



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5

October-November 2005

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Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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Committee

President: Liz Crawford
Vice-president: Alan Stuart
Secretary: Tom Clarke
Treasurer: Rowley Smith

Committee Members:

Michael Todd
Grant Brosie
Anthony Gooden
Chris Herbert
Ann Lindsey
Robert MacDonald

Conservation Officer

Jenny Powers

Life Members

Wilma Barden
Sue Hamonet
Ed Hamonet

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*

HBOC Annual Membership fees are \$25 Family or Single and \$3 for Juniors. Fees for 2005 are now overdue.

HBOC welcomes visitors to Field Outings and Clubnights. For details check out the Coming Events on the back page.

NEWSLETTER DATE

Edition

December 2005/January 2006

Copy Deadline

3 December 2005

OUTINGS

CESSNOCK ATLAS DAY

6th August 2005

From Grant Brosie

Nine keen atlassers gathered at a very cold Cessnock and car pooled to our sites for the day. First stop was a small dam near Kearsley where we saw Black-fronted Dotterel, Hardhead and various other waterfowl, and in the nearby bush, Striated Thornbill, spinebill and Golden Whistler.

Then in convoy we went deeper into the bush seeing White-eared and Fuscous Honeyeater, thornbills, scrubwrens and Weebill. We then proceeded further and after morning tea saw heaps of Dusky Woodswallow, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, White-naped Honeyeater, Brown Treecreeper and for a lucky few, a single Spotted Quail-thrush.

Our lunch break was spent watching Yellow-tufted, Fuscous, Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters, Crested Shrike-tit, Dusky Woodswallow, Brown Treecreeper and lots of other small passerines.

Our last stop for this area was most rewarding with Black-chinned and Brown-headed Honeyeaters finally turning up. Little Lorikeets zipped through the trees and an unidentified quail was flushed. Satin Bowerbird and Little Eagle were also seen here.

All up 42 species were seen and a good day was had by all.

Grant Brosie

Midweek Outing

Sunday 21st August 2005

Munmorah State Conservation Area

We started the morning by walking along the track off Blue Wren Drive – not far from the entrance gates – where we sighted Eastern Spinebill, Golden Whistler, Yellow-rumped and Striated Thornbill and spent time admiring the wildflowers.

Our next stop was the Moonee Beach Trail where Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds were seen feeding in the heathland along the ocean cliffs.

After our morning tea stop at Frazer Beach we proceeded to walk from Wybung Trig to the Birdie Beach Lookout and had good views of 4 sea eagles that continually flew over this area.

Our last stop was at Teatree Picnic Area at Birdie Beach where we mainly saw small birds such as Red-browed Finches, White-browed Scrubwrens and Superb Fairy-wrens.

A total of 39 species were seen.

From Don Moon

**FIELD OUTING TO MILBRODALE.
25 September 2005**

From Sue Hamonet

Our day began at Broke where we ticked off 20 species in the picnic area while waiting for the party to assemble.

No doubt that Spring is in the air – the birds were in full voice and nesting activity was evident for several species.

At the appointed hour we moved on to “Applegum” – the property of Richard and Pat Bushell, where we were warmly welcomed by Richard and conducted on a tour of their lovely garden - not only attractive to the birdwatcher’s eye but also to birds as canny Mr. & Mrs. Lewin were busy constructing their new home at no more than waist height in the passionfruit vine.

Our early morning walk took us along a track bordering the property where honeyeaters were busy in the remnant blossom of a White Box and Double-Barred and Red-browed Finches were in profusion, the Red-brows resplendent in their bright green and crimson. A Wedge-tailed Eagle soared majestically above the sandstone ridges coolly ignoring the best efforts of an Australian Raven to see it off. Three Grey Goshawks were spotted by some of the party and Dusky Woodswallows and Speckled Warblers preened after their early morning bathing.

After morning tea we took the fire trail that borders the Yengo National Park, and soaked in the unspoiled beauty of the Box/Ironbark Eucalypt woodland, where *Acacia longifolia* blossomed in gay profusion, Rainbow Bee-eaters were here, and a Leaden Flycatcher teased us with only occasional glimpses as it flitted from tree to tree. White-naped Honeyeaters had obviously started nesting activities early, as some young were seen already fledged.

Our trail took us on through a cleared area and vineyard, where several dams produced Australasian Grebe, Hardhead and Clamorous Reed Warbler. In all 65 species were recorded, which seemed more than satisfactory for our morning’s work.

We thank the Bushells for allowing us to use their property, and also Dianne Lamb, who was able to introduce us to this new locality.

**CAMP –WIDDEN VALLEY
October Long Weekend 2005**

From Alan Stuart

The Widden Valley is perhaps the prettiest spot I know of anywhere. And it was at its absolute best this weekend. We had perfect weather – days warm but not excessively so; nights cool but OK.

23 people camped in a clearing alongside the Widden Brook and we roamed far and wide by day. By night the communal campfire was where all the action was.

The Widden has had a very good season and there was lush vegetation everywhere – and plenty of birds. We recorded 112 species- which surely must be a new record for a Club Outing or Camp. And 18 species were found to be breeding – nest building sitting on eggs, feeding young in the nest. I suspect we’d have found even more species breeding if we’d had more time for looking.

On one notable occasion, Chris Herbert was setting up to photograph a Striped Honeyeater at nest and then had to move after he found that he had a Rufous Whistler nesting immediately above him, plus Willie Wagtails another metre higher up. At another site Tom Clarke and I found 4 nests within a 30-metre radius.

Perhaps the most important finding was eight Regent Honeyeater, some in pairs and breeding (Isn’t that fantastic?) There is a record from back in 1993 of Regents breeding in the Widden but this is the first record since then. Is it an overflow from the Capertee Valley which is not all that far away as the bird flies?

Congratulations to Lorna Mee who first found the Regents!

Other Highlights of the Camp – in no particular order included : Turquoise Parrot(1), Chestnut Rumped Heathwren (2), White-winged Triller (2), White Backed Swallow (1), Rufous Songlark (3+) Diamond Firetail (8+), lots of Common Bronzewing and many Bee-Eaters.

And, last but not least, I found a pair of Red-chested Button Quail. I will have great pleasure in filling out an Unusual Record Form (URF) for the Records Appraisal Committee to consider.

TWITCHATHON FUNDRAISER 2005

The last weekend of October is approaching fast and all the usual suspects and some newcomers are cleaning out their carbies (whatever that means), negotiating time off, revving up their bird knowledge (especially calls) and above all poring over maps for great annual Twitchathon event.

Yes folks, its on again. Normally sane birdwatchers drinking strong coffee, secretively planning routes for the weekend in which it's OK to admit you're a bit of a twitcher. Teams will compete to see how many species they can identify in as 24 hour period without breaking the traffic laws, sabotaging other teams' efforts or having a breakdown (vehicle or personal)

And all for a good cause. This year funds will go towards building and equipping an Environmental Education Centre at Gluepot Reserve in South Australia. Birds Australia, who run the Twitchathon and Gluepot Reserve hope to increase their course offerings to 6 in 2006 and to 18+ in 2007.

How to get involved The simplest way is to pledge funds to the team of your choice either a set sum of so much per bird (remembering that they tend to identify 200+) Teams will be out in force at Club Nights and are happy to take your money – which generates a tax deduction in your hands.

Or, its not too late to form a team, have a great day and badger your friends and relatives for donations. Members of the Committee – for example Tom Clarke, Ann Lindsey or Liz Crawford can point you in the right direction for entry forms etc. There are many versions of this “race” and not all of them involve running around like a demented chook. You can take a leisurely stroll around your favourite spots with stops for tea and champagne.

And everybody's welcome for the Bring you own everything BBQ at the Wetlands from 5pm on Sunday 30th October.

THE DARKER SIDE OF TWITCHING

Many of you will know that we have a breeding population of Bush Stone Curlews at Lemon Tree Passage.(sitting on eggs at latest report) Nowadays they are a relatively rare sight in this area and efforts are being made to make them safe (fences, signs etc) by officers of the Department of Environment and Conservation and through Port Stephens Council. This Club has been involved in these efforts from the beginning.

Anthony Marchant, Bushland and Vegetation Team Leader at the Council has been receiving complaints about weekend and after –hours twitchers, spooking the birds, trying to take photos including one gentlemen who apparently scared the birds off the nest site to take a Polaroid of the eggs.

Anthony is pretty sure this is not Club members – probably “amateurs” – but it's worth reprinting the Birdwatcher Code of Conduct (below)

If you have any inkling as to who these overeager birdwatchers are could you have a quiet word with them about the need to give the birds some space.

Birdwatchers Code of Conduct

1. The Welfare of birds must come first
2. Habitat must be protected
3. Nests, eggs and the immediate vicinity must not be disturbed
4. Keep disturbance of birds and their habitat to a minimum
5. Abide by the bird protection laws at all times
6. Keep your pets at home
7. When you find a rare bird, think carefully about who you should tell
8. Make your records available to the local bird recorder
9. Respect the rights of landowners
10. Respect the rights of other people in the countryside
11. Be an ambassador for birdwatchers generally. We do not want to be unwelcomed in the future.

Godwit, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Black-tailed Godwit, 1,200 Red Knot, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 2 Turnstones, 3 Golden Plovers, 1 Fairy Tern, 12 Royal Spoonbill, 1 White-Heron and 1 Banded Rail. In addition to some of the above I saw several hundred Wrybill, Pied Stilt, Black-billed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Black-winged Gull, New Zealand Dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, Caspian Tern, Paradise Shelduck and an Intermediate Egret.

The Wrybill is a small endemic New Zealand plover with a unique bill that curves to the right near the tip. The bill is believed to be specifically adapted for foraging for insects and larvae beneath submerged stones. It breeds in summer along riverbanks in the Canterbury area of the South Island and migrates north to the Firth of Thames and other muddy estuaries and inlets for the winter.

Unlike the Whangamarino wetlands the Miranda area appears well managed and under no immediate threat although all the signage and site management is provided by the Miranda Shorebirds Trust. There is no evidence of direct DOC involvement. Proposals for aquaculture in the Firth of Thames may propose a threat in the future and there do not appear to be any limits on fishing and shellfish gathering in the area. This is an excellent location to visit and all travelling birds should put it on their must-do list. However, at no time should you attempt to walk off the shell banks and onto the mud flats, as I discovered to my great embarrassment.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF CUCKOOS OF NSW

This is an abridged version of an article by Murray and Julie-Anne Coward in the NSW Bird Atlasers Newsletter of September 2004.

The authors have grouped Cuckoos into three categories – large medium and small. For reasons of space we have omitted their interesting discussion of the three larger species – Pheasant Coucal, Channel Billed Cuckoo and Koel; and of the Black-Eared Cuckoo - as these provide few identification difficulties in the field.

Medium Cuckoos

In this group are included four individuals ranging in size from 22-33 cm. They are the Oriental Cuckoo, Pallid Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Brush Cuckoo.

Oriental Cuckoo (*cuculus saturatus*) One of the largest birds of this group, this species can be easily confused with the Pallid Cuckoo on a first sighting although the Oriental is far less common. The major difference to look for is the yellow feet, part yellow bill and yellow eye ring. The Oriental Cuckoo has a distinctive pattern of bars across its underparts from the upper breast downwards, but is otherwise a similar grey colour to the Pallid Cuckoo. The female can sometimes display a red-brown colour (hepatic) on the head and wings, although this is very rare. The best means of distinguishing between the Oriental and the Pallid Cuckoo is their quite different calls and their habitats

Pallid Cuckoo (*cuculus pallidus*) This species is probably the plainest of the cuckoos in terms of distinctive markings. It is almost completely grey with a gold eye ring and fine white barring under the tail. The Pallid Cuckoo is best known for its call as it is the only cuckoo that moves up the scale of notes. The Pallid is also usually easy to observe once spotted as it will tend to remain stationary for quite a while.

Fan-Tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformes*) The Fan-Tailed Cuckoo can be confused with Brush Cuckoo. The key marking to look for is the pale buff breast of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo and its even more slate grey back and wings. It has a distinct yellow eye ring and pale yellow feet and the tail is distinctly patterned with white stripes. The call is often heard at night in the summer months and the Fan-Tailed Cuckoo often behaves in a similar manner to the Pallid Cuckoo by remaining quite still for lengthy periods.

Brush Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*) By contrast to the Fan-tailed, the Brush Cuckoo is a generally paler in most of its markings. The head is a lighter grey and the breast is a very pale washed buff. The eye ring and feet are grey and the tail has fewer white bars. The Brush Cuckoo is less often sighted than the Fan-Tailed and is most often heard than seen, through its far carrying persistent call- often heard in the very early morning.

Small Cuckoos

The four small cuckoos range in size from 14-21 cm and include the three bronze Cuckoos (Horsfields, Shining and Little) as well as the Black Eared Cuckoo. Only the three Bronze-Cuckoos are discussed here.

Horsfields Bronze Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx basalis*) Of the three bronze-cuckoo, the Horsfields is probably the most distinctive. It does not have stripes on its face but has a long white eyebrow that curves over and behind the eye down to the shoulder. There is also a small white line curving under the eye. The head is brown. In a front on view look for the gap in the chest stripes which gives the appearance of a clean white underbelly. The bronzy green wing and tail feathers and the short tail are similar to the other two Bronze-cuckoos.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (*chrysococcyx lucidus*) This species also has the typical bronzy green wing and tail feathers and this colour becomes browner and less bronze over the top of the head. The most distinctive feature to look for is the concentration of bars which surround the light brown eye and then cover all of the underparts of the bird right down to the tail. There is no gap in the bars across the upper breast. The barring is heavier and more distinct in this bird.

Little Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx minutillus*) This species as the name suggests is the smallest of the three although the size difference is not very obvious in the field. The most distinctive feature of this bird is its red eye and eye-ring. It also has less barring than the Shining bronze-cuckoo and the forehead is darker, almost black with fine white bars. In the field this bird appears to have a much darker face than the Shining Bronze Cuckoo, unless it is observed in very good light conditions.

MORE CLUB NEWS

Alan Stuart's invaluable email letter has the following snippets which are repeated here for the Technology-challenged among you.

On Ash Island you will see an Envirofund sign out alongside Ramsar Road. This relates to a project for which HBOC received Australian Government funding. If you continue on to Swan Road, near the railway line, just now there are great stacks of cut down mangrove trees which is a part of the project. The hope is that the birds will respond just like they did at Stockton Sandspit when the belt of mangroves was removed from there. Waders do like to have a clear line of sight!

The Migrants are Back. So far, only the Dollarbirds have not been reported. We like to have a record of first sightings each year so a mental note for next year, please, to let the Club know when a migrant species is seen early in the season.

HBOC Car Stickers – on sale for only \$2.00 at Club Nights and on other occasions.

A Black Bittern has been seen at Barnsley from timer to time. Directions – park at the end of Codrington Street (or any of those parallel to it) and make your way to the water and hope. Late afternoon is a good time – mostly one bird but one lucky person saw two.

The Stockton Sandspit has been very active lately with many Avocet plus Red Knot and Red Capped plovers. Terek Sandpipers and Tattlers are often along the rocky margins beyond the Bridge.

BLACKBIRDS

From Paddy Lightfoot

Caryl and I stayed overnight in Macksville. As Birdos do, we had an early morning walk, with our binoculars along the riverside. Coming along in the opposite direction was an obvious Birdo with his binoculars. So, as you do, we stopped for a yarn. Turned out he had just retired from work and migrated North from Melbourne to Macksville to live out his retirement.

“ What made you decide to leave Melbourne to live in Macksville” we asked
“Blackbirds” he replied, “I couldn't stand the blackbirds”

IBIS COUNT – UPDATE.

Wetland Centre & Middleton Swamp – August 2005

In the last newsletter we reported on Ibis Counts in June and July at various sites and this is an update on the August figures locally

Participants Anthony Gooden, Sue Hamonet, Alan Stuart Robert MacDonald and Ann Lindsey

Survey Points

Lyall Park Opp 37 Long Crescent Shortland (AL)

Cnr King & Mort Sts Shortland (AS)

The Wetland Centre Western Boardwalk(SH & AG)

Newcastle Wetlands Reserve (R McD)

Total roostings in The Wetland Centre and Middleton Swamp observed from:

	AW Ibis	SN Ibis
Lyall	0	1271
King/Mort	1153	227
TWC	13	21
NWR	0	1
Totals	1166	1520

Total Roosting

Market Swamp AWI 278; SNI 104

New'tle Wetlands AWI 92 SNI 0

Grand Totals AWI 1536 + SNI 1624 =3160

Other species roosting in Newcastle Wetlands

Aust. Pelican	119
Cattle Egret	126
LB Cormorant	23
Pied Cormorant	78
Great Cormorant	56
L.Pied Cormorant	5
White Faced Heron	5
Wand.Whist.Duck	49
Darter	15

Another interesting observation by Sue and Anthony while counting Ibis was a Lewins Rail calling in TWC from both Newcastle Wetlands and from the Western Boardwalk in TWC

OSPREYS

The following notice was received from Tony Bischoff who is working with Greg Clancy (bander and recent Club Night speaker) in the mid-North coast area.

OBSERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR COLOUR-BANDED OSPREY

As part of a study of population dispersal of Osprey in NSW, a number of Osprey chicks have been colour-banded along the mid-North and Far North Coasts. Assistance is required in carefully recording any future observations of colour-banded Osprey, providing details as follows -

- Date
- Accurate description of location (distance and direction from nearest town etc and GPS if possible)
- What colour band on Right leg (there is only ever one band on the right leg)
- What colour band(s) on the left leg and what colour band is on top of what other colour
- What the bird was doing

Please note there are more birds than there are different coloured bands. **So it is critical to accurately record the colour on the right leg, plus the top/bottom positions for each colour for the left leg.**

Please advise any sightings to

Greg Clancy gclancy@tpg.com.au Phone 6649 3153,

Tony Bischoff gcbabbler@optusnet.com.au.

Phone 6582 5055 or 0408 825055 or

Andrew Marshall

Andrew.marshall@environment.nsw.gov.au

Phone. 6588 5505.

Your assistance would be very much appreciated.

THE WETLAND CENTRE PROGRAM OCT 2005 to JAN 2006

- **Canoeing on the A-maze-ing Ironbark Trial**
October 2, Nov 6, Jan 1.
9.30am
- **Breakfast with the Birds**
Nov 13, Jan 8
7.00am
- **Spotlight Prowl**
October 15, Nov 19, Jan 14
Check start time when you book
- **Catchment Day**
Hosted by Hunter Water
Free Entry family fun day Sunday Oct 23
- **Frog & Reptile Expo**
November 20
- **Sunset Ramble Dec 3 from 5.00pm –**
incorporates a guided evening walk, followed
by canapés served on the deck. BYO Alcohol.
Great idea for a Christmas get together.

For further information and costing please contact
Pauline Price, Visitor Centre Manager on 4951 6444

Or email pprice@wetlands.org.au

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2004 EXHIBITION

Open until November 12

At Newcastle Regional Library, Lovett Gallery.

109 award winning and highly commended photographs of creatures great and small from around the world.

These were entries by amateurs and professionals in a competition run by the Natural History Museum in the UK and the BBC Wildlife Magazine.

DO NOT MISS IT!

Birding in New Zealand's Ramsar Wetlands

From Neil Fraser

During a recent stay in New Zealand's North Island I was able to check out two of the countries Ramsar listed sites, the Whangamarino Wetland and the Firth of Thames. The Whangamarino Wetland is located in the Waikato Region about 60 km south of Auckland and covers 6,000 ha of peat bogs, rush swamp, open water and river systems. Armed with a tattered second hand copy of Chamber's "Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide" and a New Zealand Department of Conservation brochure, I set off with high expectations of sighting at least some of the endangered Australasian Bittern, Spotless Crake, Brown Teal and North Island Fernbird recorded in the area, and the more common Banded Rail, Grey Teal and New Zealand Shoveler.

After some difficulty in finding the area, I arrived at the wetlands from the south where I encountered the open water areas. I was immediately shocked to see them dotted with shooters hides. It was also apparent that most of the southern part of the wetland is choked with hundreds of thousands of introduced willow trees. The presence of these trees around the margin, plus the surrounding private land holdings, makes access to the wetland almost impossible. The wetland is surrounded by steeply sloping hills that are intensely cropped or grazed to the waters edge.

There are no controls on the flow of sediment, fertilizer, pesticide or animal waste from these paddocks into the wetland and signs warning of blue green algae blooms tell the rest of the story. Infestations of Alligator weed are also flourishing in the nutritionally enriched waters. Around the margins of the wetland thousands of bright orange koi carp could be seen thrashing about, as large males, 50 to 80 cm long, fought to fertilise the female's newly laid eggs.

Most surprisingly, large sections of the margins of the southern part of the wetland are controlled by the Auckland/Waikato Game and Fishing Council and ironically, the only easy access to this part of the wetland is provided by this group. Unfortunately the birds in this area are so gun shy that the slightest movement in their direction immediately sets them to flight. The only birds I saw here area were Mallards, Pukeko (Purple Swamp-hen), Grey Duck (Pacific Black Duck), Black Swan, Canada Goose and a pair of Caspian Tern.

I then decided to try my luck in the northern section of the wetland which is dominated by rush swamp. Both the field guide and the DOC brochure recommended access along a causeway built through the middle of the swamp. This causeway provided passage for an aerial ropeway that carried coal from a mine on the eastern margin of the wetland to a power station on the western margin of the wetland. While the power station and the aerial rope way have been decommissioned the coal mine is still operating.

Unfortunately when I eventually located the accessible end of the causeway I was confronted with "No Trespassing" signs warning of dire consequences and an unfriendly looking security guard. (New Zealand has recently introduced OH&S legislation that has resulted in the elimination of all public access to any industrial facility due to public liability fears. This includes the popular geothermal power station at Lake Taupo.) I then drove about for about two hours looking for further access points to the wetland but found none. I was unable to sight any of my target birds but did hear bitterns booming in the distance on a couple of occasions.

My visit to this wetland proved very frustrating and disappointing. The NZ DOC's approach to management of the site seems very puzzling. It is difficult to understand how a wetland that is proclaimed to be so significant, has been allowed to become so degraded. With its current problems and threats I am surprised that it could even receive listing under the Ramsar Convention. One of the conditions of the Ramsar Convention specifies the "wise use" of the surrounding buffer zone to minimise impact on the area and I guess the New Zealander's definition of "wise use" differs from mine.

There is no signage directing visitors to the wetland and nothing indicating the significance of the area or the threatened species present. There are however plenty of signs warning of fishing or shooting without a permit. As we all well know, for most New Zealanders, national sport transcends all things, and this seems particularly so when farming, shooting and fishing take precedent over pro-active environmental management of a national and international asset. I later learned that there are 60,000 licensed shooters in NZ and that the Wangamarino Wetland is referred to as "the duck factory". The problems and threats that we see to our own Kooragang Wetlands pale in comparison to those in the Whangamarino area.

In comparison to the above, the Firth of Thames area provided amazing viewing. The area is about 50Km south east of Auckland and is centred along the Miranda coastline. The site comprises 7,800 ha of shallow estuarine water and mudflats, shell banks, lagoons and mangroves. Two significant high tide roosts on shell banks in the area are used by thousands of migratory and resident shorebirds that forage across the mudflats at low tide. A few km south of the village of Kaiaua is the Miranda Shorebirds Centre that is managed by the Miranda Naturalists Trust. It is open every day and provides information and accommodation for birdos (very reasonable rates) hires binoculars and telescopes and maintains a daily updated record on a blackboard of the most recent sightings. The two main sites are a short distance from the centre, are easily accessible and provide good, easy viewing at high tide – although a telescope is recommended. A shallow lagoon behind one of the sites, named the Stilt Pond, also provided a roost and foraging site for some species

On the day of my visit, 27 Sep 2005, the black board recorded the following species count: 2,500 Bar-tailed

Godwit, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Black-tailed Godwit, 1,200 Red Knot, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 2 Turnstones, 3 Golden Plovers, 1 Fairy Tern, 12 Royal Spoonbill, 1 White-Heron and 1 Banded Rail. In addition to some of the above I saw several hundred Wrybill, Pied Stilt, Black-billed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Black-winged Gull, New Zealand Dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, Caspian Tern, Paradise Shelduck and an Intermediate Egret.

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In this group are included four individuals ranging in size from 22-33 cm. They are the Oriental Cuckoo, Pallid Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Brush Cuckoo.

Oriental Cuckoo (*cuculus saturatus*) One of the largest birds of this group, this species can be easily confused with the Pallid Cuckoo on a first sighting although the Oriental is far less common. The major difference to look for is the yellow feet, part yellow bill and yellow eye ring. The Oriental Cuckoo has a distinctive pattern of bars across its underparts from the upper breast downwards, but is otherwise a similar grey colour to the Pallid Cuckoo. The female can sometimes display a red-brown colour (hepatic) on the head and wings, although this is very rare. The best means of distinguishing between the Oriental and the Pallid Cuckoo is their quite different calls and their habitats

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Small Cuckoos

The four small cuckoos range in size from 14-21 cm and include the three bronze Cuckoos (Horsfields, Shining and Little) as well as the Black Eared Cuckoo. Only the three Bronze-Cuckoos are discussed here.

Horsfields Bronze Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx basalis*) Of the three bronze-cuckoo, the Horsfields is probably the most distinctive. It does not have stripes on its face but has a long white eyebrow that curves over and behind the eye down to the shoulder. There is also a small white line curving under the eye. The head is brown. In a front on view look for the gap in the chest stripes which gives the appearance of a clean white underbelly. The bronze wing and tail feathers and the short tail are similar to the other two Bronze-cuckoos.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (*chrysococcyx lucidus*) This species also has the typical bronzy green wing and tail feathers and this colour becomes browner and less bronze over the top of the head. The most distinctive feature to look for is the concentration of bars which surround the light brown eye and then cover all of the underparts of the bird right down to the tail. There is no gap in the bars across the upper breast. The barring is heavier and more distinct in this bird.

Little Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx minutillus*) This species as the name suggests is the smallest of the three although the size difference is not very obvious in the field. The most distinctive feature of this bird is its red eye and eye-ring. It also has less barring than the Shining bronze-cuckoo and the forehead is darker, almost black with fine white bars. In the field this bird appears to have a much darker face than the Shining Bronze Cuckoo, unless it is observed in very good light conditions.

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2005

Jun 27	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	30+	Wyee Point	D. Moon
Jun 16	Emerald Dove	2	Glenrock S.R.A.	C. Goodenough
Jul 23	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Gateshead West	"
Jun 9	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Corlette Reserve	T. Clarke
Jun 17	Satin Bowerbird	1	Kilaben Bay	"
Jun 16	Spangled Drongo	1	Green Point	"
Jul 20	Pied Oystercatcher	5	Birubi Beach [Anna Bay]	"
Jul 20	Sooty Oystercatcher	1	"	"
Jul 8	Fairy Penguin	4	Shoal Bay	"
	Osprey	1	"	"
Jul 3	White-fronted Chat	6	Stockton Sandspit	"
	Little Wattlebird	2	"	"
Jul 11	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	3	"	"
Jul 13	White-necked Heron	10	Williamtown	"
Jul 1	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Cardiff	N. Livanos
Jul 30	Zebra Finch	100+	Medhurst Bridge [nr Denman]	"
	Double-barred Finch	60+	"	"
	Zebra Finch	60+	4km east of Jerrys Plains	"
Aug 12	Turquoise Parrot	2	Bulga [Wambo Rd]	"
Jul 31	Spotted Quail-thrush	1	Tomalpin [western side]	J. Goswell
Jul 15	Blue-faced Honeyeater	4+2dy	Pelican Reserve	D. Moon
Jul 26	Glossy Black Cockatoo	6+1dy	Wyee Point	"
Jul 26	Torresian Crow	1	S.W.C.	D. Cooper
	Peregrine Falcon	1	"	"
Jul 15	Brown Goshawk	Pr +1dy	Wingen	G. Newling
	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Pr nb	"	"
Aug 19	Powerful Owl	1	Awaba Bay N.P.	T. Clarke
Aug 12	Musk Duck	3	Grahamstown Dam	M. Maddock
	Hoary-headed Grebe	16	"	"
	Great Crested Grebe	1	"	"
	Swamp Harrier	1	"	"
Aug 15	Sooty Oystercatcher	3	Redhead Rock Platform	C. Goodenough
	Australasian Gannet	10	"	"
Aug 13	Spotted Quail-thrush	1	Watagan SF [Muir's Lookout]	"
Aug	Grey-crowned Babbler	Family +4 active nests	Branxton	A. Richardson
Aug 25	Topknot Pigeon	Pr nb	"	"
Aug 10	Spotted Harrier	1	North Rothbury	"
Aug 4	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1 on	Rothbury	"
Sep 17	Topknot Pigeon	22	Lamb's Valley	C. & N. Brock
Aug 2	Plum-headed Finch	80+	4km from Jerrys Plains	N. Livanos
Aug	Bar-shouldered Dove	1	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Aug 6	Barn Owl	2	Mt. Arthur Mine Site	"
	Southern Boobook	1	"	"
Aug/Sep	Grey-crowned Babbler	2+2dy	East Seaham	R. Carlton
Sep 7	Budgerigar	4	"	"
	Brown Goshawk	3	"	"

	Tree Martin	B	“	“
	Dusky Woodswallow	B	“	“
Aug 31	Osprey	2	Salamander Bay	T. Clarke
Sep 2	Tawny Grassbird	Heard only	Hunter Region Botanic Garden	“
Aug 1	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	“	“
Aug 9	Rose Robin	1	Medowie	D. Cooper
	White-bellied Sea-eagle	Nest with downy yng	Grahamstown Dam Lake	“
	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Grahamstown Dam	“
	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Medowie	“
Aug 9	Rose Robin	1	S.W.C.	D. Cooper
Aug 23	Osprey	1	Tahlee Bible College	N.Fraser
Sep 13	Pallid Cuckoo	Heard	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Sep 13	Rufous Bristlebird	3	Gloucester Tops NP [Kerrapit Rd]	A.Stuart
Sep 13	Powerful Owl	1 heard	Sharpe's Creek [Gloucester Tops]	A. Stuart
Sep 14	Bassian Thrush	2	“	“
Sep 13	Crescent Honeyeater	2	Gloucester Tops [Kerrapit Rd]	“
Sep 14	Crescent Honeyeater	2	Gloucester Tops Picnic Area	“
Sep 13/14	Red-browed Treecreeper	2	Gloucester Tops [Kerrapit Rd]	“
Sep `13	Flame Robin	Pr	“	“
Sep 14	Flame Robin	Pr	Gloucester Tops [Picnic Area]	“
Sep 12	Terek Sandpiper	2	Fern Bay	“
	Grey-tailed Tattler	3	“	“
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	9	Ash Island	“
Sep 14	Rufous Whistler	2	S.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
	White-necked Heron	1	“	“
	Figbird	Pr.	“	“
Sep 10	Black Bittern	2	Barnsley [Cockle Creek}	R.McDonald
Aug/Sep	Lewin's Rail	1-2	S.W.C.	“

COMING EVENTS

**PLEASE CHECK WITH CONTACT PERSON FOR EACH OUTING IN CASE OF CHANGED
DETAIL OR SUITABILITY OF SITE FOR CAMP OR FIELD DAY.**

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS	CONTACT
Saturday October 22	Hunter Wader Survey	11.00am Various Locations As Directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Sunday October 23	Field Outing Tahlee/Carrington	7.30am Raymond Terrace MacDonalds	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Saturday – Sunday October 29-30	TWITCHATHON Join a team and/or raise money for Gluepot Reserve (Birds Australia	4.00pm Sat to 5.00pm Sun finishing with a BBQ at Wetland Centre (\$4.50 entry)	Steve Roderick 4930 4800
Tuesday November 1	Mid-week outing Kilaben Bay Lake Macquarie	7.30am Fire Station cnr Ridge Rd and Mt Waring Rd Toronto	Robert MacDonald 4967 4161
Wednesday November 9	CLUB MEETING	7.30am The Wetland Centre	Guest speaker Catherine Price – Bush Stone-curlew
Saturday November 12	Atlas Outing Myall Lakes area	You must ring to confirm.	Nick Livanos 4854 5739
Sunday November 13	Stockton Sandspit Volunteer Day	8.00am to noon (low tide 12.30pm)	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Saturday 19 November	Hunter Wader Survey	11.00am various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 49593663 Alan Stuart 49528569
Sunday November 20	Field Outing Allyn River	7.30am Maitland Railway Station	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Sunday December 4	Annual Lathams Snipe Pambalong Nature Reserve	8.30am Minmi Pub (outside!)	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
Tuesday December 6	Mid-week Outing City Parks and Foreshore	7.30am at Wolfe Street below Obelisk	Max Blanch 49611655
Sunday December 11	Stockton Sandspit Volunteer Day	8.00am to noon (low tide 11.21am)	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Wednesday December 14	XMAS CLUB NIGHT	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Bring your slides, anecdotes, videos and a plate to share the festive spirit.
Saturday December 17	Hunter Wader Survey	10.00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 49593663 Alan Stuart 49528569