



Hunter Bird Observers Club

**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 3/06

June/July 2006

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**Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.**  
Affiliated with Bird Observers Club of Australia

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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**  
Ann Lindsey

**Life Members**  
Wilma Barden  
Sue Hamonet  
Ed Hamonet (dec)

*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*

**NEW MEMBERS**

HBOC welcomes the following new members: -

Hayley and Robert Boyce of Edgeworth  
Iain Paterson of Naremburn

HBOC Annual Membership for 2006 remains at \$25 Family or Single  
and \$3 for Juniors. Fees are now due.

**NEWSLETTER DATES for 2006**

**Edition**

**Copy Deadline**

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| August/September           | 30 July    |
| October/November           | 1 October  |
| December 2006/January 2007 | 3 December |

## **PRESIDENT COLUMN**

### **From Liz Crawford**

Our 30th birthday celebration on the Lady Joy was a great success with plenty of birds and plenty of enthusiastic Club members, including several founding members – Wilma Barden, Fred Van Gessel, Vicki and Bill Murphy and Kevin Stokes. The Lady Joy provided a wonderful viewing platform – and easy socialising as no amount of talking will disturb the birds!

Silver Gulls and Crested Terns guided the ferry into the main channel. Near Stockton Bridge, a Mangrove Heron flew across the bows. A good variety of migratory waders watched us from the Kooragang Dykes as we sailed slowly past – Eastern Curlews, a few Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwits and several Grey-tailed Tattlers. Endemic waders included Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Black-winged Stilts and beautiful Red-necked Avocets. A solitary Little Egret stared fixedly at the water, waiting for prey. Photogenic White-bellied Sea-eagles perched in emergent trees above the mangroves while the rain misted gently down.

Further upstream, the rain eased, the sun shone and we had great views of saltmarsh and mangroves. After the cruise we gathered at the Railway Sheds on the foreshore for lunch, a few speeches and a celebratory cake organised by Di Johnson! Thirty years after a small group of birdwatchers separated from the Hunter Flora and Fauna Society to form the Hunter Bird Observers Group, the Club continues to grow, encouraging birdwatching as a leisure activity and campaigning for conservation of birds and their habitat, particularly in the Hunter Region.

Persistent public pressure contributed to Centennial Coal's recent decision to withdraw its application for an open cut coal mine at Awaba. The Club campaigned against the mine on behalf of the Masked Owls that live and breed in hollows in old eucalypts in the forest targeted for mining. It's wonderful to know they can continue to be part of that forest ecosystem into the future.

Whenever development is proposed, historical records of plants and animals are used by consultants in their assessment of potential environmental impacts. From time to time, the

Club's records are sought by consultants working on developments in the Hunter Region.

Sue Hamonet maintains our Club records, which now span 30 years. These are mostly based on Club outings and surveys. However, your individual observations are very valuable too – they contribute to the Annual Bird Reports for the Hunter Region, which Alan Stuart has been compiling since 1993. Both “mundane” and “unusual” observations are worth recording and reporting – bring them along to Club night or email them to Alan Stuart, and help build up our knowledge about birds in the Hunter.

You may have noticed that we are now “affiliated with the Bird Observers Club of Australia” (BCOA). This affiliation allows us to advertise our outings in The Bird Observer, BOCA's magazine that is distributed Australia-wide, increasing our networking. We also share in BOCA's public liability insurance cover, which results in a considerable financial benefit to the Club.

Last month, Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project (KWRP) took delivery of a splendid Quintrex runabout with a 25 HP engine, generously donated by the Price Waterhouse Coopers Foundation. KWRP has invited HBOC to use the boat for future wader surveys and has provided boat-licence training for two Club members. This is a fantastic endorsement of the worth of our monthly wader surveys.

Removal of large mangroves from wader habitat on Ash Island is now complete, thanks to contractors funded by an Envirofund Grant. To maintain the areas, we need to remove mangrove seedlings, which is readily done with a hoe or spade. A small band of enthusiastic birdos has successfully cleared the eastern side of Milhams Pond. The next area will be Swan Pond. Please contact Ann Lindsey if you'd like to join in the fun.

The next Club outing is a week earlier than usual – it's the New Members BBQ on Sunday 18 June at the Hunter Wetlands Centre at Shortland. Old and new members are very welcome.

## **MID WEEK OUTING: GLENROCK 7/3/06**

### **Report from Garth Cooksey**

A good turnout of members and visitors assembled at Glenrock for the first midweek outing of Spring. It was decided to walk the Glenrock track first and the easier Fernleigh track later.

We took the boardwalk route down to Flaggy Creek. This first part of the walk was dominated by Bell Miners but the view of the creek and the lush vegetation made up for the lack of bird variety. We all stopped on the bridge to take in the views of the creek and wait for stragglers.

We then started on down the track at various intervals stretching out for the usual few hundred meters. We saw Chestnut Teal, Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, Red Browed Firetail and Lewin's Honeyeaters in this area. We all gathered again at the very scenic Leichhardt Lookout to soak in the magnificent sight of the Flaggy Creek valley framing Glenrock Lagoon and the beach in the distance.

At this point some of the more "mature" members of our party opted for an early return to the car park. This probably had something to do with the sight of the endless flight of stairs to negotiate down to the valley floor rather than a thirst for morning tea.

The rest of us pushed on toward the beach and were rewarded with sightings of Brown Thornbills, Eastern Whipbirds, Brown Gerygones and White Browed Scrubwrens among others. We were again stretched over a large stretch of track, and lost some more to the irresistible call of morning tea. On reaching the coastal heath area near the beach we caught sight of New Holland Honeyeaters, Great Cormorants, Welcome Swallows and Australasian Gannets diving out to sea.

At this point a short discussion took place between the remaining members of our outing still hanging in. The choice was between going back the way we came or, as suggested by some more adventurous "mutineers", to cross the creek and go back via the Scout Camp. I opted to go with the "mutineers". So we set off over the creek while the others retraced

their steps.

"Crossing to the other side" was rewarded by good views of various waterbirds in the lagoon. Among those sighted were Cattle Egrets, White Faced Herons, Black Ducks, Caspian Terns and Little Pied Cormorants. As we made our way back to the car park led by a "committee", each knowing a part of the way, we took in Masked Lapwings, Variegated Wrens, Grey and Rufous Fantails, and Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes.

We were greeted back at the car park by a very refreshed group of "mature" birdo's, who took great delight in giving me stick for joining the "mutineers".

Before I had finished my first cuppa some of those refreshed people were eager to set off for the Fernleigh Track. There was a steady stream of people heading off for the second leg of our outing until I finally decided to join the last stragglers. It was a very quiet day for birds on this section of the track, but we did manage to come across a small active area that yielded Rufous Fantail, Eastern Spinebill, and Superb Blue Fairy Wrens. We didn't go very far down the track before we turned back.

It was a good day's outing even though the group tended to fragment during the day, and as leader maybe I shouldn't have joined the "mutineers", but then what bird group follows a leader anyway!

### **Other Program Notes**

Pelagic 26<sup>th</sup> March. The first for the year had 10 brave souls in big swell rewarded with White-bellied Storm Petrel.

Easter Camp to Munghorn Gap  
Huge turnout from HBOC and COG – great birds were enjoyed but experience soured a little by a couple of bad neighbours

Anzac Day Weekend at Spring Dam Laguna.  
3 campers plus 3 day visitors. Highlight –Gang Gang Cockatoo feeding on grey gum seed capsules.

Midweek Outing to Sugarloaf May 2  
18 People, Quiet Birding Day.  
Highlight: Rose Robin

**MID-WEEK OUTING**  
**4 APRIL 2006**  
**HUNTER REGION BOTANICAL GARDENS**

**Report from Anthony Gooden**

Well, another mid-week function but one that nearly didn't happen. We were due to go to Grahamstown Dam and, after a visit mid last year, I was looking forward to a good list of birds – both land and water.

However, the land is owned by Hunter Water and, due to an apparently new policy, they are denying access to anyone (citing administrative and security reasons). HBOC committee has since confirmed that this is general policy. It is disappointing because it is the “protected” nature of the environment that makes the birding better!!

Thanks largely to Neville McN, we made arrangements with the Gardens and 21 loyal people met there at 8am. It wasn't a huge day bird wise but it was pleasant and it was good to be supporting the Botanic Gardens organization. We did two largish walks and then most of us had lunch at the café (sort of pre-arranged and still better than making our own). The area is very dry and I guess we are between seasons.

As well as our old members (sorry, long term regulars), we had a few visitors and they were mightily impressed with the day. They enjoyed the civilized birding, the social atmosphere and the chance to see birds they hadn't thought about – even if they are “ordinary”. Hopefully, it may lead to a few more members??

A few of the birds were little lorikeets, eastern rosellas and plenty of rainbow lorikeets; red wattle and little wattle birds; yellow-faced, white-cheeked and lewins honeyeaters; eastern spinebills; wonderful views of golden whistlers and an eastern yellow robin; as well as brown gerygones, variegated fairy wrens and white-browed scrubwrens. Also, had both the Tasmanian and eastern types of silvereye.

Not everyone saw the Grey Goshawk and the Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos. A few extra bits of excitement – red ants which loved Judy T, a beautiful flowering casuarina in the carpark, a very smelly but attractive (to flies) toadstool and a satin

bower bird bower complete with compulsory blue bottle tops and blue milk bottle “rings”.

**Atlas Outing – Hexham Swamp,**  
**Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2006**

**Report from Nick Livanos**

From the designated meeting place, Minmi Fire Station, we proceeded in two cars to our starting point at Hexham, just north of the Oak factory, leaving the other vehicles at Minmi. Our group of eight assembled there at 8am: Liz Crawford, Chris Herbert, Robert McDonald, Ann Lindsey, Terry Lindsey, Lorna Mee, Mike Newman and myself.

The walk followed the old railway line through the swamp, eventually passing through the Tank Paddock and ending at Minmi. About halfway along, we explored a side track into the swamp for a kilometre or so. This was a bit soggy in places, but provided us with some good sightings, some interesting calls and a pleasant morning tea location.

Hexham Swamp is an ephemeral wetland which has played host to large numbers of birds when water levels have been high. At the time of our survey, the overall water level was fairly low, much of the area being grass and reedbeds. However, there were some areas of open water, as well as marshy areas.

The most numerous bird was Straw-necked Ibis, with about 650 seen, mainly feeding in the paddocks on the western side of the railway. There were also large flocks of Common Starling. Other water birds seen were White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Pelican, Purple Swamphen, Buff-banded Rail and a lone White-necked Heron.

Amongst the reeds and low bushes were Tawny and Little Grassbirds and lots of Golden-headed Cisticolas and Superb Fairy-wrens. Magpies, Magpie-larks, Willie Wagtails and Australian Ravens were seen along most of the route, as well as Cattle Egrets, Welcome Swallows, and Pied and Grey Butcherbirds. At morning tea, we saw a solitary male White-fronted Chat.

At one point, Liz, Terry and I had wonderful close-up views of a Hobby flying fast and low along the track directly towards us, veering away at the last moment to perch in a small tree about 20 metres beyond. When we caught up with the others, we found out that they had disturbed it attacking a group of Brown Quail, causing the Hobby to speed off in our direction. Other raptors seen were Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Brown Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel and Black-shouldered Kite.

As well as the recognisable calls of the more-familiar birds there were some we could not positively identify, which left us intrigued. There is a lot of habitat which could conceivably support other species, such as Grass Owl, various quail and Painted Snipe when conditions are appropriate but it is a large area which is not all easily accessible.

As we progressed towards and through the Tank Paddock, we encountered Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Noisy Miner, Eastern Rosella, Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, Tree Martin, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, White-breasted Woodswallow and Brown and Yellow Thornbill. At the old sewage treatment ponds were Great Egret, Wood Duck, Grey and Chestnut Teal, and Hardhead.

The sun stayed away, as did the rain, which had threatened early on, which made for ideal conditions for a long walk. We finished up at about 2.30pm with a late lunch at Hexham.

## **More Program Notes**

### Ash Island, Stockton Sandspit 19/3/06

A small group of members enjoyed a family group of Brown Quail and some lucky people saw Yellow Wagtail

### Wader Survey 29/4/06

Anniversary cake eaten and Stubble Quail at Deep Pond as a bonus.

Greswick Angus Survey. Team Members were presented with copies of "Striking the Balance" written by John Spearpoint.

## **BIRDWATCHERS DREAM**

**from Di Johnson**

Bird Heaven has to be the Capertee Valley. Late in the afternoon on the Sunday after Saturday's planting, I came to be surrounded by an amazing plethora of birds all feeding furiously in trees close to the barbed wire fence. I had missed David Geering's birdwatching sortie to see the Regents due to my hosts fascinating details about alpacas and viewing these beautiful woolly animals with their doe-like eyes. So I set out for Crown Station Road hoping to get a glimpse of these magnificent birds.

All along from Glen Alice, flocks of Diamond Firetails, Zebra and Double-Barred Finches were startled by my car as they ranged from the ground to the wires on the fences.

When I stopped I could hear the birds in a feeding frenzy. There were lots of Dusky Woodswallows, Fuscous, Striped and White-plumed Honeyeaters and a friendly Hooded Robin quite close to the fence. My binoculars went into overdrive. On the ground amongst the creamy yellow grasses Red-rumped Parrots and Yellow-rumped Thornbills were feeding. A scissors-grinder ( Restless Flycatcher) hovered over the fluffy tufts. Nearby the crackling of bark awakened me to a Crested Shrike-tit.

My eyes suddenly caught sight of golden and black birds feeding on the lerps. I was so excited to see these enigmatic birds we are always on the lookout for in the Hunter. I must admit I stayed there quite sometime absolutely in a state of euphoria.

These planting weekends are great in that it is a practical way to help conserve our resources, encourage the Regents to keep coming back to the valley and allows us to get out there to do some birdwatching. Hope to return in August. See the following article for more information.

The **Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater Recovery Group** was established in 1993 to help conserve the Regent Honeyeater in the Capertee Valley (the most important of the three key breeding areas remaining for this endangered species).

This group is instrumental in carrying out vital on-ground work outlined in a national Recovery Plan for the Regent Honeyeater. Since 2000, alone, the Group and its many volunteer supports have planted 70,000 trees and shrubs at various strategic sites throughout the Valley. Funding from various bodies has assisted this work.

In May 2006 another 4000 or so trees and shrubs were planted on two properties. These two 40-hectare properties were also planted in 2005. This years planting extended the area planted and consolidated the importance of these two sites as future habitat for Regent Honeyeaters and other woodland birds in very strategic sites.

## WINGEN SIGHTINGS

from **Greg Newling**

Some interesting sightings in our yard.

The two Bar-shouldered Doves that have been around for some time became 6 on Friday with addition of 4 new arrivals, all immatures (bluish necks and buff eye rings). I wish I could say for sure that they bred close by, but I never found a nest.

Yesterday morning, I was painting inside our new house and heard a strange noise outside. As I moved to the window to investigate, I saw a Brown Goshawk on our barbeque with a Common Myna in its talons. Unfortunately it saw me and let the Myna go and flew off. This morning I went around to the front of our house and the Goshawk was perched on the switchboard on the front verandah! There are lots of Mynas around at present hopefully the Goshawk will catch a few without me disturbing it! It's a very large Goshawk so I presume its female.

Also on the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month there were 8 Dusky Woodswallows on our side fence, 4 of them dependent young being fed by adults.

## The 'Mid-year Minitwitch'

From **Mick Roderick**

It's on again! I said I was going to make it a bi-annual event and this is the second one this year...it's time for another '**Minitwitch**'!

In case you haven't cottoned on as yet, the Minitwitch is a 5 hour version of the 24 hour BA Twitchathon (and the HBOC is in the only part of Australia who holds a Minitwitch). To recap on my previous article, the rules are simple...in fact they are identical to the 24hr event – the only difference is that it runs from **8am to 1pm** and finishes at a different location. Teams can go wherever and however they like (apart from aircraft!) and record as many different bird species as they can in the allotted timeframe.

Due to traffic and parking disasters in previous Minitwitches, we have decided to relocate the finishing point to **Centennial Park**, on Dawson and Bruce Streets, Cooks Hill – under the arch to the west of the Lowlands Bowling Club to be exact. We will arrange for some lunch once we're there (or BYO if you prefer).

We had 4 teams compete last time (January this year), with every team scoring over 100 species – a fantastic morning's birding. The current holders of the '**Bar-breasted Brewing Duck Perpetual Trophy**' are the 'Square-tailed Quites', although they will be a 2-piece team for the first time and are keen to be challenged by the likes of the 'Oil Barons', 'Grick Livasie' or the 'Mees'.

So get a few bird-buddies together, map out a route and see how many birds you can find in 5 hours. It really is loads of fun!

For more info contact Mick Roderick  
[fred\\_barney\\_72@yahoo.com](mailto:fred_barney_72@yahoo.com) or on 0432 356 590

## Cocos and Christmas Island Trip Report May 2006 from Richard Baxter

On the 1 May 2006 I traveled to Australia's Cocos-Keeling Islands and Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean for a week of birding. My previous visits to these islands had been at the beginning of the wet season and my intention this time was to visit these locations at the end of the wet season, which is outside the times that most birders go. I had hoped that there would be some wet season migrants about and the Asian migrants would have coloured up nicely before departing on their northward journeys.

We arrived on Cocos late afternoon and started birding straight away with Rufous Night Heron and Green Junglefowl being abundant. Our first morning began with a pre breakfast search of the rubbish tip, the farm and the lagoon with White-breasted Waterhen being seen on several occasions. These would turn out to be very common on West Island with up to ten being seen at one location.

During the rest of the day we searched several areas of sandflats and freshwater on the northern end of West Island. After lunch we began our search of the southern end of West Island and located a Yellow Wagtail near the end of the runway. This yellow wag was obviously different to the ones we see each year on Ash Island. In addition to being in full breeding plumage it had a completely dark grey, nearly black head making it sub species *macronyx*, and only the third Australian record, which may one day be split into GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL.

After several photos we continued our birding. Our group also caught the ferry over to Home Island where the most common bird was White Tern. Our search found a Buff-banded Rail on the southern end of Home Island, this being one of the very few records of this sub-species away from North-keeling Island. About midday on the second day I dropped into Q Stn Swamp and noticed two unusually plumaged grey and white reef egrets. Usually Eastern Reef Egrets are either grey morph or white morph but there are a couple of individuals on Cocos that are both grey and white.

While photographing these two birds I found a CHINESE POND HERON in full breeding plumage feeding in the shallow pools in front of me. An awesome looking bird with a full burgundy coloured head/chest and grey back.

There have been possible sightings of CPH before but none have been ID'd because they cannot be separated from other pond herons such as Javan and Indian in non breeding plumage. This one had coloured up nicely prior to flying home and was unmistakable. A first for Australia!

After heading back to town and casually telling the others, we spent the afternoon at the swamp with everyone getting cracking views. The following day we flew to Christmas Island for four nights. After arriving in the dark we went to our accommodation but took a quick detour where I showed the others three Christmas Island Hawk Owls prior to dinner.

The following morning we had Java Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, CI Frigatebird, Lesser and Greater Frigatebird, White-tailed (including Golden morph) and Red-tailed Tropicbird, Brown and Red-footed Booby, CI Imperial Pigeon as well as Island Thrush, all from the motel!

Our first stop was the plantation where we found two Yellow Wagtails and two CI Goshawk as well as nesting Abbott's Booby. In less than 24hrs we had all the endemics and CI specialties. The search now began for something a little rarer and we had it by lunchtime!

While walking down to the cove adjacent to the casino a small light blue kingfisher about the size of an Azure Kingfisher darted from the rocks and around the headland. This bird was very wary and would fly around the headland as soon as anyone got within 70m of it. The following day we had better views of it and then the next morning finally identified it as COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis* only the second record for Australia.

All up a very successful trip with one 1<sup>st</sup> for Aust, one 2<sup>nd</sup> for Aust and one 3<sup>rd</sup> for Aust(sub-species) as well as easily seeing all the endemics and specialties. I'll be returning to both Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Island in Feb and March 2007. If any club members are interested in coming along I can be contacted on 0412 540212 or at [randrbaxter@yahoo.com](mailto:randrbaxter@yahoo.com).

(see below for more details of other trips)

## BIRDING TOURS AUSTRALIA

### COCOS and CHRISTMAS ISLAND 2007

Either Richard Baxter or Phil Hansboro will be leading 2 birding tours to the Cocos-Keeling Islands & Christmas Island in 2007.

**FEBRUARY 2007** 26 Feb to 5 March 2007  
**MARCH 2007** 5<sup>th</sup> March to 12 March 2007

(Both Tours are in the Wet Season to maximise chances of finding rare vagrants)

**MISSION: Find all the endemics and search for rare vagrants on both islands. Phil and Richard have been to Christmas and Cocos-Keeling Islands 3 times previously and in addition to easily finding all the endemic birds have also seen the following awesome species : WATERCOCK, COMMON KINGFISHER, ASIAN KOEL, PIN-TAILED SNIPE, GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL AND CHINESE POND HERON in breeding plumage!**

**Your package includes:**

- **Economy class Airfare Perth to the Cocos-Keeling Is.**
- **3 x Nights accommodation at the "Cocos Beach Motel" on West Island and Cocos car hire.**
- **Fly Cocos Is to Christmas Is. 4 x Nights Accommodation Christmas Island and car hire**
- **Fly Christmas Island to Perth**
- **All Taxes and Ticket Levies.**

**Meals not included**

**COST \$2500. ex Perth**  
(single supplement \$200) (every effort will be made for people to share if desired)

**Contact Richard Baxter on Mob: 0412 450212 or**

**[randrbaxter@yahoo.com](mailto:randrbaxter@yahoo.com) OR**

**Lisa Preston (Christmas Island Travel)**  
**Ph. 08 9164 7169 or [lisap@citravel.com.au](mailto:lisap@citravel.com.au)**  
**Mob. 0439 215 168**

## FRED VAN GESSEL TAPES

### NOTICE

There may be faults on Fred's recent CD's. They may lack tracks especially in the second half of the CD. Check any recent purchases if faulty return your CD to the Club for no-charge replacement.

## YELLOW WAGTAIL – SPLITS

Richard Baxter reports that the Yellow Wagtail has been split into three species by northern hemisphere ornithologists. Presumably Australia will follow suit. Why is this relevant? Well, Ash Island Yellow Wagtails are mostly of the race *simillima* but sometimes they are *taivana* birds. These are going to become, respectively, the Kamchatka Wagtail and the Green-headed Wagtail. So those who keep lists (come on, admit it) will be able to add one species to their list. If they are confident about having seen the two types of Wagtail out there, of course.

## BUSH STONE CURLEW DNA STUDY

The Australian Museum is trying to determine the distribution of sub-species of this species. They want feathers for DNA testing. If you happen to find one, let Alan Stuart know and he will tell you where to send it.

## NEWHAVEN TRANSFER TO AWC

Birds Australia have announced that the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) and the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage have entered into a contract which will ensure that Newhaven continues to be managed as a private conservation property and part of the National Reserve System. With this last formal requirement met, Birds Australia transferred the ownership of Newhaven to AWC on 31 March.

The next step is to formally establish the joint BA/AWC Management Committee that will oversee the implementation of the agreed Management Plan.



# HUNTER WETLANDS CENTRE

## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS:

### SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM

**WETLAND TURTLES** (children aged 5-9)  
Have lots of fun with games, arts and crafts, dipnetting and adventure walks, with skilled and experienced leaders.  
9AM-1PM Tuesdays and Wednesdays  
July 4, 5, 11 and 12

**WET AND WILD CANOEING** (children 10-15 years)  
Experience this fun canoeing adventure with experienced guide.  
9AM-1PM Thursdays  
July 6 & 13

**ARTS ALIVE** (children 5-12 years)  
Learn all about birds, reptiles, tortoises and other pond animals while being creative and having fun  
9AM to 1PM Fridays  
July 7 & 14

Bookings are essential for all the above activities which are fully supervised and cost \$15 per child.

All Children to wear protective footwear, hat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Also to bring a backpack with morning tea, lunch and water bottle.

### REGULAR EVENTS

**BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS**  
Next Date: Sunday July 9. Cost \$20 for adults and \$10 for Children

**SPOTLIGHT PROWL**  
Saturday Evenings Jun 17 and July 15  
\$10 Adults, \$5 Children

**CANOEING ON A-MAZE-ING IRONBARK CREEK**  
9.30am Sunday July 2  
Cost \$25 Adults, \$12.50 Children.

Bookings essential for all regular events. Start times need to be checked. Special Family Rates apply. Talk to Reception for details.

## BARREN GROUNDS

### -GROUND PARROT SURVEY 2006

Ground Parrot surveys at Barren Grounds have been conducted annually since the January 1983 fire. Volunteers from Birds Australia, COG, CBOC Birding NSW NPWS and the University of Wollongong and elsewhere have always come along to help. **!!WE NEED YOUR HELP THIS YEAR!!**

The results over the past few years have been quite erratic. What will happen this year?. **BE THERE YOURSELF AND FIND OUT.** Bring stout walking gear, wet weather gear, sun bonnet, picnic lunch. For more information, contact Jack.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au

### LIST OF CASES DETERMINED BY NSW ORAC in 2005

|                                                |                                           |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Franklins Gull</b><br>14/12/2003.           | <b>Little Bay Sydney</b><br>Not Accepted. |
| <b>Elegant Parrot.</b><br>13/07/2004           | <b>Fowlers Gap</b><br>Accepted            |
| <b>Kermadec Petrel</b><br>11/10/2004           | <b>off Sydney</b><br>Accepted             |
| <b>Soft-plumaged Petrel</b><br>9/10/2004       | <b>off Sydney</b><br>Accepted             |
| <b>Grey-backed Storm-Petrel</b><br>9/10/2004   | <b>off Sydney</b><br>Accepted             |
| <b>Westland Petrel</b><br>July 1996            | <b>off Wollongong</b><br>Accepted         |
| <b>Masked Booby</b><br>20/1/2005               | <b>South West Rocks</b><br>Accepted       |
| <b>Black-bellied Storm-petrel</b><br>10/4/2005 | <b>off Newcastle</b><br>Accepted          |
| <b>Red-backed Button Quail</b><br>9/2/2004     | <b>Woodford Island</b><br>Accepted        |
| <b>Oriental Plover</b><br>May 2005             | <b>Lord Howe Is</b><br>Accepted           |

## BYE BYE BIRDIES

*This is an abridged version of an article by Michael D Lemonick in Time Magazine 15/5/06*

Even after an unusually mild winter, the return of spring to North America feels like a blessing. Parents are dragging their toddlers to the park. Students are dusting off their Frisbees. And birdwatchers, armed with binoculars and guidebooks, are heading out to search for their favorite species.

But the birders may be in for a disappointment. Radar studies and annual migrations suggest that the number of birds winging along America's flyways may be down by nearly 50% over the past 30 years, and data from the US Geological Survey's annual Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count reflect a similar decline. Various reasons for the falloff have been proposed, but climate change caused by global warming is high on the list for many experts.

The evidence has so far been largely circumstantial, however, which is why a study in *Nature* is so intriguing. Building on some 40 years of bird counts, Dutch scientists report that populations of a migratory species, called the pied flycatcher, have plummeted an astonishing 90% over past two decades in some areas of the Netherlands. And in that case, there doesn't seem to be any doubt about why: flycatchers are on the wane because climate change has made them late for dinner.

Those agile, acrobatic birds spend the winter in West Africa and return to their Netherlands nesting grounds in the spring to lay eggs. When the hatchlings emerge, the parents feed them mostly with caterpillars. The timing of the flycatchers' migration has evolved over many thousands of years to coincide with an approximately three-week period after Dutch plants have flowered and caterpillars are most abundant.

Thanks to warmer average temperatures, however, plants in some parts of the Netherlands are flowering an average of 16 days earlier in the spring. The birds in West Africa don't know that: they still leave more or less at the usual time. And while the early spring they encounter in the north has induced them to move up egg laying a bit, they're still producing offspring nearly a week behind prime caterpillar season.

Inadequate nourishment means dying birds and falling populations. "We think this is the first time that an insufficient response to climate change can cause population decline," says study co-author Christiaan Both of the Netherlands Institute of Ecology.

But it is probably not the last. Global warming might explain some migratory bird declines in North America as well although Greg Butcher, director of bird conservation at the Audubon Society, warns that it is dangerous to make assumptions.

"It's great" he says, "when you have a bird like the pied flycatcher, which has been studied for years and you have enough detail to pinpoint what the problem is." The populations of some seabirds, such as kittiwake, are plunging not because the birds are having trouble timing their food supply but because the fish they feed on have shifted locations.

Other birds seem to be in trouble because of habitat loss. The decline of the rusty blackbird, for example – one of the most rapidly dwindling species in North America says Butcher – may also be due to global warming, but the immediate cause seems to be the drying up of the Canadian wetlands where it breeds. The same may apply to the Canada warbler. The cerulean warbler, also in decline, is losing habitat not because of global warming but because of another human activity: the destruction of Appalachian mountaintop forests by coal mining operations.

And some birds are actually doing fine, adjusting to change and even increasing their numbers – at least in the bird counts. Some hummingbirds, for example, that used to winter in Mexico don't bother to make the trip anymore because the US is now warm enough all year long. A number of migratory species that nest in northeastern forests have rebounded because that part of the country is reforesting as agriculture declines. Bluebirds are thriving, says Butcher, because bluebird lovers have been setting up nesting boxes for them for the past half-century.

But even these success stories can be troubling. Natural ecosystems evolved at a glacial pace, over millennia. And while human-induced change may help some species thrive, it can also throw off the balance that keeps an ecosystem healthy – as some hungry Dutch hatchlings have discovered.

**OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHTS APR/MAY 2006.**

|         |                            |          |                                    |               |
|---------|----------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Mar 7   | Pacific Baza               | 1        | Glenrock SRA                       | N.McNaughton  |
| Mar 19  | White-throated Treecreeper | 1        | Millhams Farm – Ash Island         | “             |
| Mar 21  | Latham’s Snipe             | 1        | Walka Water Works                  | “             |
| Mar 26  | Dollarbird                 | 1        | Millhams Farm – Ash Island         | “             |
| Mar 29  | Rufous Fantail             | 1        | “                                  | “             |
| Mar 25  | Little Penguin             | 2        | Nobbys Breakwater [inside harbour] | N.Livanos     |
| Mar 23  | Arctic Jaeger              | 1        | Off Nobbys Breakwater              | “             |
| Apr 12  | Leaden Flycatcher          | 1        | Cardiff                            | “             |
| Mar 28  | Restless Flycatcher        | 1        | Greswick Angus [East Seaham]       | T.Clarke      |
| Mar 17  | Brown Quail                | 2        | CSIRO Steel River Estate           | “             |
| Apr 4   | Australian Hobby           | 1        | Braye Park Waratah                 | “             |
| Apr 3   | Reef Egret [dark phase]    | 1        | Rock Platform Merewether           | “             |
| Mar 31  | Australian Brush Turkey    | 1        | Glenrock SRA                       | “             |
|         | Collared Sparrowhawk       | 1        | “                                  | “             |
| Mar 24  | Black Falcon               | 1        | Whittingham                        | MRoderick     |
|         | Ruddy Turnstone            | 1        | Newcastle Beach [nocturnal]        | “             |
| Apr 9   | Leaden Flycatcher          | 1        | Hamilton [Beaumont St.]            | “             |
| Apr 7   | Powerful Owl               | 1 heard  | New Lambton                        | A.Stuart      |
| Apr 6   | Spangled Drongo            | 2        | Hunter Wetlands Centre             | C.Herbert     |
| Apr 8   | Blue-faced Honeyeater      | 4        | Adamstown Heights                  | P.Pountney    |
| Apr 12  | Spangled Drongo            | 1        | “                                  | “             |
|         | Satin Bowerbird            |          | “                                  | “             |
| Apr 2   | Brown Goshawk              | 2        | Cardiff North                      | P.Phillips    |
| Apr 3   | White-faced Heron          | 1        | Mayfield                           | C.Goodenough  |
| Apr 1   | White-bellied Sea-eagle    | 1        | Blackbutt [Ridgeway Rd]            | P.Lightfoot   |
| Mar 26  | Bar-shouldered Dove        | Pr +4imm | Wingen                             | G.Newling     |
| Apr 19  | Little Raven               | 4        | “                                  | “             |
| Mar 15  | Ruddy Turnstone            | 2        | Swansea Channel                    | F.Cosgrove    |
| Apr 9   | Glossy Black Cockatoo      | 2        | Wyee Point                         | V. & D. Moon  |
| Apr 18  | “ “ “                      | 2        | Mirabooka                          | “             |
| Apr 25  | “ “ “                      | 2        | Morisset                           | “             |
| Apr 28  | “ “ “                      | 3        | Woods Point, Morisset              | “             |
| Apr 25  | Rose Robin                 | 1        | Hunter Wetlands Centre             | P.Lightfoot   |
|         | Yellow-billed Spoonbill    | 1        | “                                  | “             |
|         | Chestnut-breasted Mannikin | 4        | “                                  | “             |
| Apr 24  | Musk Lorikeet              | 6        | Edgeworth                          | H. Boyle      |
| Apr/May | Grey Goshawk               | 1        | Shortland                          | A.Lindsey     |
| May 5   | Rose Robin                 | 1        | “                                  | “             |
| Apr 29  | Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater   | 2        | Willow Tree                        | N.Livanos     |
| Apr 26  | Powerful Owl               | 1        | Cardiff                            | “             |
| May 4   | Bassian Thrush             | 1        | Glenrock SRA                       | “             |
| Apr 28  | :Yellow-faced Honeyeater   | 1,000s’s | Tomaree Head                       | T.Clarke      |
| May 4   | Pacific Baza               | 1        | Flaggy Creek                       | “             |
| May 8   | White-bellied Sea-eagle    | 3        | Wangi                              | “             |
| May 9   | Wedge-tailed Eagle         | 2        | Pambalong N.R.                     | “             |
| May 10  | Musk Lorikeet              | <20      | Shoal Bay [Anzac Park]             | “             |
|         | Scaly-breasted Lorikeet    | 2        | “                                  | “             |
| Apr 28  | Southern Boobook           | 1        | Olney State Forest [Wattagan Mts.] | A.Fawcett     |
|         | Pacific Baza               | 2        | “ [Prickly Ridge Rd]               | “             |
| May 10  | Southern Boobook           | 1        | Wang Wauk S.F.                     | “             |
| May 1   | Crested Shrike-tit         | 1        | Clarencetown                       | L. & J. Storm |
| May 10  | Barn Owl                   | 1 heard  | New Lambton                        | A.Stuart      |
|         | Collared Sparrowhawk       | 1        | “                                  | “             |
| May     | Grey Goshawk               | 1        | Belmont South                      | J. Cockerell  |
| May 10  | Rose Robin                 | 2        | Walka Water Works                  | L.Mee         |
|         | :Yellow-billed Spoonbill   | 7        | Buchanan                           | “             |
|         | Pacific Baza               | 1        | East Seaham                        | R.Carlton     |

## COMING EVENTS

**Please check with contact person for each event. Details may change including weather, fire danger or suitability of venue. Some camps may attract a camping charge.**

| DATE                          | ACTIVITY                                               | DETAILS -TIME & PLACE                                                      | CONTACT                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday<br>June 18             | New Members Day<br>Club to provide BBQ<br>Lunch        | 9.00am The Wetland<br>Centre. Entry Fee \$4.50<br>but free for new members | Liz Crawford<br>4959 3663                                                  |
| Saturday<br>June 24           | Hunter Wader Survey                                    | 7.30am. Various locations<br>as directed                                   | Chris Herbert 4959 3663<br>Alan Stuart 4952 8569                           |
| Sunday<br>July 2              | Stockton Sandspit<br>Volunteer Day                     | 8.00am to noon<br>(high tide 1.27pm)                                       | Tom Clarke<br>4951 3872                                                    |
| Tuesday<br>July 4             | Mid-week Outing<br>Swansea/Coon Island                 | 8.00am Nr Thomas<br>Humphreys Reserve<br>Dobinson Dr. Swansea              | Don Moon 4359 1670                                                         |
| Wednesday<br>July 5           | Management Committee<br>Meeting                        | 7.00pm – 10.00pm<br>Garden Suburbs School                                  | All members welcome                                                        |
| Saturday/Sunday<br>July 8/9   | Timor Caves Survey                                     |                                                                            | Alan Stuart<br>4952 8569                                                   |
| <b>Wednesday<br/>July 12</b>  | <b>Club Meeting</b>                                    | <b>7.30pm<br/>The Wetlands Centre</b>                                      | <b>Speaker TBA</b>                                                         |
| Saturday<br>July 15           | Atlassing<br>Wambo Colliery Bulga                      | 7.30am Meet at Bulga<br>Shop                                               | Nick Livanos 4954 5739<br>Ann Lindsey 4951 2008<br>Please ring to confirm  |
| Sunday<br>July 23             | Field Outing<br>Pelton/Ellalong Lagoon<br>And Congewai | 8.00am<br>Cessnock<br>MacDonalds Car Park                                  | Robert Macdonald<br>44967 4161                                             |
| Saturday<br>July 29           | Hunter Wader Survey                                    | 10.45am<br>Various locations as<br>directed                                | Chris Herbert 49593663<br>Alan Stuart 49528569                             |
| Tuesday<br>August 1           | Mid-week Outing<br>Awaba Bay/Five Islands              | 8.00am<br>Swimming Pool<br>On waterfront<br>George St Marmong Pt.          | Bev & David Kibble<br>4958 5537                                            |
| Wednesday<br>August 2         | Management Committee<br>Meeting                        | 7.00pm – 10.00pm<br>Garden Suburbs School                                  | All members welcome                                                        |
| Saturday-Sunday<br>August 5/6 | Regent Honeyeater<br>/Swift Parrot Survey              | Various locations from<br>Coordinator                                      | Coord.Steve Roderick<br>4930 4800                                          |
| Saturday<br>August 5          | Atlassing<br>Dungog Area                               | 7.30am<br>McDonalds<br>Raymond Terrace                                     | Nick Livanos 4954 5739<br>Ann Lindsey 49 51 2008<br>Please ring to confirm |
| Saturday/Sunday<br>August 5/6 | Timor Caves Survey                                     |                                                                            | Alan Stuart<br>49528569                                                    |
| Sunday<br>August 6            | Stockton Sandspit<br>Volunteer Day                     | 8.00am to noon<br>(low tide 11.15am)                                       | Tom Clarke<br>4951 3872                                                    |
| <b>Wednesday<br/>August 9</b> | <b>Club Meeting</b>                                    | <b>7.30am The Wetlands<br/>Centre</b>                                      | <b>Speaker TBA</b>                                                         |