonee Beach, north of coffs Harbour and private land near Crowdy Bay National Park both featuring. Swift Parrots have now visited Moonee Beach (a Caravan Park) four years in succession.

Queensland observers tried without success in May but Swift Parrots have since returned to the State, with up to 40 birds present in Toowoomba feeding on Yellow Box nectar. The Yellow Box is widespread through the mainland range of the Swift Parrot, but does not



flower until spring in most areas and is rarely used. This sighting basically ends any speculation that the bird is vagrant to Queensland.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Victoria               | 922 |
| Maryborough-Dunolly    | 580 |
| Bendigo                | 133 |
| North-East             | 95  |
| Rushworth              | 57  |
| St. Arnaud             | 57  |
|                        |     |
| New South Wales        | 76  |
| Central western slopes | 50  |
| North coast            | 26  |
|                        |     |
| Queensland             | 0   |

David Geering  
Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator  
Simon Kennedy  
Swift Parrot Project Officer

## More on Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters...

I have just spent 18 days searching Swamp Mahogany and Spotted Gum habitats in New South Wales. It turns out that there ARE significant numbers of Swift Parrots in NSW, and they're in the Hunter Valley feeding on Spotted Gum, as are at least 35 Regent Honeyeaters. After 13 days of little or no success, it was marvellous to find these pots of gold (or should that be black and gold) at the end.

1. A total of 128 Swift Parrots, and five foraging sites, most in the Hunter Valley, although 28 flew high overhead as I was watching 12 Glossy Black Cockatoos (seen from car window....screeeech!) in the Jervis Bay NP between Currarong and Nowra early in the trip.

1 At least 70 Swift Parrots were seen at Ellalong. All headed south to an unknown roost location during the late afternoon. To see the spectacular fast-flying flocks, visit in the late afternoon (from about 3.30 pm). Earlier in the afternoon you may find them feeding in the flowering Spotted Gums. Other Swift Parrots were seen at Aberdare SF and the Lower Hunter NP near Cessnock, again feeding on Spotted Gum. This is a great breakthrough for the Swift Parrot, as there were little data on use of Spotted Gum before now.

1 Also at Ellalong on 18/6, a Square-tailed Kite breezed in and watched myself and Jenny Meynell for some time, there's nothing like the "unexpected instant recognition twitch" is there? On seeing it I let out a gasp usually reserved for visions of god or a minor heart attack.

2. Now the Regents. It was a special moment when I first saw one here, again not expecting it. David Geering has shown me these birds at Capertee before, but then at least I knew I stood a good chance of seeing one. Here, in Aberdare State Forest, one flew into the tree, then two, then five,...."oh god what have we got here!" This group turned out to be 20-strong, feeding on Spotted Gum nectar and chasing, bill-clapping and carrying on... functioning as a feeding flock, just marvellous stuff. Another group (15) was found before midday some 3km away, by which time I was wondering just how many were in the Hunter Valley.

1 I didn't find any more Regents, but revisited both Regent sites the next day (19/6), and found them again with Swift Parrots now at one of the sites. Here I saw a Regent and a Swift feeding side-by-side in one binocular view. I made the most of the view, knowing it was something I might never see again.

3. Other great birds for me (although perhaps less surprising for NSW birders):-

Three twitches: Fluttering Shearwater (pointed out by Alan Morris and Craig Arms, skirting over water with albatross off Norah Head); Chestnut-breasted Mannikin (feeding on Paspalum seed heads in a swampy area near a Swamp Mahogany stand); Osprey (at Tanilba Bay, Port Stephens, which began to drift away from me, and as I began to take my binos down decided to make a casual 45 degree dive into the bay, catching a pretty large fish).

Other interesting birds: Glossy Black Cockatoos - 12 at Jervis Bay NP; Sooty Oystercatchers - 2 at Currarong (both these NSW south coast); Albatross, Black-browed and Shy and White-fronted Tern off Norah Head (central coast); and Southern Emu-wren at Myall Lakes NP.

Simon Kennedy

*Articles for our newsletter  
are always welcomed.*

*Closing date for next issue:  
30 September 2000*

*Please mail to: Pat Carlton,  
29 Wallaroo Rd, East Seaham 2324  
Ph/fax: 02 4988 6026  
Email: [pcarlton@optusnet.com.au](mailto:pcarlton@optusnet.com.au)*

### **Welcome to New Members**

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

Lucas Grenadier, Newcastle  
Phil Hansbro, Newcastle  
Florence Humphreys, Telarah  
Cath Reiher & Laurie Ernst, Warners Bay  
Christine Williams, Barnsley

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

### **How things change.....**

The following is a quotation from John Gould's *Birds of Australia* (1840-1848) concerning the Crested Pigeon (known then as the Crested Bronze-Wing):

*"The chasteness of its colouring, the extreme elegance of its form, and the graceful crest which flows from its occiput, all tend to render this Pigeon one of the most lovely members of its family, and it is therefore to be regretted that, owing to its being exclusively an inhabitant of the plains of the interior, it can never become an object of general observation."*

### **Better Watch Out!**

The Sydney Morning Herald's Column 8 (19/6/00) reported a comment from Sydney's *City Weekly* - "the Botanical Gardens have become the home to two rare birds known as "powerful owls" because of their size (between 500cm and 600cm tall) and are one of only two predators that eat fruit bats." (sic)

Column 8 suggested that, "at that size, they might like an occasional human snack as well"! Maybe HBOC members should approach Blackbutt Reserve with great care!!



### **Birds Australia Parrot Association (BAPA)**

For those who may not know, BAPA aims to:

- Develop plans for parrot research and management in Australasia in conjunction with other interested bodies;
- Co-ordinate and encourage scientific projects using amateur and professional skills;
- Encourage and assist with the publication of results;
- Maintain effective communication on parrot matters within Australasia, and with similar groups elsewhere; and
- Formulate and promote policies for the conservation and management of parrots and their habitat.

If you'd like more information about the availability of the BAPA bulletin, *Eclectus*, or about joining the Association, please contact:

BAPA Membership, 415 Riversdale Road,  
HAWTHORN EAST, VIC 3123.  
Tel: (03) 9882 2622. Fax: (03) 9882 2677.  
Email: [membership@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:membership@birdsaustralia.com.au)

We also have a home page to provide information about wild parrots and BAPA activities. This can be reached at:

<http://www.tasweb.com.au/bapa/index.htm>

Source: Galah 45

## OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT – JUNE/JULY 2000

|         |                              |       |                         |                 |
|---------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Jan 11  | Pheasant Coucal              | 2     | Redhead                 | J.Grebert       |
| Jan 17  | Grey Goshawk                 | 1     | Awabakal Reserve        | "               |
| Jan 19  | Noisy Pitta                  | 1     | Avon S.F.               | A. Lindsey      |
|         | White-throated Nightjar      | 1     | Craven S.F.             | "               |
|         | Spectacled Flycatcher        |       | "                       | "               |
| Jan 31  | Common Sandpiper             | 1     | Chichester Dam          | D.Jenkin        |
| Feb 7   | Grey Goshawk                 | 1     | Awabakal Reserve        | J.Grebert       |
| Apr 21  | White-backed Swallow         | 3     | Denman Rest Area        | A.Stuart        |
|         | Restless Flycatcher          | 1     | "                       | "               |
|         | Hooded Robin                 | 4     | Battery Rocks Rest Area | "               |
| Apr 20  | Little Eagle                 | 1     | Awabakal Reserve        | J.Grebert       |
| Apr 17  | Plumed Whistling Duck        | 44    | Rathluba Lagoon         | S.Roderick      |
| Apr 19  | Comb-crested Jacana          | 2     | Louth Park, E.Maitland  | "               |
| Apr 16  | Yellow-faced Honeyeater      | >50   | Woodberry               | J. & R. Smith   |
| Apr 19  | Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo | 4     | "                       | "               |
| Apr 30  | Yellow-faced Honeyeater      | >600  | "                       | "               |
| Apr 21  | Black Falcon                 | 1     | Binnaway                | C. & L. Herbert |
| Apr 20  | Powerful Owl                 | 1     | Congewai                | "               |
| Apr 1   | White-throated Nightjar      | 1     | Fosterton Loop Rd.      |                 |
|         | Pale Yellow Robin            | 1     | "                       |                 |
| Apr 3   | Spangled Drongo              | 1     | Medowie                 | D. & B. Cooper  |
| Apr 11  | Masked Owl                   | 1     | "                       | "               |
| May 22  | Osprey                       | 1     | Toronto                 | S. Roderick     |
| May 20  | Plumed Whistling Duck        | >80   | Doughboy Hollow         | "               |
| May 21  | Hooded Robin                 | 3     | White Box [G.R.N.P.]    | "               |
| May 31  | Swift Parrot                 | ~40   | Ellalong Village        | J. Meynell      |
| May 26  | White-headed Pigeon          | 1     | Redhead                 | J.Grebert       |
| May 1&8 | White-bellied Sea-eagle      | 1     | Awabakal Reserve        | "               |
| May 30  | Hooded Robin                 | 3     | Bulga                   | A.Lindsey       |
|         | Red-capped Robin             | 5     | "                       | "               |
|         | Diamond Firetail             | 2     | "                       | "               |
|         | White-backed Swallow         | 1     | "                       | "               |
|         | Zebra Finch                  |       | "                       | "               |
| May 22  | Brown Cuckoo-dove            | 3     | Glenrock SRA            | C.Goodenough    |
| May 17  | Spangled Drongo              | 1     | Woodberry               | J.Smith         |
| May     | Y.T.B.C. [showing white]     | 2     | Gloucester Caravan Pk   | G.Thomson       |
| 20&27   | Powerful Owl                 | 2     | Blackbutt Reserve       | P.Lightfoot     |
| May 14  | White-bellied Sea-eagle      | 1     | Merewether Baths        | P.Gordon        |
| May 21  | White-browed Babbler         | 11    | White Box               | M.Roderick      |
|         | Glossy Ibis                  | 15    | Lenaghans Drive         | "               |
| May 27  | Australasian Shoveler        | 4     | "                       | "               |
|         | Long-billed Corella          | 3     | Cessnock                | "               |
| May 14  | Hooded Robin                 | 2m+1f | 10k west Jerrys Plains  | H.Tarrant       |
|         | Diamond Firetail             | 1     | "                       | "               |
|         | White-winged Chough          | 80    | West Jerrys Plains      | "               |
|         | Restless Flycatcher          | 2     | "                       | "               |
| May/Jun | Restless Flycatcher          | 1     | Bolwarra                | "               |
| May 21  | Spotted Harrier              | 1     | Maitland                | "               |
| May 26  | Brown Falcon                 | 3     | Beresfield – Maitland   | "               |
| May 28  | Little Eagle                 | 2     | Walka Water Works       | H.Tarrant       |

|          |                               |       |                       |                 |
|----------|-------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| May 31   | Black Kite                    | 2     | Aberdeen              | G.Newling       |
| May 12   | Black Falcon                  | 1     | Muswellbrook          | "               |
|          | Spotted Harrier               | 2     | Bayswater Colliery    | "               |
| May 21   | Plumed Whistling Duck         | ~190  | Doughboy Hollow       | "               |
| May 7    | Swamp Harrier                 | 1     | Fullerton Cove        | D. & B. Cooper  |
| May 9    | White-headed Pigeon           | 5     | Medowie               | "               |
| May 25   | Forest Raven                  | 1     | MLNP [Mungo Brush]    | "               |
|          | Tawny Grassbird               | 1     | Hawks Nest STW        | "               |
| May/July | Pacific Baza                  | 1     | Speers Point          | S.Hamonet       |
| Jun 1    | Chestnut-breasted Mannikin    | 8     | Warabrook Rly Stn     | "               |
| Jun 7    | Collared Sparrowhawk          | 1     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 22   | Black Kite                    | 1     | Ellalong              | "               |
|          | Gang-Gang Cockatoo            | 2     | Kitchener             | "               |
|          | Pacific Baza                  | 1     | Newcastle University  | "               |
| Jun 18   | Brown Cuckoo-dove             | 2     | Blackbutt Reserve     | P.Lightfoot     |
| Jun 19   | Crested Shrike-tit            | 1     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 18   | Powerful Owl                  | 2     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 19   | "                             | 1     | "                     | "               |
| Jun      | Diamond Firetail              | 15    | Yengo NP.             | M.Roderick      |
| Jun 22   | Magpie-lark                   | 50-70 | Morpeth               | N.Foster        |
| Jun 1    | Swift Parrot                  | ~30   | "                     | "               |
| Jun 3    | Fluttering Shearwater         | 100's | Caves Beach Headland  | K.Laverick      |
|          | Australasian Gannet           | 3     | "                     | "               |
|          | <b>Black-browed Albatross</b> | 2     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 10   | Swift Parrot                  | 40    | Ellalong              | A.Lindsey       |
|          | Musk Lorikeet                 | 5     | "                     | "               |
|          | Gang-Gang Cockatoo            | 5     | "                     | "               |
| June 5   | Comb-crested Jacana           | 1     | Lenaghans Drive       | M.Roderick      |
| Jun 13   | Australasian Shoveler         | 13    | Cedar Hill Drive      | S.Roderick      |
| Jun 11   | Barking Owl                   | 1     | Bandon Grove          | R. & J. Smith   |
| Jun 10   | Australian Hobby              | 1     | Woodberry             | R. & J. Smith   |
| Jun 9    | Yellow-rumped Thornbill       | 2     | Bar Beach [suburban]  | C.Goodenough    |
| Jun 3-8  | Powerful Owl on nest          | 1     | Blackbutt Reserve     | P.Lightfoot     |
| Jun 6    | Little Eagle                  | 1     | Market Swamp          | K.Laverick      |
| Jun 10   | Pacific Baza                  | 2     | Carey Bay             | C. & L. Herbert |
| Jun 12   | Swift Parrot                  | >20   | Ellalong              | "               |
| Jun 17   | Pacific Baza                  | 1     | Speers Point          | S.Hamonet       |
| Jun 3    | Osprey                        | 1     | Borehole Swamp        | "               |
| May/Jun  | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike     | 8     | Port Waratah          | T.Clarke        |
| Jun 8    | Brown Goshawk                 | 1     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 3    | Chestnut-breasted Mannikin    | >50   | Stockton Borehole     | S.Hamonet       |
|          | Osprey                        | 1 imm | "                     | "               |
| Jun 18   | <b>Square-tailed Kite</b>     | 1     | Ellalong              | J.Meynell       |
| Jun 29   | Little Raven                  | ~20   | Gundy Rd. Scone       | G.Newling       |
| Jun 30   | Brahminy Kite                 | 1     | Taree                 | D. & B. Cooper  |
| Jun 25   | White-headed Pigeon           | 3     | Medowie               | "               |
| Jun 8    | White-throated Gerygone       | 1     | "                     | "               |
| Jun 29   | Painted Button-Quail          | 2     | 5k.West Jerrys Plains | H.Tarrant       |
| Jun 27   | Musk Lorikeet                 | B     | Ellalong              | H.Tarrant       |
| Jun 29   | Little Friarbird              | 1     | Martindale            | "               |
| Jun 29   | Hooded Robin                  | 1     | "                     | "               |
|          | Zebra Finch                   | C     | "                     | "               |

|         |                          |       |                        |                |
|---------|--------------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|
| Jul 7   | Swift Parrot             | 26    | Ellalong               | "              |
| Jul 11  | White-throated Gerygone  | 1     | Bobs Farm              | D. & B. Cooper |
| Jul 7   | Glossy Black Cockatoo    | 2     | Medowie                | "              |
| Jul 5&6 | Australian King Parrot   | 3     | Tenambit               | N.Foster       |
| Jul 11  | Blue-faced Honeyeater    | 5     | "                      | "              |
| Jul 11  | Grey Goshawk             | 1     | Beresfield             | M.Newman       |
| Jul 4   | Barn Owl                 | 1     | Hinton – Morpeth       | "              |
|         | " "                      | 1     | Tenambit – Morpeth     | "              |
| Jul 8   | Restless Flycatcher      | 1     | Shortland              | A.Lindsey      |
| Jul 7   | White-fronted Tern       | 2     | Stockton STW           | "              |
| Jul 6   | Scarlet Honeyeater       | 1     | Mt. Vincent            | "              |
| Jul 4   | Black Swan               | 720   | Pourmalong NP          | "              |
| Jul 5   | Pheasant Coucal          | 2     | Memorial Dr.Newcastle  | J. Moyse       |
| Jul 11  | Black Kite               | 1     | Booral                 | "              |
| Jul 6   | White-plumed Honeyeater  | 1     | SWC                    | P. Lightfoot   |
|         | Azure Kingfisher         | 1     | "                      | "              |
| Jul 6   | Pacific Baza             | 1     | Blackbutt Reserve      | G.Little       |
| Jul 10  | Emu                      | 1     | Ulan                   | J.Smart        |
| Jul 12  | Common Blackbird         | 1     | East Maitland          | "              |
| Jul 9   | Swift Parrot             | 3     | Aberdare SF            | M.Roderick     |
|         | Regent Honeyeater        | 1     | "                      | "              |
|         | Black-chinned Honeyeater | ~20   | "                      | "              |
|         | Little/Musk Lorikeet     | Flock | "                      | "              |
| Jul 6   | Tawny Frogmouth          | 2     | Hunter Botanic Gardens | N.Talbot       |

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## TWITCHATHON 2000 - 28/29 OCTOBER

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"Twitchathon" is a noun with several meanings: It can mean (1) participating in a fun race against time to find as many species as possible, and (2) obtaining donors who will sponsor you and your team (2 or more people) for every species of bird you find in that period. Or it could be (3) just supporting a team by being a donor, but most importantly it is (4) - fund raising for real research and/or conservation of our native birds with tax deductible status (for donations over \$2).

This year's event aims to raise funds for Birds Australia's purchase of "Newhaven Station", 335 km north-west of Alice Springs, a property with very diverse landforms, many threatened birds and mammals and some vegetation with special conservation significance.

So it will soon be time to have a fun day chasing as many species as you can. You might like to enter the Main Race and set your target on 200+ species - not easy, but fun all the same! Or

you might like to take it easier and go into the Champagne Race where you could just watch birds in your back yard or spend a day with your children or grandchildren - your species list being whatever you can comfortably manage. Think of the prestige of winning a prize! Or you might like just to sponsor one of the teams and feel the buzz of putting your dollars into real conservation.

Whatever of these options you prefer, please do contact me for either a Twitchathon registration kit, a sponsorship sheet on behalf of any team or information on Newhaven Station and the significance of its purchase for birds and their conservation.

Frances Czwalinna  
5 Lipsia Place  
Carlingford, NSW 2118  
Telephone/Fax: (02) 9872 4185  
Email: [secretarybird@bigpond.com](mailto:secretarybird@bigpond.com).

## COME WADER WATCHING!

*and help a threatened species*

Phil Straw  
State Coordinator, NSW WSG

**Volunteers wanted.** To stroll along a stretch of beach and look at birds, especially threatened species. The NSW Wader Study Group, in association with the Australasian Wader Studies Group will be launching its next beach-nesting bird survey in November this year. The idea is to plot the occurrence of all the Hooded Plovers, Beach Stone-curlews, Pied Oystercatchers, Little and Fairy Terns along the coast of New South Wales. Just to add interest, observers are asked to note White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Ospreys etc as they go. If you are interested in forming a team of two or three friends (its generally more pleasant than walking on your own) please get in touch with me (contact details below).

The next survey will be the most intensive bird survey ever conducted in NSW. This is a result of the previous data collected in 1996 and 1998 which has been used extensively by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for use in preparing threatened species recovery plans. Preliminary analysis of the earlier data has highlighted the need to more accurately plot the position of beach-nesting birds so that management plans can be implemented by the NPWS and local councils.

Each team will be asked to walk a stretch of beach, possibly close to their home, and watch carefully for beach-nesting birds. However observers will be asked not to actively look for nests, but to watch from a distance with binoculars, because of the risk of prolonged disturbance of the birds and the risk of treading on the eggs or young (very hard to see on the ground). You will be given an A3 or A4 sized photocopy (1: 25 000 scale) of your beach on which to mark with a cross any of the birds you find and a place to write down the numbers of birds you see. You will also have a very simple questionnaire about the beach you are visiting, for example whether sand dunes are present or not.

The survey will be conducted over the weekend of 11/12 November 2000 with a backup date of the following weekend 18/19, or the days in between if you have the time off. Field kits are being prepared which include a map of your chosen stretch of coastline and a count sheet and simple instructions. It is suggested that you encourage your less active acquaintances or family to drop you off at the end of a beach and then drive to the other end to pick you up again. Some of the very long beaches will be tackled by National Parks staff by 4WD vehicle although some people have shown initiative in the past by using an old mountain bike to eat up the miles at a more leisurely pace. Write now to express your interest.

### An introduction to waders, with the experts

If you have always wanted to know more about waders but were too afraid to ask your colleagues, now is your chance to get out with members of the NSW Wader Study Group in your area and learn the difference between some of those sandpipers and plovers, and any of the others that confuse you.

A series of evening talks and field days is being organised for Pambula, Moruya, Sydney, Newcastle, Yamba and Ballina. Bird watchers of any level of knowledge are asked to indicate their interest in helping the organisers of the program with planning of venues etc.

These wader workshops will be organised during Bird Week or close to that period in October 2000, very handy for anyone thinking about taking part in the beach bird nesting survey in November.

If you are interested in taking part in any of these surveys or workshops you should contact:

Phil Straw  
PO Box 2006  
Rockdale Delivery Centre NSW 2216  
Tel/fax: 02 9597 7765  
Email: [pstraw@mpx.com.au](mailto:pstraw@mpx.com.au)

Source: *Galah 45*

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## Wader News...

### Record Wet in North West

The Australian Wader Survey Group had a 'mini-expedition' to NW Australia for 3 weeks in May/June.

An added part of the enjoyment this year was the huge number of breeding water birds on Roebuck Plains and at Anna Plains Station following the record wet season. At the latter, a lake 70km long and up to 29km wide was still present and had up to a quarter

of a million nesting water birds (waders, terns, egrets, ibis, grebes, pelicans and, most surprising of all, 700 pairs of Nankeen Night Herons). It was amazing to see all the newly hatched Gull-billed Tern chicks with skink tails projecting from their mouths - because the skinks were too long!



## Flag sightings in Mongolia

A German expedition to NE Mongolia in May and June made 20 sightings of Red-necked Stints with orange leg flags (from SE Australia) and one sighting of a yellow-flagged Red-necked Stint (from NW Australia). There is only one previous record of an Australian-banded wader recovered in Mongolia. Stints caught were very fat - with sufficient fuel to fly directly to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. This confirms the importance of NE Mongolia, and adjacent regions of Russia and China, as a major inland staging area for small waders.

## Banded Stilts update

The Lake Eyre Banded Stilt/Silver Gull saga continues. Stimulated by the arrival of new floodwaters from Queensland in early May the Banded Stilts made another attempt to nest on Hughes Island in the third week of May. Several thousand pairs laid eggs but they were so heavily predated by Silver Gulls, day and night, that they abandoned their colony after 6 days. This meant that this year's first two nesting attempts at Lake Eyre were completely destroyed by Silver Gulls and it appears that, from the total of more than 25,000 Banded Stilt nests recorded in these two breeding events, not a single juvenile has successfully fledged.

By mid-June Banded Stilts started congregating at Ibis Island, a small island about 20km from Hughes Island which has recently been surrounded by flood water and commenced their third Lake Eyre breeding attempt. On 4 July there were 10,000 pairs located there. Unfortunately Silver Gulls moved in again and started to nest. With commendable speed the NPW went in on 6-7 July to eradicate the Silver Gulls on the island, an operation which was carried out very successfully.

By 19 July one third of the eggs had hatched and it was anticipated that hatching would be completed by the end of the week.

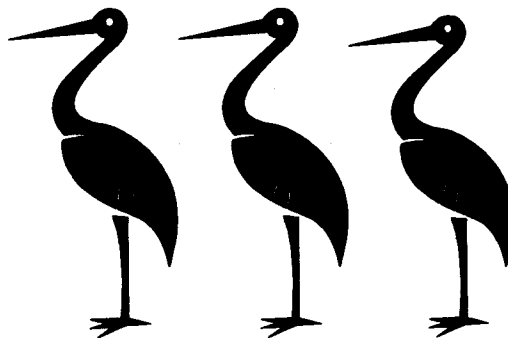
This colony may well represent the entire remaining adult breeding population of Banded Stilts and if not, is probably the whole of the eastern population. The breeding population appears to have suffered a massive decline from more than 100,000 pairs in 1989 to an estimated current breeding population of not much more than 10,000 pairs.

Of major concern is that in the vicinity of the Banded Stilt nesting site there remain 6 separate colonies of Silver Gulls, each comprising from about 1500 to 5000 pairs, and totalling at least 16,000 and possibly more than 20,000 pairs, with the potential to produce more than 100,000 young from repetitive nesting events.

The minimum response urgently needed must include targeting Silver Gulls at the 6 known concentrations at Lake Eyre, using alpha-chloralose baiting techniques. To do nothing will almost certainly be to witness the demise of the Banded Stilt.

It needs to be understood that current levels of Silver Gull impact on Banded Stilts cannot be considered a simple event of nature, or just nature taking its course; the population of Silver Gulls has exploded in the last 2 decades due to the proliferation of garbage dumps, aquaculture sites and other man-made developments that provide ideal habitat to support their breeding. As a result increased gull numbers are causing an extreme imbalance in the prey/predator relationship.

*Source: extracted from articles by Ian May and Clive Minton, Galah 45*



## 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                                      | Venue   | Meeting Place & Time   | Contact  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Saturday 19 August                        | Hunter Wader Survey   | 11.00 am (if poor weather Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed.      | Chris Herbert 4959 3663<br>Alan Stuart 4952 8569<br>You must ring to confirm.                        |
| Sunday 20 August                          | Field Outing:<br>Dunns Creek                                    | 8.30 am Tucker Park, Patterson   | Ann Lindsey 4951 2008  |
| Saturday 26 August                        | Shortland Wetlands Centre                                       | "Introduction to Birdwatching", a workshop for paying customers from 1 pm – 4 pm         | Sue Hamonet 4958 1023<br>Sue needs help with the field section of this workshop from 3 to 5 pm.      |
| Saturday 26 August                        | Atlassing:<br>Wollombi Brook, between Broke and Paynes Crossing | Broke Fire Station 8.00 am   | Ann Lindsey 4951 2008,<br>Chris Herbert 4959 3663 or<br>Mike Newman 4930 5564.<br>Please ring first. |
| Saturday and Sunday, 2 – 3 September      | Wildflowers at the Wetlands                                     | Shortland Wetlands Centre - 10.00 am to 4.00 pm  | Help needed to man stall and guide bird walks.<br>Please contact Liz Herbert 4959 3663               |
| Tuesday 5 September                       | Mid-week outing:<br>Wyee Point                                  | 36 Bay Street, Wyee Point, 7.30 a.m.   | Keith or Margaret Woods 4963 3070  |
| Wednesday 13 September                    | Club Night  | Shortland Wetlands Centre – 7.30 pm  | Speaker: Peter West<br>Topic: Newhaven Station   |
| Saturday 16 September                     | Hunter Wader Survey   | 11.00 am (if poor weather Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed.      | Chris Herbert 4959 3663<br>Alan Stuart 4952 8569<br>You must ring to confirm.                        |
| Sunday 24 September                       | Field Outing:<br>Clarencetown                                   | Raymond Terrace Macdonalds - 9.00 am   | Tom Clarke 4951 3872   |
| Saturday 30 September to Monday 2 October | Camp: "Watui", approx 16 km west of Johns River                 | Ann Mannion's property "Watui" is 5.6 km from end of bitumen past Hannam Vale            | Liz Herbert 4959 3663  |
| Tuesday 3 October                         | Mid-week outing:<br>Minmi                                       | Cemetery Minmi Road, Minmi, 7.30 am  | Keith or Margaret Woods 4963 3070  |
| Sunday 8 October                          | Hunter Region Botanic Gardens Spring Fair                       | Hunter Region Botanic Gardens, Pacific Highway, Heatherbrae, Raymond Terrace. 9:00am     | Help needed to man stall and guide bird walks. Please contact Liz Herbert 4959 3663                  |
| Wednesday 11 October                      | Club Night  | Shortland Wetlands Centre – 7.30 pm  | Topic: Wader Study Night – to help identify migratory and local waders                               |
| Saturday 14 October                       | Hunter Wader Survey   | 9.30 am (ESST) (if poor weather Sunday may be considered). Various locations as directed | Chris Herbert 4959 3663<br>Alan Stuart 4952 8569<br>You must ring to confirm.                        |
| Sunday 15 October                         | Wader Study Field Day: Big Pond, Stockton Sandspit, Ash Island  | 9.30 am at the Wind Turbine, Cormorant Drive, Kooragang Island                           | Chris Herbert 4959 3663  |
| Saturday 21 October                       | Atlassing   | To be advised  | Ann Lindsey 4951 2008,<br>Chris & Liz Herbert 4959 3663 or Mike Newman 4930 5564. Please ring first. |
| Sunday 22 October                         | Field Outing:<br>Milbrodale                                     | 8.00 am Broke Fire Station   | Liz Herbert 4959 3663  |
| Sunday 22 October to Sunday 28 October    | Bird Week   | Do your own thing!   | Enjoy the birds and maybe regenerate some habitat.   |
| Saturday & Sunday 28 & 29 October         | Twitchathon:<br>To raise funds for Newhaven Station             | 5.00 pm Saturday for 24 hours  | Phil Rankin 4946 0022  |
| Sunday 29 October                         | Twitchathon BBQ   | 5.00 pm Shortland Wetlands Centre  | Phil Rankin 4946 0022  |