

## **Draft 1**

### **HBOC Conservation Report for the Annual Report 2021**

The year 2021 was a busy year for the HBOC conservation committee with at least twenty-four letters/submissions sent to local council and commonwealth and state government departments. In addition, members of the conservation committee attended several on-line meetings. Members were Robert and Margaret Stewart, Tom Kendall and Mick Roderick.

Two new members joined the committee in 2021: Rebecca Citroni was with us for a short time during which she made several valuable suggestions but was unable to remain on the committee for personal reasons. Graeme Stevens joined in August and will remain in 2022. Brianna Coulter also joined the committee as an interested person.

#### **Local matters**

Many letters were written objecting to a range of proposed developments which, if approved, will involve the destruction of many hectares of high conservation-value woodland with continuous canopy. A brief outline of such proposals follows:

Kings Hill Residential Development, Raymond Terrace; no decision has been made until Koala habitat is re-examined. Ongoing.

Letters were written to Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Councils objecting to proposals to rezone woodland for residential purposes and acknowledgements were received. These included:

The Eden Estates (Link Road) proposal involves 572 ha of woodland. M. Roderick spoke per zoom at a public meeting initiated by Hunter Community Environment Centre on behalf of HBOC. A reply to our letter from Newcastle City Council advised that Council had not made any decision and that any rezoning proposal would be put on public exhibition after consultation with other State agencies.

The Fennel Bay rezoning involves 265 ha of woodland and the Wyee Point – Ramsgate Estate – rezoning involves 18 ha of woodland.

At 505 Minmi Road, Fletcher 26.2 ha of bushland are currently zoned E4. In reply to our enquiry Newcastle Council stated that it had decided not to proceed with rezoning and had no further plans for the site. This decision was subsequently overruled by the Joint Regional Planning Panel which is allowing the land to be assessed under the State Government Gateway rezoning process.

Note that many hectares including creek lines were destroyed along Minmi Road this year.

A rare win for the local action group involved Arcadia Park, The Hill, which contains the only piece of remnant woodland and littoral rainforest in inner city Newcastle. Fortunately, the Park is to be preserved in its entirety.

During the year, Ellalong Lagoon and its adjacent high conservation-value forest was offered for sale by Port Waratah Coal Services. Letters to the Minister for the Environment failed to secure it for the national park estate and it has become an offset for the proposed Eden Estates Link Road Development.

Martins Creek Quarry Expansion will destroy 36 ha of woodland. Ongoing.

#### **Other issues included:**

Tree felling on a development site at Chisholm which took place in November 2020. It was claimed that illegal tree felling had taken place. HBOC wrote to Maitland Council and a response was received in February 2021 pointing out that “clearing was in accordance with consent”.

HBOC wrote to Cessnock Council with regard to issues relating to the Hunter Economic Zone at Kurri Kurri. Copies were sent to MP Mr Barr and Mayor Mr B. Pynsent. The reply from Cessnock Council did not address the key issues.

Richmond Vale Rail Trail: Approximately 13 kilometres of the path located within the Newcastle Local Government Area was approved. Two kilometres of the trail that goes through the Hunter Wetlands National Park will undergo further assessment in 2022.

HBOC wrote to Singleton Council objecting to reopening Redbank power station and using biomass as a source for fuel. Ongoing.

Modifications to Hillsborough Road, Warners Bay are proposed. HBOC asked Transport for NSW to consider including an overpass for wildlife. Ongoing.

Woodlands Estate Reserve at Thornton is important for Latham’s Snipe among other species. The site is being affected by illegal vehicular use and rubbish dumping. HBOC requested Maitland Council to install appropriate signage. Ongoing.

HBOC has been asking Newcastle Council for several years for signage for the management of dogs and people around Stony Point, Port of Newcastle. Ongoing.

At the request of NSW Government Saving our Species representative, HBOC suggested two sites, Shortland Waters Golf Club and Horizon Golf Resort at Salamander Bay/Port Stephens, to be considered for inclusion in an initiative to make golf courses more biodiversity friendly. No further action and no information about outcomes have been received.

HBOC provided advice on use by water birds to Singleton Council re proposed changes to the sewage Treatment Plant which will affect water flows to Doughboy Hollow, an important water bird site especially for Plumed Whistling-Duck.

Some good news from Ausgrid in that bird diverters were installed on power lines at Ash Island after NPWS ranger reported the deaths of 6 swans associated with power lines. Matters addressed outside the Hunter Region affecting birdlife.

### **Matters outside the Hunter Region**

In response to request from BirdLife Australia HBOC wrote to the Deputy Premier, the Hon. J. Barilaro and the Hon. Ms S. Horner with regard to logging of Swift Parrot habitat on the south coast of NSW asking that these habitats not be logged. In response, a letter was received from the Parliamentary Secretary indicating that the Natural Resources Committee is to develop monitoring programs specifically for Swift Parrot. So far as HBOC is aware, logging went ahead.

HBOC wrote a submission to the Department Planning Industry Environment objecting to Warragamba Dam Raising Project. In January 2022, the proposal was rejected in its current form.

HBOC joined the campaign to prevent the Hawkins-Rumker area near Rylstone being identified as a coal release site. The campaign was successful.

HBOC supported the BirdLife Australia campaign to have “second generation” rodenticides removed from shelves of Bunnings Warehouse. Reply from Bunnings Warehouse outlining their actions but no indication that they would remove rodenticides. HBOC also wrote to the Veterinary Medicines

Authority with regard to use of bromadiolone on farms. Fortunately the VMA rejected the use of this chemical on farms.

## **Government Policies**

One submission to the Commonwealth Government was made in 2021.

Some background to this complex issue:

In 2020 HBOC had made a submission to the Commonwealth Government with regard to the *Review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The results of that Review showed:

“The final report from the review of the laws finds the environment is suffering from two decades of failure by governments to improve protection systems meant to ensure the survival of the country’s unique wildlife.”

Since then two further Bills have been introduced. The EPBC Amendment (Standards and Assurance) Bill 2021 was introduced in February 2021 to create a National Environmental Standards framework and a position for a National Environment Assurance commissioner. This bill was introduced to garner support for the EPBC Amendment (Streamlining Environmental Approvals) Bill of 2020. That Bill was introduced in August 2020 prior to the release of the EPBC Review Final Report; it would facilitate the devolution of Commonwealth approval powers to states and territories.

HBOC made a submission to Senate Enquiry into EPBC Amendment (Standards and Assurance) Bill 2021 asking for strong environmental laws; the introduction of national environmental standards able to be reviewed by independent scientific experts and to establish an environment assurance commissioner with powers to ensure compliance and enforcement of approval conditions.

Two submissions to the NSW Government were made: one to the Inquiry into the Integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Scheme with regard to the effectiveness of the Scheme to halt or reverse the loss of biodiversity values and one to the Minister for Environment objecting to changes to the Rural Boundary Code which would allow clearing of vegetation within 25 metres along boundaries with no assessment or controls.

## **Final words**

All submissions are available for more detailed reading on the HBOC website under the Conservation tab.

Members of the conservation committee have shown dedication and perseverance and I thank them for the time they have invested in the interests of the welfare of Australian birdlife and their habitats.

I am retiring as coordinator of the conservation team after several years of service. It is my wish that the conservation remain a core activity for this bird club in future years. The road will not be an easy one. I thank the Club for giving me the opportunity to develop my skills in an area near and dear to my heart.

Ann Lindsey – Conservation coordinator