

## The *Whistler* - Editorial

The papers in this volume of *The Whistler* demonstrate the ability of amateur bird watchers to make important contributions not only to our knowledge of the avifauna of the Hunter Region but also of Australian birds more widely. Pride of place goes to Lois Wooding for her meticulously documented study of a pair of Brahminy Kite's breeding at the southern extremity of their range. To the best of our knowledge her study is the first detailed account of the chronology of the breeding sequence for this species, which is understudied relative to many other raptor species.

The Noisy Pitta is another species that has been found breeding in an unexpected area, further south and nearer the coast than expected. A note by Robert Kyte documents this potentially important development without disclosing its exact location. Also connected with breeding is a note by Joy Nicholls and Anne Williams on the behaviour of juvenile Australasian Figbirds while in care, demonstrating the kind of observation that may most easily be made by wildlife carers.

The short paper describing Grahame Felletti's equally persistent studies of the Brush Bronzewing in the Belmont area poses interesting questions. For instance, why are the Hunter records of Brush Bronzewing predominantly from that area? Why are there so few records outside spring and summer? Grahame seeks to answer those questions. Here is an outstanding opportunity for others to apply their birding skills and contribute to unravelling the mysteries surrounding the little-known status of this species in the Hunter Region.

We return to breeding studies with Neil Fraser's paper which documents Little Tern nesting at Winda Woppa in Port Stephens. Neil provides a comprehensive account of the spontaneous colonisation of the area taking opportunistic advantage of circumstances created by dumping of dredged material. Neil's background research provides anecdotal evidence that these events have occurred in the past, but in this instance the published record may assist land managers to make future interventions that will improve Little Tern breeding success.

Four papers provide detailed inventories of local bird populations, but the circumstances differ markedly. Jenny Powers and Liz Huxtable offer a study of a site close to Newcastle that many readers will have visited, fully documenting the

results of eight years of surveys at the Tank Paddock, near Minmi. Such studies can be of considerable importance for HBOC's conservation efforts, especially as they relate to the Green Corridor and the overall wetland area that extends to Hexham.

Alan Stuart and others present the results of surveys on Broughton Island following the removal of invasive species. It is gratifying to see how quickly certain avian species will begin to use the new opportunities offered by the island.

Mike Newman demonstrates the value of roadside vegetation in a rural setting using data gathered by regularly walking a road near Paterson. This demonstrates the opportunities for observing birds along our country roads even though the land may remain off limits.

Alan Stuart contrasts the bird populations of two small lagoons in the north-east of the Hunter Region, adding further to our knowledge of the wetlands around the Manning Estuary, and posing interesting questions about the reasons for the differences.

The editorial team would like to congratulate the authors for providing a steady flow of publishable material, delivered in plenty of time for all the deliberations that necessarily precede publication. We are delighted with the diversity and balance of the material which we are presenting in this issue. This shows the increasing maturity of bird study within the HBOC community. But the job is never quite done, and there remains much to know about the avifauna of the Hunter Region. Perhaps this is an opportunity to reflect on where not only *The Whistler* but also the wider HBOC effort of which it is part should now be directed. After meeting overseas and discussing initiatives elsewhere, Mike and Harold wonder whether we might be able to learn from other regional groups of bird observers. For instance, the UK has estimates for the breeding populations of all bird species and in some areas the population estimates are available at the regional level. Even if the answer is 'No', it makes sense that continuing Hunter residents, who remain in touch with the situation on the ground, should reflect further upon the objectives of avian research in the Hunter for the future.

**Mike Newman, Harold Tarrant and Neil Fraser**  
Joint Editors