

Editorial

This issue of *The Whistler* epitomizes why the Hunter Bird Observers Club produces a regionally-focussed journal. Of the fourteen papers and short notes, nine of them are about some aspect of the birds of a local area. The other five articles use a local focus to illustrate more widely applicable learnings about some particular species.

Five full papers are about birds of a local area. Graeme Stevens and Lois Wooding analyse about 20 years of data from their surveys at Salamander Waters Estate, finding that many significant changes have occurred over time. It is an important follow-on paper to their 2023 article which first introduced us to the site and its birdlife. Ashley Carlson compares two urban sites from near his home in Forster, finding some significant differences in their bird populations and relating that to habitat differences for the two sites. Alan Stuart has provided two papers, the first giving an overview of recent surveys of the Hunter Estuary (which is now a 26-year project by HBOC members), the second detailing the common birds and seasonal visitors to Broughton Island based upon 13 years of survey effort by HBOC members. In the fifth paper, Mike Newman demonstrates how the planting of a native garden, at Woodville, led to a massive increase in diversity and numbers of local birds.

All five papers show what we can learn from long-term monitoring projects. Of the studies, the one on Broughton Island is the shortest, at thirteen years! Monitoring, recording, analysing – it's a simple but effective recipe.

The five papers each make use of statistical analyses in order to show which of any observed changes were unlikely to be random. We, the editors, realise that statistics are a foreign land for many readers and some would-be authors. Please note that we are always available with advice and assistance to authors about how they might analyse their data. It's

how to move from arm-waving to cold hard facts.

An article by John Goswell rounds out the full papers about birds of a local area. John's article about the Stockton sand dune system provides a refreshingly different approach to a study of the birds of a local area. John starts with the habitats – describing the six main ones of the beach and dune system – and then he explains in turn why each habitat attracts the birds which it does. This systematic approach is far more widely relevant than just the Stockton dunes.

Three shorter articles round out the offerings about local areas. The first one is about Ross Wallbridge Reserve, at Raymond Terrace, and demonstrates that site's importance for some waterbirds. Another article details the massive numbers of lorikeets, Rainbow Lorikeets predominantly, that roost at night at Raymond Terrace. The numbers are remarkable, for a species which was uncommon in our region until 25-30 years ago. The third short article describes how Pied Oystercatchers now breed often, and successfully, in some of the eastern parts of Port Stephens.

This issue of *The Whistler* has five articles which are species-specific; although they describe local studies or observations, the findings have wider implications. A short note about Silvereyes taking Gahnia seeds is intriguing – why would they do that? A paper by Kim Pryor on Galah breeding behaviour adds new information about that species, including the first-ever documented instance of probable double-brooding. Lois Wooding's review of Brahminy Kites highlights their spread (or return) to the Hunter Region and discusses factors affecting their long-term prospects. Martin Schulz and Susanne Callaghan report the first records for Broughton Island for Little Shearwater – and probably the birds were nest-prospecting. That's good news for this threatened species. And the final paper, from a team at the University of Newcastle, unveils a new way for tracking the movement

of shorebirds – in this case a Far Eastern Curlew but potentially it is applicable for many other species.

It's timely here to mention taxonomy. About halfway through 2025, a new unified bird taxonomy was released – the AviList. Since then, we have used the AviList taxonomy when editing articles. However, several articles had already been accepted, and published online, using the previous, but now superseded, BirdLife Australia Working List taxonomy. Therefore, this issue uses two taxonomies – we certainly hope that won't ever happen again! Mostly though, the changes aren't substantial (and, they can be worked out).

Finally, there are many people and organisations to thank. Firstly, the authors – it's not an easy task to analyse data and write about it, and then have to deal with picky reviewers and editors. The reviewers undertake serious work, which often goes unacknowledged publicly (although our preference is for open reviews). We thank Liz Crawford for her diligent cross-checking of facts while she formats each manuscript, and also Rob Kyte who manages the production and printing of the hard copies. We appreciate the ongoing support of the HBOC Management Committee, and we also thank the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group for their continuing financial support.

Alan Stuart and Neil Fraser
Joint Editors