



## Hunter Bird Observers Club

# NEWSLETTER

Issue 2/07

April/May 2007

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

(affiliated with Bird Observers Club of Australia)

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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:**

Anthony Gooden

Chris Herbert

Ann Lindsey

Robert MacDonald

Michael Kearns

Lorna Mee

#### **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:

Eve Russell, Valerie Owen, John Mercer and Lawrie and Christine Gray.

#### **NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 2007**

##### **Edition**

June/July

August/September

October/November

December 2007/January 08

##### **Copy Deadline**

June 3rd

July 29th

September 30

December 2

**Membership Fees for 2007 are now due.**

## President's Column – April 2007

From Liz Crawford

The Hunter Estuary Avian Study, commissioned by Newcastle City Council, is currently in progress. This study aims to provide information on the distribution, abundance and status of birds within the Hunter Estuary, based on the records and experience of the Hunter Bird Observers Club. Chris Herbert is coordinating the work, which involves collating both Club records and members' observations of birds in wetlands around the estuary.

The information will be used by the Hunter Estuary Management Committee to assist with planning and management of natural areas. It is a wonderful opportunity to combine the wealth of knowledge within the club and individual's databases to provide pertinent and important information about bird use of the estuary. Please don't hesitate to contact Chris ([chrisliz@tpg.com.au](mailto:chrisliz@tpg.com.au)) if you have information you would like to contribute to this project.

The value of long-term bird observations has been demonstrated in the Wingen Cemetery Plan of Management, recently released by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Greg Newling has been observing birds in this Grassy Box Woodland Habitat for over ten years and his bird list has been included in the Management Plan. Sadly, it records the decline of species such as the Red-capped Robin, one of our many disappearing woodland birds.

Recently, Jim Smart gave an illustrated presentation to the Walka Water Works Trust about the importance of this area for bird habitat. The Trust will soon become incorporated within Maitland City Council and the presentation sought to reinforce the existing management plan, which aims to preserve bird habitat at the site.

Jim, Lorna Mee and Paul Baird conduct monthly surveys at Walka Water Works, commonly recording more than 28 species, including Great Crested Grebe and Pink-eared Duck. Less commonly recorded birds include Little Bittern, Buff-banded Rail, Lewin's Rail and Australian Spotted Crake. Obviously a good birding spot!

Following completion of the Birds on Rock Platforms study by Chris Herbert, Newcastle City Council have decided to erect educational signs on several rock platforms, featuring information about birds and invertebrates in this habitat. By raising awareness, we hope to minimize adverse impacts on rock-platform dependent birds such as the Sooty Oystercatcher.

From time to time we have opportunities to participate in research surveys. The latest request is from an honours student at the University of Technology, Catherine Thomas, who is seeking information on Australian White Ibis. Catherine needs to know where White Ibis are roosting or nesting, how many birds are present, if they are present all year round and whether they are wearing coloured bands on their legs. If you would like to survey White Ibis in your local area between 20 March and 20 April 2007, please send the results by email to: [Catherine.A.Thomas@student.uts.edu.au](mailto:Catherine.A.Thomas@student.uts.edu.au).

Recent activities included Clean-Up Australia Day at Stockton Sandspit, coordinated by Robert MacDonald. The annual Port Stephens Waterbird Survey, arranged by National Parks and Wildlife Service using HBOC bird observers, was coordinated by Alan Stuart. Both activities were highly successful, with some exciting bird observations at both locations! Port Stephens remains a stronghold for Pied Oystercatchers, with over 100 being observed again during the survey.

Have you been down to Stockton Sandspit lately? The migratory shorebirds are donning their breeding plumage and looking extraordinarily beautiful. They can be viewed on the beach at the Sandspit for about 2 hours after local high tide (which is about one hour later than Sydney high tide). Hurry though, as they'll soon be departing for their northern hemisphere breeding grounds.

Radio-tracking of recently departed Bar-tailed Godwits from New Zealand (in the last few weeks) has shown that some of the birds flew non-stop for about 11,000 km to the Yellow Sea in approximately 9 days! This adds another dimension to our wader-watching! (see following report for more detail on the Godwit story)

Happy birding,  
Liz Crawford

## 2007 AGM

The HBOC AGM was held on 14<sup>th</sup> February at the Wetland Centre and resulted in the return of Liz Crawford as President for her fifth, and she vows, final year. The Committee is essentially the continuation of previous membership except Mike Todd and Grant Brosie stood aside for Michael Kearns and Lorna Mee. See Front Page for details

Many appointed positions were filled uncontested

Activities Officer:	Di Johnson
Assistant Activities Officer	Lorna Mee
Mid-week Outings	Val & Don Moon
Conservation Coordinator:	Ann Lindsey
Assistant Treasurer	Joan Natano
Librarian (Books)	Grant Brosie
Assistant Librarian (Books)	Robert McDonald
Librarian (Slides)	John Cockerell
Librarian (Audio/Video)	Grant Brosie
Records Officer	Sue Hamonet
NSWBA Recorder	Sue Hamonet
Public Officer	Tom Clarke
Public Relations Officer	Marion Walker
Publicity Officer	Lyn Lambert
Membership Officer	Rowley Smith
Suppers:	Judith Westphal & Caryl Lightfoot
Club Night Assts (2)	Pam Durie & Pat Pountney
Auditor	Katrina Thornton
Newsletter Editor	Peter Phillips
Newsletter Prod/Distribution	P.Rankin & T.Clarke
Annual Bird Report Editor	Alan Stuart
Website Editor	Dick Jenkins

## More News from the Committee

- Harold Tarrant is to replace Ann Lindsey on the Board of The Hunter Wetland Centre.
- Anne Lindsey has taken over the 600 Club Badge scheme as an individual – this is not an official HBOC activity
- Pam Durie has organized a series of bird lectures at Toronto for a U3A course. Able assistance provided by Judy Westphal, Caryl Lightfoot, Sue Hamonet and Chris Herbert.
- Club Committee meetings are held at Garden Suburb School commencing 7.00pm on the first Wednesday of each month except January. All HBOC members are welcome to attend.

## Wollemi Field Outing 25 February

Report from Di Johnson

On a rather overcast showery day 16 birdwatchers met at Wollemi all prepared for a great day at Judy Duffy's property "Amosville" which backs onto the Yango State Forest. This habitat proved to be very rewarding as we saw during the day a total of 27 Glossy Black Cockatoos feeding quite close to us. We were able to admire their gorgeous red tails splayed out as they went from tree to tree. In the background we heard two Superb Lyrebirds.

Judy's property had lovely green pastures and we meandered our way Indian-file up the cow or goat track towards the rocks and bush at the top. Here Robert McDonald sighted three Rock Warblers which inspired some of us to scramble up the rocky embankment to get a good view of them. The honeyeaters we saw were Yellow-faced, White-eared, Yellow-tufted, Lewins, Brown-headed and White-naped – quite a nice collection. In the shrubbery there were Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens, Silvereye and in the nearby property dams we enjoyed views of Grey Teal, Wood Duck, Grebe and Black Duck.

High up, near some caves there were a number of goats. One of them seemed to attach himself to us so much so that he followed us all the way back to Judy's home. Apparently this was a common occurrence – he may have heard about the delicious morning teas we bring to these outings. Across the road along a cool waterway, we saw Rufous Whistlers, Dusky Moorhen, Spotted Pardalote and Red-browed Finch.

After morning tea we were invited to visit "Tarrawonga", Gail and Michael Winnick's property which is beside Judy's. Here we saw the mountain birds like King Parrots. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs and Eastern Rosellas and many Glossy Blacks. Around the homestead there was a lot of activity at Grey-crowned Babbler's nests and over lunch we sighted three Blue-faced Honeyeaters.

Gail and Michael were most hospitable and we enjoyed the company of Robyn Lamond, a Wollemi Landcare participant. Gail has quite a large planting of lavender and we enticed her to bring out here lovely lavender pot-pourri bags after lunch. All in all a very enjoyable day.

**Kooragang Nature Reserve -Tomago  
Wetlands HBOC Field Survey on 3/3/2007.**

**Background**

Since the 1990s the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project (KWRP) have been working towards reinstating tidal flow to the Tomago Wetlands part of the Kooragang Nature Reserve (KNR). This area had been formerly a night roost for migratory waders. However, in the past flap gates had been installed and the tidal flow was cut off. This caused a degeneration of the salt marsh and waders have not used the area, so far as we can ascertain, for many years.

The principal access to the area is via a track which runs parallel to the main Ring Drain which surrounds Fullerton Cove and a track which is parallel to the North/South (NS) Drain. In 2006 and early 2007, a 1.3 km levee was constructed to prevent inundation of private land at the northern end of the NS Drain; trees have been cleared adjacent to small areas of existing salt marsh; and plans are in progress to install smart gates at the southern end of the NS Drain which will allow tidal flows to recommence. It is expected that this work will be complete at the end of March 2007.

The HBOC field trip aimed to: establish access points; choose particular areas for monitoring; and list the numbers of birds present before tidal flows commence. Of particular interest was the site known as the Rice Paddy, on the western side of the NS Drain. NPWS has suggested that this plot, approximately 400 x 400 metres, which is surrounded by a low levee, may become replacement habitat for Big Pond. An important aspect of this project is to establish the extent to which this measure actually provides compensation for the loss of Big Pond.

**Results of the Survey**

We drove to the northern end of the North/South Drain and inspected the new levee. Some members walked a short distance along the levee and found that either side had water about 0.3 metre deep. The vegetation on both sides of the levee was Phragmites.

The **Rice Paddy** was identified and surveyed on foot. Its northern boundary is approximately 200 metres from the northern end of the NS Drain at 32 50 04 S 151 45 22 E and the southern boundary is about 400 metres south at 32 50 17 S 151 45 21 E. The southern boundary can be easily identified at the moment by new work on the levee. It is recommended that marker posts be positioned at the corners.

The new bridge at the northern end of the NS Drain is at 32 49 59 S 151 45 24 E. The northeast corner of the Rice Paddy is approximately marked by two eucalypts or paperbarks standing close together. It was 99% dry with a few small patches of water and completely vegetated with Phragmites at the northern end and shorter grasses and sedges on the southern half. It is currently unsuitable for waders. So far as I am aware the Rice Paddy is not encompassed in the Kooragang Nature Reserve.

To the south of the Rice Paddy and west of the NS Drain is a stand of casuarinas. This area is also not in the KNR. **We called this area Tomago She-oaks**

We then returned to the main Ring Drain track and drove eastwards to a track which runs north from eastern tidal gates. Just before the first casuarinas the track divides. We followed the western track out onto a flat expanse of remnant salt marsh with Phragmites about 80 metres to the north of the track. The salt marsh vegetation was mainly samphire *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* and salt couch *Sporobolus virginicus* and *Atriplex* and assorted weeds were present. Small patches of Spiny Rush *Juncus acutus* were also present. A substantial number of Pampas Grass clumps dotted the saltmarsh to the south of this track. It was fairly wet with a few patches of water.

We surveyed this area on foot and designated it as the **Tomago Samphire Flats**. The GPS where we stopped the cars was 32 50 23 S 151 45 55 E. In the casuarinas at the beginning of the western track at 32 50 19 S 151 45 56 E we also saw a number of interesting species.

Bird lists were compiled for each of these locations – Southern Emu-wrens were a feature - and are available with the full report from Ann Lindsey.

## A SPASM OF TWITCHES

Offshoots of the Twitching craze are springing up all over. Our local mini-twitches have kept the twitchy amongst us busy during the off-season. The latest that I am aware of was organised by Robert McDonald for 1<sup>st</sup> April and ran from 7am to 12 Noon ending (mostly) at Centennial Park Cooks Hill.

Liz Huxtable has put forward the idea of a Kids Mini- twitch on the last Sunday in May with sponsorship funds to the Native Animal Trust Fund and possibly a follow up when kids take part in the Bird Australia Twitchathon in late October – after all we have won every other competition in the BA Twitchathon so why not the kids section too.

Watch for more news on this in your Alan Stuart email – assuming the Committee thinks there is enough support for it. A great way to encourage junior members and members' kids to get involved.

Meantime Birds Australia Southern Queensland have trademarked the "Armchair Twitch". This will be on the last Sunday in September and I am sure the Queenslanders will let Mexicans join in too. <http://www.users.bigpond.com/basqld/active/activities.htm> or contact the coordinator Lesley Beaton on 07 46308481 or [lbeaton@westnet.com.au](mailto:lbeaton@westnet.com.au)

## NEWHAVEN - OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

(from The Threatened Bird Network)

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy is currently organising extensive fauna surveys throughout Newhaven Station. Around 60 survey grids have already been prepared by volunteers. It is proposed to organise systematic bird surveys in these area this July/August. We are looking to have a team of experienced birders at Newhaven for a total period of three weeks. The work will be organised in 2 blocks of 11 days 11-25 July and 26 July to 5 August. Volunteers may apply for one block or both.

Applicants will need to be experienced with identification of arid zone bird species and to have been involved in systematic bird surveys. Experience with off-road 4WD work and GPS navigation would be a distinct advantage. There will be assistance with food costs and the possibility of assistance with transport expenses. Answers to queries and application form contact Richard Jordan at [emutours@aapt.net.au](mailto:emutours@aapt.net.au) or (02) 6655 9456

## SPOTTING THE SPOTTED

By Paddy Lightfoot

During February Caryl and I had an excellent four weeks touring Tassie. Great walking, birding, planting and catching up with friends and rellos.

On learning that we were going to Bruny Island for a few days, Mike said, "When you leave the ferry take the first road on the left. Drive to a hairpin bend and you will find a bridge over McCracken's Gully. There is always a Forty-spotted Pardalote in the Ribbon Gums (*Eucalyptus Vimiinalis*)".

We took the first road to the left (Barnes Bay Road) and came to a hairpin bend. No bridge in sight. We stopped the car, piled out and within minutes had seen the Pardalote. A lifer within 15 minutes of arriving on Bruny! We could not believe our good fortune but where was the bridge? When we were leaving and had learnt the location of the bridge, (courtesy of a local) and the correct hairpin bend a further kilometre along the road, we stopped again and in spite of intensive search no Pardalotes where they should have been. We did see many more including one perched just outside our cabins in the Adventure Bay Caravan Park.

Bruny is a beautiful and relatively unspoiled part of the state. However residents are shocked that clear felling of old growth forests for woodchip has recently recommenced on their precious island. One factor in their fight to prevent further destruction is that the Swift Parrot summers there. We did see this bird during our sojourn.

Some other good twitches were Latham's Snipe at Recherche Bay which is 43 25 91 south. They were feeding in pasture near the beach. This surely must be the furthest south in the world that these birds migrate to. We also spotted the white morph form of the Grey Goshawk. Apparently the white morph is not uncommon in Tasmania. After much searching and towards the end of our holiday we also twitched the last of the land-based endemics the Scrubtit – we had seen the lot.

An enterprising pilot in Hobart is now flying birdos from Hobart to the Orange-bellied Parrot feeding station at Melaleuca for \$170 the round trip. We met a South Australian who had just done the trip and had seen 3 birds at the feeding station. She said, "I'm stoked! Well worth the fee".

## ALUMINIUM CANS FOR TWC.

Paddy Lightfoot writes:

"For some years I have collected aluminium cans for sale with proceeds going to the Wetlands Centre. I am happy to take any empty cans club members have stored in their garages. If you can find time to crush them then they pack in my bags more satisfactorily. If no time then just bring them along."

Contacts ph 49521820 or feet@netexcel.net.au

## BAR TAILED GODWITS MIGRATION

From Clive Minton (via Ann Lindsey)

Dear All,

I have received news this morning that the experiment of putting satellite transmitters on Bar-tailed Godwits in New Zealand to track their northward migration has been a resounding success.

One bird has just reached Yalu Jiang, at the northern end of the Yellow Sea in China, in a non-stop flight from Miranda Nature Reserve, in the Firth of Thames in North Island, New Zealand. The distance between these two locations is 9575 km. but the actual track flown by the bird was 11,026 km. This is the longest known non-stop flight of any bird. The flight took approximately nine days.

At least three other Bar-tailed Godwits also appear to have reached the Yellow Sea after non-stop flights from New Zealand. Several others are still in flight and following the same track. Only two (out of 12 satellite-tagged birds which have so far migrated) appear to have not made their intended goal. One diverted westwards and has stopped in the Philippines. The other only reached Papua New Guinea and, after moving to two other locations there, has now tracked south to Queensland.

These hugely exciting results are a reward for the perseverance and development effort put in by the Alaskan/New Zealand team over the last three years. It appears they have now really developed a satellite package which is not significantly affecting flight capabilities. We are thus seeing results which are typical of what really happens when birds are migrating.

Only 10 to 15 years ago people were sceptical that godwits and knot from north west Australia fly 5500 km. non-stop to Chongming Dao in the Yangtse Estuary. Then in the last ten years it has gradually become more apparent that Bar-tailed Godwits fly up to 11,000 kms non-stop on southward migration from Alaska to New Zealand and Australia. But that was considered to be aided by birds taking off from Alaska in weather conditions which gave them an extremely strong tail wind in the early stages of that flight. To have now shown that Bar-tailed Godwits are also capable of flying a similar distance on northward migration, without apparent exceptionally favourable wind conditions, is fantastic. We have long suspected that the very high weights reached by Bar-tailed Godwits, and several other species, before they leave south east Australia in March/April indicated an intention to try and reach China in a single non-stop flight. It would have been impossible without satellite telemetry to prove that this really can be achieved.

I think these results are a huge step forward in our understanding of the flight capabilities of migratory waders and therefore of the migratory strategies they employ. Congratulations to the whole US/NZ team on this hugely successful exercise.

The Godwit can be followed on:

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/shorebirds/overall.html>

### NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION OF NSW

This is a long established organisation which has a Bushwalking in The Hunter Region Program. They are the leading bushwalking group in NSW with over 100 walks in the Hunter each year.

They are also a leading conservation group defending National Parks for over half a century and have a range of other activities. They may of course walk a little briskly for birders but it takes all sorts...

If you want to know more you could contact Susan Filson Membership Officer on 4994 9163 or email [hunter@npansw.org.au](mailto:hunter@npansw.org.au) or visit the website on [www.npansw.org.au/hunter](http://www.npansw.org.au/hunter) for their program

## "600 Club" Badges – Where do they come from?

By Ann Lindsey

No doubt some of you have been present at an HBOC Club meeting where such distinguished bird-watchers as Alan Stuart, Mike Newman and Mick Todd have received their "600 Club" badge and you may have wondered where they came from.

Well, it all began back in the 1970's when the late John McKean and Dave Stewart of Nature Sounds had a competition to see who could see the most birds in a year. John, a professional ornithologist with a passion for birds and a dedicated twitcher, decided to start the Australian Birding Association (ABA). After a couple of circulars, the newsletter, *Cosmic Flashes*, appeared in 1981. To gain membership you just added your name to the mailing list and there was no joining fee. According to one source, the ABA was modelled on a similar club in the UK where bird-watching has a very long history. However, there is a reference in the second *Cosmic Flashes*, to the American Birding Association. No doubt both were the source of inspiration. Bill Oddie's *Little Black Bird Book*, which is a light-hearted look at bird-watchers and bird-watching, appears to be the source for the name, *Cosmic Flashes*.

In the above paragraph, I described John as a "twitcher", a term defined by Dave and the ABA as "one who makes a significant effort to travel to see, and tick, reported sightings of rarities". There are many stories of twitching marathons nowadays, but in the 1980's they were not so common. When I lived in Manly I came home one night from the pictures to find John asleep on my doorstep. He had flown in from Darwin in response to a report of Hudsonian Godwit at Newcastle. He dropped me off at school next day and took my car north. He ticked the godwit, returned the car and flew back to Darwin all in the one day. Dave relates a story with a less favourable outcome: John flew to Melbourne, again from Darwin, to see Wilsons Phalarope, which annoyingly turned out to be a Marsh Sandpiper! Can you imagine!

Bird-watching in Australia started to become more popular with the publication in about 1970 of Peter Slater's *Field Guide to Australian Birds* and getting a tick and adding it to your life list has become increasingly popular over the years. The Australian list of birds back then was about 750 species. At some point it was decided that 600 would be a challenging number of species to aim for. Thus came about the "600 Club" and, of course, every club needs a badge. John chose the Eyrean Grasswren for the badge when Alan McBride, a twitcher of the highest order, reported that his 600<sup>th</sup> bird was this little-known species.

The Eyrean Grasswren was discovered in the Simpson Desert in 1874 but it disappeared and was not found again until 1967. It was photographed only in 1977, 103 years after its initial discovery and was, at that time, considered a very rare find and a worthy emblem for the "600 Club". With an eye to the future, a 650 badge was struck bearing the White-necked Petrel, chosen, I believe, by John and Kevin Bartram. Little did they realise that the Australian list would grow to over 800 species, due in part at least to the new generation of twitchers, and that 700 would become the next milestone in the life of the bird-watcher. No badge exists for the "700 Club", at least not as yet. A 650 badge with a White-necked Petrel existed for a time and a 1000 badge with a Blue Bird of Paradise came into being for those that wished to expand their horizons to include Australasia.

Deleted:

The last appearance of *Cosmic Flashes* was July 1990. *Cosmic Flashes* was replaced by the magazine, *Australian Birding*, supported by famous wildlife bookseller, Andrew Isles and ornithologist, David Andrew. However, it was simply not economic sense to continue its production and with its demise the ABA ceased to exist. The badges lived on however, and a website still exists where anyone with more than 500 species on their life list may post their tally.

The purpose of the "600 Club", if there is a purpose at all, is to promote the good fun aspect of bird-watching. There is no committee, nor should there ever be one, no one vets your list. The only prize is the badge and you have to ask for it. It won't magically appear on your doorstep. The number of species you claim for your list is entirely between you and your conscience. But woe betides the bird-watcher who gains a reputation for being a "stringer", i.e., someone who claims a species without actually seeing it. His or her credibility will be seriously compromised, probably forever.

Some basic rules pertaining to what may be counted do exist. Currently the list to follow is according to Christidis and Boles, *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*, 1994. All species counted should be seen alive and in the wild. So get those dead birds off your list! They cannot be counted!

My thanks to the many people who helped me compile this article, which I would like to dedicate to the memory of John McKean, friend and mentor.

Ann Lindsey February 2007

To post your bird tally go to  
<http://users.bigpond.net.au/palliser/pelagic/totals.html>

## ASIA PACIFIC SHOREBIRD NETWORK (APSN)

The APSN has been formed as a result of a need to provide an avenue of communication between shorebird specialists, wetland managers and conservationists throughout the Asia Pacific Region. Although there are many national and international organizations involved with birds and/or conservation there has been no easy way for people concerned about the future of shorebirds across the region to work together and discuss their concerns or findings.

Membership of the group is free to individuals, national and international bird groups and other conservation groups. The network aims to reach a large number of people through direct email communication and the newsletter The Tattler which is now produced in three languages: English Chinese and Indonesian.

APSN launched its website on World Wetlands Day 2007. To learn more about APSN go to <http://shorebirdnetwork.org> or, to receive regular APSN News Alerts register at - [http://www.shorebirdnetwork.org/news\\_alerts.html](http://www.shorebirdnetwork.org/news_alerts.html)

## RECENT RESEARCH FROM DENMARK

### Barn Swallows get broody while world warms.

Warmer spring temperatures and a longer growing season are proving good news for barn swallows. Over the past 35 years these birds have responded to global warming by taking more time over rearing their chicks. Around two-thirds of swallows produce two broods of chicks per year -one in April and another in July or August. Anders Moller from the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris has monitored barn swallows in the Kraghede region of northern Denmark since 1971, noting the date eggs were laid and clutch and brood size.

Based on 2705 pairs of birds Moller found that the time between clutches increased between 1971 and 2005. The birds started to breed earlier and gave themselves more time before the second brood. Timing between clutches increased by an average of 8 days (19 per cent) and swallows tended to produce more fledglings.

Moller believes that this relaxed breeding behaviour is down to climate change. Between 1971 and 2005 the mean April temperature in Denmark rose by 2.2C. The growing season too is longer.

*This is a summary of an article in New Scientist No 2586 p 16 published in Australia by the Birds Queensland Newsletter 38/1 of February 2007.*

## MURPHY'S LAW IN BIRDWATCHING:

### Law 1

#### **The interesting waders are always at the other end of the swamp**

Even if you manage to get to the other side, everything except Masked Lapwing will have taken off and flown back to where you were in the first place.

### Law 2

#### **The rarer the bird, the higher the tree**

Small common birds like wrens and thornbills are usually visible without too much effort. However, when something unusual comes through it will most likely be at the top of the tallest tree.

### Law 3

#### **If it's rare you didn't see it.**

Maybe a pessimistic rule, but if you think you have seen a rarity be prepared for a relentless inquisition. Have all your notes ready (see also Rule 4)

### Law 4

#### **Field Guides never show the bird you think you saw**

A birdwatcher will at some time see a bird which is just not in the field guide. Is it a rarity? -perhaps not! It will usually be some undescribed immature plumage.

### Law 5

#### **Hoodoo Birds**

We all have at least one bird which proves difficult to find: even relatively common species can take years to eventually tick. However, once you do catch up with it, you are likely to see it again and again.

### Law 6

#### **Always go birding the day before**

It's all in the timing. How often have you been told "You should have been here yesterday"

### Law 7

#### **Off the beaten track rule**

In the outback, you will not see another vehicle all day, that is, until you spot an interesting bird on the side of the road. As soon as you get the bins out, a large road train will appear out of nowhere and send the bird flying for cover.

### Law 8

#### **Don't go to the toilet rule**

After spending hours of discomfort on a pelagic cruise delaying going to the WC for fear that a mega-rarity will turn up, you finally give in and guess what happens?

### Law 9

#### **Birds are camera-shy**

The day you leave the camera at home will be the day that birds show themselves for great photo opportunities



*This piece by John Duranti was "borrowed" from the CBOC Newsletter of August 2006.*

## HUNTER WETLAND CENTRE

Ring 02 4951 6466 for times and prices.

### ACTIVITIES

#### SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM

##### Wetland Turtles!

(children 4-7 years) Fully supervised  
Have lots of fun with games, arts and crafts, dipnetting and adventure walks with skilled and experienced leaders,  
9am to 12.30pm Tuesdays and Fridays  
April 10, 13, 17, 20

##### Canoeing Adventures

(children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult)  
9am - 12.30pm Thursdays  
April 12 & 19

##### Arts Alive

Children 7-12, Fully Supervised  
Learn all about birds, reptiles, tortoises and pond animals.  
9am-12.30pm Wednesdays April 11 & 18

##### Wacky Tour

Get wild and wacky and take a peak behind the scenes. Learn more about wildlife on site, with hands-on demonstrations with our Wacky Professor. The Wacky Tour activities are fully supervised.  
Thursday April 19.

#### REGULAR EVENTS

##### Breakfast With The Birds

8.00am Sunday May 13

##### Spotlight Prowl

April 21, May 19, June 16.  
Check starting time when you book.

##### Canoeing the Ironbark Trail

9.30am Sundays May 6 & June 3

#### SPECIAL EVENT

##### Mother Day Celebrations

Celebrate the day with a delicious three course lunch prizes and entertainment at Café Jacana

**Bookings are essential for all programs.**

### THE WETLANDS CENTRE

#### CAFÉ JACANA GETS A FACELIFT

The Australian Government sees Hunter Wetlands Centre as "nationally unique" in terms of its tourism offerings. Because of this uniqueness Café Jacana is undergoing a new look thanks to funding through the Australian Tourism Development Program.

This is an exciting time for the Hunter Wetlands Centre to provide a nationally unique Dining and Café experience, only 10 minutes from Newcastle CBD.

Renovations started 12 March and consist of a new Commercial Kitchens a modernised café, a beautiful constructed deck where visitors will be able to capture the fantastic views overlooking the wetlands ponds and enjoy the outside dining experience. The café will double in size as a result of the project.

While these renovations are in progress, Hunter Wetlands Centre invites café patrons to enjoy take away menu selections that will be available or to bring a picnic to enjoy in the tranquil surroundings.

#### Why not join the Hunter Wetlands Centre!

Members get unlimited visits to the Centre for the year, publications, discounts, a vote at the AGM - plus the warm inner glow of supporting an excellent cause.

##### Annual Membership Fees

Concession \$16.50  
Individual \$33  
Family \$55

**OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT FEB/MAR 2007**

Dec 5&6	Scarlet-chested Parrot [escapee]	1m	Ellalong [garden]	J.Meynell
Dec 17	Australian Hobby	1	"	"
Dec 29	Grey-crowned Babbler	~20	" [garden]	"
Feb 10	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	20+	Raymond Terrace	F.Humphreys
Dec 31	Latham's Snipe	1	Mulbring	B.Clifton
Dec 19	Buff-banded Rail	4	Shoal Bay [Anzac Park]	T.Clarke
Dec 20	Sooty Oystercatcher	6	Boat Harbour	"
Dec 14	Dollarbird	14	Soldiers Point	"
Dec	Glossy Ibis	19	Morpeth	G.Brosie
	Rainbow Bee-eater	7	"	"
Dec 30	Rose-crowned Fruit Dove	1m	Harrington	"
	Varied Triller	2+1 dead	"	"
Jan 4	Red-necked Avocet	5	Tenambit Common	"
	Marsh Sandpiper	7	"	"
Jan 14	Baillons Crake	2	Walka Water Works	"
	Australian Spotted Crake	1	"	"
	Blue-billed Duck	Pr	"	"
Jan 10	Brown Songlark	1	Ash Island	B.Brosie/N.Livanos
Jan 17	Singing Bushlark	2+	Largs [Glenarvon Rd]	"
	Baillons Crake	1	Walka Water Works	"
	Baillons Crake	1	Pambalong N.R.	"
	Buff-banded Rail	1	"	"
	Wonga Pigeon	4	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	"
	Little Tern	2-5	Stockton Sandspit	"
Jan 5	Varied Triller	2	Harrington	G.Brosie/D.Portelli
	Regent Bowerbird	4+	"	"
	Red-backed Fairy-Wren	3+	Harrington [sand dunes]	"
	Emerald Dove	1	Crowdy Bay NP	"
	Pale Yellow Robin	2	Waitui	"
	Yellow-throated Scrubwren	2	"	"
	Large-billed Scrubwren	5	"	"
Jan 9	Common Blackbird	1	Barrington Tops [sub alpine]	T. Clarke
	Olive Whistler	2	"	"
Jan 12	Latham's Snipe	6	Newcastle Wetland Reserve	"
Jan 28	Glossy Ibis	10	Nr Craven	M.Kearns
Jan 2	Grass Owl	1	Ash Island	"
Jan 4	Common Blackbird	Pr+ny	Maitland	"
Jan 12	Royal Spoonbill	B+4ny	Newcastle Univesity	"
Feb 4	Lewin's Rail	1	H.W.C.	"
	Buff-banded Rail	2	"	"
	Spotted Crake	2	"	"
Jan 11	Glossy Ibis	6	H.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
Jan 28	White-headed Pigeon	3	Allyn River [White Rock camp]	B.Shields
	Rufous Scrub Bird	Heard	Gloucester Tops [Kerrapit Rd]	"
Jan 31	Latham's Snipe	10	Seaham Swamp	T.Clarke
Jan 30	Little Penguin	2	Tomaree [Wreck Beach]	"
Jan 31	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	4	Seaham Swamp	"
Jan 29	White-throated Needletail	10	Soldiers Point	"
Feb 11	Sooty Oystercatcher	4	Stockton Sandspit	"
Feb 14	<b>Greater Sand Plover</b>	3	<b>Stockton Sandspit</b>	"
Feb 12	Emerald Dove	1	Allyn River picnic area	L.Mee
Feb 1	Red-necked Avocet	300+	Beresfield	M.Kearns
Jan 26	Hoary-headed Grebe	35+	Grahamstown Dam	J. Cockerell
	Musk Duck	2	"	"
Feb 14	Osprey	1	Hexham [towards Ash Isl]	G.Newling
Jan 28	Royal Spoonbill	3pr 3ny	Stroud	L.&C. Herbert
Feb 7	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	4	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Feb 8	White-breasted Woodswallow	4	"	"

Feb 13	Striped Honeyeater	1	Bolwarra [garden]	H. Tarrant
Jan 7	Black Falcon	1	"	"
Jan 17	Peregrine Falcon	1	Bolwarra (garden)	H. Tarrant
Feb 1	Australian Hobby	1	"	"
Jan 4	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	4	Bolwarra Lagoon	"
	Red-kneed Dotterel	4	"	"
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	B	"	"
	Spotted Crake	1	"	"
	Spotless Crake	1	"	"
	Australasian Shoveler	8	"	"
Jan 22	European Goldfinch	A	Maitland Railway Stn.	"
Jan 13	Pink-eared Duck	35	Walka Water Works	"
Jan 27	Pink-eared Duck	70	"	"
Feb 4	Spotted Harrier	1	"	"
Jan 3	Brush Cuckoo	1 imm	Vacy	"
	Satin Flycatcher	2m	"	"
Jan 28	Satin Flycatcher	1	"	"
	Peregrine Falcon	1	"	"
Jan 5	Paradise Riflebird	1 f	Barrington House	"
Jan 6	Flame Robin	1	Polblue Swamp	"
Jan	White-backed Swallow		12k west of Jerrys Plains	"
	White-browed Babbler	6	"	"
Feb 10	Common Sandpiper	1	Speers Point	J. Powers
Mar 4	Osprey	1	Stockton Sandspite	F. Van Gessel
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	~120	Deep Pond	"
Mar 14	Marsh Sandpiper	~120	"	"
Mar 6	Pectoral Sandpiper	1	Deep Pond	"
Mar 8-14	Black-tailed Godwit	~120	Stockton Sandspit	"
Mar 14	Red-necked Stint	55	"	"
	Double-banded Plover	1	Deep Pond	"
Mar 12	Spangled Drongo	1	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Mar 14	Spangled Drongo	1	H.W.C.	P. Lightfoot
Feb/Mar	Brush Turkey	1	New Lambton Heights [garden]	"
Mar 13	Powerful Owl [heard nightly]	1-2	Blackbutt Reserve	"
	Southern Boobook	Heard	"	"
Mar 14	White-throated Needletail	mixed	Edgeworth	G.O'Connor
	Fork-tailed Swift	flock	"	"
Mar 11	Grey-crowned Babbler	11	Seaham Swamp	M. Samuel
Mar 3&4	Osprey	1	Belmont Lagoon	"
Feb/Mar	Rufous Whistler	Ffy	Bolwarra	H. Tarrant
Mar 5	Square-tailed Kite	1	East Maitland	"
Mar 11	Pied Oystercatcher	13	Swan Bay	"
Mar 3	Red-capped Robin	1	3km West of Jerry's Plains	"
	Little Raven	~30	Martindale	"
	Diamond Firetail	5	Medhurst Bridge	"

## HBOC Coming Events - Details

Date	Event	Meeting place & time	Contact
Friday	Volunteer Day	8.00am to noon	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
April	Stockton Sandspit	Sandspit Car park	
Saturday	Hunter Wader	11.00am Various	Chris Herbert 4959 3663
21 April	Survey	locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Saturday	Watagans – Sooty	6.00pm at Boarding	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
21 April	Owl search	House Dam	
Sunday	Field outing	8.00am at Boarding	Robert McDonald
22 April	Watagans	House Dam	4967 4161
Tuesday	Ash Island	8.00am	Robert McDonald
24 April	mangrove removal	Ash Island car park	4967 4161

Tuesday 1 May	Mid-Week Outing Ellalong	8.00am Ellalong Hotel	Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 2 May	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm – 10.00pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Tuesday 8 May	Ash Island mangrove removal	8.00am Ash Island car park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
<b>Wednesday 9 May</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: Phil Hansbro</b>
Saturday 12 May	Atlassing: Giants Creek Road, near Sandy Hollow	6.30am Maitland Station car park.	<b>Please ring to confirm</b> Nick Livanos 49545739 Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Sunday 13 May	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to noon Sandspit Car park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Saturday 19 May	Hunter Wader Survey	10.00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Saturday 19 May	Cultural Stomp 2007	9.00am to 5.00pm Cultural Lane, Civic Park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Saturday-Sunday 19/20 May	Regent Honeyeater & Swift Parrot Survey	Various locations by arrangement; particularly White Box Campsite	Co-ordinator: Steve Roderick 4930 4800
Sunday 20 May	Field Outing: Werakata NP / Pelton SF	8.00am Cessnock McDonalds Car Park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
Tuesday 22 May	Ash Island mangrove removal	8.00am Ash Island car park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
Sunday 27 May	Kids Mini-twitch	TBA	Liz Huxtable 4954 2570
Friday 1 June	Catchment Connections - LMCC education program	Croudace Bay	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Tuesday 5 June	Mid-Week Outing Kilaben Bay	8.00am Park at end of Kilaben Road	Garth Cooksey 4954 9620
Wednesday 6 June	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm – 10.00pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Saturday - Monday 9 – 11 June	Long Weekend Camp	Camp end of Baerami Valley, near old shale oil mines	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Tuesday 12 June	Ash Island mangrove removal	8.00am Ash Island car park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
<b>Wednesday 13 June</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: James Smart Walka Water Works</b>
Saturday 16 June	Hunter Wader Survey	9.00am Various locations as directed	Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Sunday 17 June	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to noon Sandspit Car park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Sunday 24 June	<b>New Members Day</b> Club to provide BBQ lunch	9.00am The Wetlands Centre. Entry Fee \$4.50, but free entry for New Members	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
Tuesday 26 June	Ash Island mangrove removal	8.00am Ash Island car park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161