

Cessnock East Birding Route

HUNTER REGION

Lower Hunter



Azure Kingfisher

Orchid Road is also home to resident family groups of Grey-crowned Babblers and Blue-faced Honeyeaters, mostly in the vicinity of the landscaped gardens near Leggetts Drive.

There are no facilities here, but there are public toilets at Mulbring, 5km to the south.

5 OLD BRUSH STUDIO

Old Brush Studio is a private property and art studio nestled in the western side of the Sugarloaf Range. This is one of the few places around Cessnock that intact stands of sub-tropical rainforest can be accessed.

The birdwatching here is excellent, possibly the best rainforest birding in the

Lower Hunter, with many rainforest specialties easily found. Green Catbirds, Rufous Fantails and Black-faced Monarchs occur in the mid-canopy. The site is particularly good for pigeons. White-headed and Wonga Pigeons are conspicuous, as are Brown Cuckoo-Doves. Sharing the forest paths with bushwalkers are Noisy Pittas, Bassian Thrushes, Yellow-throated Scrubwrens and Superb Lyrebirds (look for Satin Bowerbird bowers too). Among the vine thickets keep an eye out for Large-billed Scrubwrens and Brown Gerygones. Azure Kingfishers are often seen on the small lagoons along with a few waterfowl species. Aside from the rainforest birds, the dry forests along the fringe are

also very productive and Crested Shrike-tits, White-naped Honeyeaters and Leaden Flycatchers (in season) are among the many birds found here. There is an excellent formed trail network and a map is available on request. Access is at the end of Lieberts Lane, Brunkerville (off Leggetts Drive) and entry is via a gold coin donation per person.

Drinking water from tanks is available and toilets for small groups only (septic).



Brown Treecreeper

Prepared (June 2019) by Mick Roderick for:
Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.
PO Box 24 New Lambton NSW 2305

Birding Routes are available to download from the HBOC website

www.hboc.org.au

HBOC meets at 7:00pm on the second Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, off the roundabout at Sandgate Road, Shortland. Also, monthly outings on first Tuesday and third Sunday of each month – check our website for details.

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Factfile

Wonga Pigeon (*Leucosarcia melanoleuca*)



The Wonga Pigeon is a large terrestrial pigeon found mostly in wet forests in south-eastern Australia. It feeds on fallen fruit and seeds and can walk long distances in a day in search of food. It can be very wary but when flushed will often fly up onto a horizontal branch. Listen for its monotonous 'woop woop woop' calls.



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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This map is for illustrative purposes only and the scale is approximate



1 STANFORD MERTHYR CROWN RESERVE

Stanford Merthyr Crown Reserve near Kurri Kurri provides an easy grade bushwalk through bushland along a closed road, including an endemic (and endangered) vegetation type; Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland. Where this vegetation dominates the trees are sparsely distributed and there is an understorey comprised of heath-like plants including Banksias and Grass Trees. Subsequently the birds can be similar to those associated with coastal heath environs, including White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills and Variegated Fairy-wrens. Other parts of the reserve contain Spotted Gum-Ironbark forests and here a range of bush birds can be found, particularly when blossom is available. Access is via the end of Maitland Street, which leads onto the closed Stanford Road. Tracks are found off the closed road along its length.

There are no facilities in the reserve but a service station is located very close by in Stanford Merthyr.

2 JOHN BROWNS LAGOON

John Browns Lagoon is situated on Richmond Vale Road, between George Booth Drive and White Bridge Road, Richmond Vale. It is a very large body of water that was once used for the coal-mining industry in the area (the site is also called "Colliery Dam" and remains of the old water pump house can still be seen). The lagoon is on private property and cannot be accessed, however there are several places along Richmond Vale Road from which the lagoon can be viewed (a telescope is recommended). The best of these views are at

the northern end of the lagoon. The lagoon is quite deep and never completely dries out, making it an important drought refuge. Deep water duck species are seen here, such as Hardhead and occasionally, Musk Ducks. Australasian Darters and Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants hunt for fish and can be seen roosting on the old mine workings. White-bellied Sea-eagles also nest near here and fish the lagoon waters. The lagoon is best known for its fringing floating vegetation and records of Comb-crested Jacanas, that used to breed here. Observers are encouraged to scan the floating vegetation to look for jacanas when visiting the site.

Great Cormorant

3 SHEPPEARD DRIVE

Further east from John Browns Lagoon along Richmond Vale Road, take the turnoff south into Sheppard Drive. There is good woodland birding along this road, though as all of the properties are privately owned there is no access to the bushland itself. Nonetheless this area is the eastern extent of the Cessnock woodlands and is the eastern limit for species such as Yellow-tufted, Fuscous and Black-chinned Honeyeaters. There is a small remnant population of Brown Treecreepers which are seen mostly to the south of the large power easement. In summer, Dusky Woodswallows frequent Sheppard Drive and when the Spotted Gums are flowering there can be large numbers of Little Lorikeets, White-naped Honeyeaters and Noisy Friarbirds in attendance. Jacky Winters are often seen sallying out from the powerlines along the road.

There are no facilities here or at John Browns Lagoon.

4 ORCHID ROAD

Orchid Road is an excellent area with productive roadside woodland birding. The best location is approximately 550m along Orchid Road from Leggetts Drive, where the bushland is on both sides of the road. Here there are resident Variegated Fairy-wrens, Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and Jacky Winters. It is also an excellent site for Varied Sittellas and in summer, Brush Cuckoos and Dusky Woodswallows are present. Spotted Quail-thrush may be encountered a little further east before the track heads downhill towards a dead-end.

Variegated Fairy-wren



Eastern Spinebill

