



MEDIA RELEASE

Black-necked Storks call Hexham Swamp home

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Hexham Swamp has become the new home of a breeding pair of endangered Black-necked Storks, with two fledglings confirmed this week by members of the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC).

HBOC member Ann Lindsey said the sightings are very exciting as the stork rarely breeds this far south and is classified as endangered in NSW.

Ms. Lindsey said 'It is the only species of stork found in Australia and more commonly found in the Northern Territory where it is also known as the Jabiru. The distinctive black and white waterbirds stand 1.3m tall with a huge wing span up to 2m. The head and neck are black with a beautiful iridescent green and purple sheen - a truly stunning bird to see.'

Ms Lindsey continued 'In August of this year, HBOC became aware that two adult storks were attending a nest in Hexham Swamp. Over the following weeks it was established that there were two chicks in the nest and in October they were big enough to be banded.'

'This week HBOC members observed that the adults took the young fledglings from the nest to trees not too far away. This is only the third confirmed breeding event in the lower Hunter Estuary, the others being in 2017 and 2018 at Tomago' said Ms. Lindsey.

HBOC vice president Mick Roderick said that floodplain wetlands are key habitat for the species and the vast 2000 hectare Hexham Swamp is ideal for the storks to build their large nests in tall trees close to water.

Mr. Roderick said 'The Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project saw the wetland transform over the last ten years into a mosaic of valuable habitat types including estuarine wetland, open water, saltmarsh and mudflats.'

'The project re-instated tidal inundation into Ironbark Creek by opening the floodgates in stages to improve the water quality and restore a plentiful supply of the storks' favourite food source – eels. The storks also feed on fish, frogs and insects' said Mr. Roderick.

'The NSW breeding population has been estimated at only 75 pairs, so this is very significant for the endangered storks to be breeding here in the lower Hunter wetlands. HBOC will continue to monitor the family of storks' added Mr. Roderick.

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