

# 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

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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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### PITTAS ON THE PROWL

A Noisy Pitta was rescued at the Caravan Park at Wangi on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. The bird was being attacked by Noisy Miners, Currawongs and sundry other bullies, so it was caught and taken into the care of Lynne Welch [Native Animal Trust Carer]. The bird appeared to be in good shape, was eating well, and was considered well enough to release. This was accomplished on 24<sup>th</sup> April, in a suitable location at Blackbutt, where it was watched for a considerable time. It appeared to be well settled, and appears to have continued its migratory path that same night.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April a second bird was handed in to Marilyn Maddocks [Native Animal Trust Carer], by people from Prince Street, Waratah, who said that the bird [which they thought to be a Kingfisher] had been in their yard for more than two weeks. They had tried but were unable to catch it, but unfortunately their cat brought it in on the morning of 30<sup>th</sup>. This bird did not survive the cat attack.

It's at this time of the year when Pittas have been reported previously in suburban situations. It is known that they move, but whether North/South, or altitudinally, is not proven. However, it is known that they move at night time. If you should be so lucky, please report the presence of the species as soon as possible, giving carers a chance to rescue, rehabilitate and release.

Sue Hamonet.

Articles for our newsletter are always welcomed. Closing date for next issue: 27 July 2001

Send your contributions to: Pat Carlton 29 Wallaroo Road, East Seaham 2324

Ph/fax: 02 4988 6026 Email: [pccarlton@optusnet.com.au](mailto:pccarlton@optusnet.com.au)

## President's Column

In the last Newsletter, I flagged that some promising things were happening in our bid to reverse the decline in wader numbers in the Hunter estuary. Things continue to move forward on this.

We've had several discussions with the folk from the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project, and it's now looking like there will be some positive actions taken at Stockton Sandspit and Tomago (where an important high tide roost area will be re-established). In addition, we have decided to join with them in applying for a Coastcare Grant to remove some mangroves from Stockton Sandspit as a trial of whether this helps encourage the birds to come back.

Also, Liz and Chris Herbert have met in Canberra with some of the key people from Environment Australia and have explained to them the issues we are facing. Their presentation was very well received and it looks like it will lead to some positive outcomes for us.

The Club's monthly wader surveys have now been underway for 2 years, having started in April 1999. This April, a group of us celebrated with a cake under Stockton Bridge to commemorate the occasion. The surveys are becoming widely recognised, including by groups outside the Hunter, for the valuable data that they are generating. We routinely send the survey results to several other organisations, such as the NSW Wader Studies Group and Birds Australia. Just as importantly as far as I am concerned, is that a large number of Club members have been participating in the surveys. The count is now over 40 people who have taken part in at least one of the surveys. Come join us some time!

Keith Laverick has been doing some surveys as well – of the birds of Belmont Swamp. Just recently he has prepared a report that summarises the first 3 years of his surveying, which started in 1997. It is an excellent report

and by publishing it he has ensured that the valuable information that he has gathered will never be lost. I hope that Keith's example will inspire the rest of us to document our knowledge of our favourite areas. A copy of Keith's report is in the Club library – I urge you to have a look at it.

There are some changes occurring in the membership of the Records Appraisal Committee. Jeanette Stephenson has stepped down after 8 years of service (and about 150 cases assessed), and Jim Imrie has announced that he too will retire from the role soon. Both Jeanette and Jim deserve our thanks for the contributions that they have made. A couple of replacement RAC members are now being recruited.

I'd also like to thank Steve Roderick and also Tom Clarke for organising HBOC's display at the recent Youth Environment Forum at Tocal Field College. It's important that we continue to spread the message about the pleasures of birdwatching and about the need to take positive steps to conserve bird habitat. Tocal was a new venue for us but we regularly appear at various other locations e.g. the September Wildflower Fair at the Wetlands Centre.

The Club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in great style with a boat cruise up the Hunter River on the MV Lady Joy. About 35 members were on board for a trip that not surprisingly included a considerable amount of bird watching. Afterwards we adjourned to the Old Railway Sheds at the Foreshore Park for BYO lunch. It was great that the Founding President, Fred van Gessel, was able to join us for the day. Fred regaled us with some stories of the early days, and also helped to cut the special cake that Di Johnson had organised for us. And now it's on to the next 25 years!

Happy birding

Alan Stuart  
almarosa@hunterlink.net.au

## EASTER CAMP AT BARRABA

Two out of three isn't bad. We went to Barraba, we bought the T-shirt ..... we didn't tick IT off. But not seeing a Regent Honeyeater was a minor disappointment on an otherwise perfect Easter camp. There couldn't be a better camping spot. It was delightfully secluded and soul-refreshing. No phones, no passing traffic, no television, no deadlines and no timetables. The weather was made to order - cool nights, crisp mornings and sunshiny days and the company was as pleasant as always.

Camping with HBOC is better than going to a Camping Show (and a lot cheaper!). At our camps, there is every variety of accommodation to inspect - caravans, camper trailers, campervans and tents. (By the way, we hired from Hunter Camper Trailers at Singleton and they are offering Club members a 10% discount.) There's also every variety of camper - families, couples and singles; all age groups; minimalists to the gadget-obsessed and this time we even had a hippy! (Max, we think you really need some flowers on that van.) But everyone is appreciative of the Club provided "mod-cons" and a special thanks to those who dug the necessary toilet pits. It's a hard job but if everyone takes a turn it makes the Camp much more pleasant.

The total count was over 100 species and that didn't include the flock of multi-coloured para-gliders that effortlessly drifted over each afternoon and the Easter bilby (a "Heard" only but identified by its distinctive eggs). Also heard in the evening were Southern Boobooks and Owlet Nightjars. Our personal count was a little over 60 species and about half of them were seen no further than our campsite. We were regularly visited by a Rose Robin and Eastern Yellow Robins, various Honeyeaters, Superb Fairy-wrens, Eastern Rosellas, Grey Shrike-thrushes, Grey Fantails, Brown and White-throated Treecreepers and guest appearances were made by Little Eagles and Crested Shrike-tits. Little Lorikeets made morning and afternoon fly overs announcing their presence with their distinctive call. A special treat for us was seeing our first White-backed Swallows, Turquoise Parrots and Brown Quail - again, not far from our campsite. A prime birding spot was down by the creek where we saw a Hooded Robin family, Red-kneed Dotterels, Peaceful Doves, Common Bronzewing, Dusky Woodswallows, Restless Flycatchers and Diamond, Double-barred and Red-browed Finches.

No doubt, we would have had a higher personal count if we'd been up a bit earlier and gone further during the day, but just as there are all sorts of campers, there are all sorts of birders. It's what we like about camping with HBOC - everyone is made feel welcome (even hippies!) and you set your own pace. Why don't you come next time?

Judith and Rowley Smith

## NEW MEMBER

HBOC extends a very warm welcome to

Debbie Andrew of Oatley.

We look forward to meeting you at Clubnight and field outings during the year.

## OK folks, time to put twitching practices into Twitchathon 2001 \$'s!!

I am so excited about this year's Birds Australia NSW and ACT Twitchathon on **27/28 October 2001!** Read on and share my enthusiasm to realise a conservation dream which **WILL** come true with your help!

The Southern NSW & ACT Group, Birds Australia (SNAG) has commenced work on a project in the Cowra district of NSW to address the decline of birds found in box/ironbark woodlands, such as Hooded Robins, Grey-crowned Babblers, Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Red-capped Robins, Speckled Warblers and Brown Treecreepers. There are many avenues open to address the decline of these species and funding will be applied for from several sources for the various components of the project. The Twitchathon 2001 funds will form the seeding fund to get the first component rolling. It will pay expenses of an honours student to monitor bird populations of remnant woodland patches that have been fenced using Greening Australia funds. Greening Australia and Landcare in Cowra are very keen to work with Birds Australia on this project.

So could I persuade each and every person who reads this article and each and every member of each and every NSW and ACT bird club or group to do one of two things? **EITHER** rally up a team or teams and go birdwatching in the Main or Champagne Races up to a 24 hour period between **27/28 October 2001**. **OR** encourage anyone you know or every member of your club or group to sponsor your team, or your club's team(s), per species heard or seen (or even give a straight out donation)? A \$5 donation by every NSW & ACT club member could raise \$100,000+! Yippee for the birds! You don't need to be super experienced. You can choose the pace of the race suiting you best. You can twitch/tick birds seen all round NSW and the ACT, or all round your backyard, or down at the favourite birding spot for one hour or the whole 24 hours. It's really great fun and great prizes will be awarded to teams in both the **Main Race** and the **Champagne Race**, the person who finds the **rarest bird** and the person who raises **the most \$'s**. Watch out for prize details arriving shortly!!

Whatever your choice of race, it can only be a win, win situation for both you and the birds of the Cowra district! Contact me for your Twitchathon kit **NOW** and start this important project rolling! And remember, both the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team project in the Capertee Valley of NSW (and all that treeplanting), as well as the Birds in Backyards project (in which many of you assisted with garden surveys), commenced with Twitchathon

funds. Look at what they have achieved today: **REAL CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH IN PRACTICE.**

See you on the Twitchathon track in October!!

Frances Czwalinna  
NSW & ACT Twitchathon Coordinator  
5 Lipsia Place  
Carlingford, NSW 2118  
Tel/Fax 02 9872 4185  
Mobile 0414 776 475  
Email: [secretarybird@bigpond.com](mailto:secretarybird@bigpond.com)

## **HBOC Newsletter by Email**

Now you can receive your newsletter by email. Plenty of members have been asking for this service and it is about to happen. Potentially this form of mail-out can save HBOC hundreds of dollars in production and distribution costs. Also, those that subscribe to this service will receive the newsletter up to two weeks earlier than by the conventional mail service.

To get yourself registered on the Email Newsletter List firstly check that you are a financial member of HBOC. Then send an email message to: [tomidagajo@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tomidagajo@optusnet.com.au) simply stating "HBOC Newsletter mailout – Yes please.

This listing will be managed by Tom Clarke (HBOC Secretary) and its use will be restricted to HBOC Newsletter mailouts.

## Grey-crowned Babbler: A Threatened Species?

Recently the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) made a preliminary determination to list six new birds as 'Vulnerable' under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995). Each of these birds occur in the Hunter Region. They are:

- Grey-crowned Babbler (eastern sub-species)
- Hooded Robin (south-eastern form)
- Diamond Firetail
- Brown Treecreeper (eastern sub-species)
- Black-chinned Honeyeater (eastern sub-species)
- Speckled Warbler

By proposing this, the relevant authorities are indicating that unless the processes affecting the ongoing viability of these species is reversed, they will soon become so threatened as to become 'endangered species'. What this means is that any activity that may have an impact upon these species or their habitat will have to be assessed to determine if a 'significant impact' is likely. Basically, if accepted, these birds will join the likes of the Powerful and Masked Owls, Koala, Green and Golden Bell Frog etc. as 'species of concern' in an assessment process that gives most regard to the protection of threatened fauna, whilst appearing to give little regard to (common) native species in general.....but that's another story.

Although some of these birds may appear to us to be common in the Hunter, there are some indications that there has been a general decline amongst them, and in particular, a fragmentation of their woodland habitat. Recent studies have also shown that when a remnant patch of woodland falls below a certain size, then these birds 'appear to disappear'. This is where the concept of 'Focal Species Analysis' applies. Just as the Regent Honeyeater is a 'flagship' for the recognition of Box / Ironbark Woodland as a critical habitat resource, these species could bolster the importance of woodland remnants - i.e. through the presence of threatened species. There are many factors to consider in determinations like these and I could easily ramble on, but I won't. Instead, I encourage the club to have some input into this determination process. Indeed, anyone can make a submission to the NPWS, addressed to:

Director General  
National Parks and Wildlife Service  
PO Box 1967  
HURSTVILLE NSW 2220  
Attn: Suzanne Chate  
Executive Officer  
Scientific Committee

Mick Roderick

HBOC members wishing to participate in bird banding might like to consider the following program. Banders of any experience (nil to expert) are invited to join in.

## **BIRD BANDERS OF NORTH-EAST NSW SCHEDULE OF YEAR 2001 EVENTS**

- Event 1** (*completed*) Mean weights of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Muttonbird Island NR 7-8 April (D.Page)
- Event 2** (*completed*) Introduction to gaps and clusters bird research project, Lower Bucca SF, 28-29 April (A.Huggett)
- Event 3** (*completed*) Monitoring bird survival and movement in Hortons Creek NR, upper Nymboida River catchment, 2-3 June (D.Page 6654 5350)
- Event 4** Movement and survival of coastal heath and woodland birds, Minnie Water, Yuraygir NP, 30 June-1 July (P.Thomson 6654 2936)
- Event 5** Bird response to gaps and clusters silviculture, Lower Bucca SF - spring banding, 6-7 October (A.Huggett 6653 7667)
- Event 6** November event TBA (possibly Hortons Creek NR).

In addition to these organised events, individual licenced banders conduct their own banding programs throughout the year. Group members wishing to participate in these sessions which are usually held during the week should contact the individual bander. Currently active licenced banders in the Group are David Page, Andrew Huggett, Greg Clancy (6649 3153), Geoff Richards (6645 3374), Pat Thomson, Steve Debus (6773 2510) and Jan Patterson (6772 1825).

### **Changed entry conditions at The Wetlands Centre**

The Wetlands Centre at Shortland have reduced the visitors entry fee during the winter months of June and July to a miserly \$4.50. From August this fee will rise to \$7.00 (still cheap).

Opening hours for the centre are also changed. General access is now from 9:00am to 3:00pm on weekdays and 10:00am to 3:00pm on weekends.

These conditions do not impact on existing bookings eg. HBOC Clubnights.

# OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT – APRIL/MAY 2001.

Jan 22	Common Tern	>180	Nobbys	K.Laverick
Feb 20	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	1km Sth of Awaba	M.Todd
	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	Awaba	"
Jan 9	Australasian Shoveler	3	Irrawang Swamp0	M.Maddock
Feb 23	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	25	Lorn/Bolwarra	P.George
Mar 24	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	6	Woodberry	R. & J. Smith
	Red Wattlebird	2	"	"
Mar 18	Black-necked Stork	1	Sth of Bulahdelah	J. & B. Cockerell
Mar 16	Pale-headed Rosella	1	Ellalong	J.Meynell
Mar 23	Pale-headed Rosella	1	"	"
Mar 24	Western Gerygone	1	Jerrys Plains	H.Tarrant
	Diamond Firetail	1	"	"
	Stubble Quail		G7, F7, G8	"
	Brown Quail		Jerrys Plains/Martindale	"
	Hooded Robin		G8	"
	White-browed Babbler	>5	G8	"
Mar 27	Turquoise Parrot	10-12	G8	"
	Red-capped Robin	Pr.	East Jerrys Plains H8	"
Mar 17	Figbird	1	Raymond Terrace	M.Todd
Mar 28	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	1km Sth of Awaba	"
Mar 28	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Glen Oak	M.Maddock
Mar 29	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Raymond Terrace	"
Mar 5	Common Tern	>50	Nobbys	K.Laverick
Apr 8	Grey-crowned Babbler	6	Bolwarra Heights	P.George
Apr	Musk Lorikeet	4	Telarah	F.Humphreys
Apr 5	Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	"	"
Apr 11	Darter	3m+1f	Speers Point	R. Walker
Apr 10	Striated Heron	1	Warners Bay	"
Apr 9	Glossy Ibis	6	Lenaghans Drive	S.Roderick
Apr 8	Double-banded Plover	1 imm	Ash Island	"
Apr 6	Square-tailed Kite	2	Green Hills	"
Apr 9	Plumed Whistling Duck	14	Rathluba Lagoon	"
Apr 8	Grey-tailed Tattler	8-10	Lemon Tree Passage	G.Brosie
Apr 11	Peregrine Falcon [wing broken]	1	Dungog	J.Smith
Apr 5	White-plumed Honeyeater	1	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Apr 8	Australasian Bittern	1	Branxton	"
Apr 1	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	1km Sth Awaba	M.Todd
Apr 3	Brown Goshawk	1	S.W.C.	"
Apr 6	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	4km SE Wakefield	"
Apr 2	Common Tern	4	Nobbys	K.Laverick
Apr 11	Brahminy Kite	2	Newcastle Harbour	M.Newman
Apr 9	White-necked Heron	1	"Gleniston" A6	"
	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	1	"	"
Apr 6-9	White-eared Honeyeater	>20	"	"
Apr 8	Red-capped Robin	1m	"	"
Apr 6-9	Silvereye [tasmanicus]	>100	"	"
Apr 9	Rockwarbler	1	The Drift Goulburn R.	"
	Rockwarbler	1	Saddlers Creek	"
	Azure Kingfisher	1	The Drift	"
Apr 7-9	Striped Honeyeater	~12	"Gleniston"	"



Apr 7	Rose Robin	1m	Goulburn River N.P.	"
Apr 9	Superb Lyrebird	1	"	"
Apr 6	White-throated Gerygone	1	Goulburn River NP edge	"
Apr 9	Satin Bowerbird	1f	"	"
Apr 6	Noisy Friarbird	>20	10k.S.E. Denman	"
Apr 1	Rufous Fantail	1	Mt. Douglas	M.Newman
	Peregrine Falcon	1	"	"
Apr 6	Peregrine Falcon	1	Maitland [Hunter River]	"
Apr 9	Diamond Firetail	1	Battery Rocks [E6]	"
Apr 22	Red-capped Parrot	1	Redhead	J.Grebert
Apr 16	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Glen Oak	M.Maddock
Apr 13	Brown Quail	2	"	"
Apr 3	Black-shouldered Kite	1	"	"
Apr 15	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Irrawang Swamp	"
Apr 23	Noisy Pitta [released Blackbutt]	1	Wangi	L.Welch
Apr 30	Noisy Pitta [cat victim -died]	1	Waratah [Prince St]	Marilyn Maddocks

### OBSERVATIONS FROM MAY CLUB NIGHT.

Apr 16	Little Eagle	1	Scone	A.Stuart
Apr 25	Zebra Finch	10	Pokolbin	"
Apr 21	Spotted Crake	4	Ash Island	"
Apr/May	White-plumed Honeyeater	3-4	Bolwarra	K.Howard
Apr/May	Spangled Drongo	1	Belmont South	J. & B.Cockerell
Apr 29	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	4	"	"
Apr 23	Glossy Ibis	9	Lenaghans Swamp	S.Roderick
Apr 22	White-backed Swallow	3	Bulga/Broke Road	"
Apr 15	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Wattagans S.F.	"
Apr 13/14	Olive Whistler	5-8	Polblue area	"
May 2	Red-rumped Parrot	~30	Wallsend	C.Goodenough
	White-breasted Woodswallow	8	Big Pond	S.Roderick
	European Goldfinch	30	"	"
	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1 imm	Belmont	J. & B. Cockerell
	White-faced Heron	5	Belmont South	"
	Red-browed Finch	30	"	"
May 12	Pied Oystercatcher	2	"	"
May 1	Striated Heron	1	"	"
May 8	White-faced Heron	2	Kotara [Grayson St]	W. Barnden

FOR SALE FOR SALE FOR SALE FOR SALE

### Spotting scope for sale.

Tasco 50mm complete with 25 mag fixed lens and 20 to 60 mag zoom lens.  
Rubber coated – very good condition.

Contact Graeme O'Connor 4953 1304

## Coming Events

Please check with the contact person for each outing in case of changed details or suitability of site for the camp of field day.

Date	Venue	Meeting Place & Time	Contact
Wednesday 13 June	<b><u>Club Meeting</u></b>	7.30 pm. Shortland Wetlands Centre	<i>Louise Duff:</i> <i>Naturewatch Newcastle</i>
Saturday 16 June	Atlassing Area northeast of Singleton	8.00 am Maitland Railway Station car park	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Saturday 23 June	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 You <b>must</b> ring to confirm
Sunday 24 June	Wetlands	10.00 am Morpeth Sewage Treatment Works, Butchers Lane, Morpeth	Phil Rankin 4946 0022
Tuesday 3 July	Whitebridge / Glenrock	8.00 am. Yuelabah Track car park, Burwood Street Kahibah	Keith & Margaret Woods 4963 3070 Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 11 July	Club Meeting	7.30 pm. Shortland Wetlands Centre	<i>Walter Boles</i> <i>Origin of Australian Birds</i>
Saturday 14 July	Atlassing – Wollemi National Park	7.30 am. Jerrys Plains PO	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Saturday 21 July	Pelagic Trip	7.00 am. Swansea wharf near RSL Club, Chalmers St, Swansea	Richard Baxter 4954 0212 randrbaxter@yahoo.com
Saturday 21 July	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Phil Rankin 4946 0022 You <b>must</b> ring to confirm
Sunday 22 July	Swansea/Nesca Park	8.00 am. Swansea Macdonalds car park	Sue Hamonet 4958 1023
Saturday 4 August	Atlassing: Wang Wauk State Forest	8.00 am. Bulahdelah PO.	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Tuesday 7 August	Minmi / Stockrington	8.00 am. Cemetery, Minmi Road, Minmi	Keith & Margaret Woods 4963 3070 Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 8 August	Club Meeting	7.30 pm. Shortland Wetlands Centre	TBA
Saturday 11 August	Pelagic Trip	7.00 am. Swansea wharf near RSL Club, Chalmers St, Swansea	Richard Baxter 4954 0212 randrbaxter@yahoo.com
Saturday 18 August	Hunter Wader Survey	7.30 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 You <b>must</b> ring to confirm
Sunday 19 August	Wallingat National Park	8.00 am The Shelter Shed, Sugar Creek Road, 5 km north of Bungwahl.	Liz Herbert 4959 3663