



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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Hunter Bird Observers Club 2017 Annual Report

Introduction

The 2017 Annual Report of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was presented to members at the Annual General Meeting on the 14th February 2018. It is available via the club website at www.hboc.org.au. This Annual Report consists of an overview of 2017 in the main body of the report along with detailed reports from appropriate coordinators attached as appendices.

1. Management & Administration

This section of HBOC includes management and administrative areas that facilitate all aspects of Club operations through its committee structure and other appointed positions.

The Annual Financial Report for 2017, printed and presented separately, forms part of this section of the Annual Report. Once again, a dedicated management committee (and other supportive members) met monthly to discuss management matters relevant to the running of HBOC. Although it can be easy to underestimate the workload the committee and supporting roles deal with, there was a very diverse range of issues and responsibilities handled by the committee again in 2017. The committee and other contributing members are greatly thanked for their support and inputs throughout the year.

Throughout 2017 HBOC continued to be a well-respected organisation within the broader community; working closely with both private and public entities. The promotion and undertaking of cooperative efforts is an important aspect of the role of Club management and that of the membership in general. The club's affiliation with BirdLife Australia continued to enhance HBOC's collaboration on various endeavours successfully again throughout 2017. The benefits of these collaborations are evident in virtually every aspect of the Club and we acknowledge the contributions of collaborative organisations and those members who have been involved in building strong relationships with other organisations in the promotion and protection of Birds in the Hunter. The Club has rightly deserved an upstanding and highly respected position as one of the peak environmental organisations in the Hunter. The members are once again to be congratulated for consolidating this reputation and the committee gratefully recognises the vast amount of volunteer effort that goes into helping the Club function.

Constitution

New legislation for incorporated bodies in regard to constitution structure and content has been introduced during 2017 and HBOC's constitution has had to be amended. The HBOC Management Committee updated the previous constitution to comply with the new protocols, which was accomplished with a considerable amount of background work by our Secretary Margaret Clarke and Treasurer Bob Stewart.

2. Membership

Administrative, personnel matters and services related to the membership.

Membership Secretary: Rob Kyte, our Membership Secretary, continues to introduce initiatives to diversify the membership and increase our supporter base. A diversity of initiatives, including discounts at retail outlets, were enjoyed again by the membership throughout 2017. The Membership Secretary working in collaboration with the Treasurer (Bob Stewart) has produced a comprehensive and regularly updated database of the club membership which facilitates reliable communication with club members.

Club Membership: HBOC has seen a continued growth in membership numbers with 68 new memberships in 2017 (18 family, 32 single).

As of 31 December 2017 there were 357 financial members of HBOC an increase of 12 from 31 December 2016. (NOTE family memberships are counted as two members). There were 41 memberships from 2016 not renewed in 2017 (12 family, 29 single).

Library: The extensive library continues to be well used by members each Club Night. The thorough stock-take of the library as carried out during 2016, together with the adding of an updated computerised list on the website have facilitated greater accessibility and accounting of the Club's media resources. Printed lists remain available in author, title and subject order. As of 2017 the library comprises more than 450 books, 66 reports and issues from journals related to Australian birding.

The audio visual library includes 36 audio CD's, six CD-Rom and six DVDs.

Digital Photo Library (Bird Image Library): The digital library saw important changes through 2017, built on the careful maintenance of its files by John Cockerell and contributions by Jim Smart. The role of overseeing the digital library was taken up by Rob Palazzi during 2017 and the name of the library was updated to the Bird Image Library - BIL). Important changes to the running of the BIL were adopted during 2017. The HBOC's diligence in providing safe and secure usage of contributor's photographs for bird promotion and conservation saw the establishing of a set of usage protocols and clear guidelines for photographers who would like to contribute to this growing resource. An important new component of BIL's usability was the developing of internet accessibility of low resolution images of the BIL's photos developed by the HBOC Management Committee in conjunction with technical expertise from Alwyn Simple. These new BIL access and security initiatives would not have been possible without the tireless work of the HBOC's Secretary, Margaret Clarke. Currently the BIL includes 3,400 images a number of which will not be viewable on the internet at the request of photographers. Some 806 photographs are yet to be added to the BIL with more likely to be added after that. There are still many species that could benefit from additional images and most would benefit from images exhibiting additional age or alternate plumage phases. With internet viewing available the library is much easier to access and local birds will benefit greatly as their images are utilised to promote bird conservation locally and further afield in initiatives for our birds.

The Hunter 300, 350 and 400 Club: has been a fun and self-challenging component of the Club in the past where keen birders who have seen more than 300 species in the Hunter Region publish their tallies on the website (though only following peer review for those with more than 350 species on their list). Of note was an extraordinary number of birds added to the lists of keen birders during 2017, with at least one member recording 10 new species beyond their 400 total. There is an ever-growing group of keen birders looking to find those elusive few birds to take them to the next milestone and although the list of birds recorded in the Hunter appears to be close to its limit, the region continues to attract rare bird species. 2018 may just be the year for folk at all birding levels to add new Hunter observed species to their lists while they continue to enjoy the abundant bird life the Hunter is home to.

2017 saw the introduction of milestone badges for the numbers of birds photographed in the Hunter Region; with 200, 250 and 300 badges to aim for. It is very likely that there are many folk among us who have already surpassed one of those milestones from their photographic efforts over the years, so perhaps it's time to go through the archives with a list beside you? A 400 badge may be in the offering in the future as a number of locals are approaching this milestone.

E-mail Service: The e-mail service has again continued to play a vital role in Club communications. This efficient means of distributing important messages and other interesting information keeps members informed, especially between Newsletters. It also provides an important link to those who receive their Newsletter electronically. Thanks again go to Alan Stuart for his long-term maintenance of this service to the membership.

Electronic social media has become an increasingly popular means for birders to share and catch-up on what is occurring locally in regard to the Hunter's birds. This is reflected in the growing numbers of people joining the HBOC Facebook page. During 2017 the numbers following the HBOC page increased by 150 from 374 to 524

'Hunterbirding': This online forum for sharing (predominantly local) bird information, reporting sightings and for general discussion continued to grow in interest during 2017. Hunterbirding has become firmly established as the important go-to place where local issues, such as identification and interesting sightings are first fielded to the wider Hunter birding community. Members are encouraged to join the forum, either with a view to read posts or to contribute to discussions. Contributors to identification threads are encouraged to explain why they arrived at an identification, to add to the educational benefit of this chat group resource. Additionally, an archive of all emails sent to Hunterbirding exists, thus allowing cross-referencing to previous discussions on all topics.

The Club once again recognises the efforts of the Hunterbirding moderator (Dan Williams) and also thanks all contributors that make Hunterbirding happen and interesting.

New Members Day: 2017 was a success with a number of existing and new members enjoying the birding at the Hunter Wetlands Centre.

3. Activities

Includes planning, organisation and participation in the leisure-based birdwatching and social activities of the Club.

Outings: HBOC implemented a successful program of outings during 2017, including the monthly Sunday and midweek outings, camps and other events, primarily focussing on the recreational needs of members.

Monthly Sunday outings: Monthly outings, eleven (11) in all, covered a range of locations and habitats, with attendances varying in association with either the location of the outing, other activities happening at the time or, in some instances, the weather. The annual 'New Members Day' occurred again in June and was (as always) a popular day and great way for the established membership to make new members feel welcome.

Long weekend camps: Three (3) successful camps were held in 2017. Bird list totals at the camps varied according to the season and the numbers of members present. The June long weekend at Sandy Hollow and the October long weekend camps at Windy Station were notable, particularly Windy which appeared to benefit with the influx of more westerly species present in the west of the region during the spring of 2017.

From the dedicated team who support and organise the camps a big thank you goes to that indefatigable group of hardy camp goers that turn up despite the weather conditions, including the very wet and the cold. The camps would not be possible or nearly as enjoyable if it were not for those volunteers who organise the camps and/or lend their expertise and local knowledge to enhance the experience of other camp goers. The camps remain a great way to get out into natural surroundings and bird habitats with like-minded people.

A big thank you again also goes to those that share their images and writing skills to share camp experiences with the wider club through reports in HBOC Newsletters throughout the year.

Mid-week outings and camps: Nine (9) mid-week outings were held in 2017. Generally attendances were very good, with a diverse range of habitats visited including Hexham Swamp, Tahlee in Port Stephens' north, Tocal, Kurri Woodlands, Walka Water Works and Dungog Common being visited.

Our camp at Murrurundi in spring was a great success.

The Mid-week outings, while relaxing and enjoyable, involved some serious field studies with all observations being entered on Birddata. Thanks to all those who contributed.

The *Annual Twitchathon* fundraising birdwatching event "went national" in 2017, with coordination happening by BirdLife Australia and several new rules and initiatives put in place. It is always a very popular event with HBOC members and several teams connected with HBOC took part in the various race categories in 2017. Again, the winning team from the Main Race went to a HBOC team; the Dodgy Drongo's, notching up a four-in-a-row of wins; both in the NSW Main Race and the National Event. Approximately \$3000 was raised by HBOC-related teams within a total of approximately \$17,000 in NSW. NSW funds raised in 2017 will go to the Bitterns in Rice project (a beneficiary that was put forward by BIGNet).

In addition to the leisure and social benefits enjoyed in the various activities by everyone involved, the above outings are also a not-to-be-underestimated source of observational data for the Hunter Region. All records from HBOC activities are routinely submitted to the BirdLife Australia Atlas and the highlights are reported at Club night meetings or via the Hunterbirding email chat group and used for the Annual Bird Report. Members are encouraged to do likewise with their individual sightings, particularly via the Birdlife Australia data portal and its easy access through the Birdata application designed for our phones.

To the many members, including the 2017 Club Activities Officers and those organising, coordinating and leading outings (Lorna Mee, Greg Little, Lene Parashou, Alan Stuart, Mick Roderick, Tom Clarke, David Stuart, Lucas Grenadier and Robert McDonald), and to all those attending; thank you for your involvement. The generosity of the landholders of private properties is also acknowledged.

4. Club Night

The monthly Club Night is one of the feature activities of HBOC.

Club Night meetings were held at the Hunter Wetlands Centre every month in 2017 except January, with healthy attendances throughout the year.

The Guest Speaker Program in 2017 gave us a travel blend from distant and local destinations; from locally with Shorebird Rehabilitation with Tom Clarke, Belmont Lagoon with Grahame Feletti, further afield in Australia with the Powerful Owl project through Beth Mott, introduced House Sparrows with Simon Griffith and Bitterns in Rice with Andrew Silcocks to international locations in South Africa with Keith Eastwood and Argentina birding with Dick Jenkin and then specialised studies on Silvereye/Honeyeater migration with Harry Battam, Common Mynas with Francoise Lermite and Seabird by-catch mitigation with Yuna Kim.

We ended 2017 with our very popular and well attended December meeting.

Bird of the Evening is a short, 5-10 minute piece, sometimes longer by arrangement, that usually precedes the main speaker at Club nights. All members are encouraged to present a Bird of the Evening segment in any format; be it pictures, poetry, powerpoint or prose.

The *Observations* section of meetings is a good opportunity for people to share their local sightings and contribute to the knowledge-base of our birds.

Many thanks to all of the people that chip in to ensure that Club Nights happen smoothly – it is a great team effort every month.

5. Newsletter

HBOC's regular newsletter communicates Club news, the events calendar, interesting sightings, Club outing and other reports and birding articles of general interest, to members, selected birding organisations and the public, either directly or via the HBOC web site.

The Newsletter continues to be a quality publication and an important means of communication, which links members within the Club through its news reports, and other birding articles. There is always a good supply of articles and photographs submitted to the editor ensuring a high quality and sizeable Newsletter. The many members who contribute articles and photographs to the Newsletter are thanked for their interest, time and effort. Thanks go to editor Dan Williams, completing his second full year in this important role, and to the printing and distribution team (Robert and Margaret Stewart) for providing such an important service to the Club. We welcome Judith Thomas as the new Newsletter editor for 2018, who has overseen the latest Newsletter the HBOC Membership will have received recently in their mailboxes, whether electronic or through the postal service.

6. Special Interest Group

At present, this section offers the opportunity for members with a special interest in bird photography to develop their bird watching and photographic knowledge / skills while promoting birds and the environment.

A “Phototwitch” competition was held throughout a week in May whereby competitors attempted to photograph the most number of species within a specified timeframe. Thanks go to Robert McDonald for organising these fun events.

7. Conservation

This section is primarily concerned with issues relevant to the protection of birds and their habitat in the Hunter Region and beyond. It helps link the areas of HBOC endeavour and the community through its collaborative partnerships, networking and advocacy.

There are now more than 90 species or subspecies of birds in the Hunter Region that are listed as threatened under either State or Commonwealth threatened species legislation. Further, those habitats that provide home for a diversity of currently non-threatened bird species are also under threat; thus the conservation arm of the Club remains vitally important. Fortunately in 2017, no new species were added to any threatened species legislation, with the only change being Antipodean Albatross being ‘elevated’ from Vulnerable to Endangered under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

2017 saw the NSW “Biodiversity Conservation Act” associated regulations come into force and at the time of writing it still remains to be seen how this legislation will affect the Hunter’s threatened biodiversity. Other policy that HBOC wrote to the government on included the ongoing issue of the management and ownership of ecologically significant Travelling Stock Reserves (June 2017).

In terms of local conservation issues, HBOC was involved in making submissions and/or having representation on projects including, but not limited to:

- Mambo Wetlands, Port Stephens
- Soldiers Point Marina, Port Stephens;
- Wilpinjong Mine Extension, Upper Hunter
- Little Tern breeding at Winda Woppa, northern shore of Port Stephens
- Newcastle Wetlands Reserve / Shortland Waters Golf Club (Water Hyacinth issue)
- Richmond Vale Rail Corridor Project, Shortland to Kurri Kurri

In good news, it was a positive year for two of the Region’s critically endangered breeding species; Regent Honeyeater and Beach Stone-curlew. A second pair of Beach Stone-curlews was found on Corrie Island during 2017 and a nest with egg discovered during early summer although the final outcome for that is unknown. Regent Honeyeaters were found in good numbers in the Cessnock area from May until late August (40+ birds) and again nested in the Upper Hunter in the vicinity of the Goulburn River National Park.

HBOC also continued to manage migratory shorebird habitat in the Hunter Estuary (see ‘Projects’) and provide advice on the management of the dynamics that make the estuary such an important place for shorebirds. HBOC members were involved with several strategic planning workshops, including the hydrological management of the estuary and continued to advise the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) on their habitat restoration of Fish Fry Flats on Ash Island.

8. Field Studies, Data Management and Records Appraisal

This section of HBOC addresses collection of data, monitoring of bird populations and maintenance / appraisal of records which underpin the HBOC research and conservation effort while at the same time making a worthwhile contribution to members’ leisure-based bird watching.

Field Studies programs organised by HBOC and those conducted by individual Club members continued at about the same levels of activity which were reported for 2016.

The Broughton Island bird study project entered a new phase in 2017, when the banding of terrestrial birds on the island commenced. Ongoing quarterly visits are now happening, involving a mixture of banding activities and survey work. The project is well positioned for identifying bird population changes in response to the removal of feral animals from the island.

The Club's work in surveying the Barrington Tops and Gloucester Tops IBA is focussed on checking the vocalisations of the more readily accessible Rufous Scrub-bird territories in relation to the dry climatic condition experienced throughout the region in 2017. Although no club surveys for scrub-birds were conducted in 2017, Alan Stuart continued to monitor the population.

The monthly surveys of the Hunter Estuary continued, including simultaneously at the newer tidal wetland sites at Tomago Wetlands and Hexham Swamp.

In 2016, several members started to monitor the waterbirds at their local/favourite wetlands. This initiative continued in 2017, with Toronto Wetlands added to the list of sites this year. Many of the sites are important second-tier wetlands in the region, sometimes hosting sizeable populations of waterbirds and some having breeding colonies of cormorants etc. This led to several new tables in the 2016 bird report.

Once again during the year we received a complete data set of Hunter Region records from BirdLife Australia, which has been used to inform our annual bird report analyses as well as analyses of individual species (e.g. in publications such as *The Whistler* and species distributions in the ABR). An increasing number of our members are using BirdLife Australia's new Birddata portal which has made data entry and data extraction so much easier, and enhancements to it keep on coming. There was a record number of Birddata surveys submitted for the Hunter Region in 2017 (approximately 3,500 surveys). The new Birddata portal was the focus of a very well attended workshop which the club ran in May, and this no doubt helped kick-start many people in its use

A GIS-based method for showing species distribution maps based on Atlas data was refined further in 2017 and a method for showing timelines for migratory species was also utilised again. The maps and timelines were used in the 2016 bird report, which was published in late November 2017.

HBOC is indebted to the Field Study and Data Management coordinator, Alan Stuart, and to the many members, who organise and participate in acquiring and reporting observational data, for their expertise, dedication, and persistence in the pursuit of knowledge and better environmental outcomes for Hunter Region birds. Alan Stuart is also the editor of the Annual Bird Report and his untiring commitment to this role is greatly appreciated and duly acknowledged as is the assistance he receives from Ann Lindsey, Dan Williams and Rob Kyte. The 2017 Annual Bird Report editing role currently being conducted by Alan will be his last, with Dan Williams taking on the role of editing the 2018 Annual Bird Report.

Records Appraisal: Records appraisal committees are an important part of modern birdwatching. As our knowledge of the status and distribution of birds increases, there is also a need to 'manage' the reliability of the information that contributes to that knowledge. This is done within HBOC by the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC). The RAC assigns categories to each bird species and decides whether records of Category 3 (and some Category 1 and 2) species can be accepted. For 2017, the RAC members were Mick Roderick (Records Appraisal Officer), Ann Lindsey, Dan Williams, Phil Hansbro, Dick Jenkin, Craig Anderson and

Allan Richardson. A comprehensive outline of the roles and responsibilities of the RAC was published in the February 2014 HBOC Newsletter and is available for download on the website.

In some cases, the rarity of a bird can be such that it needs to be assessed by a higher authority. There are 2 records committees that assess such species and when they are recorded in the Hunter Region, their review is deferred to them. For nationally rare birds, the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) is the authority, whilst for state-significant birds, the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) is the authority. Both committees maintain a review list of species required to be submitted when a sighting is claimed.

2017 was an extremely busy year for records appraisal, due to there having been quite a number of unusual sightings made during the year. The reasons for this were varied, but included an obvious influx of “western species” in early spring that coincided with some vagrant shorebirds that spent a short time here. There was also a number of rare seabirds observed on pelagic trips in 2017, including a migration of Mottled Petrels and other seabirds that occurred much closer to the coast than usual.

In 2017, a total of 8 cases were assessed or submitted to NSW ORAC; Red-footed Booby, Oriental Pratincole, Oriental Plover, Little Curlew, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Little Shearwater, Mottled Petrel and Common Gull-billed Tern. The first 3 of these have been accepted by ORAC, with the Oriental Pratincole representing a new species for the Hunter Region list. Remarkably, 3 more of these ORAC-assessed species (Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel and Common Gull-billed Tern) would also be new species for the Hunter Region list and are currently being assessed (as at February 2018). One submission to BARC was made (Cook’s Petrel) and is also being assessed at the time of writing. There will be one more submission made to BARC for a species observed during 2017 however, being the well-documented Aleutian Terns at Farquhar Inlet (Old Bar) found during December 2017 (though with evidence of their presence there in December 2016 as well). If accepted by BARC, which is very likely, this will represent a new species for the Australian list. Therefore, notwithstanding the assessments yet to be made by BARC and ORAC it is likely that 5 new species will be added to the Hunter Region list during 2017.

Additionally, around 40 other cases were reviewed by the HBOC RAC during 2017, many resulting from the ‘western influx’ in early spring, as well as 4 separate reports of Oriental Cuckoos in summer/autumn. A detailed account for each species assessed by the HBOC RAC, as well as cases reviewed by BARC and ORAC for birds seen in the Hunter Region, will be found in the Records Appraisal Committee Report for 2017 (which will appear as an appendix to the 2017 Annual Bird Report).

9. Projects

Comprises the “hands on” conservation projects that restore selected areas of bird habitat in the Hunter.

A comprehensive run-down of works undertaken as part of the Ash Island and Stockton Sandspit Habitat Restoration Projects is available in Appendix A.

10. The Whistler

HBOC’s research-based, occasional periodical of refereed papers and notes that places on record observational details and analysis of HBOC members’ field studies.

Whistler number 11 was issued in December 2017. The 11th volume, with an interesting selection of full length papers, includes papers documenting specific behavioural aspects of Hunter bird species, including breeding extension of Brahminy Kites, and nesting behaviours of Noisy Pittas, Little Terns and Australasian

Figbirds. There are a number longer-term studies on local bird habitat usage documenting bird diversity in the Tank Paddock section of the Lower Hunter Valley green Corridor, changing bird diversity dynamics on Broughton Island and birds of Forest Road Duns Creek. Grahame Feletti documents field observations of Brush Bronzewings in Belmont heathland habitats and Alan Stuart compares two ephemeral wetlands in the Lower Manning Valley. The number of new authors in this edition is encouraging for the editors, who remain committed to broadening the authorship of this important component of the Club.

Mike Newman, Harold Tarrant and Neil Fraser are editors of *The Whistler*, with Liz Crawford as the production manager and Rob Kyte the graphics designer. The other production and distribution personnel and of course the authors/referees, are congratulated and thanked for dedication to the demanding task of producing *The Whistler*.

11. Education & Promotion

To equip club members, the organisation and the broader community with the knowledge, skills and capacity to not only enhance the bird watching experience, but also to support the conservation of Hunter birdlife and its various habitats. This section includes avenues for members to champion birds, the environment and HBOC to the broader community.

In 2017 HBOC again anticipated raising the awareness of birds within the communities of the Hunter Region, which was successful through a number initiatives.

Total Field Days: We once again had a display stall at Total Field Days, inside the Hunter LLS marquee which they provide free of charge for community groups. There was a steady stream of visitors all three days and our birding routes again proved very popular. We'll be back there again in 2018.

Biodiversity Day: This event is organised by the Office of Environment and Heritage in conjunction with NPWS and held at the Blue Gum Hills Reserve in Minmi in late September. In 2017 the event was again a great success with a good number of people attending. HBOC held a stall alongside BirdLife Australia and both tents proved to be popular with attendees with the many educational activities being taken up by young and old.

Aussie Backyard Bird Count: This national week-long event, organised by BirdLife Australia, is aimed at getting broader participation in birding from the non-birding community. Events are held around the country and counts made by 'citizen scientists' and entered into a national database.

HBOC wishes to thank the many members who helped raise the profile of birds and enhance public environmental awareness in 2017. Special thanks also to the Club photographers whose work makes these displays possible and to Rob Kyte for his time and skills in preparing the stimulating and visually appealing posters.

Website: The HBOC website continues to be an indispensable interface between the Club and the rest of the world and again saw much activity during 2017. Our server provider capably delivered this last year under the watchful eye of our dedicated 'Webmaster' (Steve Merrett) who works tirelessly behind the scenes to not only enhance the security of the website, but to make improvements and facilitate updates as required. The efforts of Steve, Rob and Alan continue in keeping the website running and up-to-date, which is an ongoing task and crucial for the trouble free service it provides.

Facebook: As mentioned earlier the number of followers of HBOC's Facebook page has increased considerably by 150 during 2017. A number of interesting posts throughout the year elicited much interest in the page.

Publications: As previously mentioned, the Hunter Region Annual Bird Report No. 24 (2016) was published during 2017. No. 24 was once again a high quality publication, benefiting from many colour photographs and illustrations along with the remarkable amount of closely reviewed records and analysis. The production team, in particular Alan Stuart (still the sole editor after 23 years of 'service') and Rob Kyte (as Production Manager, producing a tremendous looking booklet), along with the contributing field observers are to be

congratulated for this well respected and treasured publication. From 2018, Dan Williams has taken over the editing of the Bird Reports, and Alan will take a well-earned rest after he finishes the 2017 Report.

During 2017 Hunter authors either authored or co-authored papers dealing with regional birds that have been published in periodicals such as *Australian Field Ornithology* and *Stilt*.

12. Acknowledgements

Once again I am very very grateful for the wonderful assistance I received during 2017; my second year as HBOC President. Work and family commitments have prevented me from being present on a continuous basis, and therefore I hope that in the reading of this Annual Report that it is obvious to you all, that the success of the club during 2017 could never be due to the endeavours of any one person, least of all one who might have an illustrious title; for there are many important contributors that only together have realised a successful HBOC in 2017. HBOC's success thought 2017 was not realised because birds are an enjoyable pastime to a group of outdoor minded people, although they are, but because birds need a voice that can be heard in the modern world from people who care about them. However, during 2017 HBOC was once again successful, as it always has been, because devoted people go to meetings and devise ways in which they can promote birds through the community and stand against loss of their habitat when necessary. There are too many individuals to mention for their contributions, so I express a sincere collective thanks to those who have helped keep the club operational and remaining strong, (including those that have assisted me personally along the way and stood in when work commitments have taken me away). I would however, like to give special thanks to the members of the Management Committee who have dependably steered the club's course throughout the year. Being President of HBOC throughout 2017 has been difficult in terms of time, but its on-going management would have been impossible without the assistance and seemingly untiring enthusiasm and commitment of Alan Stuart and other members of the Management Committee. Alan has enthusiastically stood in during those times when I haven't been able to perform my duties in person during 2017. As President, it has really become apparent to me, as it did in 2016, just how Alan with other dedicated HBOC members really do keep much of the 'thread' of HBOC bound together and I consider it appropriate to acknowledge that here.

Allan Richardson (HBOC President 2017) 14 February 2018