

Editorial

This edition of *The Whistler* deals with an eclectic mix of Hunter Region species – some rare, some relatively common. The thirteen articles herein are similarly varied – some of them report results from medium- to long-term studies, often dealing with multiple species; many others present findings from observations of a single species over shorter time frames.

One long-term study location is the Hunter Estuary, which has been surveyed monthly for shorebirds and waterbirds since 1999 and with participation by almost two hundred Hunter Bird Observers Club members during that time period. In this issue, Alan Stuart and Ann Lindsey present the results for waterfowl, grebes, crakes, and rails. They show that many of those species have prospered in the estuary and suggest this to be the result of the restoration of tidal flushing at several local wetlands.

Mike Newman and Glenn Ehmke used the results from Mike's long-term study of birds at *Yaraandoo*, a property near Paterson, to make population density estimates for the species that he regularly encountered. The method they used is novel; the results aligned well with estimates for elsewhere which had been developed by other means. This type of data has not generally been available for the Hunter Region and the methodology used is readily adaptable to any suitably collected data sets.

Ann Lindsey and Neil Fraser used the results from long-term studies of the Hunter Region's many estuaries and shorelines to analyse the status of the Double-banded Plover in our region. It has been a mixed outcome for this New Zealand migrant; a substantial decline in numbers at sites where the levels of human disturbance are high, and stable populations elsewhere in the region. They found that two sites in the region were nationally significant for the species.

Kim Pryor found that human disturbance also had a major impact on the breeding success of two pairs of White-bellied Sea-Eagles in the Maitland area. Sadly, one breeding attempt failed because of ongoing disturbance, while the successful second pair's nest tree has since been removed to facilitate housing development. It is to be hoped that Kim's report of her careful observations will lead to better outcomes for threatened species attempting to breed near large population centres. Copies of the article will be sent to relevant Hunter Region councils for their consideration when planning developments in wooded areas with potential raptor nesting sites.

Also in this edition, Neil Fraser has taken Citizen Science to a new level by using video recordings made by scores of amateur birdwatchers to develop insights into the foraging behaviour of the Australian Painted-snipe and its close relative, the Greater Painted-snipe. The cryptic nature of these two species has made them difficult for ornithologists to study. Neil obtained video recordings from widespread locations and identified many common behaviours, which had not previously been documented.

Last year's issue included several articles about birds of the Broughton Island Group. Greg Little and Alan Stuart have continued this theme, with a report summarising results from a five-year bird-banding project on the main island. This is the sixth article in *The Whistler* about birds of the Broughton Island Group – there is no doubt that the long-term study there is proving fruitful. Likewise, the two reports in this issue about Rufous Scrub-birds in the Gloucester Tops comprise the sixth and seventh articles in this journal about that cryptic species, which are slowly unveiling some of its secrets.

Although there are twelve different authors for this edition, which implies healthy author diversity, the majority of the content has involved just a handful of people. For that reason, we are very pleased that there are six short notes in this issue of the journal, in addition to the seven full papers discussed earlier. These briefer articles are relatively easy to write, and to read. As such, they are a forum for less-experienced writers to document their observations in a manner which is more readily assimilated by the average birdwatcher i.e., someone without any scientific background. Our aim in each issue is to have a balance of short notes and longer, more scholarly, papers. We encourage you, the reader, to give it a go sometime. It's not hard once you get started.

As with every edition of *The Whistler*, there are many people to be thanked – starting with the authors, of course; the referees whose constructive comments always lead to better articles; Liz Crawford who formats and proof-reads every article; and Rob Kyte who puts everything together for the hard copy and arranges its printing. We also thank the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group for their continuing financial support for publication of this journal.

Alan Stuart and Neil Fraser
Joint Editors