

The *Whistler* – Editorial

This volume of *The Whistler* features three major papers. The first two document long-term studies of important wetlands. Both these studies provide valuable information to land managers which will help shape the actions needed to sustain these areas as prime waterbird habitat. They also provide baseline data against which the success of those actions can be judged. The Tomago Wetlands is a work in progress involving the restoration of saltmarsh habitat, a declining natural resource which is particularly important to migratory shorebirds. The success of this project is critical to the future of shorebird populations in our region given the loss of other areas of suitable habitat in the Hunter Estuary to industrial development. The other study involves the Walka Water Works in the rapidly expanding city of Maitland. Here the goal is to effect a compromise which affords recreational opportunities, including bird-watching, to the local community while preserving the bird species diversity of its unique deep freshwater lake. The paper suggests that the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* is a suitable indicator species. Manage its numbers and breeding success and the wetland should be suitable for other waterbird species, particularly deep water specialists which have few other options in the Hunter Region.

Hunter Bird Observers Club members are involved in monitoring the status of the Rufous Scrub-bird *Atrichornis rufescens* in the Gloucester Tops. The final major paper deals with the calling patterns of territorial scrub-birds, a topic central to the monitoring program. While the paper provides valuable insights it also poses unanswered questions; but that is the essence of research.

Short papers and notes provide intriguing insights into bird behaviour. One of these papers explains how Australian Pied Oystercatchers *Haematopus longirostris* successfully adapted their breeding tactics in the Worimi Conservation Lands at Stockton Beach to overcome the multiple hurdles of king tides and excessive recreational vehicle activity which usually causes failure. The other paper delves into the interactions between a pair of Pacific Black Ducks *Anas superciliosa* in a suburban garden. Guess who rules the roost! In addition there is exciting news on the Regent

Honeyeater *Anthochaera carunculata*; based on 2012 numbers the dry open forest of the lower Hunter Valley is extremely important to this critically endangered species. Another type of vegetation, olive groves, is shown to be surprisingly good habitat for birds, especially for the Speckled Warbler *Chthonicola sagittata*. Other notes concern Australian Pelicans *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Cattle Egret *Ardea ibis*, Variegated Fairy-wrens *Malurus lamberti*, White-throated Nightjars *Eurostopodus mystacalis*, Jacky Winter *Microeca fascinans* and White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*.

For the first time *The Whistler* contains a regional overview of a single species, the Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*, summarising all the available information in the Hunter Region on this fascinating species. The wealth of information available is a tribute to all Hunter Bird Observers Club members who contribute observations to the club's records, to the Hunter Region Annual Bird Report and to the BirdLife ongoing Atlas. We hope that similar single species accounts will be a feature of future volumes of *The Whistler*.

It is particularly rewarding to welcome a number of new authors to *The Whistler*; for many of them it is the first time they have been involved in a demanding adventure of this type. It has been a privilege to work with the authors of the oystercatcher paper who are of aboriginal descent. Developing their paper resulted in a parallel understanding of the importance of the Worimi Lands to their cultural heritage and an intriguing link in which the conservation of their middens contributes to an opportunity for the oystercatchers to breed successfully.

As *The Whistler 6* goes to press we are in the embarrassing position for the first time of having excess copy, amounting to almost half the next volume. What a fantastic embarrassment. Another unique feature of 2012 has been that following Harold's move to the UK in 2011 your Editors have worked shifts facilitated by overnight email exchanges. How the world has changed.

Mike Newman and Harold Tarrant
Joint Editors