

## The *Whistler* - Editorial

Publication of the tenth issue of *The Whistler* completes a decade of endeavour which we believe has delivered invaluable documentation of the contemporary status of the bird populations of the Hunter Region. The eclectic collection of articles we have published in that time reflects the unique avian diversity of the Hunter Region. Equally diverse are the backgrounds of authors who have contributed articles. They range from professional ornithologists to bird watchers who had not previously remotely considered the possibility of writing a scientific article. *The Whistler* embodies a culture of regional bird study, which is arguably without peer in Australia. While *The Whistler* feeds off that culture it also nurtures and sustains it by demonstrating the value of conducting systematic field studies and providing participants ownership of their work. Hunter Bird Observers Club Members differentiate themselves from most “Citizen Scientists” by planning, conducting and interpreting their own work rather than waiting in the hope that someone else will eventually find some use for, or explanation of their results.

There have been a number of changes in the taxonomy of Australian birds which we have adopted based on BirdLife Australia’s updated working list (V2);

<http://www.birdlife.org.au/conservation/science/taxonomy> (accessed 11 July 2016). Advances in genetic studies continue to provide an improved understanding of linkages across the amazing diversity of our birds. It is important that data collection, analysis and publication of results reflect the latest understanding of that diversity so that it can be protected. Accordingly, we have updated a summary of the status of the Threatened species of the Hunter Region from that previously published in 2010 in *The Whistler* Number 4.

Behavioural studies also feature strongly in this issue involving a number of short notes dealing with topics as diverse as the roost-selection of shorebirds and the fostering of orphaned chicks by wild Laughing Kookaburras. A short paper provides insights into observations 20 years earlier of a most unusual near-coastal breeding of the Black-eared Cuckoo hosted by Speckled Warblers. The explanation provided is only possible because recent studies of the Australian Bronze-Cuckoos

have demonstrated how sophisticated the cuckoo-host interaction is in the *Chalcites* genus, to which the Black-eared Cuckoo belongs.

Another short paper provides background to the development of improved distribution maps for the Hunter’s bird species. The new techniques are used in this issue’s in-depth focus on the Rose Robin.

Raptors are the theme of two articles, both involving long-term studies, one of the Morpeth Wastewater Treatment Works and the other of Port Stephens. There are also notes documenting the breeding of the Black Kite in the Hunter Region and on the tactics of Peregrine Falcons hunting shorebirds. Other articles chronicle the waterbirds of Belmont Lagoon and discuss the Oystercatchers and White Ibis of Port Stephens.

We have our second book review and sadly our first obituary. Max Maddock left us with the legacy of the Wetlands Centre, and his example and leadership, especially regarding the study of egret species, provided the first steps in community-based collaborative bird study which is the hallmark of the Hunter Bird Observers Club and the foundation of *The Whistler*.

During 2016 we have been delighted that Neil Fraser has joined *The Whistler* editorial team. Neil’s presence in the Hunter is increasingly important with Mike and Harold residing in Tasmania and Cambridge, UK respectively and Liz cruising the high seas for an extended period. We started by reflecting on how genetics has changed taxonomic understanding; the internet is making equally dramatic changes in the way we communicate and publish.

We again congratulate all our authors over the last ten years, particularly those without previous experience of the preparation of scientific papers and of handling critical peer review. Our appreciation is likewise extended to the referees that we have used over the decade, and who, by the very nature of the task, are nowhere thanked for the individual insights that they have offered authors and editors alike. Thank you all.

**Harold Tarrant and Mike Newman**  
Joint Editors