

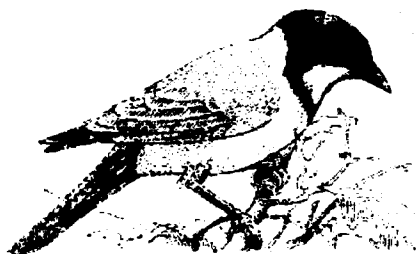
# NEWSLETTER

**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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## A true tale

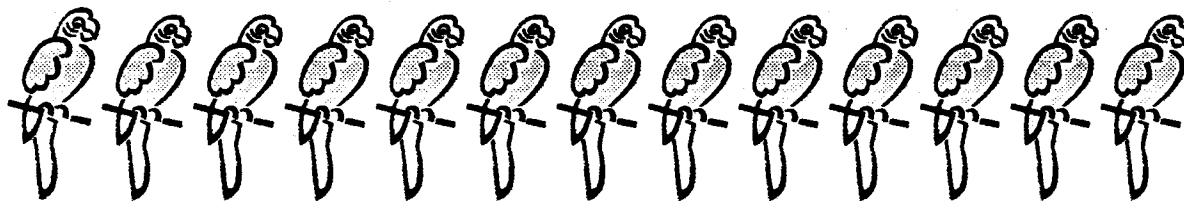
**from Len Dixon, equine dentist (extraordinaire) from Tasmania**

**via Marny Hare, Martins Creek**

While travelling between Dubbo and Dunnedoo a couple of years ago, Len spotted on the roadside an injured galah. He pulled up and picked it up on what was a stinking hot day. He lay it on the floor, under the cool air-conditioning, which is how it travelled for the next month!!

He fed it dampened horse mix, green oats or wheat (always available in horse stable areas) and a good source of milk, also water from a syringe. On arriving back home he decided to take it to his vet friend whose name just happened to be Dr Harry Potter. Dr Harry diagnosed the bird with a broken wing with compound fracture, a fractured pelvis, a broken leg with nerve damage, plus a badly fractured beak, concluding that "It should have been dead!"

Today "Dubbo" is a happy, healthy bird, loves the family though occasionally takes a peck at Len, talks non-stop and has the run of the garden. He is called "Dubbo" as Len said, "I couldn't really call him Dunnedoo, could I?"



## President's Column

As I write this, we are busily preparing for a visit in early October by a crew from the BBC making a documentary about birds and bird conservation in NSW. The crew will be spending two weeks at various locations in NSW including three full days in the Hunter where they will address the twin themes of waders and wetlands.

The BBC crew's leader is Iolo Williams, known on UK TV as "The Birdman of Wales" and the general theme of the documentary they are making is The Birdman in NSW. We're delighted to have the chance to showcase our Hunter area internationally and also to use this to help us lobby locally on bird conservation.

We were invited to suggest a program of activities such that Iolo and his crew could do interesting interviews and filming. Our suggestions, which the BBC accepted, were:

- Our wader surveys of Kooragang dykes, Ash Island, Stockton
- Freckled Duck and Magpie Goose recovery projects at the Wetlands Centre
- KWRP rehabilitation work at Ash Island and Stockton Sandspit
- Hexham Swamp restoration project
- Hunter Water's work at the former Morpeth sewage treatment ponds
- Nesting, roosting and feeding behaviour of egrets and ibis in the lower Hunter wetlands (Seaham, Irrawang, etc)

We also have made sure that Newcastle Council and local MPs have been aware of what's happening (special thanks to Peter Phillips for this). The upshot has been a civic reception by the Lord Mayor on the final afternoon of the visit, for which HBOC was asked to suggest the invitation list. We hope that this will help us make some points about the value to the Newcastle community of preserving and showcasing its wader and wetland habitats.

The importance of these areas is reinforced by the exciting sightings that have occurred at some of them in the past month or so - in particular, three wild Freckled Duck at the Wetlands Centre in late August, a Ruff and a Lesser Yellowlegs at Ash Island. And Ash Island has been teeming with a wonderfully diverse population of other species too, including all sorts of migratory waders, waterbirds, several types of tern, bitterns - the list just goes on.

Changing topics, I'd firstly like to remind you that the Twitchathon is on again later this month (October 27/28). The money it raises will go towards rehabilitation of dry woodlands in the Cowra area (dry woodland birds are in serious decline in Australia). There are three ways you can become involved in the Twitchathon:

- Enter a team (main event or Champagne event)
- Sponsor a team (there are 4 teams already entered)
- Share some of the fun by coming along to an HBOC-hosted BYO-everything BBQ at the Wetlands Centre after the finish (4pm Oct 28).

In a couple of weeks' time, the HBOC Committee will get together to work out next year's program of activities. We'd welcome any suggestions you might have. If you have a favourite place you visit, a property you have contacts for, a potential campsite somewhere (even outside of the Hunter Region), please let us know.

The 2000 Bird Report is now out, with 376 species listed (including 11 new ones) and with 334 species seen during the year. Please try to collect your copy from the Treasurer's table at club nights or from me on an outing, so we can save on the postage costs.

Happy birding

*Alan Stuart  
almarasa@bigpond.com (please note my change of e-mail address)*

## Bulga Field Trip

23 September 2001

What a weekend! First there was the delight of seeing my beloved Knights thrash Cronulla on the Saturday night, and then to wake up the next morning with the excitement of going to one of the best birding sites in the Hunter and hopefully seeing my three target species, the Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, and most important of all, the Zebra Finch (yes, you heard me, Zebra Finch). It doesn't get any better than that.

Twelve birds turned up at the regular meeting spot, and then headed up the road to an excellent area that lies on the edge of the Wollemi National Park. Before leaving, I had mentioned to Ann Lindsey my target birds and just a couple of metres up the road, our convoy came to a sudden stop. "Grant, this is where we see Zebras," Ann said, with such confidence that there just had to be some around, and sure enough there was, a small flock feeding on the ground in a small orchard by the side of the road. One down, two to go, I thought. Other birds at this site included Red-browed Firetails, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and an excellent sighting of three Striated Pardalotes, threatening us with wings outstretched, which made for a very interesting display.

Arriving at our destination we quickly set off up the dirt tract and were quickly surrounded by Weebills, Thornbills, Gerygones and Mistletoebirds. Shortly after came the cry I was waiting for - "Red-capped Robins!" Ann had found a superb pair of these beautiful robins, the cock doing his best to attract the hen by bouncing and bobbing from perch to perch. She wasn't impressed, however, but they did fly off together, so maybe they wanted to be away from the prying eyes of a dozen onlookers. Two down, one to go.

Buff-rumped Thornbills were everywhere, including a few young ones who were still being fed by their parents. Speckled Warblers, Double-barred Finches and Grey Fantails were

also quite plentiful and even a pair of White-eared Honeyeaters turned up. That's when I noticed a small black and white bird sitting half way up a tree, slightly hidden by twigs. Bingo, that makes all three! Yes, it was the Hooded Robin. It took off and eluded us for a second before we located it again in a much more open position. What a sight! A Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo was seen in a nearby tree.

Further up the track we saw our first but certainly not our last Jacky Winter, as well as Olive-backed Oriole and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. There was also plenty of Button-quail scratchings in the leaf litter but unfortunately no Painted Button-quail.

As the day warmed up other interesting species showed themselves: a large flock of White-winged Choughs, Wedge-tailed Eagle, a pair of swift flying Little Lorikeets and a few Scarlet Honeyeaters feeding on the mistletoe blossoms. At the end of the track the habitat changed and birds like Superb Fairy-wren, White-throated Treecreeper and White-browed Scrubwren were seen foraging among the foliage. Alan Stuart located a Variegated Fairy-wren nest with young calling within. We watched as the cock bird came to the nest with an insect and fed the young.

The walk back to the cars produced Brown-headed Honeyeater, Varied Sittella and Shining Bronze-cuckoo. The final bird tally stood at 68 species, including the Yellow-billed Spoonbill and an Australian Pelican that were seen on the nearby dam.

A very enjoyable day. Good birds, good company, and most important of all, Zebra Finches!

*Grant Brosie*



## **The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Wader Flagging Program**

Under a Flyway-wide program small plastic flags have been placed on the legs of waders. Each country or region has been given a colour combination code. At the moment Alaska, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand are flagging waders.

The program has been hugely successful in tracing the movements of waders, the timing of migrations of different populations, and the locations of breeding areas and non-breeding areas. It is clarifying many hitherto unanswerable questions about waders. The new knowledge is feeding directly into our understanding of the conservation needs of waders.

There are estimated to be about 60,000 waders which are alive today carrying flags. A massive increased effort is needed everywhere to search for flagged birds, and anybody can do it. There are still huge gaps in the search coverage in many places in the Flyway, and even in large parts of Australia. Also, in some places, people are becoming apathetic to looking for flags, simply because many have been seen before.

Every flag sighting is valuable. The more flags that are reported from one locality the more useful is the data, as it can then be used for calculating such aspects as migration timing, proportions of populations using sites, partial northward migration of immature birds, and much more. Please do not, however, report flag sightings from near to places of banding, at least in Australia, unless they are inland.

Negative sightings are also of use and this has not hitherto been recognised. For example, the first stop-off location for many wader species from southern Australia is still unknown. Negative sightings from the northern coasts of Australia will prove that many do not stop there (which we suspect). Where then is their first stop-off in Asia? In many cases we do

not know because we receive hardly any reports from SE Asia - does this mean they are not stopping there, or is it simply because they are not being looked for?

Details about the flagging program, the colour combinations used, an electronic reporting form and who to send sightings to, are to be shown on the Australasian Wader Studies Group website at [www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/index.htm](http://www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/index.htm). You will also now be able to report negative "sightings" on the form.

For sightings within Australia, please send to Clive Minton, preferably by email ([minton@ozemail.com.au](mailto:minton@ozemail.com.au)). Fax (03 9589 4901) or mail (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Victoria 3193) can also be used. For sightings in other countries, these can also be sent to Clive Minton (especially if birds are thought to be of Australian origin) or to the Banding Scheme in that country. All sightings will be promptly acknowledged.

A massive effort has gone into flagging the birds. Please can everybody throughout the Flyway also put a massive effort into finding them again.

*Rosalind Jessop, Chair Australasian Wader Studies Group*

*Jim Wilson, Chair of the AWSG Scientific Committee.*

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## **Glossy-black Cockatoo Survey 2001: Southern Brigalow Belt NSW**

The Resource and Conservation Assessment Committee (NSW) has funded a survey for the Glossy-black Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus lathami*, in the Southern Brigalow Belt of NSW. The project is managed by State Forests, NPWS and DLWC, but the main focus for field activity will be through funding bird clubs to visit the study area and collect relevant information. The funding opportunity will be made available through conservation officers of participating BIGNet bird clubs.

This study is designed to complement other research projects and surveys (particularly those directly to the south in the Wagga district). The objective is to establish a more comprehensive knowledge of the distribution of the species - where it does and does not occur across the Southern Brigalow Belt. At present, studies and surveys have concentrated on known populations, logically enough. This particular project aims to survey for the Glossy-black cockatoo right across the study area, with particular concentration on areas which have not been surveyed previously.

The study will have two distinct but complementary survey techniques. Firstly, data will be collected at a set of 400 random survey points generated using a Geographical Information System (GIS) and current vegetation maps to ensure that the locations are in (or at least near) forest or woodland. Secondly, data will be recorded whenever Glossy-black cockatoos are encountered by participants, either through encounters travelling to study sites or independent searches of likely habitat. (Note that funding will be related to visiting the 400 survey points, initially.) Using these two methods, it should be possible to collect data on where the species occurs across the study area, as well as

generating relevant information on habitat requirements and future management needs.

To get started, clubs or individuals should contact project organisers (listed below) for a set of survey points. These survey points will be allocated according to time and logistic requirements of the surveyors and the project. Fuel receipts for distance travelled in relation to the project will be compensated through State Forests, when presented or approved by the conservation officer of a BIGNet Bird club. Compensation will generally be through the Club, with funds being paid to an invoice from the Club. (Particular arrangements for funding extended or specific field trips may be possible.)

State Forests will provide detailed information packets to clubs, which will contain survey information, census techniques, biological information and tips, and instructions for participation.

Individuals or Clubs planning field visits should contact: Rick Webster (03 5881 2201) or Mandy Ffakman, SFNSW Head Office, Pennant Hills (02 9980 4100 or em: mandyff@sf.nsw.gov.au) or Patrick Tap, Western Region, Dubbo, SFNSW (02 6884 5288 or em: pat@sf.nsw.gov.au).

## A Diary of Bird Behaviour

### 5<sup>th</sup> October

I've been swooped by many Magpies, but today I got swooped by a Butcherbird while riding my bike. On one dive it made a loud snapping sound next to my ear, louder than a Magpie would make.

### 8<sup>th</sup> October

Today I went on a seabird-watching trip. When the boat stopped and burleying began a flock of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters appeared and frantically ate whatever burley was thrown in the water. They dived to intercept sinking food by steering with their wings and propelling themselves by paddling in a bicycle-like motion with their webbed feet. A number of Black-browed Albatross settled on

the water to share in the feast, but the Shearwaters were too quick. All the hungry Albatross could do was to emit a frustrated "quack"

### 11<sup>th</sup> October

Our class went to a beach to do an experiment on sand dunes today. After a while one of my class-"mates" alerted me to two Muttonbirds that were near his bag.

"Are they alive?" I asked excitedly

"Yeah," he replied. I noticed there were many more on the sand closer to the water, so I went to look for others that were alive. Most were dead, but I ended up collecting 10 that were alive. When I took them up to my bags a few of my classmates were making fun of me, although a few were supportive of what I was doing. One girl thought all the sick birds were distressing, but one guy thought I should just leave them alone because it was nature, but then he added,

"Just kick 'em around. There's plenty of them." The girl who did her seminar on marine birds didn't even come down off the sand dunes to look. My plan was to take them with me and ring the Native Animal Trust Fund, but the guy who gave me a lift wouldn't let me in his car with the birds, so I had to walk.

While walking down the beach I saw an exhausted bird being pummelled in the shorebreak, but it still tried to duck-dive each wave.

### 12<sup>th</sup> October

Unfortunately all the birds I had with me died. None had any fat on them: their breastbones protruded like a knife-edge when you felt them.

### 13<sup>th</sup> October

I found out this morning that Muttonbirds had been washed ashore from Seal Rocks down to the Central Coast. Apparently it is normal for some birds to be found dead on the beach around this time of the year because they arrive here from Siberia around now to breed, but this year there were a few violent storms that they had to fly through on their route. So more birds this time died of exhaustion.

### 15<sup>th</sup> November

Today I went down to the lake. There were two Sacred Ibis feeding on the grass just near the shore. Along with the Purple Swamphen, I reckon Ibis are the silliest-looking birds of all. They strut around with their disproportionately sized beak taking life so seriously. One of the Ibis that were feeding on the shore walked to the water's edge and picked a snail-like shellfish from the water. The close attentions of two seagulls made it swallow the snail quickly.

*Colin Goodenough*

## Barren Grounds Bird Observatory

Brendon Neilly, Observatory Manager, has sent an invitation for groups of at least 10 people to visit Barren Grounds Bird Observatory. He suggests that his staff would be pleased to organise an exciting weekend or weekday activity which could include visits to Morton National Park, west to the slopes of the Great Dividing Range and north to Wollongong. He provides an example of such a weekend:

- Group of 10 meets staff at the Observatory on a Friday evening for a delicious meal and an introduction to the weekend activities
- Saturday morning - a dawn walk around the Observatory
- Birding Booderee National Park and beautiful Jervis Bay

- Fish and chips lunch while checking out the shore birds of Jervis Bay
- Lake Wollumboola to tick off the Little Tern or any one of the 90-odd species
- Spot lighting for Sooty, Barking, Boobook and Powerful Owls, Greater and Sugar Gliders
- Sunday morning breakfast followed by a trip into some of the local hot spots
- Return to the Observatory after lunch.

All of this would cost \$215 pp, and Brendon suggests up to 120 species would be seen.

Interested people should contact Brendon Neilly, Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, PO Box 3, Jamberoo, NSW, 2533, telephone 02 4236 0195, fax: 02 4236 0537, email: [barren\\_grounds@bigpond.com](mailto:barren_grounds@bigpond.com).

You can also visit their website at [www.users.bigpond.com/barren\\_grounds](http://www.users.bigpond.com/barren_grounds).

## New Organiser for Surveys

I have been the HBOC liaison person for the Regent Honeyeater/Swift Parrot recovery projects for several years now. I would like to thank Club members for the interest they have shown and the practical support they have given to these projects. I have decided to hand this job on and Steve Roderick is more than happy to take over. The surveys will continue and I will certainly be participating as usual. The surveys take place in May and August and involve going out birdwatching for the day, weekend or week looking, in particular, for these two elusive species.

It is great fun and the only real chore is to fill in the survey sheet whether you see the birds or not.

Should you see the birds outside the survey times could you contact Steve anyway and he will pass on the information to David Geering and Debbie Saunders who are the project coordinators.

Phone numbers are: Steve Roderick: 49 345601  
David Geering for Regent Honeyeaters: (02) 6883 5335 or freecall 1800 62 10 56  
Debbie Saunders for Swift Parrots: (02) 6298 9733 or freecall 1800 66 57 66

*Ann Lindsey*

## Ibis

*The ibis, she told me, flock here in their thousands,  
swooping in squadrons onto the marsh till you think  
Oh so many, but great clouds keep coming .....  
it's really, she said, an attraction.*

Grey ibis, that move  
like weary old uncles in tailcoats, probing and poking  
the soil  
with beaks like querulous walking-sticks,  
once stalked our semi-suburban lawns, ungainly  
gardeners  
weeding and fossicking. They spoke in rheumatically  
grunts,  
yet they rose up in flight or curved down like the grace  
of God,  
blessing the air with a movement as fluid as music -  
that miracle, yes, we have seen. But here there are  
green flats  
surrounding the wetlands, here the ibis are white and  
they rise  
and descend like choirs of spiralling angels.  
To see them in clouds and crescendos of thousands must  
be  
some kind of foretaste of heaven.

*Pamela West Cole*

*Ed. Note: Pam and Bill Cole have recently moved from Taree  
to Seaham and have become good neighbours of ours. We told  
them about the wondrous sight of thousands of this returning  
to roost in the wetlands along New Line Road. This poem was  
Pam's response to my more prosaic description.*

## Orange Flags

It is not often that you actually find a bird that has been banded so that when it does happen it is both surprising and exciting. On 21st July this year, Chris, Liz and I were doing our regular wader count in the rubber boat along the "dykes" on the Hunter River. Unlike the disastrous August count, the weather was excellent and the water calm. We were in the process of counting the Bar-tailed Godwits when we noticed an Eastern Curlew with an orange flag on its tibia. On closer examination we could see another orange flag on the other leg. I later sent the information off to The Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and received the reply that our bird had been flagged as part of The Australian Wader Studies Group Leg Flagging Program. The Curlew was flagged

in Victoria sometime since 1990. It appears that the Eastern Curlew is a high priority study species under the JAMBA/CAMBA agreements and that two orange leg flags have been used to maximise the chances of the bird being seen. About 10 years ago the AWSG was asked to increase its banding/flagging efforts on this species. Being so large, Eastern Curlews are capable of carrying an extra flag.

Clive Minton, who presides over Victorian banding efforts, responded to my submission thoughts about our bird as follows: "Your record I think is probably of a bird which had just arrived back from its northern hemisphere breeding grounds and was on its way through New South Wales to Victoria. Eastern Curlew are the first of the waders to reach us on southward migration and we always notice the first population increase in late July/very early August. At the site we were at last Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> August, the population had gone up from 18 to 40 over the last two weeks."

Sue Hamonet who surveys Swan Bay for waders saw a similarly flagged Eastern Curlew on the 20<sup>th</sup> August and we are wondering if this was the same bird.

Monthly wader surveys in the Hunter Estuary also show that Eastern Curlews are the first waders to arrive on the southward migration, with numbers increasing in August - September.

## STOP PRESS

Alan Morris saw 1 flagged Red-necked Stint and 1 flagged Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Ash Island.

The waders are really coming in at the moment. On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September at Stockton Sandspit just after high tide and still at roost were 700 Avocets, 400 Red Knots, 250 Bar-tailed Godwits, 20 Black-winged Stilts, 2 Grey-tailed Tattlers and 120 Eastern Curlews. It was truly a wondrous sight.

*Ann Lindsey*

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Clean Up of Stockton Beach

9am-1pm Sunday 14 October 2001

Register at: Lavis Lane (Carpark - Williamtown entry to Stockton Beach) or Birubi Beach (Lower Carpark, off James Patterson Drive, Anna Bay) Free sausage sizzle and drinks at 1.00 pm at Lavis Lane Registration Site. BYO hats, gloves, sunscreen, protective shoes (maybe long trousers, based on last year's conditions). Prizes hidden in the dunes! Further information from: Steven Bernasconi, Environment Officer (02 4980 0162).

### Book Review

#### *Birds: Their Habits and Skills*

G Kaplan and I J Rogers, 264pp, \$29.95

This book was published in May 2001. We recently received a review copy of it from the publishers Allen and Unwin, and which is now in the HBOC library and available for members to borrow.

I found it to be a fascinating book to read, and bristling with a mixture of facts and interesting anecdotes. Both of the authors are professors at the University of New England (Kaplan is a biological scientist with an interest in birds of prey and Rogers is a neuroscientist specialising in animal behaviour). These two distinguished scientists have delivered a book that successfully translates pure science into something readily understood by the lay reader. It is recommended reading for all who have an interest in birds.

The book is broken down into five main sections:

- How birds evolved, and their special features,
- How birds choose their mates, reproduce, and the young develop,
- How birds see, hear, smell, taste and touch,
- How birds communicate and learn,
- How birds and humans interact (covering domestication and conservation).

I found the middle three sections in particular to be quite absorbing. Often it raised questions that I had never thought about and then of course it answered them. I found it all

to be very enriching of my knowledge and understandings about birds. For example, included in the section on Vision is a discussion about how birds are able to achieve depth perception. Because the eyes of birds are on the sides of their head, they don't see the kind of stereoptic view that we do, except in a quite narrow arc at the very front (which is of course is where the food for which they are foraging/eating is located). Some birds use the degree of adjustment needed for each eye as their depth gauge, while others rely on motion parallax – which is why some birds move their heads back and forth or around in a circle while they look at things. Conversely when a bird wants to look closely at some particular scene it keeps its head perfectly still, even if it is in the air and has its wings flapping away. Have you ever watched the way a pigeon walks – it's the same principle. It keeps its head still while it brings its body forward, then very rapidly pushes out the head, then brings the body forward yet again. There's an interesting series of photos relating to this in the book.

The section about birds' sense of smell led to a positive outcome on the most recent pelagic trip. The book discussed how storm-petrels are attracted to the smell of cod liver oil, leading me to take a bottle of it on the boat. Soon we had 25-30 White-faced Storm-Petrel around the boat as we bobbed about near the continental shelf!

I particularly enjoyed the book's mix of anecdotes and hard facts. Also, each chapter is extensively referenced (50+ references cited for most of the chapters) for anyone wanting to get more details on the subjects discussed. A book that's well worth reading!

Alan Stuart



## Oops! Wrong continent!

The Lesser Yellowlegs is described as an exceedingly graceful bird, gregarious and common on the Atlantic coast in the Fall. So, one wonders what one of them was doing on Ash Island near Newcastle from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2001? It had indeed taken the wrong turn somewhere on its migration route from North America where it breeds, to Central and South America where it spends the winter. When I found it, it was happily feeding in shallow water on the eastern side of Swan Pond in the company of Common Greenshanks, Marsh Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Like Greenshanks and Marsh Sandpipers the Lesser Yellowlegs belongs to the genus *Tringa* within the large family of waders. They have in common long, colourful legs - green, red and bright yellow as in this particular species, slim graceful bodies and bills of medium length, mostly thin and straight but some slightly upturned. It is not the first time this species has strayed off course as there are perhaps four other records for Australia. Although its identification was supported by Terry Lindsey and Alan Morris on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> and by several others on 15<sup>th</sup>, field notes and a description have been submitted to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee for official confirmation.

*Ann Lindsey*

## Congratulations!

To lucky Jenny Musicka. For registering her "Bush Haven" site in the Great Australian Bird Locations Survey with Birds Australia she has won the early bird prize of a Leica Z2X Compact Camera. Perhaps we'll see some super shots of many of the nesting species presently busy in her "patch".

## Morning at Yuraygir

With the first faint flush of colour in the east, the honeyeaters started. They chirped and chattered in half a dozen dialects while they and I together waited for the sun. Like all keen fishermen, the gannets were already out at sea and hard at work. At last the sun appeared and with it came the first faint stirrings of a breeze in the casuarinas. The banksias sat stiffly and did not deign to move. The sun laid a golden pathway from the edge of the world, right to my feet.

Suddenly, there was an explosion of colour and sound as the lorikeets arrived. Rainbows and scabies together. They flashed overhead, with the newborn sunlight catching the extravagance of their colours as they wheeled and disappeared and returned over and over. The honeyeaters were forgotten, their colours and their chirping completely overcome by the frenzy of the newcomers. For the moment, the world was full of lorikeets and existed only for them. On some pre-arranged signal they descended on the trees all around me. And now the banksias moved. They were alive with movement, their branches weighed down with the mass of birds. Then, suddenly, they were off again, whizzing by, inches from my face. Under my arms, between the branches. In seconds they were gone. But they would surely be back for the next act.

During a lull in the proceedings I heard a familiar screeching and there, just above the treetops was a flock of black cockatoos, flapping their leisurely way to a breakfast elsewhere. Observing the whole business with a very disdainful look was a spangled drongo. He sat in his black suit, very upright and proper on an exposed perch, but forbore to comment. Not so the friar birds. They were the last to awaken, but when they did, they discussed the morning's revels in noisy and irritated tones before they too said grace and went to breakfast. Lorikeets of course, never say grace.

*Ross Carlton*

## OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHTS AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2001

May 23	Dusky Woodswallow	35-40	"Bush Haven"	J. Musicka
Jun	Spangled Drongo	3	The Junction	P. Gordon
	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	Merewether Beach	"
	Tawny Frogmouth	2	Merewether	"
Jun 20	Brown Quail	2	Awabakal Reserve	J. Grebert
	Grey Shrike-thrush	1	"	"
	Variiegated Wren	>9	"	"
Jun 10	Red-capped Parrot	1m	Redhead	"
Jul 16	Comb-crested Jacana	1	Rathluba Lagoon	S. Roderick
Jul 21	White-fronted Tern	2	Newcastle Ocean Baths	"
Jul 9	Nankeen Night Heron	1	Islington	"
Jul 12	Pacific Baza	1	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Jul 22	Grey Goshawk	2	Blackbutt Reserve	"
Jul 5-7	Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1	Awabakal N.R.	C. Goodenough
Jun/Jul	Masked Lapwing [incubating]	2	Jesmond [Roundabout]	"
Jul 5	Red-rumped Parrot	>100	Mount View Park [Cessnock]	J. Meynell
Jul 5	Eurasian Coot	>100	Ellalong Lagoon	J. Meynell
Jul 13	Sooty Oystercatcher	7	Newcastle Ocean Baths	R. Walker
	Crested Tern	>100	"	"
	Ruddy Turnstone	2	"	"
Jul 27	Pink-eared Duck	>300	Uni. Rlyw Stn. Warabrook	P. Phillips
Jul 14	Zebra Finch	30	Wollemi N.P.	N. Livanos
Jul 10	Barn Owl [dead]	1	Big Pond	"
Jun-Jul 9	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	Wye Point	D. & V. Moon
Jul 5 - 7	Rose Robin	1	"	"
Jul 7	Little Eagle	1	"	"
Jul 10	Pacific Baza	2	"	"
Aug 8	Spangled Drongo	1	"	"
Jul 11-14	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	5	Telarah	F. Humphreys
Jul 22-30	Australian Wood Duck	2	"	"
Jul 16	Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	Total	C. Goodenough
Jul 15	Masked Lapwing	2 + 3dy	Jesmond [Roundabout]	"
Jul 28	Turquoise Parrot	2	Bylong/Sandy H. Rd. GRNP	Brian Hare
Aug 6	Yellow-nosed Albatross	3	Nobby's Headland	T. Lindsey
Aug 6	Black-browed Albatross	7	"	"
Aug 6	Black Swan	40	Quorrobolong Creek	J. Meynell
Aug 8	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	3	Kooragang Island	M. Chegwidde n
Aug 6	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	6	Allandale	"
Aug 5	Eastern Spinebill	1	Fassifern Rly Stn	P. Durie
	Red-browed Finch	50	Morisset	"
	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	1	"	"
Aug 23	Freckled Duck	3	S.W.C.	W. Barden
Aug 20	Curlew Sandpiper	20	Big Pond	A. Lindsey
Aug 19	Crested Tern	55	Stockton S.T.W.	M. Roderick

	Gull-billed Tern	8	"	"
	Hardhead	100	"	"
	White-fronted Tern	40	Stockton [off beach]	"
	Australasian Gannet	3	"	"
	Chestnut Teal	2	"	"
Aug 14	Red-rumped Parrot	~500	Mt. View Park, Cessnock	J.Meynell
Aug 18	White-fronted Tern	40	Off Stockton Beach	M.Roderick
Sep 4	Australasian Gannet	73	Off Hawks Nest	"
Aug 20	Red-capped Robin	1	Warkworth	S.Roderick
Aug 20	Hooded Robin	2	Warkworth	S.Roderick
	Western Gerygone	1	"	"
Aug 15&28	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	15	S.W.C. & University areas	K.Gibson
Aug 23	Freckled Duck	3	S.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	27	S.W.C.	"
Sep 11	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Blackbutt Reserve	"
Aug 28	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	Buttaba	L.Grenadier
Sep 1	Powerful Owl	1	"	"
Sep 2	Scarlet Robin	2	Gog Tops Range	A.Lindsey
	Red-capped Robin	1	Ellerston	Lindsey/Herbert
	Buff-rumped Thornbill <b>nesting</b>	3	"	"
Sep 1	White-backed Swallow	1	Gundy	"
Sep 2	Flame Robin	3	Ellerston	"
	Diamond Firetail	1	Glenrock Station	"
Sep 11	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Dungog	J. & R. Smith
Sep 9	Southern Boobook	1	Birmingham Gardens	"
Sep 12	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	6	Killingworth	"
Sep 5	Southern Boobook	1	Whitebridge	C.Goodenough
	Peregrine Falcon at nest	2	Tomago Aluminium	T.Clarke/G.Little
Sep 9	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Oyster Cove	M.Blanch
	White-bellied Sea-eagle	3 imm.	"	"
Sep 11	Gull-billed Tern	21	Stockton Sandspit	S.Roderick
	Red-necked Stint	9	Stockton [wreck]	"
	Pacific Golden Plover	3	"	"
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	18	Ash Island	"
	Curlew Sandpiper	14	"	"
	Red-kneed Dotterel	13	"	"
	Common Greenshank	24	"	"
Sep 11	Osprey	1	Walka Water Works	H.Tarrant
	White-throated Gerygone	1	"	"
	White-plumed Honeyeater	1	Bolwarra	"

### 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

Saturday 20 October	Hunter Wader Survey	10.30 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 You must ring to confirm
Sunday 21 October	Allworth area. Bucketts Way	7.30 am Raymond Terrace. Macdonalds (opposite Swan Pond)	Rowley Smith 4964 1389
Saturday & Sunday 27 - 28 October	Twitchathon Join a team and help raise money for Birds Australia	4.00 pm. For 24 hours	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Phil Rankin 4946 0022
Sunday 28 October	Twitchathon BBQ - bring your own everything	Shortland Wetlands Centre: 5.00 pm	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Tuesday 6 November	Dora Creek / Myuna Bay	7.30 am. End Dora Street, Dora Creek	Keith & Margaret Woods 4963 3070 Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 14 November	Club Meeting	7.30 pm. Shortland Wetlands Centre	Speaker: TBA Topic: <i>...</i>
Saturday 17 November	Hunter Wader Survey	10.30 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 You must ring to confirm
Sunday 25 November	"Bush Haven", Italia Road. Seaham	7.30 am at "Bush Haven" Host: Jenny Musicka 4988 6343	Contact: Liz Herbert 4959 3663
Tuesday 4 December	King Edward Park / Foreshore (Luncheon afterwards)	7.30 am. Wolfe Street. near the Obelisk	Keith & Margaret Woods 4963 3070 Max Blanch 4961 1655
Saturday 8 December	Annual Lathams Snipe Count. Pambalong Nature Reserve (Cedar Hill Swamp)	Minmi Pub. 8.30 am	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Wednesday 12 December	Club Night	Shortland Wetlands Centre: 7.30 pm	Topic: Members' Night - bring your slides, anecdotes, videos and a plate to share the festive spirit.
Saturday 15 December	Hunter Wader Survey	9.20 am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 You must ring to confirm

## Birds in Backyards Breeding Bird Survey

Birds are an important and highly visible part of city life. However while some native species are becoming more common, others, particularly the smaller birds, are becoming rarer. In order to preserve these urban bird communities we need to understand more about their lifestyles so we can include important components of their environment in our gardens. Birds Australia has established a ***Birds in Backyards Project*** to examine the bird friendliness of our cities.

The first ***Birds in Backyards*** community survey looked at the relationships between larger aggressive birds and smaller natives as well as what aspects of backyards encourage birds. This project, which took place in October 2000, was a resounding success. However, one factor we need to look more closely at in the spring of 2001 is the importance of urban gardens and parks to nesting birds.

We are seeking volunteers throughout Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Newcastle and the Illawarra to be on the lookout for nesting birds and to provide information on the habitat provided by their gardens, parks and local bushland.

If you wish to become involved in the project then please mail the attached form to us. If you have any other questions please phone Holly Parsons (02 4221 3436) or email [backyardbirds@uow.edu.au](mailto:backyardbirds@uow.edu.au)

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I would like to register for the Birds in Backyards Breeding Bird Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form to: Backyard Birds, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW 2522.

I would be willing to be contacted by local media for interviews.