



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

*Affiliated with BirdLife Australia*

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc  
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## **BIGnet Report April 2019**

Hunter Bird Observers Club has two objectives:

- To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat
- To encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity

Between September 2018 and March 2019 these objectives were furthered through:

### **Conservation Efforts**

- HBOC is always on the front foot with environmental policy and in 2018 the Club wrote to the government on matters such as the Senate Inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis, as well as keeping abreast of the ongoing changes in the conservation status of Travelling Stock Reserves in NSW. HBOC wrote to Environment Minister Frydenberg regarding the proposed development at Toondah Harbour, part of a Ramsar-listed wetland in Queensland.

In terms of local conservation issues, HBOC was involved in making submissions and/or having representation on projects including, but not limited to:

- Newcastle Wetlands Reserve / Shortland Waters Golf Club. The club is now having some success in working with the golf club to eradicate Water Hyacinth from a wetland now in their possession
- Saving Mambo Wetlands at Port Stephens.
- Little Tern breeding at Winda Woppa, northern shore of Port Stephens
- Regent Honeyeaters were found to have bred successfully in the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ, Tomalpin Woodlands) late in 2018. In fact, this was the only location in the entire Regent Honeyeater range where evidence of breeding was found in the 2018 spring/summer. HBOC continues to work with Bird Life Australia, Cessnock Council and landholders in the Cessnock area in promoting the significance of the area, as well as monitoring birds in areas affected by severe bushfires. As I write we are closely monitoring a proposal to build 2 coal-fired power plants in the Hunter Economic Zone.
- HBOC also continued to manage migratory shorebird habitat in the Hunter Estuary and provide advice on the management of the dynamics that make the estuary such an important place for shorebirds. HBOC members were involved with several strategic planning workshops, including the hydrological management of the estuary and continued to advise the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) on their habitat restoration of Fish Fry Flats on Ash Island.

### **Monitoring and Data Surveys.**

- In 2019 we continued to do monthly surveys of the Hunter Estuary and have now completed our 20th year of those surveys.

- Our other regular field studies projects also continued in 2018/19 - the Port Stephens waterbirds survey, Tomago Wetlands surveys, Rufous Scrub-bird surveys in the Gloucester Tops, land bird surveys and bird banding on Broughton Island
- Three new club projects were to commence monthly surveys at Earthcare Park in Tenambit, quarterly surveys in the Martindale Valley, and to join the national Latham's Snipe monitoring project.
- As always, those official club field studies projects were supplemented by survey efforts from many dedicated individual Club members.
- All our surveys provide valuable data about the Hunter Region and generate income for the club as well as allowing us to provide data to support genuine research.
- Late in 2018 we published our 2017 Annual Bird Report. This was our 25<sup>th</sup> annual bird report and the publication is becoming increasingly sophisticated.
- We also published the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of our annual journal, *The Whistler* which are all available on our web site.

### Activities

Since last report the club has organised twelve outings, both weekend and mid-week, and three camps. We have held six club meetings with an interesting range of speakers.

### Education, Media and Promotion.

HBOC continued to raise awareness of birds and the importance of their contribution throughout the whole Hunter Region. Some highlights were;

- *Biodiversity Day*: This event is organised by the Office of Environment and Heritage in conjunction with NPWS and held at the Blue Gum Hills Reserve in Minmi in late September 2018.
- *Aussie Backyard Bird Count*: This national week-long event, organised by BirdLife Australia, is aimed at getting broader participation in birding from the non-birding community. The club was heavily involved in this event, especially through co-operation with many of our local councils.
- *Bird Identification Signs at Hunter Wetland Centre*: Six signs were erected at the Wetlands Centre with assistance from Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group.
- Members have spoken to several community groups.
- We are trialling an Enews format for our newsletter to ensure that our news is always current.
- The club has now published 14 Hunter Region Birding Routes that are available on our website, and three others are in preparation.
- HBOC members continue to contribute to the promotion of birds in the local media with interviews with ABC local radio, and community radio, the Newcastle Herald and a regular column in the Maitland Mercury.
- We were pleased to appoint both a new Education Officer and a new Media Officer in 2019

### Organisational Matters

HBOC has continued to monitor and where possible gradually improve its operating procedures for the benefit of all members. We have reviewed our activities and risk management procedures.

Membership stood at 369 in December, 2018

For more detailed information refer to the club's web site at [www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

Robert Stewart  
President