



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia



Records Appraisal Committee 2016 Report

Compiled by Mick Roderick

April 2017

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Below is a list of cases assessed by the Hunter Bird Observers Club Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) in 2016. A summary of each case is provided, along with selected photographs. A summary of cases relevant to the Hunter Region assessed by BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) or the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) in 2016 is also provided. Front Cover Image: Slender-billed Prion (Case #453), off Port Stephens 14/08/2016 (Allan Richardson)

List of Accepted Cases

441	Kermadec Petrel	Port Stephens pelagic	10 January 2016
442	Freckled Duck	Toronto Wetlands	31 January 2016
443	Black-eared Cuckoo	Giants Creek	1 February 2016
444	Greater Sand-Plover	Stockton Sandspit	6 February 2016
445	Red-tailed Tropicbird	Port Stephens pelagic	7 February 2016
446	Oriental Cuckoo	Walka Water Works	10 February 2016
447	Little Bittern	Cameron Park	22 March 2016
448	White Tern	Port Stephens pelagic	17 April 2016
449	Singing Honeyeater	Medhurst Bridge	14 May 2016
450	Buller's Albatross	Swansea pelagic	21 July 2016
451	Hooded Plover	Stockton Beach	22 July 2016
452	Buller's Albatross	Port Stephens pelagic	7 August 2016
453	Slender-billed Prion	Port Stephens pelagic	7 August 2016
454	Antarctic Prion	Port Stephens pelagic	7 August 2016
455	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Whitebridge	23 September 2016
456	Australian Pratincole	Hexham Swamp	16 September 2016
457	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Cape Hawke	4 October 2016
458	Pilotbird	Mount Coricudgy	3 October 2016
459	Grey Currawong	Mount Coricudgy	5 October 2016
460	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Harrington	14 September 2016
462	Buller's Albatross	Port Stephens pelagic	13 November 2016
463	Diamond Dove	Durrigere Road, via Ulan	6 December 2016

List of Unconfirmed Reports

The following cases were assessed by the RAC during 2016 but were not accepted by the protocol majority proportion of committee members.

427	White Tern	Seal Rocks	Mar 23, 2009
428	Masked Booby	Seal Rocks	Mar 23, 2009
429	Grey Currawong	Wollemi NP	May 20, 2010
430	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	Yarrawa Deviation	May 19, 2010

* Note that Case #461 was not assessed due to a lack of information available to the committee.

Case Summaries

Case 441: A pale phase **Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta* was seen and photographed near the continental shelf on the Port Stephens pelagic on the 10th January 2016. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 442: A single **Freckled Duck** *Stictonetta naevosa* was observed at Toronto Wetlands on the 31st January 2016. As this species was still a Category 3 bird at the time, conformation was requested and an Unusual Record Report Form (URRF) was submitted (and the record accepted unanimously). Freckled Duck has now been 'downgraded' to a Category 2 species in the Region. **Pam Durie**

Case 443: An adult **Black-eared Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx osculans* was found at a well-known birding location in Giants Creek on 1 February 2016. Although this species is a Category 2 bird in the Region, an URRF was submitted by the observer, detailing the sighting and providing accompanying photographs. Several observers visited the site in the ensuing days and found the bird easily. **Alan Stuart**

Case 444: Two **Greater Sand-Plovers** *Charadrius leschenaultii* were first seen and photographed at Stockton Sandspit on 6th February 2016. Several other observers subsequently visited the site and the birds were again found and photographs taken. Although no URRF was submitted, photographs were circulated amongst the committee and all but one member agreed that identification of the birds as Greater Sand-Plovers was correct. **Tony Bischoff**

Case 445: A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* was seen and photographed about 5 miles inside the continental shelf break on the Port Stephens pelagic on the 7th February 2016. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 446: This case pertains to an **Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus* that was present for a short period of time during February 2016 at Walka Water Works. The bird was found initially by observers doing the regular monthly bird surveys there, on the 10th February. The bird was quite distant and no photographs were taken. However, their description of the bird was unmistakably that of an Oriental Cuckoo and the bird was subsequently seen by several people over the course of the next few days. Remarkably, no photographs were able to be taken by any of those subsequent observers, due to the skittish nature of the bird. **Lorna Mee, Jim Smart, Rob Kyte, Marg Clarke**

Case 447: A recently fledged **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus dubius* was taken into care after being found in a backyard at Cameron Park on the 22nd March 2016. The bird was rehabilitated and was subsequently released back into the wild. Given that the bird had only recently fledged (evidenced by downy feathers still on the head) the committee was in agreement that this should constitute a breeding record as the bird would have fledged from very close to the site where it was found. This is the first confirmed breeding record for Little Bittern in the Region. **Mark Simpson**

Case 448: A **White Tern** *Gygis alba* was observed at close range by all observers on board the Port Stephens pelagic at the continental shelf on the 17th April 2016. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 449: A **Singing Honeyeater** *Gavicalis virescens* was photographed at Medhurst Bridge (Martindale Valley) on the 14th May 2016. The bird was subsequently found and photographed by other observers at the site. **Lene Parashou**

Case 450: An adult **Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche bulleri* was seen and photographed on the outward leg to the continental shelf off Swansea pelagic, 21st July 2016. **Allan Benson, Mick Roderick et al**

Case 451: A juvenile **Hooded Plover** *Thinornis cucullatus* was found at the northern end of Stockton Beach (Worimi Conservation Lands) near Birubi during a monthly survey on the 22nd July 2016. The bird was subsequently seen for a period of weeks after the initial observation. This represents an addition to the Hunter Region checklist, though some unsubstantiated historical claims from the Port Stephens area exist. **Ann Lindsey, Neil Fraser**

Case 452: Three individual **Buller's Albatrosses** *Thalassarche bulleri* were seen and photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic 7th August 2016. On the same day several **Slender-billed Prions** *Pachyptila belcheri* and **Antarctic Prions** *P. desolata* were present for the majority of time spent at the continental shelf (as well as numerous of the regular Fairy Prion *P. turtur*). The Slender-billed and Antarctic Prions represent Cases 453 & 454 respectively. **Mick Roderick et al**

Case 455: A dead **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* was found at a residence on Burwood Road, Whitebridge on the 23rd September 2016. **Ken Wells per Carol Wells, per Ann Lindsey**

Case 456: An **Australian Pratincole** *Stiltia isabella* was found on Hexham Swamp 16th September 2016. The bird was subsequently seen by several observers until the 25th September after which the bird was not seen again. **Ann Lindsey**

Case 457: A single **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* was reported from a fruiting fig tree at Cape Hawke (south of Forster) on 4th October 2016. The bird was keeping company with numerous other frugivorous birds including several Wompoo Fruit-Doves. At least one Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove was seen by subsequent visitors to the site during early October. **David Ongley**

Case 458: A total of eight **Pilotbirds** *Pycnoptilus floccosus* were observed and/or heard calling (some also photographed) between the 3rd and 5th October 2016 on and eastward of the summit of Mount Coricudgy in the extreme west of the Region. This species is considered to be resident in this part of the Region, though records are very few, perhaps due to the difficulty in accessing the area. **Allan Richardson**

Case 459: A total of four **Grey Currawongs** *Strepera versicolor* were observed near the summit of Mount Coricudgy on the 4th and 5th October 2016. More birds, including a pair at nest, were observed just outside the Region slightly to west of the mountain's summit. There are no breeding records of this species in the Hunter Region (or Valley) so this nest of interest as it is highly likely that they would nest inside the Hunter as well. These are the first confirmed Hunter records since 2009 and the first from Mount Coricudgy since September 2007, though as for the Pilotbird, the difficulty in accessing the site doubtless plays a role in the paucity of records. **Allan Richardson**

Case 460: Several members of Central Coast group of Birding NSW saw a group of five **Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves** *Ptilinopus regina* in the rainforest at Harrington on the 14th September 2016. **Graeme Catt, Alan Morris et al**

Case 462: A **Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche bulleri* was seen and photographed on the Port Stephens pelagic 13th November 2016. The bird had a broken left leg and it is possible that this is the same individual that has been observed on other Hunter pelagic trips. This is the first spring record for this species off the Hunter coast Mick Roderick *et al*

Case 463: A **Diamond Dove** *Geopelia cuneata* was observed at close range at a site along Durrigere Road, approximately 18km north-east of Ulan on 6th December 2016. The bird was 4km to the south of where a juvenile Diamond Dove was seen on the 3 April 2015 (in Durrigere State Conservation Area; HBOC RAC Case #420). This is just the 4th record for the Region. **Ian Benson**

Photographs

Case 441

Kermadec
Petrel, off Port
Stephens
10/01/2016

(Allan
Richardson)



Case 449

Little Bittern, Cameron Park 22/03/2016

(Mark Simpson)

Case 448

White Tern, off
Port Stephens
17/04/2016

(Tim Strong)



Case 449

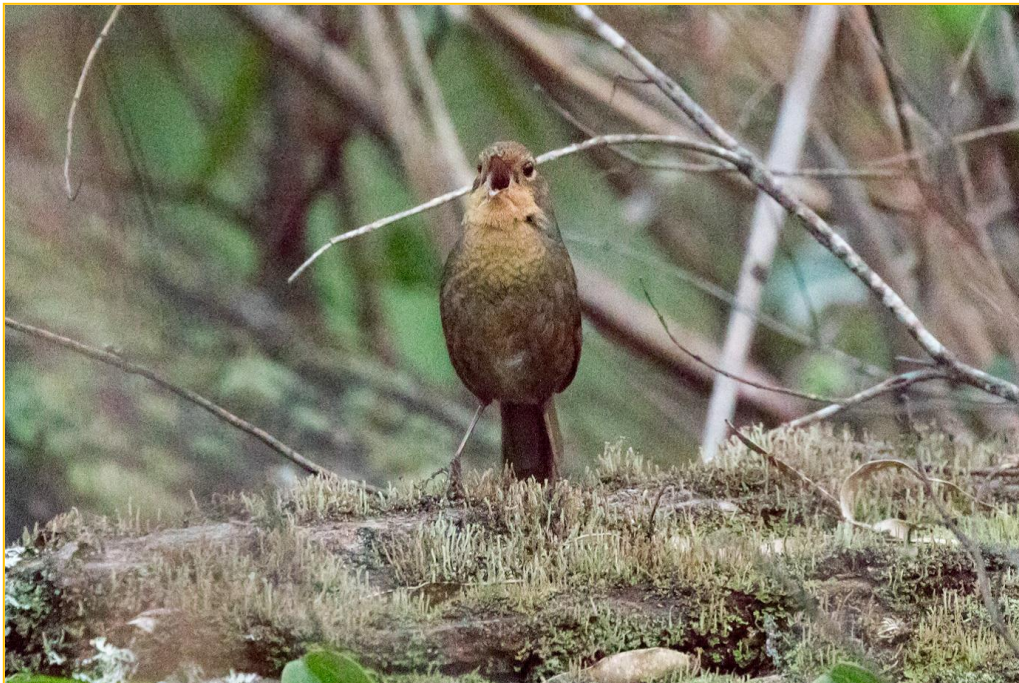
Singing
Honeyeater,
Medhurst
Bridge
14/05/2016

(Lene Parashou)



Case 451

Hooded Plover,
Worimi Conservation
Lands 18 August 2016
(Nick Livanos)



Case 458

Pilotbird,
Mount
Coricudgy
3/10/2016

(Allan
Richardson)



Case 459

Grey
Currawong,
Mount
Coricudgy
5/10/2016

(Allan
Richardson)



Case 463

Diamond Dove,
Durrigere
Road 6/12/2016

(Ian Benson)

Hunter Region Cases assessed by BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) or the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) in 2016

No cases relevant to the Hunter Region were assessed by the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) during 2016. The following case was assessed the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) during 2016:

NSW ORAC Case 652: An adult male **Red-backed Buttonquail** *Turnix maculosus* was seen and photographed at Tuncurry Racecourse on February 27, 2014 (the first confirmed sighting in NSW since January 2012, which was NSW ORAC Case 545).

Accepted. Submitted by Nick Thompson