

NEWSLETTER

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (02) 4958 5942

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

President: Alan Stuart

Secretary: Tom Clarke

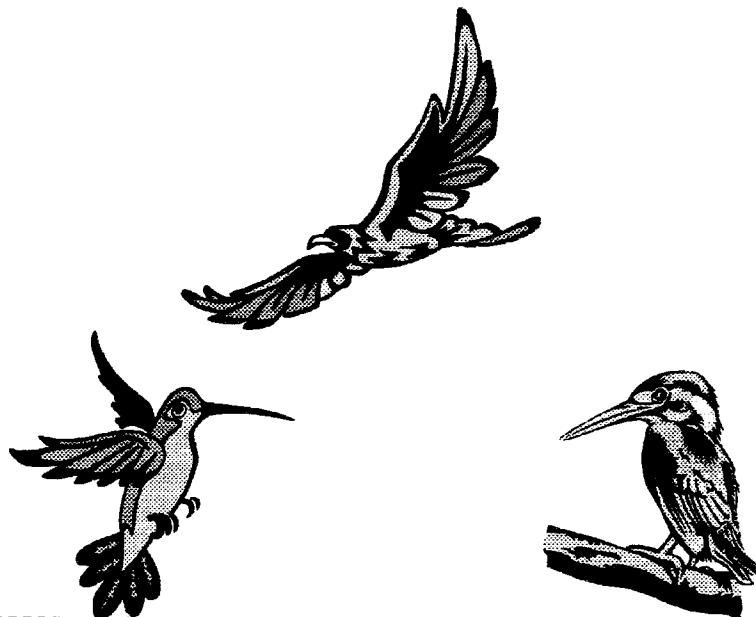
Newsletter Editor: Pat Carlton



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*
-

***Season's Greetings
to all HBOC Members
and
Magnificent Birding in 2003!***



President's Column

As I write this column, I'm working high in the Andes of Peru, but all going well I will be back in Newcastle in time for the December club night. There's only grasslands here so there isn't a great variety of birds around – maybe 15 species that I've found here. But I have managed to squeeze in one trip to somewhat more exotic locations. Highlight of that expedition was a pair of Andean Condor soaring over a very deep canyon. And I've got them on a T-shirt now!

This year's Twitchathon was held in late October. I understand that it has once again been a great success, with much money being raised across NSW for a project to do with woodlands restoration in the Cowra area (each state chooses different projects for their Twitchathon fundraising). My congratulations to all the HBOC teams that participated, and a big thank-you to all of you who sponsored one or more of the teams. Your efforts and your money are going to a good cause.

We're heading towards the end of another successful year for HBOC. It seems timely to remind you that we're always on the lookout for suggestions for ways to improve how we do things in the club. Also, your ideas for outings, speakers, other activities are always welcome. Please see me or any member of the Committee to pass on your thoughts – we'd be most pleased to discuss them with you.

Of course, we're also always on the lookout for extra volunteers too. So if you're interested in becoming more involved in the club, there are plenty of opportunities. The main reason why HBOC is such a successful club is that we have countless people who pitch in and help with things. Not only is it for a good cause it's fun and satisfying too.

One of the year's success stories has been the rehabilitation work at Stockton Sandspit. We've been campaigning for this

for quite some time, and it finally has happened. Not everything was done that we wanted, which means that the Sandspit probably will deteriorate again. However, as many of you already know, there's been a dramatic turn around in bird utilisation of the Sandspit. At times, around 1000 waders are roosting there at high tide. There's also been a pair of Red-capped Plover nesting. And some rarities have been present too – there are recent reports (that are yet to be confirmed by the Records Appraisal Committee) of a group of Oriental Plover and also 1-2 Grey Plover out there. Surely this is no coincidence!

Balancing the success at Stockton Sandspit are the development threats elsewhere around the estuary, that are the cause of much concern. In particular, Ash Island seems to be being targeted in various ways. This is an important habitat for waders, and for many waterfowl species too. And it happens to be one of my favourite local places to go birding. Let's hope we can hang on to it.

One of the things that I am doing, that I hope will help, is documenting the birds that occur on Ash Island and some details of where typically they are found there. Also, to provide dates and locations for sightings of rarer species, and all those species listed under JAMBA, CAMBA or the NSW threatened or endangered species lists. If you have any records that you think could be relevant, I'd be very pleased to have them from you. They can be recent or from the past. In fact, older records are quite important as they can confirm regular visitations – and we don't have many of such records.

It looks like there's a hot dry and not all that pleasant summer coming up. Just the same, enjoy the holidays if you're taking a break, and happy birding.

Alan Stuart
almarosa@bigpond.com

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. to be held at the Wetlands Centre, Shortland on 12th February 2003 commencing at 7:30pm.

Business of the meeting: Confirmation of minutes of 2002 AGM
Annual Report Including Financial Report
Election of Office Bearers (see separate notice)
Filling of other positions
General Business

The AGM will be followed by the February Club Night.

Tom Clarke, Public Officer.

Election of HBOC Office Bearers for 2003

Nominations are called for the following positions for 2003:

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Ordinary Members of the Management Committee. (6 max.)

Nominations shall be made in writing and signed by two members of the Club and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. Written nominations shall be delivered to the Secretary by 5th February 2003.

If insufficient written nominations are received by 5th February 2003, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall then be received at the AGM.

Tom Clarke, Public Officer.

Form Of Appointment Of Proxy

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.
(Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984)

I, (full name)
of (address)

being a member of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

hereby appoint (full name of proxy)
of (address)

being a member of that Club, as my proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Club to be held on the 12th February 2003 and at any adjournment of that meeting.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

Membership fees are now due for the year 1st January 2003 to 31st December 2003.

Name:

Address:

Phone No.:

Please circle the appropriate category: **Family - \$22** **Single - \$22** **Junior - \$3**

New members who joined after 30th September will be registered for 2003.

Fees may be paid at Club Nights or by mail to the Hon. Treasurer, P.O.Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305

Please return this completed form with your renewal, whether renewing in person or by mail.

Extension to Internationally Recognised NSW Wetland

The following is an extract from a media release issued on 18 November 2002 by David Kemp's office.

The internationally recognised wetland, Kooragang Nature Reserve, near Newcastle was today extended to include Shortland Wetlands, under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the world's peak wetland conservation treaty.

The Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, and the New South Wales Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, today congratulated the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and The Wetlands Centre Australia (Shortland) for their hard work in securing the extension and announced that the two wetlands would now be merged under a new name - *the Hunter Estuary Wetlands*.

"The site extension, which will be officially announced at the 8th Ramsar Conference of Contracting Parties this week in Valencia, Spain, acknowledges the international significance of these wetlands," Dr Kemp said.

"The original site, Kooragang Nature Reserve, was designated in 1984 and is recognised as one of the most important bird study areas in New South Wales. It provides habitat for 250 bird species, including several migratory birds such as the Great Egret, Glossy Ibis, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Eastern Curlew.

"With community involvement, education and conservation in mind, the extension to include Shortland Wetlands has been undertaken. Shortland Wetlands have been restored to provide habitat for a diverse range of wetland species, including migratory shorebirds at critical stages of their lifecycles.

"Many endangered species listed under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act*

1995, such as the Black-necked Stork, Red Goshawk, Bush Stone Curlew and Little Tern are supported by the Hunter Estuary Wetlands. Important mangrove forests, saline and freshwater pastures, and rainforest communities are also present within the boundaries of the Ramsar site," Dr Kemp said.

"This site extension is an acknowledgement of the ecological significance of the Hunter Estuary Wetlands that now protect 2,971 hectares of important wetland," Mr Debus said.

The Australian Government has also announced designation of six other wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, increasing the total number of Australian Ramsar sites from 57 to 63. The new site designations include four sites managed by the Commonwealth Government - Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve, Coral Sea Reserves, Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve and The Dales (Christmas Island), as well as one site on Crown land in New South Wales - Fivebough and Tuckerbil Swamps and one site on private land in South Australia - Banrock Station Wetland Complex.

For high resolution images and for more information on wetlands please visit <http://www.ea.gov.au/water/wetlands/about.html> and for more information on the Ramsar Convention please visit <http://www.ea.gov.au/water/wetlands/ramsar/index.html>

Articles for our newsletter are
always welcomed

Closing date for next issue:
31 January 2003

**PLEASE NOTE NEW EDITOR:
PLEASE SEND CONTRIBUTIONS
FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER TO:**

Peter Phillips

34 McIntyre St, Cardiff 2285

tel: 4956 9090

em: juniper@hunterlink.net.au

A New Beginning for the Stockton Sandspit

Great things have been happening at the Stockton Sandspit this year! The Sandspit was created about 1971 from dredge spoil to support the Stockton-side abutments to Stockton Bridge. During the 1970s and into the 1980s it was a major high-tide roost site for thousands of migratory and resident waders that fed in the Hunter Estuary at low tide. It was a huge drawcard for wader watchers from far and wide. Alas, it succumbed to invasion by exotic weeds and grasses such as bitou bush and spiny rush. In addition, mangroves grew up in front of the beach cutting off a clear line of sight to the Hunter River. Waders decamped en masse and set up their high-tide roost on a rock training wall on the opposite side of the river, the Kooragang Dykes. Similar scenarios were being played out at other formerly sandy roost sites throughout the estuary. These areas are within the Kooragang Nature Reserve and in a declared Ramsar site of international significance, which puts responsibility on the government to ensure that no degradation of the wetlands environment takes place.

However, wader numbers and species using the estuary have declined since the 1970s and HBOC's recent 3 years of monitoring has confirmed this trend. The Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project (KWRP) has been attempting to reverse this situation over the last few years by rehabilitating Stockton Sandspit, but their efforts were having minimal effects even after creating a lagoon and island, because of the growth of mangroves and weeds. Although mangroves are a protected species, HBOC applied to Fisheries for a permit to remove mangroves from the Sandspit to improve the habitat for waders. Much to our surprise and relief permission was granted.

While waiting to hear about the success of our application for a Coastcare grant to carry out removal of mangroves and weeds, KWRP organised the Greencorps to help us extract immature mangroves from the mudflat feeding area at the eastern end of the Sandspit. To

complete this job, a group of 10 young workers, supervised by David Jenkin, and ably assisted by Ann Lindsey and myself, worked 1 day each week from February to June this year. Within a week or so of removing the mangroves, about 30 Eastern Curlews started roosting along the shoreline we had just cleared indicating their immediate appreciation. However, we were devastated to hear that our Coastcare application had been unsuccessful. Apparently it was considered too controversial!!!

Fortunately, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) had verbally promised that if our grant application was unsuccessful, and we had obtained permission to remove mangroves, they would step in and complete the job. To their credit that is exactly what they did. In consultation with HBOC, NPWS prepared a Review of Environmental Factors and a programme for removing mangroves and weeds from the Sandspit was instigated. A commercial contractor undertook the work during September. At the same time, NPWS rehabilitated a former roost site on Sandy Island, at the entrance to Fullerton Cove, and erected artificial roost platforms in Fullerton Cove.

Although more work needs to be done at the Sandspit to complete the job, we are absolutely thrilled with the transformation so far. Hundreds of migratory and resident waders and terns are already returning to roost along the shoreline where the mangroves have been extracted. In addition, greater numbers and varieties of birds are using the lagoon and fringing saltmarsh. Even more thrilling to see is the immediate use of the bare shelly sand and adjacent saltmarsh for nesting. Two pairs of Red-capped Plovers have already nested within a month of clearing vegetation off the Sandspit! Even a Beach Stone-curlew has been seen patrolling the mudflat where the mangroves used to be!

Now the public needs educating about the importance of the area. Because the beach is nice and clear, people are walking along it to fish at high-tide roosting time with obvious disturbing consequences. And would you

believe it, someone has driven a car onto the Sandspit, done a few wheelies, got bogged and departed!!! Plans are now afoot to fence the area more effectively. In addition, we have suggested that the roosting area be closed to non-essential access and informative signs erected. Also it is vitally important that a programme of maintenance be instigated as regrowth is already apparent.

After the disappointing refusal of our Coastcare grant application, HBOC made an application for a Natural Heritage grant and surprise, surprise, it was successful. However, now that most of the work has been done we have to consider how best we can use the money

for other purposes under the conditions of the grant. A more effective hide, positioned to look over the foreshore area where most of the birds are starting to roost again, has been suggested to help monitor the success of the rehabilitation.

Hopefully, Stockton Sandspit will become a great example of effective rehabilitation achieved through community (HBOC) interaction with KWRP and government authorities (NPWS) to the benefit of all, especially the waders and, of course, the wader watchers.

Chris Herbert

Beach-nesting Bird Survey, 9/10 November 2002

Since 1996, the NSW Wader Study Group has sought volunteers to survey the coastline for beach-nesting birds on a bi-annual basis. Some of the information has already been used by NPWS in Recovery Plans for threatened species, such as the Hooded Plover and Beach Stone-curlew. A report on the status of Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers is planned after this year's survey.

Surveying beaches for nesting birds can be an unrewarding experience in urban areas such as Newcastle and Port Stephens. Even more remote beaches, such as Stockton Bight, are well-used by four wheel drive vehicles. During the first survey in 1996, HBOC members covered every beach between Swansea and Port Stephens, counting heaps of people, dogs and 4WD vehicles. This year we were more choosy, concentrating on two beaches where we hoped there was a chance of seeing beach-nesting birds: Stockton Bight and Nine Mile Beach between Redhead and Blacksmiths. Ann Lindsey, Nick Livanos, Chris Herbert and Liz Crawford formed the HBOC team.

Nine Mile Beach had a huge population of Australian Ravens, lots of Silver Gulls, a few

Common Terns and Crested Terns, and fishermen, occasional dogs and 4WDs. Our long walk was relieved by discovering a narrow lagoon where Crokers Creek drains to the sea. Among a wide variety of birds using the lagoon were 4 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 4 Black-fronted Dotterels. There were no beach-nesting birds, even though Little Terns nested at Redhead many years ago.

Stockton Bight was more productive. There were around two hundred 4WD vehicles along the beach, including an encampment of about 60 vehicles and tents near the Sygna wreck. A 4WD tourist bus and multiple quad bikes careered over the dunes. We traversed about 27 km of beach and foredunes, concentrating on shelly washovers where stormy seas had broken through the foredune and left small shells and other flotsam on the surface of the sand. These areas are favoured by beach-nesting birds as they provide some camouflage and protection from shifting sand for the eggs and brooding birds. We located 3 solitary Pied Oystercatchers, spaced out along the beach, but found none nesting. However, we did find a pair of Red-capped Plovers with a nest and two eggs, right beside some wheel ruts. Hopefully they survived the passing traffic! Lots of Silver Gulls, Crested Terns, Common Terns, 4 Whiskered Terns and 2 Gull-billed Terns, as

well as 2 Black Swans out on the ocean and hundreds of Shearwaters off-shore. Another highlight was 8 Oriental Plovers, an unusual migratory wader, found roosting in low vegetation behind the foredune, about 4 km southwest of Anna Bay.

After the survey we called in to Stockton Sandspit and found 15 Pied Oystercatchers roosting there.

On 21 November, Keith Laverick took on the challenge of surveying the beach north of Port Stephens. The southern 10km of this beach is accessible to 4WDs. Despite a short delay due to a sinking feeling in soft sand, Keith pressed

on and located 7 Pied Oystercatchers between Hawks Nest and Dark Point, a distance of about 10km. Walking about 3km north of Dark Point, Keith located 3 more Pied Oystercatchers.

In previous surveys, the total number of Pied Oystercatchers recorded on the NSW coast was 232 in 1996, 229 in 1998, and 248 in 2000, while the total number of Sooty Oystercatchers was 173 in 1996, 87 in 1998, and 240 in 2000. Variation in these numbers may be partly due to survey effort, which has been entirely voluntary.

Liz Crawford

Club Outings

Harrington, 23rd - 25th November

Over the weekend we had 14 bird watchers some of whom are experts and some are novices like me. 11 of us camped at the caravan park near the rainforest walk overnight. The afternoon we arrived, just after we set up camp, we went for a walk to find some birds. We had just set out when we came across a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike sitting on a nest.

We decided to walk along the rainforest walk, and spotted a Black-faced Monarch. We also had a Golden Whistler playing games - we could hear it right near us but could not see it. We finally found it after about 15-20 minutes. At the end of the walk we came out near the beach where we saw a Spangled Drongo and in the trees looking back towards the rainforest walk we saw a male and female Regent Bowerbird.

Later that night 10 of the group went out to a known spot to find Grass Owl but there was no sign of them. We tried to call them out at 5 different spots but there was not any response.

Early the next morning after being woken up by the dawn chorus I went for a walk and it was rather quiet until we came across a White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike which followed us for a little

while. On the way back we came across a pair of Pied Oystercatcher.

About 9:00am we set off for our scheduled rainforest walk. We identified many little birds including a Black-faced Monarch showing off, before 3 of us spotted an Emerald Dove flying off. A little further down the track we saw a Regent Bowerbird building a nest. While we were observing this a small flock of Forest Raven flew over chasing an unidentified bird of prey, when suddenly the bird of prey turned around and grabbed one of the Forest Ravens on the tail.

After morning tea we walked along the breakwall to look out over a sand spit. On the spit there is a known colony of Little Tern which was fenced off. Also over on the sand was about half a dozen Pied Oystercatchers.

After lunch we went to a spot where there is a known Osprey nest. There was 1 adult and 1 juvenile there. We then went to another known Osprey nest but there were no birds there. We did see some Willie Wagtail there, with dependent young, and also a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike sitting on a nest.

To sum it all up over the 3 days there were 114 species identified, and I personally identified 12 new species.

Robert McDonald

Atlassing in 2003

I have chosen the dates for the 2003 HBOC Birds Australia atlassing days. You are welcome to join in these days whether you are a member of HBOC or not. I have not chosen any venues as yet other than that of February which will be on the 22nd, meeting at Maitland Railway Station at 7am and travelling to Mt Royal National Park. Bring lunch etc as it will be a long day. Other venues will be published in the Club newsletter as the year progresses or I will contact you by email.

As always, please contact me on 4951 2008 before the outing as the venue may be changed at the last moment because of weather, bushfire or just something else more interesting turning up at the last moment.

As you are aware, the Birds Australia Atlas project is continuing in a more limited form in that we will continue to collect data that will be scanned into the database in Melbourne, but not analysed at this stage. Perhaps there will be money in the future to do this. In any case the data collected will give a more detailed picture of the avian population in the Hunter Region.

Dates are as follows: March 22nd, May 24th, June 21st, July 19th, August 23rd, November 22nd.

Many thanks for your continued interest in this grand effort. I really look forward to receiving your data sheets every month or so. Because this project makes us get out into the field, we have found many more interesting birding spots in the Hunter and therefore know more clearly where we are likely to find various species

Ann Lindsey

2003 Pelagic Trips

I have picked the Newcastle Deep Sea Pelagic dates for 2003. Yes ALL our trips next year will be out to the 80km mark. This is due to the amazing success of our two October trips out to 80km in 2002. None of the other east coast pelagic trips are going out that far and there is great potential to find some awesome seabirds.

We are using the same boat and all trips are from Swansea as in previous years. The start time will now be 6am and the cost \$80pp.

Dates: ALL trips are on Saturday and dates have been picked to find the best birds.

29 March, 5 April, 26 July, 16 August, 11 October, 25 October.

I am now taking bookings on a first in-first out basis. I will keep a reserves list and if we have enough for a second trip I will organise another the following day (Sunday).

Richard Baxter

randrbaxter@yahoo.com or 49 540 212.

Late note: Just about all the 2003 Newcastle Pelagic Trips are now fully booked. I have therefore added another trip on Sat 6 September 2003. RB.

Social Currawongs

In the March, 2001 issue of The NSW Bird Atlassers newsletter a lady reported observing a tree full of noisy Currawongs close to sunset in Lane Cove National Park. She wondered why they were massed in this one tree,

and why they were so noisy. Following are two suggestions.

Pied Currawongs aren't the only species that communally roost. Others I have observed or heard about are the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Corellas, the Common Myna, the Regent Honeyeater and Ibis. Common Mynas and the

Regent Honeyeaters share with Pied Currawongs the behaviour of choosing just one tree in which to roost. Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Corellas and Ibis congregate in close proximity, but in more than one tree. I have experienced the deafening dusk dialect that Joan heard with communally-roosted Scaly-breasts, Corellas and Common Mynas.

The communal roosting behaviour of Pied Currawongs could be a safety-in-numbers defence mechanism against the Powerful Owl. Pied Currawongs and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets have been recorded as prey items in studies of the Powerful Owl. But this doesn't explain the tremendous noise generated by the flock from

around sunset to until the last ray of daylight has gone.

One aspect of the behaviour that is common to all communally-roosting species is that it occurs mainly during non-breeding months. As Pied Currawongs migrate altitudinally to coastal areas like Sydney during the non-breeding winter months, the birds Joan observed would have been non-breeding. Communal roosting at this time would provide a venue for birds to interact and for young birds to look for a mate. This arrangement would maintain genetic diversity within the species.

Colin Goodenough

NEWS FROM BIRDS AUSTRALIA...

Congress and campout

The annual Birds Australia Congress was held last week in Alice Springs followed by our annual Campout at Birds Australia Newhaven Reserve. Both events were a great success. Newhaven is progressing - however, there is still much to be done.

Next year's Congress and Campout will be held in Coonabarabran, NSW, with visits to the Warrumbungles NP and Macquarie Marshes commencing 6 September 2003

The New Atlas

The New Atlas of Australian Birds will be published in book form by Birds Australia during December 2002. We have the text written and some of Australia's most talented wildlife artists have nearly completed the species drawings. The maps for over 600 bird species

are in the final stages of design. In the meantime, we have developed a series of powerpoint presentations which explain the application of the atlas in gaining conservation outcomes. These will be presented to catchment management authorities, Government and Birds Australia members over the coming months.

Birds in Backyards

We are also working on expanding our Sydney based project called "Birds in Backyards" which we hope will assist us in gaining a better understanding urban bird ecology. It will also involve the community in urban bird monitoring. The project is being developed by Kate Ravich in our Sydney Office and further details will be announced soon.



Ecology of Bird-dispersed Weeds

Bird-dispersed weeds represent a major challenge to weed managers. The dispersal process is complex and difficult to manage, often resulting in seeds being spread over long distances into isolated areas of native vegetation.

The Alan Fletcher Research Station (Qld Dept. of Natural Resources & Mines) and the CRC for Australian Weed Management have initiated a project that aims to identify which birds are feeding on and potentially spreading introduced plants and invasive weeds, and are seeking help from experienced bird observers.

Initially a questionnaire will be sent to interested bird observers to determine existing knowledge on bird-dispersed weed species. Once the main dispersal agents have been identified, several sites will be chosen for more structured observation. The focus will then be on bird species, feeding behaviour, fruit handling techniques, frequency of visitation and bird movements in and out of weedy areas.

The information will be used for the development of Integrated Weed Management strategies that target bird-dispersed weeds, and to identify any recent plant introductions that are at risk of being dispersed by birds, potentially becoming invasive.

If you are interested in participating in the bird survey, or have any information relating to birds and introduced plants and invasive weeds, please contact:

Dr Chris Stansbury
Alan Fletcher Research Station
Dept of Natural Resources and Mines
PO Box 36, Sherwood Qld 4075
Email: chris.stansbury@nrm.qld.gov.au

Formation of a Bird Observers Club in Singleton.

Some weeks ago a group of 40 people attended a Landcare meeting at Singleton for National Birdweek. At this meeting quite a few locals agreed that they would like to start a Bird Observers Club in Singleton. The idea is that a local group could organise local meetings and outings that would better suit the needs of birdwatchers from the Upper Hunter. It is true that except for camps the majority of HBOC outings are closer to Newcastle than Singleton for instance.

Well one thing has lead to another and early next year that prospect will become a reality. Perhaps as a stand-alone club or as a sub-group of HBOC but in some form in any case depending on the wishes of those interested in forming this group. Some of the detail is currently being discussed by the proponents and the HBOC Committee.

People who are interested in such a group should contact:

Diane Lamb of Milbrodale on 6574 5205.

Research student opportunity

Raptors in the Hunter Estuary an "Eagles View" of Ecosystem Health

Newcastle City Council City Strategist Sustainability (Frank Cosgrove), University of New England Doctoral Bird Researcher and Consultant (Steve Debus) and Newcastle University biogeographer (Stuart Pearson) have designed a research project to study the raptors of the Hunter estuary that will identify their critical habitat needs that can lead to the development of conservation and management strategies. The project draws on the detailed knowledge and records of the Hunter Bird Observers Club and other bird watchers in the lower Hunter, and the recently completed Lower Hunter Vegetation Mapping Project. The team are now looking for a research Masters or Honours student to explore the project.

The project involves a description of the habitat and behaviour of estuarine raptors, integration of data with habitat maps and identification of high conservation areas to maintain the Hunter Estuary's raptor communities. Ongoing development activities in the Hunter estuary places pressure on decision-makers who often make critical ecosystems decisions in isolation of adequate biodiversity data. Raptors are a useful indicator of ecosystem health and are sensitive to changes in prey, vegetation structure in hunting areas, and the structure and availability of roost and nest sites. They occur in relatively low densities, are often territorial and are long lived making them susceptible to catastrophic collapse.

The initial discussion identified 8 species (Osprey, Swamp harrier, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Brahminy Kite, Little Eagle, Brown Falcon, Grass Owl and Whistling Kite) for consideration, however this is likely to evolve. A suite of species is useful because it will separate the effects of habitat, prey and nest or roost trees amongst the different species. The initial discussions identified the management need for habitat and mapping outcomes over pure behavioural or diet studies.



The project would involve joint academic supervision between UNE and Newcastle, steering and resource support from NCC for student expenses (indicative funding \$500). The student should have access to their own vehicle, a strong interest in bird and habitat issues and meet the academic entry requirements for honours or masters. A background in natural resources, ecology, geography or environmental science would be an advantage. The student will be trained in bird observation and research methods including GIS and interpretation of data, guided through the process of completing an animal care and ethics application and assisted in completion of the thesis and report to Council. This project will be the first of its kind in Newcastle and will make a valuable contribution to habitat and biodiversity management needs of the internationally significant Hunter Estuary. It provides good training opportunities in research and management and linkages into wider research and natural resource management trends and programs in this growing area.

To apply or seek further details please contact:

Frank Cosgrove
fcosgrove@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Steve Debus
sdebus@metz.une.edu.au

Dr Stuart Pearson
gsgp@alinga.newcastle.edu.au
phone 49215087



Magical Estuary Tours

Thousands of migratory wading birds visit the Hunter Estuary each summer. One of the best places to see them is from the water. Kooragang Wetlands is running five estuary tours this summer.

On each tour you'll

- Pass the hustle and bustle of Newcastle Harbour
- Hear some of the history of this fascinating area
- Spend time observing the thousands of migratory waders lined up along Kooragang Dykes
- Explore the mangrove and saltmarsh wonderland that is Mosquito Creek
- Discover why Kooragang Nature Reserve is a Ramsar site

Tours depart from Queens Wharf, Newcastle aboard the Lady Joy and take three hours. Cost (GST, morning tea included):

- \$25.00 adults
- \$22.00 concession
- \$20.00 children (5-14yrs)

Tour	Date	Departure Time
Tour 1H	Saturday 18 th January 2003	8:30am
Tour 2B	Sunday 2 nd February 2003	9:00am
Tour 3B	Wednesday 19 th February 2003	10:00am
Tour 4B	Sunday 2 nd March 2003	8:30am
Tour 5H	Thursday 20 th March 2003	9:30am

(H = history emphasis, ex islander, Vera Deacon accompanying
B = bird emphasis, Alan Morris or other bird expert accompanying)

Bookings essential - at least one week before each trip.

Call Sue at Kooragang Wetlands (02) 4964 9308.

Clean Up Australia Day

It's nearing that time of year again when thousands of Australians get to work removing rubbish from our parklands, beaches, waterways and roadsides as part of Clean Up Australia Day. Participating in Clean Up Australia Day is simple – its about taking action and making a difference.

You can make a difference too by joining Hunter Bird Observers Club in cleaning up **Stockton Sand Spit**. Met in the car park under the Stockton Bridge from 8:00am and help out through to lunch. You don't have to be there all morning – every little bit helps.

For further instruction contact Tom Clarke on 4951 3872.

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 2002

2002				
Aug 22	Latham's Snipe	5	Woodville	M.Newman
Jul	Brown Treecreeper	2	Buttaba Hills	L.Grenadier
Aug/Sep	Powerful Owl	2 + 2 juv	"	"
Sep 2	Brown Falcon	2	Bayswater Colliery	G.Newling
	Peregrine Falcon	3	"	"
	Black Kite	1	Mt. Arthur North	"
	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Flocks	Bayswater Colliery	"
Sep 9	Barn Owl	1	Wingen	"
Sep 8	Figbird	6	Singleton	"
Sep 27	Grey Goshawk	1	Pambalong N.R.	M.Newman
Sep 27	Red-kneed Dotterd	9	"	"
	Pink-eared Duck	>150	Lenaghan's Drive Swamp	"
	Grey Teal	>1,000	"	"
	Hardhead	>100	"	"
	Australian Hobby	1	"	"
	Peregrine Falcon	1	Hexham Swamp 32°51'/151°39'	"
	Latham's Snipe	2	"	"
	Marsh Sandpiper	50	"	"
27 & 29	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	>1,250	"	"
	Curlew Sandpiper	>10	"	"
	Black-winged Stilt	700	"	"
	Whiskered Tern	100	"	"
Sep 13	Brown Quail	4	Martins Ck. 32°34'/151°39'	"
Oct 2	Black-tailed Native Hen	1	Woodville [still resident]	"
Oct 5	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	>250	Morpeth STW	"
	Curlew Sandpiper	1	"	"
	Marsh Sandpiper	8	"	"
	Brown Songlark	1m.	"	"
Sep 14	Australian Owlet-nightjar	1	Doyle's Creek	H.Tarrant
	Red-capped Robin	Pr.	Jerry's Plains	"
Oct 7	Caspian Tern	2	Bolwarra lagoon	"
	Latham's Snipe	1	"	"
Oct 8	Cotton Pygmy Goose	1 f.	Hands Lagoon , Bolwarra	"
Sep 22	Pink-eared Duck	3	Walka Water Works	"
Oct 8	Black-faced Monarch	1	Newcastle University	"
Sep 14	White-winged Triller	2	Martindale [F/G7]	"
	Rainbow Bee-eater		"	"
Sep 14	Brown Songlark	1	Bureen	"
Sep 28	Large-billed Scrubwrens	2	Vacy [Oxbow site]	"
Sep	Lewin's Rail	3 calling	Newcastle University	A. Richardson
Mid Sep	Pacific Baza	Pr.Nest	"	"
Sep 23	Powerful Owl	1	Glenrock S.R.A.	M. Burgoyne
Oct 9	Rufous Fantail	2	Highfields	"
Aug 4	Spangled Drongo	1	"	"
Oct 1	Whiskered Tern	219	Ash Island	S.Roderick
	Spotted Crake	1	"	"
Sep 28	Little Friarbird	1	Goulburn River N.P.[Wollar side	"
	Spotted Harrier	7	" [Ringwood Rd.]	"
	Brown Songlark	10	"	"
Oct 5	Banded Lapwing	4 + 1 juv	Phoenix Park, Bolwarra	"
Sep 25	Masked/White-brow. W'swallow	>300	Weston	"
Sep 30	Regent Bowerbird	2	Barrington House	M. O'Leary
Sep 29	Striated Pardalote Nest	2+yng	Seaham N.R.	A.Stuart

Sep 30	Bassian Thrush	1	Burruga Swamp Barrington Tops	“
	Russet-tailed Thrush	1	White Rock Camp “ “ N.R.	“
Sep 30	Rose Robin	2	Burruga Swamp	A. Stuart
	Common Bronzewing	1	Mount Allyn	“
Sep 14	White-headed Petrel	1	Off Swansea [Pelagic	R. Baxter
Sep 30	Flame Robin	1	Gloucester Falls	“
Sep 29	Lewin's Rail	1	Glenrock N.R.	“
Sep 14	Cape Petrel	>22	Off Newcastle [Pelagic'	“
	Wandering Albatross	6	“	“
	Slender-billed Prion	3	“	“
Oct 3	Noisy Pitta	1	Glenrock S.R.A.	P. Hansbro
Oct 7	Eurasian Coot	140	Deep Pond [Ash Island]	A. Stuart
	Black Swan	330	“	“
	Whiskered Tern	162	“	“
Sep 11	White-headed Pigeon	1	Buttaba	R. Waymark
	Satin Bowerbird + bower	1m	“	“
16& 29	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	“	“
Oct 10	Common Koel	2	“	“
Oct 6	Sacred Kingfisher	2	“	“
Sep 29	Dollarbird	2	“	“
Oct 7	Fairy Martin 8 nests		Stockton Bridge	“
	Rufous Songlark	2	Ash Island	A. Stuart
	European Goldfinch	2pr	“	“
	Bar-shouldered Dove	7	“	“
	Grey Teal	82	“	“
	Australasian Bittern	1	“	“
	Spotted Harrier	1	“ [Deep Pond]	“
Oct 6	Emerald Dove	1	Awabakal Lagoon	J. Powers
	Latham's Snipe	1	“	“
Oct 7	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	Ash Island	A. Stuart
Oct 13	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	Sandy Creek [33°02'/151°30'	K. Imrie
Oct 17	Turquoise Parrot	1	S.W.C.	G. Nicholls
Oct 14	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	3	Awaba S.F. [Ryhope]	D. Jenkin
Aug 19	Bassian Thrush	5	Frying Pan Ck. Telegherry S.F.	“
	Logrunner	1m	“ “	“
Aug 31	Brown-headed Honeyeater	2	Fosterton Loop Rd. Dungog	“
	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Pr.	“	“
	Black-shouldered Kite on	2	Ellalong Lagoon	“
Oct 14	Brown-headed Honeyeater	3	Awaba S.F. [Ryhope]	“
Oct 7	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	Whitebridge	C. Goodenough
Oct 5	Pacific Baza	1 + 1dy	“	“
Oct 7	Dollarbird	1	“	“
Oct 10	Banded Lapwing	12	Flat Rd. Bolwarra	G. Brosie
	Cotton Pygmy Goose	1f	Hands Lagoon, Bolwarra	“
Oct 16	Common Bronzewing	>5	Broke	“
	Varied Sittella	>5	“	“
	Zebra Finch	>5	Singleton	“
15/22	Regent Bowerbird	1	Whitebirdge	C. Goodenough
Nov 4	Laughing Kookaburra	2 + 3dy	“	“
Nov 7	Red-rumped Parrot	2	Merewether [garden]	Andrew Hamonet
Oct 27	White-throated Gerygone	4	Paterson	K. Gibson
	Scarlet Honeyeater	2	“	“
	Zebra Finch	>6	“	“
	Pied Butcherbird nest	1 + 2dy	“	“
Oct 12	Scarlet Honeyeater	1	Fassifern Rlwy. Stn.	E. McKane
	Black Swan	>100	Fennells Bay	“
	Dollarbird	1	Bonnells Bay	“

	Nankeen Night Heron	1	Toronto Wetland	"
	White-breasted Woodswallow	2	"	"
Oct 27	Collared Sparrowhawk	1	Tank Paddock Minmi	J.Powers/N.Livanos
	White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	"	"
	Nankeen Night Heron	1	"	"
	White-winged Triller	1	"	"
Oct 27	Regent Honeyeater	2	Green Point	W. Warner
	Powerful Owl	2	"	"
Nov 12	Tawny Frogmouth	3 + 2dy	Valentine	"
Oct 27	Little Friarbird	5-10	Paterson	S.Roderick
Nov 3	White-browed Woodswallow	>250	Weston	"
	Masked Woodswallow	>50	"	"
Oct 29	Regent Honeyeater	1	Dudley	L.Ernst
Nov 11	Brown Goshawk	1 + 2dy	Hillsborough	"
	Tawny Frogmouth	1 + 2dy	Warners Bay	"
Oct/Nov	Nankeen Kestrel	1	"	"
Oct 19	Speckled Warbler	3	Keinbah	J.Goswell
Oct 17	Pacific Baza	1	Lorn	"
Nov 7	Zebra Finch	1	Telarah Lagoon	"
Nov 4	Dollarbird	2	Eleebana Reserve	A. Gooden
Oct 29	Whiskered Tern	>150	Grahamstown Dam [Medowie end	D.Cooper
Nov 1	Great Crested Grebe	>105	" "	"
Nov 3	Square-tailed Kite	1	Fullerton Cove	"
Nov 7	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	Medowie	"
Nov 11	Great Crested Grebe	>200	Grahamstown Dam	"
Nov 12	Glossy Ibis	1	Raymond Tce. [Newline Rod]	"
Nov 13	White-throated Needletail	~5	Medowie	"
Aug 20	Lewin's Rail [Road kill]	1	Bob's Farm	"
Nov 1	Black Bittern	1	Walka Water Works	J.Smart
Oct 24	White-browed Woodswallow	~200	East Maitland	"
	Masked Woodswallow	~200	"	"
Nov 10	Baillon's Crake	1	One Mile Creek [E.Maitland]	"
	Buff-banded Rail	1	"	"
	Latham's Snipe	1	"	"
Nov 11	Common Koel [Road kill]	1	Garden City	M.Burgoyne
Nov 1	Tawny Frogmouth	4	Stoney Creek	P.Durie
Nov 9	Baillon's Crake	1	Warabrook Ponds	R.McDonald
Nov 11	Spotless Crake	1	"	"
Nov	Mallard	>10	"	"
Nov 7	Grey Teal nest/eggs	2	"	"
Nov 13	Maggie-lark 2 nests/eggs	4	"	"
Oct 13	White-browed Babbler dy	7	Doyle's Creek	H.Tarrant
Oct 14	Cotton Pygmy Goose	1	Hands Lagoon, Bolwarra	"
Oct 30	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	22-34	Bolwarra Lagoon	"
Nov 1	Rufous Songlark	1	Bolwarra	"
Nov 5	Brown Songlark	1	Phoenix Park	"
Nov 6/7	Musk Lorikeet	~10	Bolwarra	"
Nov 7	Brush Cuckoo	1	"	"
Oct 13	Peregrine Falcon	Pr.	Martindale	"
	Brown Songlark	5	Bureen	"
	Rufous Songlark	8	"	"
	Red-backed Kingfisher	1	"	"
Oct 18	Glossy Black Cockatoo	4	Lee's Pinch G.R.N.P.	M.Newman
	Emu	2	G.R.N.P. [Nr. "Poggy"]	"
Oct 3	Glossy Ibis	33	Hexham Swamp 32.51/151.39]	"
	Marsh Sandpiper	40	"	"
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1,800	"	"

	Black-tailed Native Hen	1	Woodville	“
Oct 5	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	>250	Morpeth STW	“
Oct 19	Brown Songlark	3	Hexham Swamp 32.51/151.38	M.Newman
Oct 20	White-winged Triller	Pr	Morpeth STW	“
	Brown Songlark	1m.	“	“
	Pink-eared Duck	2	“	“
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	200	“	“
	Marsh Sandpiper	4	“	“
Oct 19	Whiskered Tern	>100	Hexham Swamp 32.51/151.38	“
	Glossy Ibis	20	“	“
	Common Greenshank	2	“	“
	Marsh Sandpiper	5	“	“
	Pacific Golden Plover	40	“	“
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	500-	“	“
	Curlew Sandpiper	2	“	“
	Red-kneed Dotterel	10	Pambalong NR	“
	Black-fronted Dotterel	1	“	“
Oct 28	Little Grassbird	1 + 2dy	Ash Island	N.Livanos
27/28/29	Baillon's Crake	1	“	“
28/29	Spotted Crake	2	“	“
Oct 28	Buff-banded Rail	2	“	“
27/28	Spotted Harrier	1	“	“
Nov 11	Great Crested Grebe	200	Grahamstown Dam	M.Maddock
	Hoary-headed Grebe	56	“	“
	Hardhead	43	“	“
Nov 16	Great Crested Grebe	1	Bedminster Rehab. Swamp	“
11 & 16	Glossy Ibis	1	“	“
Nov 9	Latham's Snipe	2	Irrawang Swamp	“
Nov 11	“	1	“	“
Nov 13	“	2	Glen Oak	“
Nov 16	“	2	Irrawang Swamp	“
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	8	“	“
	Latham's Snipe	1	Seaham Swamp	“
	Pink-eared Duck	2	“	“
Nov 20	Magpie Goose	8	“	“
Nov 21	Regent Bowerbird	2	Glenrock S.R.A.	D.Cooper
	Brush Turkey	2	“	“
	Common Sandpiper	1	“	“
	Grey Plover	2	Stockton Sandspit	“
Nov 16	Oriental Plover	8	Stockton Beach 32.47/152.02	Lindsey/Herbert
Nov 21	Oriental Plover	8	“	D.Cooper

Coming Events

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

Date	Activity	Time and Place	Contact
Saturday January 18	Hunter Wader Survey	9:00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 <i>You must ring to confirm</i>
Sunday January 19	Field Outing Walka Water Works	8:00am WWW Car Park	Leader: Tom Clarke 4851 3872
Saturday - Monday January 25-27	Camp Allyn River	White Rock Camp Via Barrington House	Contact: Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Tuesday February 4	Mid-Week Outing Newcastle University	7:30am Playing Field No.3	Leader: Robert Macdonald
Wednesday February 12	Club Night	7.30 p.m. The Wetlands Centre	Annual General Meeting
Saturday February 15	Hunter Wader Survey	8:00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 <i>You must ring to confirm</i>
Saturday February 22	Atlassing Mount Royal NP	7:00am Maitland Railway Station (bring lunch)	Leader: Ann Lindsay 4951 2008 <i>You must ring to confirm</i>
Sunday February 23	Field Outing Stanhope Creek	7:30am Rutherford Macdonalds car park	Contact: Sue Hamonet 4958 1023
Sunday March 2	Clean Up Australia Day	9:00am to 1:00pm Stockton Sand Spit	Organiser: Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Tuesday March 4	Mid-Week Outing Walka Water Works	7:30am WWW Car Park	Leader: Nick Livanos 4954 5739
Wednesday March 12	Club Night	7.30 p.m. The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Chris Herbert Digiscoping Birds
Saturday March 15	Hunter Wader Survey	7:00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569 <i>You must ring to confirm</i>
Saturday March 22	Atlassing TBA	Watch this space next newsletter	Leader: Ann Lindsay 4951 2008 <i>You must ring to confirm</i>
Sunday March 23	Field Outing Kooragang Island	8:00am Big Pond	Contact: Diane Johnson 4975 1777
Saturday March 29	Pelagic Trip	6:00am Swansea Wharf	Leader: Richard Baxter 4954 0212