



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6/06

December 2006/January 2007

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL MEMBERS

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*

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 2007

Edition

February/March
April/ May
June/July
August/September
October/November
December2007/January08

Copy Deadline

February 4th
April 1st
June 3rd
July 29th
September 30
December 2

Membership Fees for 2007 are now due.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – DECEMBER 2006

The Hunter Estuary continues to be a focus for further development, with the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) proposing to construct a third coal loader on Big Pond, Kooragang Island and Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS) planning to expand the throughput capacity of their existing coal loader on Kooragang Island. The Club made a written submission to the NCIG proposal and subsequently made a powerpoint presentation to an Expert Panel assessing this proposed development, emphasising the impacts on bird habitat at both Deep Pond and Big Pond. The Environmental Assessment for the PWCS expansion is on exhibition until 22 December 2006 on the Department of Planning's website and the Club will be making a submission on this proposal too.

Rail upgrades to service the increased throughput of coal to the Port of Newcastle are currently taking place, with construction of the Sandgate flyover completed recently. Previous rail track modifications and maintenance works led to the damming of Market Swamp and loss of fluctuating water levels which formerly provided mudflat foraging areas for Latham's Snipe. HBOC has continued to press ARTC (Australian Rail Track Corporation) for modification of the drainage at Market Swamp so that foraging habitat can be reinstated. Market Swamp is a SEPP 14 wetland and any modification to its drainage will require an environmental impact assessment. Following a recent meeting with ARTC and Newcastle City Council, it now seems likely that funding will be provided for an environmental assessment. We look forward to the day when water levels in Market Swamp can fluctuate in a more natural manner and once again provide habitat for Latham's Snipe.

Late in October, the Department of Environment and Conservation released the Lower Hunter Conservation Plan, to complement the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy released by the Department of Planning earlier in the year. The Club prepared a submission commenting on the Conservation Plan, commending the increased National Parks estate while encouraging conservation of additional critical areas. Unfortunately the SEPP 74 to facilitate an infrastructure corridor across Ash Island still exists, preventing much-needed conservation of this important shorebird area. The Conservation Committee will continue to press for conservation of this area for shorebirds.

Congratulations to Alan Stuart for editing and producing the 2005 Annual Bird Report for the Hunter Region. The report documents 150 breeding records and 4 new species for the Hunter Region. Thanks to all the contributors who filled in their forms at Club nights or sent emails to Alan during the year – remember, your observations are important and help to make this compilation comprehensive.

Congratulations to our Twitchathon teams too – the Hunter Home Brewers won the main event with a record-breaking 233 species; the Dodgy Drongoes came third and the Hunter Thickheads fourth. The champagne race saw Hunter teams in the first three places with *Lesticum phoradae* in first place, Crested Shrike Twits in second and the Old Birds in third! Sponsorship funds raised by all NSW teams were considerable and it is expected that the target of \$15000 to add to the Australian Bird Study Association's research trust fund will be reached. This is a fantastic result and thanks are due to all sponsors as well as participants.

Our observations have also led to informative newspaper articles, raising the public profile of birds and the importance of the Hunter Estuary for migratory shorebirds (more than 1500 Red Knots on Ash Island) and the importance of Hunter wetlands as a drought refuge for inland birds. Thanks to Lyn Lambert for facilitating contact with newspaper reporters.

Some fresh faces are needed for the Committee next year, as a couple of members will be leaving the Hunter for a while. If you are interested in the inner workings of the Club, we'd love to hear from you – please don't be shy, tell me or any Committee member and help make the February AGM as short as possible!

With best wishes for a safe and happy festive season, filled with bird song,

Liz Crawford

LOCAL BOY DOES GOOD!

Club Member Paddy Lightfoot has been awarded the Newcastle Medal by Newcastle City Council for his work at the Wetland Centre over many years and in many different roles. The full citation reads

Awarded to Dr Paddy Lightfoot by Newcastle City Council on behalf of the people of Newcastle for highly distinguished service to the City and community of Newcastle. This award is made in recognition of outstanding contributions in advocacy for the preservation and regeneration of our natural environment"

CONGRATULATIONS PADDY!

ATLASSING 24 SEPTEMBER 2006

Barrington Tops National Park

From Ann Lindsey

It was only when we heard the news that Sunday night that we really realised just how dangerous the day had been in terms of wind and fire. Seven of us drove to Barrington Tops National Park west of Gloucester to the end of the Kerrapit Road. This area is famous for its Rufous Scrub-birds and some of us were quite desperate about seeing one. As the trees, a hundred feet tall, swayed and crashed about us we walked along the trail and back for about three kilometres and then down to Munro Hut built for bushwalkers back in the sixties. The area is well-known for its upland species such as Crescent Honeyeater, Red-browed Treecreeper, Olive Whistler and the Rufous Scrub-bird. Crescent Honeyeaters call well but are jolly difficult to pick out especially in such windy conditions, but the young member of the team managed to see one in the car park whilst we others were having morning tea. It took us quite a while to find the Olive Whistler several of which were constantly calling from dense foliage. We sat around on several logs waiting for the Rufous Scrub-bird to appear to no avail. However, as we walked back along the trail, one called loudly and we saw the empty space it had occupied as it disappeared into the bracken. The Crimson Rosellas were a delight, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos screeched about us and Rose Robins called softly from thickets. All in all we saw or heard twenty-eight species and filled in three atlas sheets for the Birds Australia database.

MIDWEEK OUTING

SEAHAM – 7th November 2006

Report from Val Moon

Pam and Norol Hill welcomed us to their place at Giles Road Seaham. They have mainly left their five-acre property in natural state with tall trees, plenty of undergrowth and with a stream running through it.

The 21 people present divided into two groups and went in different directions. After morning tea we reversed the order. We had good views of the birds and saw 55 different species which included 13 species either with nests or gathering nest building material.

Among the nesting birds were Sacred Kingfisher, Restless Flycatcher, Variegated and Superb Wrens, Spotted Pardalote and Eastern Yellow Robin.

Other interesting birds seen included Diamond and Red-browed Finches, Oriole, Pallid Cuckoo, Grey Strike-Thrush, Black-faced and White-bellied Cuckoo-strike, Golden and Rufous Whistler, Bar-shouldered Dove and Spotted Turtle-dove, Lewins Yellow –tufted and Yellow faced honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebill, King Parrots, Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and Grey Butcherbird.

We were entertained by the Satin bowerbirds who kept returning near the shed to retrieve the blue objects left out for them

Thank you to Pam and Norol for your hospitality - we enjoyed visiting your hideaway at Seaham.

After lunch we traveled on to the Seaham Swamp where we saw the many Egrets which are nesting there at this time.

ATLASSING MUNGO BRUSH

11 November 2006

Notes from Alan Stuart

Two Radjah Shelduck were found – presumably the same pair reported for 12 months in the area, 100s of White-throated Needletail and a Tawny Frogmouth on nest. The group also heard a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove.

OTHER CLUB NEWS by Peter Phillips

On Friday 24th November there was a fund-raising **trivia night** held at the Wetland Centre to assist Robert MacDonald on his trip to Tasmania. You may remember that Robert was named as one of 20 Commonwealth Bank Young Green Ambassadors in recognition of his volunteer work with Landcare.

The Night was a lot of fun and well attended by HBOC members, Lyn Lambert organized things superbly and I hope we made lots of money – we certainly gave away lots of prizes.

A feature of the night was that all questions and answers were connected – usually deviously – to birds. Not that much actual bird knowledge was needed. – e.g. Kiwi did win the 1983 Melbourne Cup, Anthony Quayle played Admiral Canaris in some obscure film and Falcons were driven to victory in a recent car race. Brilliant questions with just the right degree of difficulty and humour. A non-birdo team won with my team joint second.

We should do this again. Let the maddies race round in the Twitchathon, those of us who prefer to sleep in beds can eat drink, think and be competitive in comfort while serving a good cause.

2006 TWITCHATHON RESULTS.

Main Race

1st. Hunter Home Brewers 233 (new record) –

Craig Anderson, Lucas Grenadier,
Mick and Steve Roderick

2nd, Whacked out Woodswallows –227

3rd. Dodgy Drongos 214 Grant Brosie, Nick Livanos, Michael Kearns and Robert MacDonald

4th Hunter Thickheads 202. Ann Lindsey,
Mike Newman, Liz Crawford and Chris Herbert

Champagne Race

1st. Lesticum phoradae 162 (Liz Huxtable,
Rachael Russell, Sue Tiley and Liz Livanos

2nd Crested Shrike Tits 159. Jim Smart, Lorna Mee, Paul Baird.

3rd The Old Birds 145(Jenny Powers,
Di Johnson, Jenny Helman, Chris & Dave Eastham

Over \$15,000 raised for a good cause.

Well done everybody in the Hunter Teams

And now a few modest words from two teams-

THE THICKHEADS

Over Sixty and still Twitching

From Mike Newman

On Saturday the Hunter Thickheads, Ann, Chris, Liz and Mike set out knowing we couldn't win but hoping we could maintain our standards as Champions of the Hunter and East of the Divide Twitches. We had lunch at Pinegrove Road, where concerns over the increasingly strong wind were mitigated by the presence of a flock of several hundred White-browed and the occasional Masked Woodswallows. They were hawking over the scorched paddocks - hopefully harvesting the hordes of infuriating flies. Our spirits declined with the increasing barrenness of the land as we drove up the Hunter Valley to our Widden Valley starting point. Yes, we believe in transparency and will share with you what we twitched and where! As we passed through Kings Gap it became clear that the birds' spirits were also low as a consequence of the strong warm north westerly. We rely on them being active and singing their heads off.

At our starting point there was a deathly hush; no welcoming call from the Painted Honeyeater which the previous week had resonantly invited us to start our twitch with them for a second year. So we had a cup of coffee and instead of teeing up a hit list of calls debated what is the most important thing to do before you start. Interesting suggestions included, "brush your hair, put on lipstick" but at our age you can't beat having a comfort stop. We thought enviously of the Hunter Home Brewers going through their stretching exercises (do they take a fitness trainer?), but there is little point for us when only one member of our team can still run.

After a slow start we cut our losses and drove back out of the valley. Things immediately improved, the wind dropped a bit, the White-backed Swallow was exactly where it had pledged to be (somebody please sponsor it) and an audience of about 70 Plum-headed Finches flocked to the fences to applaud the swallow fly past. We drooled over them in a most time consuming manner which the Brewers would consider totally unprofessional; well why not? This is a rare opportunity in the Hunter.

At this stage we share a brief insight as to why Thickheads are thickheads. Just after passing Phipps Cutting a bird was spotted on a post. "Stop"! "Will you stop Chris"!! "Get that Pallid Cuckoo it's just dropped to the ground". "No it's a Ground Cuckoo-shrike." "Looks like a Pratincole" "No, it's only a Pallid Cuckoo after all."

At Kings Gap the birds were at last getting more active but alas again we dipped on our second banker Painted Honeyeater. Then an amazing bonus, a juvenile Hooded Robin, which like the Brown Treecreeper we had not recorded at Kings Gap for several years.

On to Medhurst Bridge where we were greeted by the ringing calls of the Painted Honeyeater; third one lucky for this species which is uncharacteristically common in the Hunter this spring.

As daylight faded we drove along the Jones Reserve road towards Appletree Flat where we miraculously twitched a roosting Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, our only chance for this species. As we drove off we were amazed to see a Brush Turkey on the side of the road. Are they normally present in the gullies of this dry woodland country? Who says the Twitchathon has no ornithological value?

Dinner at the Singleton noodle parlour and on to our camp spot at the Allyn River hoping to pick up a sponsor's incentive bonus for a Sooty Owl. At last at 4 00am a noise; but not really like a falling bomb; more like a dodgy car. The Dodgy Drongos had finally made it! Soon after came the first call of the Eastern Yellow Robin followed by the calls of the Russet-tailed and Bassian Thrushes. Suddenly everything was calling: Rose Robins, whistlers, catbirds, monarchs, lyrebirds and the first Noisy Pitta, an absolutely fabulous dawn chorus. The pre-breakfast walk, yes we do find time to eat, revealed rainforest pigeons and bowerbirds gorging themselves on fig laden trees.

Fluky luck! On the way down the Allyn Valley when we stopped for a Variegated Fairy-wren we instantly spotted both it and a Southern Emu-wren in the roadside vegetation. As we drove on pondering why the Pheasant Coucals weren't calling, one flew out, presumably hawking an insect immediately in front of the car. Displaying extraordinary reflexes, Chris somehow managed to avoid it.

At this stage we got the usual disinformation bulletin from the Brewers. "Well down on last year but recovering from a slow start". We replied buoyantly "On track, Thickheads record (205) a possibility". We should have known better. When we got to Raymond Terrace the wheels soon started to fall off our aspirations for the coastal locations.

Our trump card was finding a pair of Painted Snipe at a very convenient location in the Hexham swamp area the previous Thursday. Come Sunday we could not find this elusive species and on a Twitchathon the last thing you need is to waste time searching for a cryptic skulker. This set the scene for the rest of the day. A wind-driven high tide coupled with a boat moored off the Stockton Sandspit kept most of the waders beyond viewing distance on the dykes and similar problems eventuated at the Newcastle Beach area roosts. We were about 10 birds down on our expectations for these areas.

So back to the Wetlands Centre and the submission of our final score, 202, which was exactly the same as last year despite the conditions. Then comes the moment of truth; yes, we flogged all the rest of the main race teams in NSW but we were last of the Hunter teams. But we don't mind. We have proved our resilience and it must be inspiring to the young guns to know they have many Twitchathons to enjoy come win or lose. We had a great time travelling a mere 500km from start to finish and as usual enjoying a great BBQ to wrap things up.

THE BREWERS

Twitchathon 2006 – “The Brewers Strike Back”

From “Jacqueline Winter”

Following a narrow defeat in 2005 at the hands of the merciless Whacked Out Woodswallows (WoW), the Hunter Home Brewers (HHB) were determined to return the favour in 2006. To this end, the spade work started early – around November 2005. By the time that October 2006 had come around, the boys (Mick, Steve, Ando and Grena Brew) were getting eager to twitch. One key factor was emphasised during the lead up to the 2006 Twitchathon – the impact of the drought in western NSW. This was for two reasons – firstly, as it could possibly send some more traditionally western species towards the western slopes on the Liverpool Plains and secondly, as it was likely to disadvantage the WoW, who start much further west in the Macquarie Marshes. The prospects of an ‘accidental occidental’ for the Brewers and a dry route for the WoW had the team quietly self-assured.

A fierce westerly grew during the Saturday, reaching virtual unbirdable conditions by mid-afternoon. Still, there was consolation in the fact that the chief woodland patch was in a lee, and that the ever-reliable Painted Honeyeaters were completely unperturbed by the conditions. The Twitch TAB favourite for first bird, Mistletoebird, was pipped by Red-rumped Parrot for the prize, quickly followed by Singing, Spiny-cheeked and Painted Honeyeaters.

The boys left their first ‘patch’ after less than a minute’s birding as the key species had fallen. Incredibly, a male White-winged Fairy-Wren confronted the gale-force westerly and perched defiantly on a fence post. A few more important western species such as Cockatiel, Blue Bonnet and Yellow-throated Miner fell before reaching the closest thing the Brewers have to a western wetland.

The woodlands produced rapidly, with both Hooded and Red-capped Robins plus 3 species Woodswallow falling early. However, the last 30 minutes in the woodland only produced ‘common’ species, which essentially equated to a wasted half hour. Frustrated, they left the woodland but soon picked up a healthy consolation in the form a Black Falcon, the first ‘brewers maiden bird’ for 2006.

The second woodland spot produced 2 very handy mop-ups in Turquoise Parrot and Inland Thornbill and although the nearby homestead provided Southern Whiteface, the resident Zebra Finches simply could not be found. Looking down the barrel of an awful dip, Mick Brew called for a visit to a nearby homestead, which eventually yielded Zebs. Instant rejoicing ensued, but literal pandemonium ensued seconds later as a male Red-winged Parrot barrelled past.

The impetus was carried through to a large dam where Whiskered, Caspian and Gull-billed Terns were all seen hawking over the open water. Down on the creek an Azure Kingfisher was very welcome and a flock of White-throated Needletails where a reasonable consolation for the dipped White-backed Swallow before setting off on the long haul across the plains towards the ranges.

Perched on 112 by dark, they were pretty happy and like clockwork Barn and Boobook Owls and Tawny Frogmouth fell within a few kilometres of each other. Attempts at Bitterns along the way produced some niceties such as Glossy Ibis, Black-fronted Dotterel and Plumed Whistling Duck. It was a late arrival at camp, with the time spent setting up tents roughly equating with the time spent within them.

Soon after, the magical rainforest dawn chorus slowly accelerated into song. Always an exciting part of the Twitch, as the tally probably grows more rapidly for the Brewers at this time than any other stage of the 24hrs. Generally, it was a classic case of ‘the usual suspects’, although this still meant they had added 22 species before leaving camp. Brewers are also grateful to the Brush Turkeys that have recently taken up residence at the campsite, allowing them to ‘peg one back’ on the teams that go to Barrington House.

Paradise Riflebird was the next to fall and a calling Pheasant Coucal was a relief as always. They then moved on to their ‘rainforest mop-up’ sites, where numerous Topknot Pigeons were seen, but little else that was new. Steve was expressing concerns at the potential implications of the rainforest dips (such as Regent Bowerbird, Wompoo Fruit-Dove and Noisy Pitta), though Mick remained quietly confident as these are never ‘shoe birds’. His confidence was also due to the fact that the Brewers were on 164 species by the time they’d left the wet forests behind...and it had only just passed 8am.

With a very entertaining Long-billed Corella tick-up (a classic bogey-bird), it was onwards to the Paterson area where Grey-crowned Babblers and a very obliging Buff-banded Rail grazing on a front lawn were added. The penultimate woodland site produced Variegated Fairy-Wren and Little Lorikeet, along with the first of many Pallid Cuckoos. Although this spot is critical habitat for Hunter Thickheads and WoW, they dipped this year.

A male Brown Songlark spied by Mick en-route to Walka Water Works was another maiden bird for the Brewers whilst Steve pointed out a Goldfinch perched on top of a thistle. WWW itself was productive in producing a male Blue-billed Duck and the first Aussie Grebe. The momentum was lifting and those rainforest dips were well and truly starting to dissipate.

The lads then progressed to their strategic Lower Hunter dry woodland site – an area they thought they had sewn up to themselves...only to encounter a Ford Falcon virtually bottoming out on the rutted-out gravel track – it could only be the Dodgy Drongo's. This called for the now-infamous "Brewer's Flash", as the NSW bird list (awash with blue highlighter) was thrust out the window at the unsuspecting Drongo's. They simply shook their heads. This was a particularly important stop for the Brewers as they picked up a crucial 6 species, including Yellow-tufted, Brown-headed and Black-chinned Honeyeaters, the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Crested Shrike-tit missed from Saturday and the only Koel heard in 24hrs. All were agreed that it was 'good brewing' and they moved on.

At Pambalong they crossed paths with a very relaxed Alan Morris and his CCC's, who were promptly treated to an affable, yet deliberate, Brewer's Flash – they shook their heads. Ash Island produced a few waders and Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo before they set off towards Tourle Street Bridge and crept onto Deep Pond, where Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and a Skylark were seen.

And so, it was off to the Hunter Estuary on 211 with still three hours to go. A quick stop-off at the Kooragang Dykes yielded a Common Sandpiper as well as Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers. At the Sandspit the WoW were seen. Needless to say the lads treated them to a Brewer's Flash, before ticking off the Tattlers and Terek Sandpipers that stood behind a very cheeky Striated Heron.

After picking up Stints on the sandspit, Whimbrel in the mangroves and Golden Plovers at Stockton the gang decided that they were happy with their waders and set off to Newcastle Baths for the ocean watch, sitting pretty on 225 sp. with nearly two hours to go.

Whilst the baths were a write-off for the standard roosting birds, Wedge-tailed and Fluttering Shearwaters as well as Gannets were able to be identified out at sea. Along with Crested Terns, this brought them to 229 and equalling the record...with the Maggie Geese patiently waiting at the end, it was imminent that 230 would fall. En-route to the wetlands centre a new spot was visited, where New Holland Honeyeaters were seen – 230 it was.

Onwards they went to the wetlands centre, knowing that had beaten the record...but was it going to be enough? How had the WoW fared? Had the Drongo's pull something out of the fire? Things were looking great in the Hunter, how did the Thickheads go? The anticipation that swelled within them as they bustled into the centre was electric.

Magpie Goose took them to 231. They knew there had been Wandering Whistling Ducks seen there over the past few weeks and before long they had a pair in their bins – 232. With still a quarter of an hour to go Steve pointed out a Red-kneed Dotterel which took them to 233. The last 15 minutes were spent searching in vain for a Crake, a passing Hobby or even for what was to be their worst dip – a Yellow-billed Spoonbill.

As 4 o'clock approached, teams huddled around the picnic tables for the wrap-up. The Thickheads had again cracked 200 in the Hunter catchment with an impressive 202. The Dodgy Drongo's had notched up a fine 214 in their first venture over the big hill. A paused silence as only two teams weren't accounted for, then ..."Whacked Out Woodswallows..." and at that Steve thrust his fist in the air, the WoW had run in second ..."227".

Mick was soon on the dog-and-bone to Alan Morris, who confirmed that no other teams had passed 200. The Brewers had gotten up by six birds and had beaten last year's record by four. So once again, the bar has been raised to another level. David Geering was heard to say at the ensuing BBQ that 233 wouldn't be a difficult score to beat and Greg Clancy's threat to head west next year on the internet have certainly set the scene for 2007.

SCORING THE TWITCHATHON

Mike Newman suggests that another way of measuring twitchathon success would be to measure to number of species seen per kilometre travelled. In the 2006 event the Hunter Thickheads (of which Mike was a member) drove about 500 kms for a species per kilometre(sp) rate of 0.4. The triumphant Brewers travelled about 700 kms for 0.3spk and the Dodgy Drongos flogged their Falcon 800 kms for a spk of 0.26. In future the prize for the most environmentally sustainable performance may be called the Mike Newman Cup.

BIRDLINE NSW GOES HI-TECH

This story has been received from Murray Lord who is one of the coordinators of Birdline NSW.

For some time we have been looking at how best to put the Birdline NSW telephone service that has been operating for the last 15 or so years and funded by Birding NSW ,Cumberland BOC and BASNA online, with a view to being able to provide more up to date information. We have decided we are going to trial using Richard Alcorn's www.ereamae.com site in the same way that Birdline Victoria has been doing for some time.

So in order to see the most recent Birdline NSW sightings you can go to www.ereamae.com and click on the link in the top right corner. That recent sightings page contains a link to a form to fill out with your sightings. Your sightings will appear once a moderator has reviewed and approved the sighting (we aim to do this daily) Also it's possible to receive a weekly digest of sightings by email

Please submit interesting records online so that we can test how the system works. A reminder that all sightings submitted to Birdline NSW are considered for inclusion in the NSW bird report. Can I also encourage people who post NSW sightings on birding-aus or any of the local email lists to submit their sightings in this way rather than assuming all sightings that are online somewhere come to our attention.

Murray Lord -mailto: mklord@trump.net.au

(of course you should also tell Alan Stuart or Sue Hamonè of notable local sightings -ED)

RED KNOT *Calidris canutus* RECORD NUMBERS ON ASH ISLAND

From Ann Lindsey

The Red Knot is a migratory species which breeds in the high Arctic across Siberia in localised populations. After breeding they leave their breeding grounds and fly south, many coming to Australia and New Zealand along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The ones that come to Australia are probably the subspecies "rogersi" which breeds in NE Siberia including the Chukotskiy Peninsula. The nominate "canutus" may also occur.

They are omnivorous: worms, bivalves, gastropods, crustaceans, echinoderms. Extralimitally i.e. Siberia, they are known to eat shoots, bulbs, arachnids, insects, fish and kitchen scraps. Locate prey by touch rather than visually. Probe vertically into substrate with full length of bill and slowly rotating the head. Often probe 1-5 times followed by a short run, then repeat the pattern. Also feed by continuous pecking, sewing machine action. Put bill 1 cm into mud then push bill forward 1-3 cms.

They arrive in the Hunter in September and October and move on south to Victoria and New Zealand. Until 18 October 2006 the highest count since 1999 when HBOC started monthly surveys was in September 2001 when 1100 were seen.

Today, 18 October 2006, 1,669 were feeding voraciously on Milhams Pond on Ash Island at high tide. I first saw them at 7.10 am and they left Milhams Pond at 10.00am as the tide was ebbing. Among them were 4 birds with orange flags indicating that they were flagged in Victoria at some time in the past and two with faded yellowish /buffish flags. Difficult to really identify the colour. North west Australia uses yellow flags. Milhams Pond would provide a supplementary feeding area, the main feeding area being on the mudflats on the Hunter River. Supplementary feeding areas are very important for the smaller species of waders.

Late Bird News from Alan Stuart

I include here sightings notified to Alan since the November Club Night for the benefit of those not on his email list.

- Little Bittern seen at Bolwarra wetlands (old sewage treatment ponds). Seen in the early morning by Jim Smart on 14 November.
- Swamp Harriers nesting in Kooragang Island – exact location not for disclosure.
- Spotted Harrier at KI Nature Reserve
- Black Falcon hanging around Old Silo on Ash Island where Fairy Martins are nesting.
- Cockatiel at Warrah (near Willow Tree)
- Inland Thornbill at Pine Ridge (NW corner of Hunter)
- Brown Songlark at Stockton Sandspit

Among the Bar Tailed Godwits recently surveyed on Kooragang was one banded on Stockton Sandspit in 1975 by Fred Van Gessel.

One of the themes from our recent sightings is the occurrence of Western species nearer to the coast. The most tantalizing of these sightings is possible Grey Falcon. Harold Tarrant is interested in receiving details of any suspected sightings of this species which may be present in the central and western districts of the region. He is trying to compile a database to establish whether there are common factors behind the alleged sightings – such as presence in numbers of suitable prey, time of day etc. Let him have details which will be kept confidential at proclus@bigpond.com and he will send you a brief questionnaire.

Homework for the holidays:

Collective Nouns for the next Trivia Night

- A Parliament of Owls
- An Ostentation of Peacocks
- An Exaltation of Larks
- A Murmuration of Starlings
- A Deceit of Lapwings
- A Walk of Snipe
- A Watch of Nightingales
- A Crackle of Cockatoos
- A Tiding of Magpies & (old favourite)
- A Murder of Crows

THE WETLAND CENTRE PROGRAM

SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM

Wetland Turtles (aged 5-7)

Arts and crafts, dipnetting, games, adventure with experienced leaders

9am –12.30pm Tuesdays and Fridays

January 9, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26

Wet & Wild Canoeing (aged 12-16)

9am-12.30pm Thursdays

Jan 11. 18. 25

Arts Alive (aged 7-12)

With a changing theme each and every school holidays, this is a great program for children. Learn all about birds, reptiles, tortoises, pond animals

9am-12.30pm Wednesdays

January 10, 17, 24

Wacky Tour

Behind the scenes at the Hunter Wetland Centre Hands on demonstrations with our Wacky Professor.

Wacky Tour activities fully supervised.

Thursday 11 January 9-11am

REGULAR EVENTS

Breakfast with the Birds

A nice easy stroll around the Wetlands observing flora and fauna with commentary from an experienced guide, Return to Café Jacana for a delicious continental breakfast

January 14 7am.

Spotlight Prowl

Join our experienced guide on this easy paced walk.

January 20, February 17, March 17

Check starting times when you book

Canoeing on the A-maze-ing Ironbark Trail.

Paddle and explore with our experienced guide. Stop off at our coastal rainforest and then return to Café Jacana for a delicious lunch.

9.30am January 7, February 4, March 4.

School Holiday Program and Regular Events

must be booked in advance. Enquire about

fees when you ring 02 4951 6466

Special Event : World Wetland Day

Sunday 4 February 9.30am to 2pm. Entry Free.

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHTS OCT/NOV 2006.

Jul	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	Wingen	G.Newling
Jul24	Silvereeye large flocks	~1,000	Eleebana [Stobbard Ck.Res]	A.Gooden
Sep 25	Brown Songlark	5m	Mt. Arthur mine	"
Sep 28	White-backed Swallow	4	Wingen	"
Sep 17	Rainbow Bee-eater	First arrivals	"	"
Sep 24	Dollarbird		" earliest for 17 yrs	"
Sep 17	Rainbow Lorikeet	2	"new for the area	"
Aug	Cattle Egret	~40	Muswellbrook STW	"
Sep 18	Eastern Grass Owl	1 Road Kill	9km south of Gloucester	P.Drake-Brockman
Sep 29	Little Penguin	2	Off Belmont	Matt Hamonet
Aug 26	Skylark	3	Kooragang Is [nr Deep Pond]	M.Roderick
Sep 5	Dollarbird [early arrival]	1	Upper Dartbrook	"
Sep 22	Cockatiel	>20	Warrah Creek	"
	Brown Songlark	5-10	"	"
	Singing Bushlark	>10	"	"
	Singing Bushlark	5	West of Sandy Hollow	"
	Painted Honeyeater	1	Baerami Valley	"
	Little Raven	5	"	"
Oct 1	Crescent Honeyeater	4	Kerrapit Rd. Gloucester Tops	"
	Crescent Honeyeater	>5	Devil's Hole	"
	Rufous Scrub Bird	1heard	Gloucester Tops	"
Oct 7	Square-tailed Kite	2. 1 on nest	Cooperook SF	"
	Red-necked Stint	>50	Farquhar Inlet	"
	Sanderling	14	"	"
	Pacific Golden Plover	>50	"	"
	Beach Stone-curlew	1	"	"
Sep 3	Common Sandpiper	1	Booragul [Art Gallery area]	L.Huxtable
Sep	Western Rosella [escapee?]	1	Merewether Heights	K.Woods
	Paradise Riflebird	1m	Chichester SF [Gumleaf Hut]	T.Tasoulis
Sep 18	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	Flaggy Creek	T.Clarke
Sep 24	Whiskered Tern	2	Stockton Sandspit	"
	Tawny Grassbird	1	"	"
Sep 26	Scarlet Honeyeater	>20	Arcadia Vale	"
	Crescent Honeyeater	1	" [Gale force Westerlies]	"
Sep 28	Common Koel	1	Newcastle [#1 Sports Ground]	"
Oct 6	Spotted Harrier			
Oct 9	Whiskered Tern	~150	Hexham Swamp	"
Oct 10	Rufous Fantail	2	Floraville [Armstrong's Gully]	"
Sep 26	Pallid Cuckoo	Heard	Maitland	H.Tarrant
Sep 30	Rufous Songlark	4	Hand's Lagoon, Bolwarra	"
Oct 4	Brown Songlark		Flat Rd. [nr Hands Lagoon]	"
Oct 6	Black Falcon	4	Hunter River [near WWW]	"
Oct 9	Common Blackbird	Heard	Bolwarra	"
Oct 2	Common Blackbird	6	Maitland [Regent St area]	"
Sep 24	Rufous Songlark	10-20	Yarrawa	"
	Western Gerygone	6-20	Past Jerry's Plains	"
	Grey-crowned Babbler	1	10k past Jerrys Plains	"
	Hooded Robin	1	Jones Res. Rd.	"
	White-winged Triller	1	"	"
Oct 8	Leaden Flycatcher	Pr	Fisher's Hill Rd. Vacy	"
	Satin Flycatcher	Pr	"	"
Sep 26	Olive-backed Oriole	Pr +3dy	Newcastle University	"
Oct 13	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	4	Charlestown	R. Walker
	Common Sandpiper	1	Speers Point	"
Oct 4	Australian Hobby	1	Mayfield	M.Chegwidden
Oct 10	Australian Wood Duck	Pr +16dy	Belmont South [Caravan Park]	B. Cockerell
Oct 4	Common Koel	1	Cooks Hill	R. Vale
Aug 31	Regent Bowerbird	1m	Cardiff Heights [garden]	L. Denham
Aug 26	Eastern Reef Egret	1	N'cle Ocean Baths	R.McDonald

	Wandering Albatross	1	"	"
Aug 31	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	>10	Ash Island	R.McDonald
Aug 31	Double-banded Plover	2	"	"
Aug 23	Spotted Harrier	2	"	"
Sep 13	Latham's Snipe	10	Pambalong NR	"
Sep 4	Black-winged Stilt	>10	Ash Island	"
Sep 10	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	~150	"	"
Sep 10	Red-necked Stint	>50	"	"
	Common Greenshank	7	"	"
	Marsh Sandpiper	3	"	"
Aug 30	Ruff	1	"	"
Oct 29	Masked Woodswallow		Awabakal N.R.	P.Lightfoot
	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	HWCA	"
Oct 18	Latham's Snipe	15	Ash Island [nr City Farm]	A.Lindsey
	Latham's Snipe	1	Water Ribbon Swale	"
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	8	"	"
Oct 3-7	Leaden Flycatcher	1	Mt. St. Helens [Murrurundi]	J.Adams
	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	20	"	"
	Glossy Black Cockatoo	12	"	"
	Crimson Rosella	D breeding	"	"
	Australian King Parrot	D breeding	"	"
	Satin Bowerbird	B breeding	"	"
	Musk Lorikeet	Breeding	"	"
	Little Lorikeet	Breeding	"	"
	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Breeding	"	"
	Rainbow Lorikeet	Breeding	"	"
Oct	Figbird	5 nests	Swansea	"
	Tawny Frogmouth	Nest	"	"
Nov 14	Little Bittern	1	Bolwarra wetland	J. Smart
Nov 11	Radjah Shelduck	Pr	Myall Lakes NP	HBOC Atlassers
	White-throated Needletail	100's	"	"
	Rose-crowned Fruit Dove	Heard	"	"
	Tawny Frogmouth	On nest	"	"
Nov 14	Diamond Firetail	1	Kurri Kurri [Hospital area]	G.Brosie
Nov 11	Brown Songlark	6m +3f	Mt. Arthur mine area	G.Newling
	Richard's Pipit	~10	"	"
	Singing Bushlark	3	"	"
	Stubble Quail	4	"	"
Nov 14	Great Crested Grebe	14	Lake Glenbawn	"
Oct 31	Painted Snipe	3	Lenaghan's Swamp	A.Richardson
	Latham's Snipe	Several	"	"
v 18	Swamp Harrier	1+n1y	Big Pond area	C.& L. Herbert
	Australasian Bittern	1	"	"
Sep/Oct	Common Blackbird	Heard	Bolwarra/Lorn/Telarah/E.Mait	G.Brosie
Oct19/20	Inland Thornbill	2	West of Willow Tree	A.Richardson
Oct 28	Black Bittern	1	Morisset [Stockton Creek]	"
Oct 24	Stubble Quail	4+	Bolwarra/Largs	"
Oct 20	Peregrine Falcon	2	Duns Creek	B.Shields
Oct 10	Bush Stone-curlew	3	Lemon Tree Passage	T.Clarke
Oct 17	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	Wallsend [garden]	"
Oct 22	White-backed Swallow	1	Bulga	"
Oct 28	Red-kneed Dotterel	12	HWC [Water Ribbon Swamp]	"
Oct 29	Spangled Drongo	1	Wallsend [garden]	"
Nov 5	Little Tern	2	Stockton Sandspit	"
Oct 26	Australian Hobby	1	Cardiff	J.Westphal
Oct 14	Brush Turkey	1	Cardiff [busy road]	"
Oct 28	Tawny Frogmouth	Pr on	Medowie	"
Oct 27	Turquoise Parrot	Pr	Kurri Kurri [hospital area]	N & L. Livanos
Nov 3	Diamond Firetail	2	"	"
Nov 8	Freckled Duck	1	Walka Water Works	J.Smart/P.Baird
Nov 8	Baillon's Crake	2	Walka Water Works "	J Smart/J Baird
Nov 8	Latham's Snipe	3	Walka Water Works	J.Smart/P.Baird

Oct 30	Spotted Crake	1+2dy	Battery Rocks	J.Smart
	Little Friarbird	1+1dy	"	"
Nov 8	Buff-banded Rail	1+2dy	Walka Water Works	"
Oct 20	Black Falcon	1	Ash Island	T.Tasoulis
Oct 20	Wedge-tailed Eagle	1+1dy	Pacific Palms	R. Russell
Nov 5	Lewin's Rail	4 heard	Black Ned's Bay	A.Stuart
	Brown Goshawk	1	"	"
Nov 4	Turquoise Parrot	4	Kurri [Hospital area]	A.Stuart/P.Hansbro
	White-browed Woodswallow	30+fy	"	"
	Masked Woodswallow	4+fy	"	"
	Pallid Cuckoo	5+	"	"
	Brush Cuckoo	2	"	"
	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	"	"
Nov 1	White-necked Heron	3	Ash Island	L.Lambert
Nov 1/2	Masked Woodswallow	1imm	Wingen	G.Newling
Oct 14	Gull-billed Tern	~50	Stockton Sandspit	M.Kearns
Oct 29	Glossy Ibis	44	Lenaghan's Swamp	"
	Wompoo Fruit-Dove	6+	Allyn River	"
Oct 20	Buff-banded Rail	1	Bolwarra Lagoon	H.Tarrant
Oct/Nov	Latham's Snipe	7	"	"
Oct 24	Red-kneed Dotterel	1	"	"
Oct 21	Singing Bushlark	2-4	Yarrawa	"
Nov 4	Painted Honeyeater	1	Medhurst Bridge	"
	White-browed Woodswallows	~50	"	"
Nov 5	Grey-crowned Babbler	1on	Vacy	H.Tarrant
Oct 11	Barn Owl	1	Lorn	"
Nov 8	Turquoise Parrot	2	Rosebrook	"

COMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
Sunday 14 January	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to noon Sandspit Car park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Saturday 20 January	Hunter Wader Survey	10.00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 49593663 Alan Stuart 49528569
Sunday 21 January	Field Outing Green Point	7.30am 16 Foot Sailing Club, Belmont	Di Johnson 4975 1777
Sat/Sunday 20/21 January	Painted Snipe Survey	Any wetland near you	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Friday-Sunday 26-28 January	Long Weekend Camp	Craven State Forest	Di Johnson 4975 1777
Sunday 4 February	World Wetlands Day	Hunter Wetlands Centre	Tom Clarke 49513872 Alan Stuart 49528569
Tuesday 6 February	Mid-week Outing Ash Island	7.30am Ash Island Car Park	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Wednesday 7 February	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Saturday 10 February	Atlassing: Hexham Swamp	6.30am Minmi Fire Station; carry morning tea and lunch as we will be walking across the Swamp.	Please ring to confirm Nick Livanos 49545739 Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Sunday 11 February	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to noon Sandspit Car park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Wednesday 14 February	Club Meeting Annual General Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: TBA

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. to be held at the Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia, Shortland on Wednesday 14th February 2007 commencing at 7:30pm.

Business of the meeting: Confirmation of minutes of 2006 AGM
Annual Report Including Financial Report
Election of Office Bearers (see separate notice)
Filling of other positions
General Business

The AGM will be followed by the February Club Night.

Tom Clarke, Public Officer.

Election of HBOC Office Bearers for 2007

Nominations are called for the following positions for 2007:

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

Nominations shall be made in writing and signed by two members of the Club and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. Written nominations shall be delivered to the Secretary by 7th February 2007.

If insufficient written nominations are received by that date, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall then be received at the AGM.

Tom Clarke, Public Officer.

Form Of Appointment Of Proxy

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

(Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984)

I,(full name)
of(address)

being a member of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

being a member of that Club, as my proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Club to be held on the 14th February 2007 and at any adjournment of that meeting.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

Membership fees are now due for the year 1st January 2007 to 31st December 2007.

Name:

Address:

.....Phone No.:.....

Please circle the appropriate category: **Family - \$25** **Single - \$25** **Junior - \$3**

New members who joined after 30th September 2006 will be registered for 2007.
Fees may be paid at Club Nights or by mail to the Hon. Treasurer, P.O.Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305

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