



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Issue No. 4/18 August 2018

The Club aims: To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat, and
To encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity.



*The most photogenic of the five species of Robin at "Wongalee" Appletree Flat
Red-capped Robin – Rowley Smith, see camp report p.10*

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Please send Newsletter articles direct to the Editor
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Deadline for next edition 5th September 2018

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President's Column August 2018

BIGnet

The Bird Interest Group Network (BIGnet) bi-annual meeting is being hosted by HBOC at the Hunter Wetlands Centre on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd September. BIGnet is a network of birding groups in NSW and the ACT who share information and other resources to promote the conservation of birds and their environment. It is an opportunity to discuss ideas and conservation issues that are common to all clubs. All HBOC members are welcome to register and attend the whole event. However, on Saturday afternoon from 1.30 to 5 pm there will be a series of talks largely about birds of the Hunter Region in the theatre where we hold our Club meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend all or part of this session at no charge.

There is also a dinner at the Shortland Hotel on Saturday evening at 6.30 pm at own expense. For attendance please contact the Secretary Margaret Clarke 0412 616030, secretary@hbc.org.au

The basic program is:

Conservation Meeting at 1030 -1230 Saturday

Seminar /Presentations at 1330 -1700 Saturday

Early Morning Bird Walk at Hunter Wetlands Centre. (small entry fee applies) 0730 Sunday

BIGnet General Meeting 0930 Sunday

Monthly Newsletter

The committee has decided to trial a monthly rather than bimonthly newsletter. This will allow us to provide more up to the minute news about club activities and give you a more manageable reading experience. This brings up the problem of the ever-increasing cost of printing and posting a black and white copy of the newsletter to those who receive it by post. For a monthly newsletter the cost per member would be about \$35 a year, the same as our membership fee. So after the August edition members with an email address will receive notification that a coloured copy of the newsletter is available on our web site. The committee recognises that there are a few members who are unable to access email or our web site and they will be catered for. This trial will be evaluated at the end of the year.

October Camp

Details of our October long weekend camp can be found elsewhere in the newsletter. I'm sure everyone is aware of the extreme drought conditions in the Upper Hunter. To show our appreciation to the property owners for giving us access to this great birding area while they are going through such tough times we are charging campers \$5 per adult per day and the proceeds of this will go to the property owners. I hope day visitors will also throw in a few dollars. Thanks again to Andrzej and Lyn Karpel for organising this.

Don't Forget...to get out there for the next week or two to search for Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots.

Robert Stewart

A Warm Welcome to New Members: We hope to see you at club meetings and outings.

Susan Crickmore, Macquarie Hills

Adriana Corona Mothe (s) Charlestown 2290

Paul Hamson (s) Warners Bay 2282

Laurence Smith (s) Avoca Beach 2251

Michele & Rodney Graham, Branxton

Archie Brennan (f) Eleebana 2282

Ted & Jennifer Elks, Valentine

Mark Kempton, New Lambton Heights

Ross Mildenhall, East Maitland

Health and Safety Awareness for Activities

When attending field outings, ensure you are wearing appropriate clothing, including wet weather gear in inclement weather, and suitable footwear. It is advisable to bring a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and to carry water. Please sign the attendance register at field outings and also at meetings. If you leave an outing early, please let the leader know before you go. Participants attend at their own risk and should refrain from any behaviour that might put themselves or others at risk. That includes assessing whether they have the level of fitness required for the advertised outing. If in doubt, contact the leader beforehand.

BIGnet Meeting

(Bird Interest Group Network)

Saturday 1 September Sunday 2 September

All members welcome to Seminars and Presentations, Saturday 1.30 to 5 pm

For further details see Presidents Column

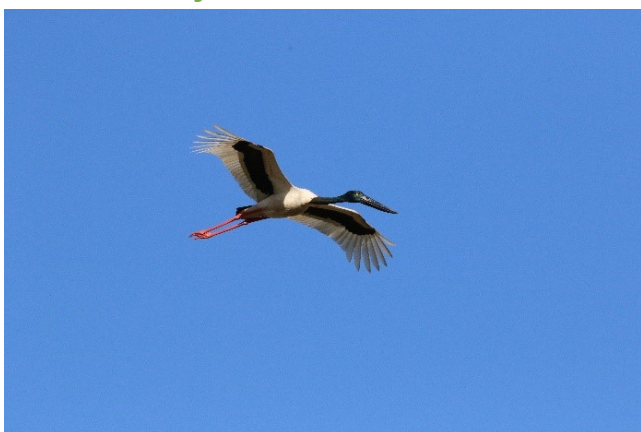
Enquiries: Margaret Clarke 0412 616030, secretary@hbc.org.au

Four Stork Stories from the Hunter Estuary

First Story

Black-necked Storks have been turning up in the Estuary area for a long time but since about 2014 there have been more and more sightings. In *Whistler No. 8*, on Hexham Swamp, Rod Warnock describes an “up and down display” he observed on 21st May, 2014. This display is associated with pair bonding and often takes place in the vicinity of a nest. In August 2014 a stork flew over Pipeline Track on Hexham Swamp carrying a large branch and I watched it land on a shrubby tree where another stork was already standing. Then, in September, October and December I saw two storks standing or sitting on what was now obviously a substantial nest way over on the western side of Hexham Swamp. However, I failed to 100% establish that there were chicks in the nest. Subsequently, adults with young have been seen feeding on Hexham, but they could, after all, have flown in from anywhere.

Second Story



In March, 2017 HBOC received a message from local residents that storks were nest building at Tomago. So Neville McNaughton and I dashed out there to find that indeed a pair was carrying sticks to a tree not far from Tomago Road. I was determined that this time I would see this nest through to the bitter end and over the next five months I spent many hours standing watching trying to establish what was going on. Because I did not have permission to cross private land, I could not really get very close to the nest but I am as sure as I can be that there was a chick in the nest on the 9th May. However, it was not until after a waterbird survey on 16th May that Gary Tong and I went there to see how things were going.

To our delight we could see a tiny brown-headed, downy white chick bobbing around in the nest. I subsequently observed adults bringing in fish and eel to feed the fast-growing chick which, as the weeks passed, would practise flying, leaping up and down, flapping wings and lifting off above the nest. During all this time the adults continued to do a lot of housework refurbishing the nest with small sticks and soft vegetation. According to my calculations the chick would fledge in the last week of July and I would go out every day to check.



I was a week out in my calculations and was so happy when on 7th August, the, by now, very large chick just flew off the nest, made three large circles over my head, gaining height and cleared the power lines on Tomago Road to land in a paddock with four horses for company. It stayed there for a week and several times a day the adults would bring in large eel. There is little doubt in my mind that the adults deliberately chose that ostensibly unsuitable site surrounded by fences, factories and houses and occupied by horses all of which would give some protection from predators such as foxes and eagles. I saw it on the paddock for the last time on 14th August and early next morning Neville saw an adult with a chick/juvenile down on Tomago Wetlands, undoubtedly this chick. Before it had fledged other members of the Club had started to visit the chick and Lene made a great video which you can see on Youtube and there will be an article in our journal, *The Whistler*, sometime in the future which will have more details. This event is the most southern, confirmed, breeding record for NSW. The other regular breeding nest is to the north at Bulahdelah.

Third Story

Neil Fraser, Liz Huxtable and I went out to do the regular waterbird survey at Tomago on 19th May 2018. We had stopped at the Smart Gates, just inside the national park to look for Mistletoebirds which are always feeding on the prolific mistletoe in the Casuarinas at this spot. To our initial joy we saw an immature stork just in the saltmarsh on the side of the road. However, we quickly realised that this was a very sick bird. It was just standing around or rather drooping around with very dirty feathers, closed eyes. Neil distracted it and it moved away from us at first, but then just stood as Liz dropped a towel over it and grabbed its wings as I grabbed the

bill. It was so light and, as it turned out, weighed just 2.7 kg when a bird of this age should be at least 4.5 kg. We drove it to Sugarloaf Animal Hospital at West Wallsend almost certain it would be dead by the time we arrived. However, it survived and was whisked away for immediate treatment. It stayed there for a week and the vet, Alex, rang me every day with an update on its treatment and progress. It seems that the bird was suffering from chronic malnutrition. By the end of the week, it was standing up and eating itself and well enough to be sent to a Native Animal Trust Fund carer. The carer put fish in a pond of water and the bird would feed itself eating a kilo of fish per day!!!! It was not long before it had put on half a kilo in weight. We thought it would be a good idea to raise some money for fish expenses and at the June Club night, HBOC members contributed \$485 for its upkeep. A big Thank You for your generosity.



The young stork was successfully released by carer Anne Williams at Hexham Swamp on 25th July and was seen around the release site for the next four days. Unfortunately, starvation is a known killer of young storks as some just do not manage to fend for themselves. This one has had a second chance and hopefully it will survive. As it is banded, please send any sightings to HBOC info line. It has a blue band on its left leg, yellow on right leg. It is likely but cannot be proven that this stork is the same bird which features in the Second Story. Its plumage is correct for a one year old bird according to stork expert, Greg Clancy.

Fourth Story

The adults from the Second Story have another chick in the nest first seen on 25th May, still present on nest, August 4th stretching wings, and at the jumping stage. Further report next newsletter.

Ann Lindsey

Learning about Scrub-birds

“Our” Noisy Scrub-bird: photo Alan Danks

The Gloucester Tops includes an area of core habitat for the endangered Rufous Scrub-bird. Since 2010, members of HBOC have been involved in a study of the local population of these elusive cryptic birds. We now think that the population is stable (although that situation requires regular checking) and so our attention can turn towards learning more about the behaviour of individual birds. Such knowledge should help towards achieving the best overall conservation strategies.



In the early 1980s, a university student named Simon Ferrier studied Rufous Scrub-birds and produced a very valuable thesis about them. However, there is much more that we could know. For example, there has never been a breeding record from the Gloucester Tops! One thing that has interested me is what we could learn from studies of its closest relative, the Noisy Scrub-bird which is found in a restricted range in areas near Albany in WA. After the Noisy Scrub-bird was rediscovered in the 1960s, having for a long time before that been thought to be extinct, scientists in WA have been involved in 50+ years of effort to study and protect these birds.

In June, Rob Kyte, Greg Little and I spent a week based at Two Peoples Bay near Albany and working with three members of the Noisy Scrub-bird recovery project team. The three were Sarah Comer, who now leads the project and has 20+ years of working with these shy birds, Alan Danks 35+ years and formerly was the project leader, and Abby Berryman whose PhD study led to revelations about aspects of the birds' territorial and breeding behaviour. We spent lots of time sharing knowledge about Scrub-birds and participating in fieldwork together. They had a lot more knowledge to share than did we, but it wasn't all one-way traffic. It was very interesting to consider differences as well as similarities and to ponder on their significance. For instance, the Noisy Scrub-bird breeds in winter and lays one egg, whereas the Rufous Scrub-bird breeds in spring and is reported to lay two eggs. What differences in behaviour does that cause?

The fieldwork included searching for nests, which the females build in wet gullies alongside creeks. The nests are large (a bit like a coconut with a hole in the middle) and 1-2 cm thick, presumably for insulation. Despite their size they



Greg with an old Noisy Scrub-bird nest

are not easy to find and lots of searching through thick patches of sedges etc was required. The female's territory is some distance from the male's, who has no involvement in the breeding cycle apart from that one brief initial moment. We hope information of this sort will help us in the Gloucester Tops studies. Maybe one day we'll know the incubation period and how long it takes for the chicks to fledge.

The coastal heath where the Noisy Scrub-bird lives is fire-prone and the birds can scarcely fly, so fires have serious impacts. An important part of the overall recovery project is to translocate birds from areas where they are doing well, to restock burnt areas or to populate new areas. In 50+ years, this strategy has raised the Noisy Scrub-bird population from around 100 birds in the 1960s to well over 1,000 birds now. Translocation involves catching birds in a specially modified net and releasing them at the target location. They fit a radio transmitter to each bird, which falls off after about 3 weeks but during that time the team is able to track each released Scrub-bird, checking that it has survived the translocation experience (most of them do) and monitoring where it ends up settling and forming a territory.



Rob measuring a Noisy Scrub-bird



The team on a cold & frosty morning (photo: Sarah Comer)

We were privileged to be able to help with the translocation (Rob and Greg are licensed banders) of a male bird from Waychinicup National Park to Two Peoples Bay, where a fire a couple of years previously had wiped out a lot of birds. Then we were taught how to use radio tracking equipment, and spent one afternoon and the next morning following the bird. In that time, he had moved about 100m from the release point. Our parting moment with him was to hear him calling – a sign that he was probably in the process of establishing his new territory. It was a very exciting moment!



Alan and Sarah releasing the bird (and Alan Danks with camera)



***I'm outta here!* (photo: Alan Danks)**

We're very grateful to Sarah and her team for the wonderful tuition they provided, and for the opportunity to join them in their fieldwork.

The next Rufous Scrub-bird surveys in the Gloucester Tops are scheduled for 24-26 September. We stay in the national park at the Sharpes Creek campsite and drive daily up to the high country where the birds live. You're welcome to join us – there's some walking involved but it's all done at a leisurely pace. NB you might not see a Rufous Scrub-bird because the survey method doesn't require that, but you'll learn lots about them.

Alan Stuart

Singing Honeyeater: A Bird to Watch for, an uncommon sighting in the Hunter



Durridgerie Road, Turrill is an HBOC documented location for the Singing Honeyeater. We have seen a bird here on most visits but it proved to be very shy and difficult to see and even harder to photograph.

June this year is the first time it has appeared in the open to allow good photographic opportunities. The first bird we saw is the subject photographed and it appeared in trees on both sides of the road as well as the fence-line where the road crosses a ridge line at a height of about 440m. A second bird was seen away from the road about 450m SW on a small plateau at a height of 455m.

The second bird was feeding in flowering mistletoe and we were unable to get any clear photographs. The terrain is rocky with steep embankments around the plateau area. The area has a light density woodland with much of the ground area covered with fallen

trees and wooden debris and there is little to no topsoil. There are small areas of ground vegetation which is less than 1m in height.

Singing Honeyeaters are widespread throughout Australia, but rarely reported in the Hunter. Previous reports have included two birds seen at Medhurst Bridge, and a single bird on Kooragang Island.

Bruce Watts and Jeff Jones

Little Friarbird: “an uncommon bird of passage” (Annual Bird Report 2016)



Three birds, 2 adults and 1 juvenile, were initially reported lerping on Bureen Road by Mick Roderick on June 28.

Subsequently seen by Michael Kearns on June 30, Michael reported that they were lerping but also using blossom.

On July 1 Tom Kendall and Anthony Gooden reported: At 9.45am this morning there were 4 Little Friarbirds (plus 1 Noisy Friarbird) at the spot listed by Michael. They were lerping and feeding on some of the blossom on the eucalypts. They also came down to drink at a plastic pipe on the Martindale end of the row of trees.

Little Friarbird photo - Mick Roderick

Critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots in our area

Numbers of the Regent Honeyeater are believed to be as low as 400 mature birds in the wild, and the Swift Parrot down to an estimated 2,000. But in recent months both have been sighted in the Hunter Valley.



Regent Honeyeater in Botanic Gardens – Bill Kinsey

At last, after a break of nearly six months with no reports, Bill Kinsey reported a sighting of two Regent Honeyeaters in the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens at Heatherbrae. This sighting has been confirmed by many club members. The number in this one small area has now grown to at least six, including one bird banded as an adult female in the Capertee Valley in late 2013 (she also fledged two young in the Goulburn River last year). Meanwhile Mick Roderick had received a report of one Regent Honeyeater at Old Bar, further north. This was also subsequently confirmed.

Below is a link to the ABC report on our critically endangered visitors. It also refers to the National recovery effort and encourages us to take part in the

mainland surveys in May and August, the current one presently underway.

<http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-28/honeyeaters-affected-by-drought/10029290?pfmredir=sm>
and view Mick's short video: [Swift Parrot gleaning foliage in the Hunter Economic Zone, NSW](#)

Early in May, Mick Roderick began reporting on Swift Parrots arriving in the Cessnock forests, which he estimated to be around 200 birds during May if the sites are totalled at that time. The first report was on the 30th April when 18 birds were found by Liam Murphy in Werakata SCA, Pelton. Numbers peaked here on the 8th May when Mick Roderick found around 100 birds dew-bathing in the early morning sun. Birds were also found at Kitchener, Ellalong Lagoon and several sites in HEZ. They are currently still in the area in particular the site we call Button-Quail Junction.

There was some extensive debate on Hunterbirding about the food source for each species. One thing is for certain; virtually no Swift Parrots are feeding on blossom. Lerp appears to be making up the vast majority of the Swift Parrots' diet this winter.



Swift Parrot at Pelton – Mick Roderick



Regent Honeyeater, Botanic Gardens – Mark Simpson

The “Hobbit”: A Club Member’s Rescue Experience



This is the tale of a little common type of bird who should not have survived the following events in his very young life. I called him ‘The Hobbit’ as he was so small and helpless. We have a lot of nests in the yard that get hidden and never seen, generally in the Old Man Banksia out the front. The doves, wattlebirds and miners all take their turns with the babies first appearing out the front. There are also a number of doves in the back yard. We had not realised that the Noisy Miners had built a nest high in the Tuckaroo hanging out over the backyard.

It was a very pleasant Sunday afternoon and Beth and I were having a coffee on the back deck. We heard a small commotion and looked out onto the back lawn area to see what was going on. There were a number of Noisy Miners fussing around this little ball of fluffy down, very small, no formed feathers to speak of and no tail. He had stepped out of his little abode with no thought of the consequences, and had fluttered down into the very dangerous world outside. No, the Noisy Miner certainly does not rate as my favourite bird as they spend a lot of their day bullying the little birds I want to see, out of the yard. I thought that he would need some help so I picked him up, after a brief struggle, to try putting him up somewhere safe. There was no sign of the nest or how he had got where he was. Well you should have seen the commotion when I first picked him up. They thought he was in mortal danger and dealt with me accordingly with a lot of noise and activity.

I took him over to the Blueberry Ash and put him on a branch. He immediately tried to move to another very close branch and basically just fell out of the tree and fluttered down to the ground, so I picked him up and put him back in the tree. There was no resistance this time as we were becoming good friends. He just sat quietly while I picked him up again. The parents were also quite accepting of my help. Again he was unable to get from one branch to another, he just fluttered down to the ground. Third time, same result, so I tried just putting him on the tank. What with diamond pythons, black snakes, cats, kookaburras and butcherbirds, my yard is not safe for such a vulnerable creature. Well the top of a 200 gallon tank wasn’t big enough and down he went again, so we tried the ice-cream container trick. Again a no go, so I told him he was on his own, and left him with his parents and friends.

He set up camp between a large pot plant and the fence, which proved to be a defensible position, as a while later I heard a massive commotion and saw several of the miners beating the daylight out of a kookaburra, which was on the ground at the pot, trying for an ‘easy’ meal. The kookaburra flew off followed by the miners, but had another go about half an hour later, again without success.

Well Sunday night was a wild night, with 40mm of rain, so I expected to find a ball of wet fluff on the ground, however I found a very dry, small bird, sitting out in the garden being fed. As there was no shelter from that type of weather, the parents must have sheltered him. He stayed in the one area all day with very little movement, just enjoying the sun. Late afternoon and all the miners were hassling something in a tree down the street, and the Hobbit was nowhere to be seen. I looked for a while, and decided he was gone, so imagine my surprise the next morning, to see him right up the Buckinghamia being fed by his parents. As he was totally unable to fly a foot on Sunday, no wing stretches all day Monday, and then get from the ground up into the lower branches of this tree on Tuesday, I just do not know how he did it.

So Tuesday night he is still in the top of the tree. By all accounts he should not have survived, yet it now looks like he will make adulthood. Then we had another storm on Tuesday night and he survived that as well. We could see his feathers growing and his tail getting longer although he kept partially hidden in the foliage most of the time. It is surprising how quickly his appearance had changed over only a couple of days. He spent a few days in the Buckinghamia before moving back across the yard to the Tuckaroo. He was obviously being fed by the flock in various places around the front and back yard over the next few weeks before he just blended into the flock and disappeared.

What I find interesting is the regular visits I get from a Noisy Miner. If I am sitting on the deck, or at the table under the Macadamia this bird will come in close to me and chatter away directly at me. It will stand on the deck or sit in the branch of the tree and appear to be having a definite conversation with me. I often wonder if this bird was the parent bird or the Hobbit. I did not try to photograph him while he was on the ground, which I should have. The above photo was taken on the Tuesday after he had moved into the tree. The down has gone and the feathers are forming.

If you find a young bird on the ground advice can be found <http://wildcare.org.au/species-information/birds/>

John Cockerell

HBOC Club Meetings: June Meeting

The June meeting was well attended with cheerful HBOC members, despite the cold weather. Using the newly acquired HBOC laptop for the first time was a little nerve wracking for some of us however after a rocky start all went well with the technology. Phil Reid an Environmental Adviser with NCIG and an HBOC member, gave an update on the rehabilitation of Fish Fry Flats on Ash island including aerial shots of the vegetation regrowth. We congratulate NCIG for winning an international award for this work recently.

An amazing talk was given by our main speaker, a very adventurous Amellia Formby, an artist and zoologist turned pilot who is planning to circumnavigate Australia next year in a microlight aircraft. "Millie" is supported by Birdlife Australia and hopes to raise funds for shorebird conservation. This is an exciting concept and a great adventure. We look forward to hearing about Amellia's success in the future.

And finally, a juvenile Black-necked Stork was recently found in an emaciated state during a regular waterbird survey. Treatment was given at Sugarloaf Animal Hospital and the bird is now in care. A plea for donations to help feed the bird was made by Ann Lindsey and \$481 dollars raised from the audience. Well done HBOC members.

Marg Clarke

July Meeting



A well-attended meeting "Christmas in July" was a fundraiser for geolocator tracking of Ruddy Turnstones. Bird of the evening was presented by Peter Weinstock who showed his photos of Whistling Kites.

The guest speaker at the meeting was Ken Gosbell 'Hobbs Medal recipient'. Ken spoke about how Geolocators are put on Shorebirds, the reasons behind it and all the data and the knowledge collected. Ken illustrated his talk with details of Ruddy Turnstone carrying geolocators from King Island and Victoria, including Ruddy Turnstone, WMA. WMA has been sighted for three consecutive years in Newcastle. Thanks to the observations by HBOC members additional data was collected. Many thanks to Ken Gosbell for his excellent, informative talk. We will be watching our rockshelf for WMA, which we hope will make the long journey again this September/October to our Newcastle Shore.

Ruddy Turnstone WMA – photo by Richard Nicholas

To report a banded bird visit the HBOC web page. Under Field Studies go to Report a banded bird and there are links to ABBBS at the bottom of the page. You can also attach reasonably sized images.

<https://www.hboc.org.au/field-studies/report-a-banded-bird/>

Martindale Valley Bird Surveys - 23-25th July 2018

HBOC and Martindale Landcare have for some months now been in discussion regarding the possibility of beginning systematic bird surveys on a number of properties across the Martindale Valley. Tom Clarke and Dennis Neader had surveyed a number of properties in 2014/2015 as part of The Stepping Stones Project and it was decided to incorporate these surveys into a larger survey coverage of the valley.

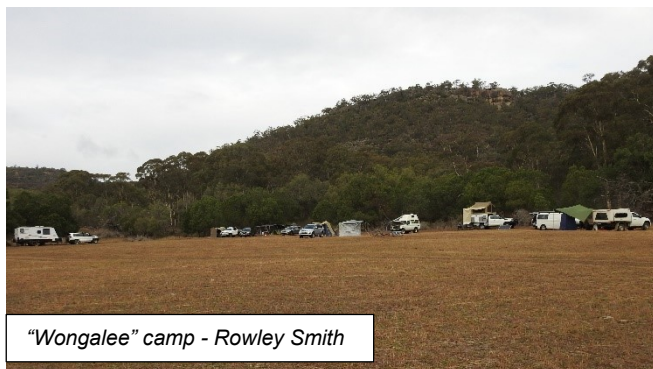
The initial team of volunteers from HBOC included Dennis Neader, Jeff Jones, Dave White, Alan Stuart and myself. The team did a couple of recon trips in May/June in preparation for the first round of surveys held in late July. The team camped on the Sykes property experiencing sub-zero temperatures overnight and ice on parts of the wetland on the second morning. Despite the cold conditions the days were perfect and the birding excellent. This first round included 16 survey sites across 9 properties starting at the top of the valley and finishing about 25kms away on Bureen Road. A total of 82 bird species were recorded including threatened species such as the Grey-crowned Babbler, Little Eagle, Speckled Warbler, Hooded Robin and Diamond Firetail.

The next of our quarterly surveys will be held on the 9th and 10th of October 2018. If you are interested in volunteering for one or both days then contact me, **Bruce Watts** on Email: bruce@whitepoppyaviaries.com.au

Club Activity Reports

June Long Weekend Camp on “Wongalee” Appletree Flat

9 to 12 June 2018



“Wongalee” camp - Rowley Smith

On the June long weekend whilst coastal members suffered through heavy rain and cold winds 12 members camped on the property “Wongalee” at Appletree Flat in milder weather with intermittent light showers. Three additional members joined for a day trip. The Williams family arrived one evening for the bird call and the boys toasted marshmallows around the camp fire.

With the long dry spell the birds seemed to enjoy the light showers and took advantage of the rain on the foliage to bathe. In one tree I counted 15 Spotted Pardalotes many working the foliage for a wash. A

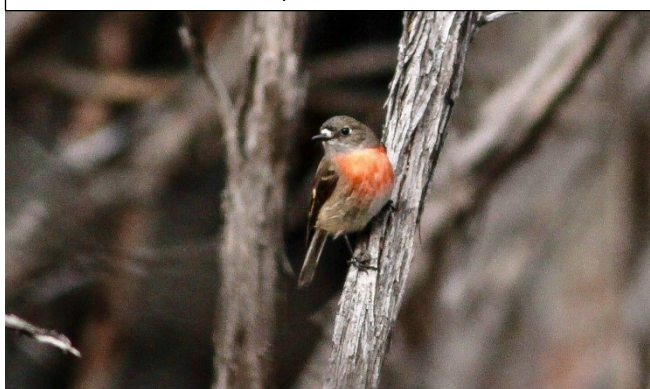
Grey Fantail took exception to one Spotted Pardalote trying to bathe in the foliage of one tree and chased it around aggressively. There are probably not many birds a Grey Fantail can bully.

Again at this property Red-capped Robins frequented the camp area and provided a splash of colour for those members lazing around camp. A pair of Scarlet Robins together with a male Rose Robin was observed along the track into the lookout above with Eastern Yellow Robins sighted along Commission Road. Rose Robins were also recorded adjacent to the camp. Some members drove to Medhurst Bridge and sighted a male Hooded Robin which brought their Robin count to 5 for the weekend.

Also along Commission Road 9 Rockwarblers, several White-eared Honeyeaters, and Spotted Pardalotes were sighted. Numerous flocks of 20-40 White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were seen and heard moving through, generally westward.

Immediately around the camp Speckled Warblers, Silvereyes, Olive-backed Orioles and 4 species of Thornbill were active. The Silvereyes feasting on a variety of berries were resplendent with chestnut sides. The resident Superb Lyrebirds and Pied Currawongs provided aural entertainment all weekend.

This Female Scarlet Robin puzzled us for a while – Juliana Ford



Rock Warbler – Rob Palazzi

A flock of over 400 Little Corellas visited our camp and surrounding paddocks. At least 17 Long-billed Corellas were interspersed with the Littles.

Fred van Gessel sought to record the Superb Lyrebirds singing along the base of the escarpment opposite the camp each morning. He noted at least 9 different species calls interwoven into one Lyrebirds song. Breakfast was eaten each morning to the melodious notes of 3 Lyrebirds around the camp area.

At night a Southern Boobook was calling and in the last hours before dawn a Powerful Owl was heard.

Overall a total of 64 species were seen and a further 7 heard over the extended 6 days that some members stayed.

Thanks to those involved in organising the camp, providing the facilities and initiating the camp fire. Also to the HBOC members attending for a social and enjoyable weekend. Very special thanks to the owners of ‘Wongalee’ for allowing HBOC members the privilege of camping there again.

Tom Kendall

New Members Day at Hunter Wetlands Centre 17 June 2018



New members day is held annually at the Hunter Wetlands Centre to welcome members who have joined our club in the last year. This year 14 new members attended with 21 current members who also enjoyed the day.

Despite the chilly weather and cold wind, the day was very successfully co-ordinated by our committee. Introductions were followed by a two-hour informative walk guided by Greg; with vegetation described, and the Wetlands explained by Paddy.

The walk was followed by a sausage sizzle lunch provided for the new members. At bird call it was found that we had seen a total of 51 species with a Black-shouldered Kite putting on an impressive display. Other birds seen were a single Pink-eared Duck and several hundred Grey Teal.

Staff from the Australian Geographic shop at Westfield Kotara were on hand to demonstrate some binoculars and scopes, a new range that they are now stocking in the Kotara shop. New members were able to borrow these for the walk to give them a good trial.

Judi Thomas

Tuesday 3rd July at Earthcare Park



The HBOC July Tuesday outing was held at Earthcare Park in Tenambit with 56 species, followed by a visit to Ray Lawler Park in Morpeth with 54 species. The outing was well attended with 25 keen birders and with some new members present.

The number of birds for midwinter was impressive and the growth in the trees and understory at Earthcare Park seems to be making a difference to the number of smaller birds attracted to the site. Flocks of White-naped Honeyeaters and Silvereyes were still present and were actively feeding on the flowering paperbarks. An old tree full of hollows had attracted Scaly-breasted and Rainbow Lorikeets, Galahs, Long-billed Corella, Little Corella and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, the majority guarding or inspecting vacant hollows.



At Morpeth we found no less than eleven Nankeen Night Herons and a very co-operative and photogenic Azure Kingfisher. Altogether a lovely winter outing.

Text and Photos of Rainbow Lorikeets and Azure Kingfisher by Marg Clarke

Sunday 15th July at Tahlee



On Sunday 15 July, 13 intrepid souls braved the cold winter morning at Tahlee to wander the property in search of birds. The elusive Bush stone curlew was not to be found, however a bunch of birds were observed. As the group arrived a variety of birds from the parrot family greeted guests with some Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Little Corellas screeching, intermingled with Galahs and Lorikeets.

Along the foreshore were Cormorants in a hurry somewhere, cheered along by some Silver Gulls, an Australian Gull-billed Tern, and a pair of Pied Oystercatchers. Followed by a parade of Welcome Swallows – some 32 in all! Walking past the wetlands on the property we discovered an Azure Kingfisher, White-faced Heron and some Teal.

In the four hours the group walked around the property we were greeted with many bird songs as the day warmed up. Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote predominated. With intermittent calls from Eastern Whipbird, Eastern Spinebill, and White-throated Treecreeper. As the temperature warmed up, little birds appeared at all points around the walk and the list included a Rose Robin high in the treetops, Varied Sittellas, Thornbills, Red-browed Finches, Eastern Yellow Robins and Grey Fantails.

There was a brief pause for some morning tea in a open area of forest that was at the apex of several tracks and surrounded by some Fan-tailed Cuckoos, Golden Whistlers and a Grey Shrike-thrush. Back on the main part of the property the Magpies, Pied Butcherbird, Masked Lapwings, Wood Ducks, and Blue-faced Honeyeaters were present.

A Whistling Kite nest was of interest as the nest site was a previous nest for a couple of Osprey, and now belongs the new couple. The group was witness to some nest building activity. Lunch was back in the main auditorium – the old Greta Picture Theatre from a previous life. A nice warm cuppa a bite to eat and 64 species made up the count. The host went through a chart showing the progress of the surveys so far, with 175 species observed and over 200 surveys undertaken.

Photo and text above from Stuart Fleming

Future Club Activities: Camps

September 17-19 Mid-week camp at Old Bar

This camp will be held from Monday morning 17 to Wednesday 19 September at Old Bar. Accommodation is available at Lani's on the Beach (65537274). We plan to visit Saltwater National Park, Cattai Wetlands and Mudbishops Point. Further information is on HBOC website, or ring Robert and Margaret Stewart 4963 2029.

September Fri 28th to October Mon 1st long-weekend camp at Martindale Directions

This camp is at the private property, "The Ranch", via Martindale. To get there drive through Jerrys Plains on the Golden Highway, but instead of following the highway around a sharp right-hand bend (about 0.6 km past the service station) to go to Denman, go straight ahead for about 200 metres and then turn left onto Queen Street which becomes Jones Reserve Road within a kilometre. From here it is 29 km to the T intersection with Martindale Road where you should turn left. This road ends at the "The Ranch" gate after 20 kilometres. Make sure you close the gate and then follow HBOC signs to the camp site, a further 1.65 Km. There are a few dips but with care caravans should be OK. The fees for this camp will be \$5 per Adult per day. For further details contact me on 02 4952 3458 or 0427 483 663 Andrzej Karpie!

AUSTRALIAN WADER STUDIES GROUP SNIPE SURVEYS

Once again Hunter Birders are invited to help with the Australian Wader Studies Group Snipe survey directed by Dr Birgita Hansen. Peter Weinstock is co-ordinating the Hunter region surveys. Those of you who are interested in helping please contact Peter ceteris@bigpond.net.au giving him your preferred survey area. If you have not done this before and would like to volunteer, Peter can give you an area to survey. The survey would involve watching a specific area for about an hour and counting the number of Snipe seen.

Clicker's Corner

In this regular Newsletter section, we profile one of the Club photographers who use their skills to enhance the aims of the Club as a leisure-time activity; and to study and conserve Australian birds and their habitat. All photos and this article are by Margaret Clarke who is the club's Secretary.

Margaret Clarke



I can't remember a time when I wasn't interested in birds, and I was lucky to grow up on the Far North Coast of NSW, where birds abound. My siblings and I spent many blissful hours roaming around on the local farmlands and creek beds looking for birds.

In the early 1960s there were no cameras and field guides were only in the local library, so we relied on memory to identify birds. We took notes and drew pictures of what we could remember and looked the bird up in the school library. My brother, who later became an accountant, carefully logged them in a Bird Register. Sadly, that is now lost.

My first attempt at photography in the early 1970s ended in disaster as I had no idea about the settings and months later, when my first roll of film was developed not one image was worth keeping. After that expensive exercise I stuck to lists in note books. However, the interest in taking my own photographs was always lurking in the background.



Five years ago I bought my first DSLR, a Canon 650D and learnt, by trial and error to use it. We are all familiar with the huge benefits of digital photography, the instant gratification, the ability to take the images, preview them and delete the poor-quality ones straight-away, is just life changing. Nevertheless, I soon wanted better images and that meant a bigger lens, and so I now have a Canon 7D Mark II with a 100-400mm lens

and love it. A camera is now an essential part of my equipment, and I carry it with me every time I go out birdwatching. I use it for record shots, for identification and more often now just to get a better image than I currently have of a particular bird.

I always shoot in RAW and use Adobe Lightroom for post processing, which is simply adjusting things like the white balance and vibrance, nothing major. I have set myself the goal of obtaining the best photograph I can of every Australian bird and I have a long way to go. What is life without a challenge?

The technicalities of photography still escape me, but I am beginning to understand what works for me and have been experimenting with the concept of birds as art, rather than just a bird portrait or a "bird on a stick". Sometimes, not often, I manage to produce an image I am happy with!



Spotted Dove

Margaret Clarke

Recent Observations: Please report special observations

Hunterbirding is an email group set up by HBOC that is run through the Google Groups. It is a great way to keep in touch with the latest goings-on in Hunter Region birding. Members are able to report sightings, post questions to the group and get involved with group discussions on bird related issues. The home page of the Hunterbirding group is located at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/hunterbirding> Instructions for joining a Google Group to sign up for Hunterbirding to take part in these discussions and benefit from up-to-date birding news in the region, can be found at <https://support.google.com/groups/answer/1067205?hl=en> and follow the on-site instructions In addition to being a forum for interesting discussions on issues such as bird identification and behaviour it is also a great place to report your observations.

Bird records are obtained by the club through a variety of other means. Others are received through the BA atlas database, club outing sighting sheets, the club night observations forum and direct communications with the record officers. Of particular interest to the club are those records of regional significance, including sightings of the more unusual species, observations of breeding activity, early and late records of migratory birds and significantly large counts. A selection of records of this nature is provided below.

There has recently been a number of decisions handed down by the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) and NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) for 'rare birds' that were recorded in the Hunter during the latter half of 2017.

All of them were accepted and include:

BARC Case #985 - Ringed Plover, Stockton Beach (Worimi Conservation Lands) 25/08/2017

BARC Case #984 - Cook's Petrel off Port Stephens 12/11/2017

BARC Case #1001 – Aleutian Tern at Old Bar 2016//2017 multiple sightings

ORAC Case #676 - Oriental Plovers on Hexham Swamp, 26/09-02/10/2017

ORAC Case #679 - Little Curlews on Hexham Swamp, 29/09/2017

ORAC Case #680 - Soft-plumaged Petrel off Port Stephens 15/10/2017

ORAC Case #684 - Mottled Petrels off Port Stephens 12&13/11/2017

ORAC Case #685 - Little Shearwater off Port Stephens 12/11/2017

ORAC Case #687 - Common Gull-billed Tern, Stockton Sandspit Dec 2017-Feb 2018

ORAC Case #690 – Black-winged Petrel, off Crowdy Bay 19/01/20018



Ringed Plover – Ann Lindsey

Of these, the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel and Common Gull-billed Tern were new to the Hunter list. And of these, the Ringed Plover is certainly the most gripping! (congrats to Ann and Neil on that one).

BARC have also accepted the Aleutian Tern records from Old Bar, December 2016 and December 2017 to April 2018, as two separate records. This submission concerns the enigmatic discovery of Aleutian Tern(s) *Onychoprion aleuticus* at Farquhar Inlet, near the town of Old Bar, NSW on the 4th December 2016. The following year on December 11th 2017 four birds were rediscovered at the same locality and between then and the 8th April

2018 there were regular reports of up to 18 birds but maximum number of birds photographed together was 16. The birds were seen and photographed by many. Massive congratulations to Liam Murphy who not only made the "enigmatic discovery" (as BARC referred to it) but who also made an excellent submission to BARC detailing the find.

Observations from Hunterbirding:

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Zebra Finch	1	11/6/18	Hexham Swamp Railway	M. Kearns
Pink-eared Ducks	760	11/6/18	Hexham Swamp Railway	M. Kearns
Musk Lorikeet	40	12/6/18	Fingal Bay	R. McDonnell
Red-capped Plover	1	12/6/18	Ham's Beach/Caves Beach	H. Stevens
Emu	8	12/6/18	Durridgerie Rd, Turill	B. Watts & J. Jones

Singing Honeyeater	2	12/6/18	Durridgerie Rd, Turill	B. Watts & J. Jones
Pacific Gull	1	15/6/18	Nobbys Beach nth	R. Nicholas
Red-necked Avocet	1496	16/6/18	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey
Red-capped Plover	26	16/6/18	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey
Figbirds	2	16/6/18	Wingen	G. Newling
Pied Oystercatcher	2	17/6/18	Fennel Bay Bridge	C. Doyle
Grey-crowned Babbler	40	18/6/18	Abernathy	B. Laut
Cockatiel	6	19/6/18	Merriwa-Willow Tree Rd	B. Watts
Little Lorikeet	200	22/6/18	Nulkaba	B. Laut
White-fronted Tern	9	22/8/18	Green Point Reserve	J. Stone
Noisy Pitta	1	21/8/18	Green Point Reserve	J. Stone
Barn Owl	1	24/8/18	Bobs Farm	D. Hatfield
White-headed Pigeon	1	28/8/18	Elermore Vale,	S. McKay
Little Friarbirds	2+1Juv	28/6/18	Bureen Road	M. Roderick
Musk Lorikeet	100	28/6/18	Belmont North	B. Farley Ciezak
King Parrots	100+	29/6/18	Wollombi	D. Collins
Chestnut Teal	5	29/6/18	Wangi Point	D. Johnson
Pacific Baza	1	30/6/18	Newcastle University	N. Hayes
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	5/7/18	Aberglasslyn	P. Weinstock
Bassian Thrush	1	6/7/18	Green Point	J. Stone
Freckled Duck	23	7/7/18	Shortland Waters	Krishna
Riflebird (female)	1	7/7/18	Main Creek, Dungog	D. Stuart
Bassian Thrush	1	9/7/18	Galgabba	J. Adams
Brown Goshawk	2	9/7/18	Galgabba	J. Adams
Black Falcon	2	10/7/18	Creswell Upper Hunter	M. Roderick
Southern Boobook	1	11/7/18	Mount Hutton	R. McDonell
Sacred Kingfisher	5	11/7/18	Tomago	A. Stuart
Double-banded Plover	9	11/7/18	Hexham Swamp	A. Stuart
Red-kneed Dotterels	25	11/7/18	Hexham Swamp	A. Stuart
Fairy Prion	4	11/7/18	Boat Harbour	S. Fleming
Reef Egret	1	11/7/18	Boat Harbour	S. Fleming
White-fronted Chats	8	14/7/18	Ash Island Bellfrog Track	A. Stuart
Glossy Ibis	10	17/7/18	Leneghans	J. Thomas
Black Kite	9	17/7/18	Irrawang	B. Watts
Red-necked Stint	52	17/7/18	Old Bar	A. Stuart
Jacky Winter	1	17/7/18	Crowdy Head Lighthouse	A. Stuart
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	30	18/7/18	Wagtail Way Ash Island	G. Little
Swift Parrot	17	21/7/18	HEZ BQJ	M. Simpson
Regent Honeyeater	3	22/7/18	B Gardens Heatherbrae	B. Kinsey
Topknot Pigeon	200	23/7/18	Stockton	A. Lindsey
Regent Honeyeater	6 (1 banded)	27/7/18	Botanic Gardens	HBOC members
Pacific Baza	2	29/7/18	Pambelong	R. Burton
Spotted Crake	1	30/7/18	Whistler Pde	R. McDonell
Red-kneed Dotterel	86	2/8/18	Whistler Pde	T. Kendall
Pallid Cuckoo	1	3/8/18	Main Creek, Dungog	D. Stuart

Club Activities August To September

AUGUST 2018			
Wed 8 th Aug	Club Meeting –	7.00pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Emily Mowat 1 year on Macquarie Island Bird of the Evening: Rob Kyte
Sat 11 th Aug	Hunter Wader Survey HT- 8.08am, 1.53m	8.00am Ash Island and Tomago 8.30am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Dan Williams 0408 023 262 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 0409 848 390 – Tomago Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 - Hexham
Sun 19 th Aug	Field outing: Quorrobolong	7:00 Cnr Heaton Road and Sandy Creek Road	Mick Roderick 0421 761237
Tue 21 st Aug	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Please ring to confirm
SEPTEMBER 2018			
Sat 1 st - Sun 2 nd Sept	BIGnet meeting	Hunter Wetlands Centre	Marg Clarke 0412 616030, secretary@hboc.org.au
Tue 4 th Sep	Mid-Week Outing – 8.00am Worimi Lands Stockton	Meet – 8.00am, end of Vardon Rd, Stockton	Rob McDonnell 49 624258
Wed 5 th Sep	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	President – Robert Stewart All members welcome
Sat 8 th Sep	Hunter Wader Survey HT- 7.01am, 1.50m	7.00am Ash Island and Tomago 7.30am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Dan Williams 0408 023 262 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 0409 848 390 – Tomago Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 - Hexham
Wed 12 th Sep	Club Meeting	7.00pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Alan Stuart – Birds of Sri Lanka Bird of Evening: Bruce Hosken
Sat 15 th Sep	Australian Wader Studies Group Snipe Survey	Each volunteers survey location	Peter Weinstock 0417 415 738
Sun 16 th Sep	Field Outing: Mangoola Mine	Meet 8am Mangoola Mine site office	Lucas Grenadier 0427 213 796
Mon 17 th – Wed 19 th Sep	Mid-Week Camp – Old bar	Meet – Lanis on the Beach Caravan Park	Robert & Margaret Stewart 4963 2029 or 0401 283 305



Bird & Nature Photography Tours

Amazing Destinations!

- *South Africa-Kruger Safari.
- *Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine.
- *Cairns, Daintree, Atherton.
- *Flinders Ranges & Gluepot.
- *Hunter Valley.
- *Riverwood Downs Weekends.

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