

Editorial

This is the 17th annual edition of *The Whistler*, and as usual it has been a pleasure for us to bring it all together. We hope that it will also be a pleasure for you to read. By coincidence, there are 17 articles in this edition. They span a wide range of topics; some of them report on long-term studies and some on chance observations, while the rest lie somewhere in between.

Tom Kendall reports results from a long-term study at a property near East Seaham, in which many Hunter Bird Observers Club members have had involvement over the years. It is arguably the longest continuous study of woodland birds ever conducted in the Hunter Region. The property is managed with an emphasis on sustainability, and the study reveals that there have been some significant changes to bird populations over time.

Another long-term study location is at Salamander Bay on Port Stephens, where an area of wetlands and woodland is almost surrounded by housing and industrial development. Lois Wooding and Graeme Stevens have supplemented their 15 years of data with reports from ecological consultants, and they demonstrate the importance for wildlife of this small suburban oasis. We hope their report will assist Port Stephens Council planners working on the next stage of the Salamander Waters Estate development.

A paper by Neil Fraser about a breeding event by Little Terns on the Worimi Conservation Lands demonstrates why this is an endangered species in New South Wales. Predation and disturbance devastated the colony, with only six of 45 chicks fledging and with Ghost Crabs proving to be a significant predator of the young chicks.

In another paper, Neil reviews the status of introduced avian species in the Hunter Region, tracing the arrival and spread of each species and their population trends. It is a timely contribution, especially given the frequent

community angst about the spread of Common Mynas in our towns and suburbs.

The fifth full paper in this edition summarises a five-year study of Gould's Petrel breeding activities on Broughton Island. It is a valuable contribution to our knowledge about this threatened species, since it is the first detailed study of how a new Gould's Petrel breeding colony develops. The high breeding success rate from artificial nest boxes is encouraging.

There are twelve shorter articles (including one book review) in this edition and together they comprise more than 40% of the total pages of articles. We are delighted with this outcome. And what's more, there are six first-time authors or co-authors. There can be no doubt that *The Whistler* plays an important role in stimulating local birdwatchers towards becoming contributing ornithologists.

Four of the short notes describe unusual dietary items for some of our common species – Laughing Kookaburra, Grey Butcherbird, Noisy Miner, and Australian White Ibis. These notes were all based initially upon chance observations; they show that there is still much to learn and document about Australian birds. Four other notes report examples of interesting bird behaviour: the first local report of pre-roost assembly by Gang-gang Cockatoos; the first-ever-reported single nest brood overlap by Galahs; the first documented instance for New South Wales of site fidelity by the Far Eastern Curlew; and the first modern record for Australia for Pycroft's Petrel – and what's more it was exploring for breeding sites.

The final four of the shorter articles deal with various other topics. Neil Fraser reviews the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2020, finding some flaws; Mike Newman considers insights about raptors from his observations of them at his then-home in Woodville; Ashley Carlson describes the bird population of Bootawa Dam in the under-documented northern part of our region; and Ann Lindsey and Rob Kyte report on

two recent breeding records of the endangered Black-necked Stork at Hexham Swamp within the Hunter Estuary.

We are the editors but production of *The Whistler* involves a large team. Firstly, we thank all the authors – it takes perseverance to sit at a desk, analyse data and write about it, and it takes stoicism to deal with picky reviewers and editors. The reviewers undertake serious work, which underpins *The Whistler's* credibility. That vital work often goes unacknowledged publicly

(although our preference is for open reviews). We thank Liz Crawford for her diligent cross-checking while she formats each manuscript to *The Whistler's* style guide, and we also thank Rob Kyte who manages the production and printing of the hard copies. The ongoing support of the HBOC Management Committee is much appreciated, and 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