



## Hunter Bird Observers Club

# NEWSLETTER

Issue 4/06

August/September 2006

Newsletter articles welcome –  
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## **Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.**

*Affiliated with the Bird Observers Club of Australia*

**P.O. Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305**

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Website [www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

### **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: -

Jennie & Tony Boyd  
Allen Friis  
Jaii Jeffries  
Rachael Russel  
Richard Nicholaas

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

### NEWSLETTER DATES for 2006

#### **Edition**

#### **Copy Deadline**

October/November  
December 2006/January 2007

1 October  
3 December

## **PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

Spring can't be far away – galahs, rosellas and lorikeets are checking out hollows for nesting, some birds are building nests and courting displays are becoming common.

Lots of action in the bird world! In September we can expect hundreds of migratory waders to return to the Hunter Estuary from their northern hemisphere breeding grounds. When you are out looking at these birds, check out their legs for coloured bands or flags. The Australasian Wader Study Group is particularly interested in Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia (MYSMA), as there have been some huge changes to the tidal flats in the Yellow Sea that may adversely affect the birds.

Please pass your observations on to Ann Lindsey, who is part of HBOC's Committee, and also Conservation Officer for the Australian Wader Study Group.

Why not combine a little gardening with birdwatching on Sundays at the Stockton Sandspit? Tom Clarke and any welcome assistants are maintaining weed-free bird habitat on the sandspit, and getting some intimate views of bird behaviour at the same time.

Another way to help conserve bird habitat is to put pen to paper when there is a proposal or development that you strongly disagree with. From time to time, issues arise that would benefit from lots of letters, not just one from the Club as a whole. Letter-writing can be a powerful tool for change.

Thanks to an Environmental Grant from Lake Macquarie Council, we have reprinted the Lake Macquarie Birding Brochures. These are available at Club nights, as well as being distributed to tourist outlets and the Hunter Wetlands Centre. They provide directions to excellent birding spots around the Lake.

Birds are certainly a tourist attraction, as we well know from the numbers of Sydney birdwatchers we regularly meet on Ash Island or at Stockton Sandspit, particularly during the summer months when migratory shorebirds and occasional rarities turn up.

The latest rarity is a Grey-headed Lapwing, which has turned up at Burren Junction in northwestern NSW, between Wee Waa and Walgett. The Grey-headed Lapwing normally ranges from northern China and Japan to southeast Asia, and this bird is the first record for Australia. It's a very handsome bird, similar in size to our own Masked Lapwing, and can be seen foraging in open paddocks near the wheat silos in town.

Rohan Clarke is keeping track of the numbers of birdwatchers attracted to Burren Junction to twitch this bird, to assess the impact of such events on tourism. Rohan would appreciate details of anyone traveling to Burren Junction to see the Lapwing. Please contact him by email on: [diomedeamages@hotmail.com](mailto:diomedeamages@hotmail.com)

To help celebrate the Club's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, we now have a new Club Badge featuring the Golden Whistler – a great addition to your hat or jacket! Orders for Club t-shirts and polo shirts are still being taken - at Club nights or by phoning me on 4959 3663.

Birds offer us so many different avenues of enjoyment – they delight us with their song, uplift us with their soaring flight, enrich us with their beauty, and awaken our keen sense of competition when we try to tick as many as possible during a "twitching session".

Twitching hones your identification skills as well as your knowledge of habitats – have some fun and join in the "Minitwitch" organized by Mick Roderick on Sunday, 27 August, from 8am to 1pm, starting anywhere and finishing at Centennial Park, Dawson Street, Newcastle.

Happy twitching!

Liz Crawford

### **ANIMALS AT THE WETLANDS CENTRE**

**The Club Committee reminds HBOC members that it is forbidden to bring animals onto the Hunter Wetlands Centre site at any time for quarantine reasons, because of its status as a wildlife refuge. This includes attendance at Club Nights and other Club events at this venue.**

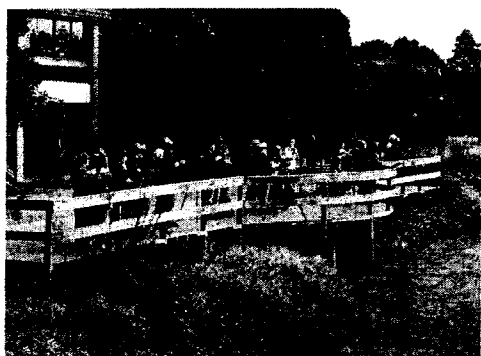
## New Members Day at the Wetlands Centre 18 June 2006

from Tom Clarke

Another very successful New Members Day was enjoyed by over thirty people this year at the Wetlands Centre, Shortland. New members from the last twelve months were invited to a social day of birdwatching and BBQ with more established members to make acquaintances and get to feel part of HBOC. All of that happened at a fairly leisurely pace but an impressive bird call of 79 species was an unexpected bonus.

- The Wetlands Centre is a perfectly good place to go birdwatching as there are many easy to see species as well as the odd rarity. For instance on the one hand we had plenty of engaging Grey Fantails to entertain us as we walked about the grounds but a once in a lifetime "tick" of a Spotless Crake kept even the experienced birdos excited. Some people did manage to get excellent pictures of the crake while others, including myself, have nicely focussed images of an empty log!

Thanks to Di Johnson and her many helpers, the lunch was scrumptious and easily devoured by the mob.



## MIDWEEK OUTING: SWANSEA AREA 4 July 2006.

Report from Don Moon

On an overcast and drizzly winters morning 16 birders met near the Swansea caravan park and walked beside the channel up to the Coon Island bird viewing platform – then along the roadway parallel to the caravan park up to the lake.

The waterbirds seen included many swans, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eastern Curlew, Pied Oystercatcher, Double-banded Plover, Caspian and Crested Tern and 8 Royal Spoonbills flew overhead.

After morning tea we proceeded to Galgabba Point which is always a good birding site and we were not disappointed. The honeyeaters were plentiful with New Holland, White-cheeked, Brown-headed Lewins, Scarlet, Striped and Yellow-faced observed.

Also present were Regent Bowerbird, Fan-Tailed Cuckoo, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike Thrush, Spangled Drongo, and Black-faced Cuckoo strike. The smaller birds included both Spotted and Striated Pardalote, Brown Gerygone, Mistletoebird, Silveryeye and many more. We also saw a Sea Eagle flying overhead at Galgabba Point

A good morning was had irrespective of the weather – a total of 70 species being sighted.

## GALGABBA POINT HONEYEATERS

Jack Adams has submitted an excellent record of the honeyeaters using this area in the months of April/May and into June – a period which coincided with the major flowering time of the Eucalypt species,

Unfortunately space constraints do not allow the full publication of these valuable observations but to whet your appetite Jack reported on Brown, Scarlet, Lewins, Yellow faced and White-cheeked Honeyeaters plus Red and Little Wattlebirds, Eastern Spinebill and Noisy and Bell Miners.

## Dry Woodland Gets Wet

### **Camp at Baerami – June Long Weekend**

#### **From Tom Clarke**

I am so glad that curiosity got the better of Ann Lindsay and Mike Newman one day and led them up the Baerami Creek Road in search of new birding areas. Their brief visit last year was enough to convince Ann that this place would be well worth exploring further and a camp situation was preferable.

On first look at the map you might be forgiven for thinking that Baerami Creek would replicate the wonderful Widden Brook in appearance and ecology and that the birds would be the same. In fact this is true to some extent but mostly I have to say, the area is quite unique. Our campsite and the majority of the birdwatching actually took place along Reubens Creek, which is entirely within the Wollemi National Park and is the site of an historic shale oil mining area. Almost as soon as Reubens Creek leaves the national park it falls into Baerami Creek.

So there we were, pitching our tents etc in the rain and having a really good time. Of course I expected rain, it had rained for most of the trip, but a secure and snug set-up, dry clothes, a nice cup of tea and some interesting reading material was all I could wish for when I had finally settled in. Too bad then that an occasional enticing break in the weather coaxed us away from dry camps to risk a walk along the Reubens Trail in search of birds.

By the end of the day it was a very cramped “bird call” under the shelter of my gay pergola as the drizzling rain continued. But what a day of birding everyone was reporting! The points of greatest attention were the flowering White Box (*Eucalyptus albens*) that were absolutely dripping with nectivors. I have always wanted to use that phrase but until now I have not seen anything to justify it.

June Long Weekend at Reubens Creek was the place to see literally hundreds of honeyeaters actively foraging on this great source of energy; it was possible to see 100+ birds of the same species just in one tree-top.

The greatest numbers of nectar feeders included Yellow-faced, White-naped and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. It was not just the nectar that was attracting the birds either; the Lewin's Honeyeater were happy to eat the fruit of White Cedar and when the rain ceased lots of birds came down to ground level to forage behind strips of bark. All the previously mentioned honeyeaters were represented on the ground along with fairy wrens, robins and thornbills.

One wonderful moment for a couple of birds seeking shelter was a close encounter with a Crescent Honeyeater also taking refuge with some other species. A first for both of us and as I scrambled for my field guide I had no hesitation in calling it before getting the confirmation. What a delight to see this bird in what was essentially dry woodland (box/ironbark) when the book tells us it prefers wet eucalypt or sub-alpine habitats. It was certainly wet where we were I have to admit.

By the Sunday evening the clouds had given way to a majestic starry sky. That energetic gatherer of fire wood, Tim Vella, had spent most of his day working hard and succeeded in creating a beautifully warm campfire that became the immediate focus for Happy Hour. It was easy to forget the previous wet times as I sat in my fold-up chair, stubby in hand, camp fire at my feet and a full moon rising over the ridge. How good does it get!

A clear and freezing night followed and everything that was wet the day before was covered in ice the next morning. Looking out of my sleeping bag past my toes I could see icicles hanging from the edges of the pergola, beautifully lit by the sunrise.

Fantastic, a glorious sunny day to pack up and go home! What a shame then to be going just when things were looking good but I'm sure there will be other opportunities to explore this exciting place.

## MURDER AT WOLLOMBI CEMETERY

From Liz Crawford & Chris Herbert

On 26 April 2006, we were quietly observing the birds in Wollombi Lagoon from the local cemetery, unaware that we were about to witness the final moments of a Golden Whistler.

A Yellow-billed Spoonbill stirred the shallow water along the lagoon margin, Dusky Moorhens and Grey Teal pattered about on the serene surface while Australasian Grebes dove repeatedly. We turned our attention to the forest bordering the lagoon and found Silvereyes, Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Superb Fairy-wrens, Grey-crowned Babbblers, and an immature Golden Whistler, all busily foraging.

We noticed a couple of Australian Magpies patrolling amid the tombstones and a solitary Pied Butcherbird in a nearby tree.

Suddenly there was a flurry of wings and the Golden Whistler was racing for its life, hotly pursued by not one but seven Pied Butcherbirds! The Whistler flew frantically from tree to bush to tree, but it could not hide from the seven pursuers who repeatedly forced it to fly from cover. After several seconds of intense pursuit, the Whistler was caught in mid-air and the pack dispersed, leaving the victor to its spoils.

The Pied Butcherbird wedged the body of the Whistler into a small forked branch in a paperbark and promptly plucked the wing and tail feathers, ensuring its demise. The Butcherbird then flew off, leaving the dead Whistler for later.

### DAVID SUZUKI: 4 September 2006

David Suzuki will speak at Enmore Theatre Newtown on the subject The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Putting the world back together. Also on the program are the African drum group KARIFI and Les Saxby of Yidaki Didj and Dance. This is expected to be Dr Suzuki's final appearance in Australia.

The Evening has been organized by the Anvil Hill Project Watch Association to support their campaign against Open-Cut Coal Mine proposals at Anvil Hill

Tickets available from Ticketek

## CLUB NEWS

Paddy & Caryl Lightfoot report that the pair of Radjah Shelduck are still around at Mungo Brush – they saw them there recently. Neville McNaughton saw them when camped a couple of weeks earlier so they seem to have become quite faithful to the area.

There is a Brahminy Kite around the Hunter Estuary - says Alan Stuart – an unusual species for the Hunter.

The First Sunday of each month is to be a working bee at Stockton Sandspit.

Contact Tom Clarke 4951 8372 for more details

Reminder for the Mini-twitch on August 27<sup>th</sup>. Start anywhere at 8.00am. Finish at Centennial Park Dawson Street Newcastle at 1.00pm to see how you performed against others. Much mutual bragging and preening expected.

Ann Lindsey has been appointed Conservation Officer of the Australasian Wader Studies Group. AWSG will hold its Australian Wader Conference in Newcastle in July 2007 – HBOC members will be needed for logistical support.

### Pelagic Program - additions

Richard Baxter has chosen three Newcastle pelagic dates for Winter/Spring 2006. The dates are: 20 August, 10 September and 5 November. Sundays). Usual arrangements apply. The boat departs at 7am from Newcastle Harbour boarding at the small jetty about 300m east of The Brewery (just through the roundabout) Parking in the adjacent car park. BYO lunch/drinks. The cost is still \$110 per person and the boat returns about 6-7pm. Numbers are limited to 10 so bookings are essential. Richard Baxter [randrbaxter@yahoo.com](mailto:randrbaxter@yahoo.com) for more detail.

### And finally, a Win!!

Cessnock City Council has rejected a rezoning application from Hardie Holdings for developments at Ellalong Wetlands. HBOC and many others made strong representations on the issue and the Council will as a result commence proceedings to rezone the wetlands from Ellalong to Millfield as a Conservation Area thereby protecting the ecosystem from any future threat of development.

## ***The Whistler:*** **Occasional Publication of Hunter Bird Observers Club**

There has been discussion for some time now that the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) publish a journal dedicated to the status and behaviour of birds in the Hunter Region.

It would provide an opportunity, particularly for members, to record studies that are of regional rather than national or international significance. It would also compile in one place, information on the ornithology of the Hunter Region for the benefit of people with a deep interest in the birds of the area and be an essential resource for those involved in the conservation and management of the diverse birdlife of the region. The journal would be a venue for a wide range of material including analyses of the results of detailed ecological or behavioural studies and syntheses of the results of long-term bird monitoring studies and annotated species lists of comprehensive studies of important bird areas and habitats.

In addition, it would be suitable for communication of short notes on significant bird behaviours and reviews of books that are relevant to birdwatchers and birdwatching in the Hunter Region. The publication of full survey reports will continue as the Hunter Bird Observers Club Special Report Series, separate to the journal, but submitted to the same review process in which two peers from the club will be asked to comment on the relevance and rigour of the manuscript. HBOC has formed a publications sub-committee to oversee the publication of relevant papers, short notes and book reviews of sufficient standard to be accepted after peer review and Liz Huxtable is the aspiring editor managing this process. The sub-committee includes Alan Stuart, Liz Crawford, Chris Herbert, Ann Lindsey, Mike Newman, Jenny Powers and Liz Huxtable, and we propose the name, "*The Whistler*", for the journal after the club's emblem, the Golden Whistler. *The Whistler* will be published by HBOC on a regular basis determined by the availability of material rather than at a fixed frequency. By publishing *The Whistler* and the special report series, HBOC aims to provide feedback on the outcomes of projects in which its members participate. It aims to increase its members' curiosity about what birds do and to encourage them

to place on record unique observations and insights through this journal.

This is an initial call to members to put pen to paper and communicate their observations and findings. The publications sub-committee will consider survey reports up to 100 pages, contributed papers to 20 pages, short notes to 4 pages and book reviews of approximately 2 pages in length with formats as suggested in brief below. For a full list of instructions please contact Liz Huxtable at [chaz.liz@hunterlink.net.au](mailto:chaz.liz@hunterlink.net.au) or 49542570.

### **Survey Reports/Contributed Papers**

Format:

- Introduction/Background – introduce aims of/rationale for study and reference other similar work where relevant
- Methods – location (map or co-ordinates), how observations were made and analysed
- Results/Data – description and/or analysis of data highlighting trends in the results, use of subsections is desirable if more than one body of data is included; use of photos, figures, including graphs and drawings, and tables is encouraged
- Discussion/Conclusions – interpretation of significance of data, i.e., local, regional and national relevance, reflection with other regional and Australian work, possible alternative conclusions/caveats, suggestions for future or extension of work
- References
- Appendices/Annotated Lists

Style – factual (100 pp. for survey reports, 20 pp. for contributed papers)

### **Short Notes**

Format – introduce species using English and scientific names, adequate description of location and rationale for recording the observations, entertaining and cogent description of observations, relevance to similar observations with references if appropriate.

Style – prosaic (4 pp.)

### **Book Reviews**

Format – introduce topics and aims of book, analyse thoroughness and rigour of content (chapter by chapter or topic by topic), conclude on effectiveness and originality of book in meeting its aims and its values to bird enthusiasts in the Hunter Region.

Style – critical (2 pp.)

Liz Huxtable and Mike Newman, 30/7/06

## **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@cittravel.com.au](mailto:lisap@cittravel.com.au)  
Mob. 0439 215 168

## **BIRDS & BIRDERS WHO NEED YOUR HELP**

### **PAINTED SNIPE PROJECT**

This joint effort of Birds Australia – Threatened Bird Network and the Australasian Wader Studies Group is looking for snippets of information. They have regular surveys – coordinated locally by HBOC. The next survey is on 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> October followed by one on 13 & 14 January 2007. Lots of other activity and information from Dean Ingwersen  
[d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au)

### **BLACK NECKED STORK**

Greg Clancy is still studying these birds as part of his Ph D at University of New England, National Marine Science Centre. He would appreciate sightings, breeding records and historical records for his ongoing research

### **OSPREY**

The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife is seeking keen birdwatchers to register sightings of Osprey and their nests in NSW to help with their 2006 survey. You can register online at Osprey Watch [www.fnpw.org.au](http://www.fnpw.org.au) or call Angela Brady on 02 6644 7882 or 0428 299 300 for more information

### **GROUND PARROT**

There is a Ground Parrot Survey at Barren Grounds in the morning of Sunday 13 August 2006. These surveys have been conducted annually since 1983. They need help with the survey – what a great excuse for a visit. Contact [Jack.Baker@environment.new.org.aau](mailto:Jack.Baker@environment.new.org.aau)

### **AVIAN FLU RESEARCH**

Our very own Dr Phil Hansboro is looking for volunteers and research assistants to help with his sampling projects. This may involve setting duck traps and in the longer term bird catching. This is important work as it gives an objective measure of the Bird Flu situation in this part of the world – especially in regard to wild bird transmission. Phone 49236819 or email: [Philip.hansboro@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Philip.hansboro@newcastle.edu.au)

**CONFESSIONS OF AN HONEST WOMAN  
REFLECTING ON A LIFE OF TWITCHING:  
DILEMMAS, MORAL QUALMS AND LAPSES  
OF JUDGEMENT**

*Editors note: This is a somewhat dated article from another age published here in tribute to that period long ago when 600 seemed like a decent target and birding scruples were pristine.*

Letters in Australian Birding about the 600 Club have finally driven me to ink about the heartrending decisions a twitcher, even one in some decline, has to make.

If you had to actually seek, find and personally identify each and every bird that goes on your list, then membership to the 600 Club would indeed drop off dramatically. All those world birders who see 4000 birds in a year do not actually identify the birds themselves. I can remember showing a most eminent person his 4000th bird for the year. It was his first Turquoise Parrot ever. He paid it scant attention before we rushed off to the next number.

And this is the crux of the matter so I believe. I don't think it matters if someone else seeks, finds and identifies the bird for you. The questions I now ask myself are - whether I saw the bird well enough to see its great beauty (turkeys and friarbirds are a bit sus) and whether I knew in my heart that the identification of the bird was correct. You can't leave your brain at home even if you go on a guided tour!

These are some the decisions I have made over the past many years: the long sought Lewin's Rail - how I chased that bird for 20 years (how could it have taken 20 years, some people might ask). I saw it eventually in my own suburb in August 1996. At first I heard it; its call is unmistakeable, but I couldn't see it of course. I went back the second day, heard it and joy o joy, it crossed a gap in the dense grass. I saw pink bill, head, then its chestnut back and striped flanks and then its tail, almost in slow motion, but I did not see the whole bird in one frame. I twitched happily, but was left feeling vaguely dissatisfied as if something was lacking.

More recently when I saw this wonderful bird again perched in the open on a log above a dense understorey of bracken and lantana I made the decision not to tick a bird again unless I could appreciate all of it at the same time, a regrettable stance as it has led me not to count the Grass Owl I saw on the Cape in the headlights of the car, in silhouette, with its legs dangling in the required manner, in an area known to be heaving with Grass Owls. My travelling companion was as miffed about this decision as I am since it also results in my not having as many birds as another close friend. It's not that I am such an honest Joe. It's because I know that when I see a Grass Owl staring back at me in the torch or car lights, I will be just so chuffed. (how do you spell this word?)

And then of course there are all of that button - quail. They are dreadfully suspect if judged on the above criteria. Ghastly views in the grass just as they jet off to the next bit of impenetrable foliage identified with a prayer and a song. But I'm keeping them on my list, for the time being at least. Goodness knows when I might be in a position to tick some of them again.

And what about the Dunlin I saw on the Cairns waterfront back in 1978. Nobody else may believe that I saw it, but I believe I saw it and it stays on my list.

And what about all those birds you have forgotten whether you have seen them or not. I do realize that a large percentage of readers being so young won't understand this concept. But if you have been bird watching for over 30 years and you don't pore over your notes at frequent intervals (I now have nearly 63 notebooks; who has the time?) you may just forget whether you really have seen Dusky Robin. Do you cross it off? Hmmm, must look up my notes.

I still have my 600 Club badge and yes, it is a bit rusty.

Ann Lindsey



## THE OWLS OF HARRY POTTER

Harry Potter's female owl Hedwig is actually a male Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) Male Snowy Owls are pure white and female Snowy Owls have dark bars across their wings and chest, Snowy Owls are native to cold grassland and tundra of North America, Europe and Asia.

Ron Weasley's owl Pigwidgeon is a Scops Owl (*otus scops*), Scops Owls are amongst the smallest owls in the world. Their brown/grey colouring gives them excellent camouflage in the wild. Scops Owls like to live in parklands and inside old buildings and are native to Europe, Asia and Africa.

Draco Malfoy's owl is a Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo Bubo*). They are very regal looking owls and are brown with black bars and white spots. They live to about 20 years in the wild and up to 60 years in captivity. Eurasian Eagle Owls like to live in rocky outcrops in forests and deserts and are native to Europe Africa and Middle East.

(This information brought to you by the magic of Birds Queensland Newsletter Volume 37/5)

### A PREVIEW OF THE GENUS INCOGNITUS

*This article by Bruce Knight of Wonboyn was originally published in The NSW Bird Atlassers Newsletter of June 2006. So it must be true.*

A type description of this enigmatic group is as yet unpublished – and may well remain so. Frequently encountered by most ornithologists of both professional and private persuasion, the specific identity of its members remains obscure to all of us except those with delusions of grandeur, steroidal ability in self-deception or an uncontrolled twitch.

This state of affairs is in part due to inadequate field guides, the modern compilers of which appear loath to attempt their version of Neville Cayley's planned but never published sequel "What Bird WAS That?"

The following guide has been prepared so that you can write something positive meaningful and soundly scientific in your field notes.

*Incognitus modestus*. This is the most frequently encountered species; of varied size; marked ability to hint at being rare or outside normal range. This group is characterised by taking off from the edge of vision and flying to settle within reasonable observation range behind a branch, dense foliage or tree trunk.

*Incognitus mimetes*. This individual lurks in undergrowth making precision calls of Emu-wren or Chestnut-rumped Hylacola. Having kept the observer glued to the spot for at least half an hour emerges disguised as a Superb Fairy-wren or Brown Thornbill.

*Incognitus dubius*. A character that specialises in bearing a striking resemblance to at least two other species and has perfected the art of obscuring from the observer the one or two characteristics that allow differentiation.

*Incognitus escapus*. This is the bird that you just know will be an Australian record. You cannot find it in the bird books, phone calls to local bird gurus and museums draw a blank, You spend considerable time filling out your "Unusual Sightings: form. Then the lady at the store says to you "Isn't it sad old George forgetting to close his aviary door."

*Incognitus inquirus*. This is invariably described only by non-birding friends, who saw it at least a month ago and want to know what it was. One should disregard their vague description of size colour, call and behaviour. (What was it doing? Why, being a bird of course!) Open your local bird list, close you eyes and stab with a pin

*Incognitis anticipatus deflatus*. You are so certain it was a...( insert name of favourite rare bird) The experts tell you that it could only have been a .. (insert name of denigratingly common species)

*Incognitus dramaticus*. Okay, I admit that it is unlikely that the large raptor which carried off your Shetland Pony was a Condor ...but it wasn't a Wedge-tail under deceptive light conditions either.

# **OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHTS JUN/JUL 2006.**

Mar 24	Musk Duck	33	Grahamstown Dam [Richardson Rd]	M.Maddock
	Great Crested Grebe	14	"	"
	Hardhead	54	"	"
Apr 28	Musk Duck	8	"	"
	Hoary-headed Grebe	88	"	"
May 11	Hoary-headed Grebe	127	"	"
	Musk Duck	9	"	"
	Great Crested Grebe	4	"	"
May	Plumed Whistling Duck	~300	Doughboy Hollow	R.Waymark
May 23	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	Buttaba [garden]	"
May 6	Freckled Duck	9	Ellalong Lagoon	L. Crawford
	Pink-eared Duck	18	Ellalong Lagoon	"
	Black Swan	2+2dy	Ellalong Lagoon	"
12,25,27	Common Blackbird	1	East Maitland	J.Smart
May 25	Australian Hobby	1	East Maitland	"
May 31	Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	Port Stephen [1km out to sea]	A.Rogers
May 25	Galah	2	Shoal Bay [Anzac Park]	T.Clarke
May 22	Glossy Black Cockatoo	5	Falbrook [Mt. Royal]	"
May 29	Red-necked Avocet	5	Glenrock Lagoon	"
May 18	Common Sandpiper	1	"	"
May 25	Southern Boobook	1	Hamilton [Parry St]	"
	Musk Lorikeet	~20	Shoal Bay [Anzac Park]	"
May 30	Rose Robin	1	Pambalong NR	"
May 29	Sooty Oystercatcher	2	Burwood Beach	"
May 30	White-fronted Chat	~20	Hexham Swamp	"
May 20	Powerful Owl	1	Sunshine	C.Goodenough
May 27	Sooty Oystercatcher	9	Merewether Beach	"
May 6	Brahminy Kite	1	Glenrock NR	B. & V. Murphy
May	Regent Bowerbird	1	Cardiff Heights [garden]	L.Denham
May 29	Brown Quail	5	Ash Island	G.Brosie
	Common Greenshank	4	"	"
	Gull-billed Tern	1	"	"
	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2	"	"
	Brahminy Kite	1	"	"
	Tawny Grassbird	1	"	"
Jun 11	Caspian Tern	1	Morpeth	"
	Brown Falcon	1	Pambalong NR	T.Clarke
Jun 1	Sooty Oystercatcher	4	Box Beach [Pt. Stephen]	"
Jun 4	Brahminy Kite	1	Stockton Sandspit	"
Jun 4	Double-barred Finch	4	Stockton Sandspit	"
	Brown Quail	1	Stockton Sandspit	"
	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	8	Stockton Sandspit	"
Jun 10	Pied Oystercatcher	11	Lemon Tree Passage	M.Blanch
	Sooty Oystercatcher	2	Lemon Tree Passage	"
	Owlet Nightjar	1	Oyster Cove	"
Apr 23	Glossy Black Cockatoo	4	Lemon Tree Passage	L.Vella
Jun 9	Hoary-headed Grebe	95	Grahamstown Dam [Richardson Rd]	M.Maddock
Jun 16	Black Falcon	Pr	Wingen	G.Newling
	Double-barred Finch	15	"	"
	Red-browed Finch	34	"	"
	Crimson Rosella	5	"	"
	Australian King Parrot	5	"	"
	Restless Flycatcher	1	"	"
Jun 30	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	Dingo Creek [nr Baerami]	M.Roderick
	Little Raven	~80	5km SW Sandy Hollow	"
Jul 9	Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1	Awabakal N.R.	"
Jun	Rose Robin	1	Shortland [garden]	A.Lindsey
	Red-browed Finch	20	"	"
	Tawny Frogmouth	1	"	"

Jun 16	Whistling Kite	21	Greswick Angus	T.Clarke
	Grey Goshawk	1	"	"
Jun 21	Grey Goshawk	1	Awaba Bay	"
	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	Fullerton Cov	"
Jun 22	White-necked Heron	4	Williamtown	"
	Barking Owl	Heard only	Eagleton [via R/Terrace – Seaham]	"
Jun 26	Spangled Drongo	2	Salts Bay [Swansea Heads]	"
	Sacred Kingfisher	1	"	"
Jul 5&7	Rose Robin	1	Jesmond Park	"
Jun 23	White-headed Pigeon	3	Windeyers Creek [R/Terrace]	"
	Grey Goshawk	1	"	"
Jun 28	Red-whiskered Bulbul	1	Salts Bay	"
Jun 25	Scarlet Robin	Pr	Jones Reserve Rd	H.Tarrant
	Red-capped Robin	1	"	"
	Diamond Firetail	2	"	"
	Plum-headed Finch	3	" [at Martindale Creek – dry]	"
Jun 29	Blue-faced Honeyeater	5	Bolwarra	"
Jun 24	Square-tailed Kite	1	Over Maitland Hospital	"
Jun 4	Pacific Baza	1	Green Hills	G.Brosie
Jun	Tawny Frogmouth	1	Morpeth Manor	"
	Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1	Awabakal NR	G.Brosie/R.McDonald
Jun 7	Blue-billed Duck	2	Walka Water Works	"
	Brown-headed Honeyeater	>10	"	"
	Double-barred Finch	>10	"	"
Jun 24	Wandering Albatross	2	Off Newcastle	R.McDonald
	Black-browed Albatross	1	"	"
	Australasian Gannet	~20	"	"
Jul 4	Fairy Prion	~20	Off Swansea [Moon Island]	"
	Hutton's Shearwater	~20	"	"
	Fluttering Shearwater	~20	"	"
Jun 3	<b>Australasian Bittern</b>	1	Nelson Bay Rd. [Fullerton Cove]	M.Diemer
Jun 18	Rockwarbler	1	Milbrodale	:
Jul 11	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	30	T.W.C.	W.Barden
Jul 3	Regent Bowerbird	1	New Lambton Heights	P.. Lightfoot
Jul 6&10	Pacific Baza	2	Wangi Point	T.Clarke
Jul 9	Brahminy Kite	1	Stockton Sandspit	"
Jul 10	Grey Goshawk	1	Wangi Point	"
Jul 10-14	Pacific Baza	1	Speers Point [garden]	S.Hamonet
Jul 9	Plumed Whistling Duck	~180	Doughboy Hollow	A.Lindsey/A.Stuart

## COMING EVENTS

DATE	ACTIVITY	DETAILS -TIME & PLACE	CONTACT
Sunday August 20	Field Outing Awabakal NR	8.00am End of Ocean Street Dudley	Jenny Powers 4944 7274
Sunday August 20	Pelagic Trip	7am Newcastle Harbour <b>YOU MUST BOOK IN ADVANCE</b>	Richard Baxter <a href="mailto:Randrbaxter@yahoo.com">Randrbaxter@yahoo.com</a>
Wednesday August 23	Ash Island Mangroves Volunteer Day	12 noon KWRP office	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
Saturday August 26	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30am. Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Sunday September 3	Stockton Sandspit Volunteer Day	8.00am to 12 Noon	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Tuesday September 5	Midweek Outing McGregor Park/Jesmond Park	8.00am Grassed park area Cambridge Drive Rankin Park	Margaret Woods 4963 3070
Wednesday September 6	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm –10pm Garden Suburbs School	All members Welcome
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> September	Pelagic Trip	7am Newcastle Harbour <b>YOU MUST BOOK IN ADVANCE</b>	Richard Baxter <a href="mailto:randrbaxter@yahoo.com">randrbaxter@yahoo.com</a>
<b><u>Wednesday September 13</u></b>	<b><u>CLUB NIGHT</u></b>	<b><u>7.30pm Wetlands Centre</u></b>	<b><u>Guest Speaker Annette Carruthers Antarctica</u></b>
Saturday/Sunday September 16/17	Timor Caves Survey		Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Sunday Sept 17	Field Outing Applegum at Milbrodale	8.00am Broke Fire Station	Rowley Smith 4964 1389
Wednesday September 20	Ash Island Mangroves Volunteer Day	12 noon KWRP office	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
Saturday September 23	Hunter wader Survey	8.30am Various Directions as directed	Alan Stuart 49528569 Chris Herbert 49593663
Sunday September 24	Atlassing Gloucester Tops	7.00am Meet Macdonalds Raymond Terrace	Nick Livanos 4954 5739 Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Saturday -Monday Sept 30 – Oct 2	Camp at Coolah Tops (private property)	Maps and directions available	Robert Macdonald 4967 4161
Tuesday October 3	Midweek Outing Belmont Lagoon	8.00am car park Pacific Highway opp Robert St Belmont South	Keith Laverick 4953 8365
Wednesday Oct 4	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm to 10pm Garden Suburb School	All members Welcome
<b><u>Wednesday Oct 11</u></b>	<b><u>CLUB NIGHT</u></b>	<b><u>7.30pm Wetland Centre</u></b>	<b><u>Guest Speaker Col Driscoll Native Bee as Pollinators</u></b>