



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
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Bignet Report April 2018

Hunter Bird Observers Club has two objectives:

- To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat
- To encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity

Between September 2017 and March, 2018 these objectives were furthered through:

Conservation Efforts

- Club member, Tom Clarke, continued to organise clearing mangroves from the Hunter Estuary to provide improved habitat for the threatened Eastern Curlew, drawing on a \$20,000 grant from the Threatened Species Recovery Fund. In addition the club has raised an additional \$1,109 through club night raffles to support this project.
- We made a submission to the Land and Environment Court in opposition to revived plans for an extension to a marina at Soldiers Point, risking critical habitat for breeding Beach Stone-curlews. The proposal for the extension was rejected by the LEC.
- The first recorded breeding of Black-necked Stork in the Hunter was reported in 2017 and indications are that the same pair is again nesting at the same general site.
- Conservation efforts never cease and we are currently campaigning to have an infestation of Water Hyacinth eradicated from Newcastle Wetland Reserve, an annual nesting site for Australasian Darter and various species of cormorants.

Monitoring and Data Surveys.

- Two expeditions to Broughton Island off Port Stephens continued monitoring and banding of terrestrial birds; the project is in its sixth year and is done in collaboration with the local National Parks and Wildlife Service office.
- This year the club achieved 15 years of boat-based surveys of Port Stephens waterbirds, and then celebrated the occasion with a very enjoyable party.
- Our monthly surveys of Hunter Estuary waterbirds continued. Next year will mark the 20th year of these surveys.
- Following our Birddata workshop in 2017, an increasing number of club members are reporting their sightings in Birddata and using their Birddata summaries to communicate with other club members. Most of this communication occurs through our Google group, *hunterbirding*, with up to 11 surveys or sightings reported each day, especially at weekends. HBOC now has three shared sites on Birddata (in addition to all the Shorebirds 2020 sites).
- In late 2017 we published our 2016 Annual Bird report. For that Report we receive a complete set of data for the Hunter Region from the BLA Atlas project database. From this data we have been able to generate distribution maps for most species and accurate timelines for migratory species. Thanks especially to Dan Williams, Alan Stuart and others our Annual Bird Report is a high quality document that is a valuable reference for our members and has reinforced the position of our club as one of the major environmental groups in the Hunter.

- We also published the 11th edition of our annual journal, *The Whistler* with 9 peer-reviewed articles ranging from a short article on *Co-operative Feeding among Juvenile Australasian Figbirds* through to long-term studies, such as *Birds of Forest Road, Duns Creek, 2008 to 2014*.
- Club members have also participated in Australasian Bittern surveys, Latham Snipe surveys and of course the National Twitchathon.

Activities

Since last report the club has organised twelve outings, both weekend and mid-week and three camps with another one scheduled for Easter at Borah TSR. On our March Sunday outing to Hunter Wetlands and Estuary we hosted a group of Tamworth birdwatchers who were visiting the Hunter Region.

Education, Media and Promotion.

HBOC continued to raise awareness of birds and the importance of their contribution throughout the whole Hunter Region. Some highlights were;

- We Participated in a Biodiversity Day organised by the Office of Environment and Heritage near Minmi on September 28, 2017
- We mounted a display at Wallsend Library in Newcastle City
- We have developed important relationships with Maitland and Cessnock City Councils and the Martindale community in the Upper Hunter
- We participated in the Bird Fair in Sydney and appreciated having the opportunity to meet with members of other clubs and listen to some quality talks.
- We co-operated with Conservation Volunteers Australia in a 'Good-bye to Shorebirds Eastern Curlew' event involving students from Hunter River High School.
- HBOC members continue to contribute to the promotion of birds in the local media with interviews with ABC local radio, and community radio, the Newcastle Herald and a regular column in the Maitland Mercury, as well as speaking to local community groups throughout our region.

Organisational Matters

HBOC has continued to monitor and where possible gradually improve its operating procedures for the benefit of all members. At present we are working together to develop an approach to the use of call playback at club outings and refining our Working with Children's Policy.

Membership stood at 353 in December, 2017

For more detailed information refer to the club's web site at www.hboc.org.au

Robert Stewart
President