



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Issue No. 5/18 September 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.



Several unusual sightings of Noisy Pittas were reported; the Glenrock Noisy Pitta prompted this sketch by Rachel Klyve

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

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President's Notes September 2018

This is the first of our trial of monthly newsletters. I don't plan to burden you with a long president's column every month but would like to add a few notes in the "off" month to bring you up to date with what might be happening.

On 1 and 2 September our club hosted a BIGnet meeting at The Wetlands Centre. Bignet is a Bird Interest Group Network at which representatives of bird groups throughout NSW get together to discuss common conservation and organisational issues, and our visitors seemed to appreciate what we organised for them. The credit for this goes to the organising committee of Margaret Clarke, Helen McCall and Mick Roderick.

On Saturday afternoon there were four talks by our own members, Neil Fraser, Alan Stuart and Mick Roderick and another by Andrea Griffin from the University of Newcastle. We are lucky to have members in our club who can put together such a quality program of talks. It was also gratifying to see so many of our own members willing to give up part of their weekend to support our presenters.

Their efforts were ably supplemented by a viewing of Lene Parashou's video of Hexham Swamp birds and Greg Little's guided walk at the Wetlands Centre. In one and a half hours our visitors were treated to the sighting of 67 species. They were in awe of the birding delights we have within easy reach of our city.

On a more sombre note many of our long-term members were saddened to hear of the passing of Leone Storm and they will remember fondly Leone and John's active participation in club camps over many years. Our sympathy goes out to husband, John, and daughter, Lynne.

Robert Stewart

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

Linda, Jason & Annabelle Lunnon (family) North Rothbury

Patrick McEvoy (s) Adamstown

Alissa, Helen, Amy, Clare & Keenan Rogers (family) Belmont North

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.

Contributions and Articles for Newsletter

Please send articles with a Hunter focus to the address at the foot of p.1 by the deadline date.

Four Stork Stories Continued from August newsletter

Third Stork Story Continued

Do you remember from the August newsletter that a young Black-necked Stork in very poor condition was captured on 19 May at Tomago and taken into care. It was released on Hexham Swamp on 25th July where it



Black-necked Stork in care, banded by Greg Clancy
Photo: Ann Lindsey

remained for a couple of days but it was not seen after 27th July. Then on 5th August at 10.40 am V. Stevens saw it on the ninth fairway on Horizons Golf Course, Salamander Bay. She confirmed that it had yellow and blue bands on its legs.

It next turned up in downtown Tea Gardens but there is some confusion about the date. HBOC member, J. Connors, saw pictures posted on Facebook –Tea Gardens community page on 4th August showing an immature stork with a yellow band on the right leg but the blue band is not visible in the picture. John contacted the photographer who said that the bird did have bands, but no further information was forthcoming. It was still there on 5th August but then disappeared. Over the next couple of days both Lois Wooding and John separately drove around the district looking for it, but to no avail. If it was seen in Tea Gardens on 4th August, then it flew there from Salamander Bay on that day. How lucky was V. Stevens' sighting at 10.40 am!!

This bird continues to hang around the Tea Gardens area as a picture taken on 25th August was again posted on Facebook – Tea Gardens community page. The bands are clearly visible. It was still present on 26th August. Keep you posted!

Fourth Stork Story Continued

You may recall that the Tomago pair successfully raised a chick in 2017. By February 2018 the adults were already refurbishing the nest and on 19th May before we went to Tomago Wetlands to do the waterbirds survey N.Fraser, L.Huxtable and I saw a well-developed chick bobbing around in the nest. This was just before we found the sick stork from Story Number 3 down on the Wetlands a bit later in the morning. I suspect that from the behaviour of the adults, the new chick was already in the nest on the 12th May. Several members, including L. Parashou, L.Huxtable and J. Thomas especially, sent me reports of their visits and I monitored the nest at least weekly. As time passed, Lene and I independently came to the conclusion that this chick was not nearly as active as the 2017 chick at the same approximate stage of development but then, we did not spend nearly as much time watching as in 2017. It was last seen in the nest on 11th August, 84 plus days old.



Young Stork on nest 4th August

Despite searching over the next couple of days, it was not seen again until B.Kinsey and I.Maynard saw it dodging traffic on Tomago Road near Tomago House on 5th September. It landed on the road and narrowly missed being hit by a car. On the morning of 8th September I found it roosting in a paddock near Tomago House. It looked well and healthy. If you go out to see it, please do not approach it as it is still dependent on its parents and should not under any circumstances be put to flight. It is a threatened species and listed as Endangered under the NSW Biodiversity Act.

Ann Lindsey

Baillon's Crake Arrivals



Black-shouldered Kite with captured Baillon's Crake photo taken in August this year by Mark Simpson. Right, one taken October last year at Hexham, showing identifying features. Alwyn Simple

A Baillon's Crake was seen at Hexham swamp on August 11 by Michael Kearns, a first report for some time. One was also photographed by Mark Simpson (see left), being taken by a Black-shouldered Kite. This would indicate that several birds have arrived at Hexham. I can't help but make comparisons to what unfolded last year and the fact that Baillon's Crakes (along with the cuckoos and songlarks) were a 'headline act' in the influx of species one would normally expect to see in numbers further inland.

Mark also kickstarted the Baillon's Crake observations last year when he found a bird at Pambalong on the 22nd August. There were then a trickle of records on Hexham Swamp, increasing as we headed into September. Baillon's were reported as well from several other sites and right up and down the east coast. I think the peak locally last year was on the 22nd September when Alex Berryman counted 23 Baillon's Crakes on Hexham Swamp, along with ~40 Spotted and 6 Spotless Crakes. This just preceded the Oriental Plovers, Australian Pratincole, Little Curlews etc.

These birds appear to be arriving earlier this year than last year. Perhaps they're bypassing their inland haunts because they know already how bad it is and are coming directly to the coast? **Mick Roderick**

Southern Whiteface sighting at Martindale

Southern Whiteface Cocoparra NP Photo: Rob Palazzi



While travelling from Denman to Martindale on August 23rd Alan Stuart reports that two Southern Whiteface flew across the road in front of the car. This was about 1km after turning onto the road to Martindale. The report stimulated discussion on Hunterbirding about the presence of Southern Whiteface in the Hunter. They have been infrequently reported in the Hunter so this is a bird to watch for, especially at the camp in Martindale in early October. Please report any sighting.

The photo at left was taken outside the Hunter but shows the short thick bill, pale iris and the outline of the lores and forehead. Southern Whiteface is an active bird and

may be seen foraging on the ground with other species, and occasionally on lower tree-trunks and branches and stumps.

SNIPE SURVEYS: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SATURDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER



Latham's Snipe. Peter Weinstock

The first reported sighting this season of a returned Latham's Snipe was 14th August. This Snipe was photographed by Peter Weinstock at Woodlands Estate.

Once again Hunter Birders are invited to help with the Australian Wader Studies Group Snipe survey directed by Dr Birgita Hansen. Peter is co-ordinating the Hunter region surveys. Those of you who are interested in helping please contact Peter ceteris@bigpond.net.au or phone 0417 415 738 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. There will be follow-up surveys on November 10, 2018 and January 12, 2019.

August HBOC Meeting

Our Bird of the Evening presentation was by Rob Kyte, who told us about a recent week-long visit to Albany to work with the Noisy Scrub-bird recovery project team. Rob had a couple of terrific videos to show. His visit to WA was aimed at improving our understandings of the local Rufous Scrub-birds.

Our guest speaker was Emily Mowat, telling us about the year she spent on Macquarie Island monitoring albatrosses and other seabirds. Her workplace was rugged and remote, and the work was challenging and sometimes potentially dangerous, but she was rewarded with many wonderful experiences with the four Albatross species that breed on the island. We were enthralled by Emily's stories and the photos she showed.



Both Light Mantel Sooty Albatross and Wandering-type Albatross breed on Macquarie Island. Mick Roderick

Mike Newman was up from Hobart for a visit and so the opportunity was taken to congratulate Mike on his election last year to Life Membership of HBOC. We also acknowledged the contributions by Mike and by Harold Tarrant as joint editors of The Whistler for the past decade. Both are stepping down from the role once issue #12 is finalised later this year.

Alan Stuart

Future Club Activities: Camps Old Bar September 17-19 Mid-week camp

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.

Martindale Camp September Fri 28th to Mon October 1st long-weekend 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. Remember to stay on the correct road as it veers left at the Martindale School. 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 Rowley Smith on 4964 1389 / 0417 802 005 or email rowleysmith51@gmail.com

Club Activity Reports Tuesday 7th August Black Hill, Lenaghans



Little Friarbird – Andrzej Karpziel

The highlight of the mid-week outing in August, was the sighting of two Little Friarbirds by Ted Elks, photographed by Andrzej Karpziel. During July many club members travelled individually or in groups out to Bureen to "twitch" the Little Friarbirds found there a few weeks ago by Mick Roderick. Now there is excitement because they have been sighted at Black Hill, much closer to home.

The outing at Black Hill was well attended and covered a remnant bushland reserve at Black Hill, followed by wetlands viewed on and from Andrea Parr's property. Thanks to Andrea for allowing us access. Twenty-one members attended and we found a total of 71 species: Rose Robins, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, a variety of raptors: Whistling Kite, Black Kites,

Grey Goshawk, Swamp Harrier, Wedge-tailed Eagle, and Nankeen Kestrel with young. The Nankeen Kestrels were sheltering in a shed from a very strong wind which blew up as we had morning tea.

The Black Hill property is on a ridge and has two reasonably sized dams. It also overlooks the swamp area, including Hexham Swamp. We used the club's new telescopes to observe the swamp where we found Black-winged Stilts and Avocets. At the moment it contains quite a lot of water. At times it is almost dry and in rare times it floods. The consequence at present is concentrated water birdlife in the area; with hundreds of Grey Teal, Black Ducks, and a few Chestnut Teal, Aussie Grebe, Hardheads and a Pied Cormorant. A refuge from the drought out west.



Little Friarbird – Andrzej Karpziel

Andrea also reported seeing the young Black-necked Stork (see p.3 report) on her property after it had been released at Hexham Swam.

Judi Thomas

<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=2052643&h=fa24f38a>

Sunday 19th August, 'Iomar' Quorrobolong

Twenty-one people braved the wintry weather conditions on the outing to 'Iomar', a private property at Quorrobolong. It was very windy (NW 20+ knots) and very cold, bordering on uncomfortable at times.



Photo. Andrzej Karpel

I gave a little spiel to the group about the history of the property and how it has been one of the most important patches for Regent Honeyeaters in recent times, qualifying it with a pretty solid assurance that we wouldn't likely see a Regent Honeyeater due to the lack of blossom in the area. I was very happily proven wrong when a Regent flew into a small dam that we staked out for some time. There were many honeyeaters coming down to drink/dunk but a real surprise was seeing the Regent land at the edge of the water. It did this twice and was not seen again. The only hint of blossom we noticed all morning was a small amount at the very top of a tall Blackbutt tree late in the morning (a long way from where the Regent was).

The day really belonged to the honeyeaters, with good numbers of the resident Yellow-tufted and Fuscous, along with lots of Yellow-faced and White-naped. Breeding has already been in full swing with Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters having a bird already out of the nest, chicks being fed in another, plus another nest that may have had eggs inside.

We also had fantastic views of an adult Square-tailed Kite that flew right over our heads barely a metre or two above the canopy. Two Bassian Thrushes were also seen. A full list is at the link below:

Mick Roderick

<http://birddata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=2132276&h=70732825>



*Square-tailed Kite (left) Regent Honeyeater (above)
Photos at 'Iomar' by Mick Roderick*

Postscript:

I returned to Quorrobolong at dawn on Tuesday 21st August and the first bird I heard as I got out of my car was a Regent Honeyeater! What a difference no wind makes! From what I gathered that morning there are at least 4 birds present, comprised of a lone bird on the power easement, a pair (maybe 3 birds) around some large Spotted Gums south of the easement and a bird at the dam that I saw soon after the pair. What is really interesting is there is effectively no blossom, as we saw on Sunday. I watched the birds intently and noticed they were feeding in the axils of the branchlets and leaf-stalks, taking small whitish items. I have concluded that this is 'manna', a sugary crystallised sap that is produced by some gum trees.

Mick Roderick

Tuesday 4th September Worimi Fern Bay, and SSS

This outing went ahead in the rain. Average attendance for these outings is around 25 but due to overnight rain and heavy early morning rain only 8 people arrived to start the day at the Vardon Road, Fern Bay entrance to the Worimi lands. Within half an hour we were experiencing more heavy rainfall. There was no eucalypt blossom. We saw 14 species, the highlight would have been White-cheeked Honeyeaters. Even though we all had good wet weather jackets and headgear we were wet so we returned to the cars and moved to Stockton Sandspit where we could shelter under the bridge.



Double-banded Plover at SSS– J. Thomas

The rain continued heavily so we decided to call it a day, didn't even have morning tea. Half of the group left and the other half just chatted. The rain stopped so we moved out onto the Stockton Sandspit area. It was low tide so there were not many waders but we amassed 30 species. The highlights for me were Double-banded Plover, Brahminy Kite and Red-capped Plover. There were other visitors; a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, a White-bellied Sea Eagle, some very vocal White-cheeked Honeyeaters, a few Brown Honeyeaters, lots of Pied Cormorants and a couple of Eastern Curlews on a distant sand bar.

An enjoyable day despite the conditions. Full list below at links to Birdata.

<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=2389106&h=8323428f>

<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=2389101&h=6c5b96f4>

Rob McDonell

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.

Observations mainly from Hunterbirding:

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
White-faced Storm Petrel	1	1/8/18	Swansea Pelagic	D. Jenkin
Common Gull-billed Tern	1	10/8/18	Worimi, Stockton	A. Lindsey
Whiskered Tern	1 Imm	11/8/18	Hexham Swamp Rail Easement	M. Kearns
White-fronted Tern	160	7/9/18	Newcastle Baths	R. Nicholas
Beach-stone Curlew	2	23/8/18	Soldiers Point	L. Wooding
Red-capped Plover	157	11/8/18	Tomago Wetlands	S. Cox
Latham's Snipe (1 st return)	1	14/8/18	Woodlands Estate	P. Weinstock
Latham's Snipe	3	14/8/18	East Seaham	T. Kendall
Latham's Snipe	1	31/8/18	Wallsend Swimming Pool Swamp	E. McKane
Freckled Duck	12	14/8/18	Louth Park	M. Clarke
Baillon's Crake	1	11/8/18	Hexham Swamp Rail Easement	M. Kearns

King Quail	2	15/8/18	Hexham Swamp	B. Watts & J. Jones
Painted Button-quail	3	18/8/18	Dungog	D. Jenkin
Peregrine Falcon	2	11/8/18	Hexham Swamp Rail Easement	M. Kearns
Eastern Osprey	2+1Y	30/8/18	Karuah	J. Connors
Little Eagle	1	10/8/18	Wingen Stock Route	G. Newling
Black Kite	6	11/8/18	Blackalls Park	R. Palazzi
Black Kite	19	18/8/18	Wingen area	G. Newling
Peregrine Falcon	1	6/9/18	Bar Beach (eating Rock Dove)	N. Hays
Powerful Owl	2+2	1/9/18	Green Point	T. Elks
White-headed Pigeon	1	23/8/18	Bar Beach	R. Nicholas
Common Bronzewing	3	10/8/18	Wingen Stock Route	G. Newling
Wompoo Fruit-Dove	2	13/8/18	John Tucker Park, Paterson	R. Stewart
Topknot Pigeon	5	30/8/18	Eleebana	A. Brennan
Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	5/8/18	Shortland	M. Roderick
Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	28/8/18	Wangi Point	D. Rushton
Noisy Pitta	1	3/8/18	Blackbutt	P. Lightfoot
Noisy Pitta	1	7/8/18	Glenrock Merewether	R. Klyve
Rockwarbler	2	20/8/18	Ulan, The Drip	A. Stuart
Speckled Warbler	3	10/8/18	Wingen Stock Route	G. Newling
Inland Thornbill	2	29/8/18	Windy Station	B. Watts, J. Jones
Southern Whiteface	2	23/8/18	Martindale Road	A. Stuart
Spotted Pardalote	2 + nest	6/9/18	Nest in tree Blackbutt reserve	P. Lightfoot
Regent Honeyeater	1	7/8/18	Quorrobolong	HBOC field trip
Regent Honeyeater	2	21/8/18	Botanic Gardens, Heatherbrae	R. Palazzi
Little Friarbird	2	7/8/18	Black Hill	T. Elks, A. Karpel
Green Catbird	1	2/9/18	Pambelong	C. Christoe
Spangled Drongo	1	18/8/18	Dungog	D. Jenkin
Hooded Robin	1	13/8/18	Medhurst Bridge	J. Stone
Rose Robin	2	6/9/18	Ash Island	N. Hays
Flame Robin	2	28/8/18	Gloucester Tops	A. Stuart
Crested Shrike-tit	1	13/8/18	Medhurst Bridge	J. Stone
Red-whiskered Bulbul	2	21/8/18	Boys Walk, Cooranbong	B. Watts & J. Jones
Rufous Songlark	1	16/08/18	Martindale	M Roderick
Brown Songlark	1	25/8/18	Hexham Swamp	L. Parashou
Brown Songlark	2	7/9/18	Ash Island	A. Stuart
Horsefield's Bushlark	1	29/8/18	Merriwa area	M. Roderick
Bassian Thrush	2 NB	21/8/18	Botanic Gardens, Heatherbrae	R. Palazzi

Club Activities September To October

SEPTEMBER 2018			
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	Snipe Survey	Each volunteer's survey location	Peter Weinstock 0417 415 738

Sun 16 th Sep	Field Outing: Mangoola Mine	Meet 8am Mangoola Mine site office. Numbers Limited	Lucas Grenadier 0427 213 796 MUST ring to confirm
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
Tue 18 th Sep	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Please ring to confirm Christine Cameron 49 319 388 or 0409 665 049
Mon 24 th – Wed 26 th Sep	Rufous Scrub-bird surveys	Meet – 11am Sharps Creek camp area, Gloucester Tops NP	Alan Stuart 0409 978171
Fri 28 th Sep – Mon 1 st Oct	October Long weekend camp - Martindale	Meet - Pauline Sykes property "The Ranch" \$5/adult/day	Rowley Smith 0417 802 005
OCTOBER 2018			
Tue 2 nd Oct	Midweek Outing – Bishops Bridge	Meet – 7.30am, 564 Wollombi Rd, Bishops Bridge	Christine Cameron 49 319 388 or 0409 665 049
Wed 3 rd Oct	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	President - All members welcome
Thu 4 th Oct	Biodiversity Day	Blue Gum Hills Regional Park 10:00am-3:00pm	Paul Baird 4938 5039 Greg Little 0414 562169 Mick Roderick 0421 761237 Robert McDonald 0408877827
Mon 8 th – Wed 10 th Oct	Martindale survey	Those interested ring Bruce after 30 th Sep	Bruce Watts – 0402 406332
Sat 13 th – Mon 15 th Oct (b'up 26-28 Oct)	Broughton Island bird banding	Nelson Bay NPWS TBA Fit only, numbers very limited: contact Alan for waiting list	Greg Little 0414 562169 Alan Stuart 0409 978 171
Wed 10 th Oct	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Akos Lumnitzer – raptor photography & the stories behind Bird of the Evening: Judy Little



Bird & Nature Photography Tours

Amazing Destinations!

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

Contact: Dick Jenkin 0407 267207

E: richardnjenkin@bigpond.com

W: www.jenkinphotography.com.au



Lachlan Fold Wildlife Action Group




RANKINS SPRINGS
BIRDING WEEKEND

FRI 28 SEPT. – SUN 30 SEPT.

- **FRI EVENING:** MEET & GREET PUB DINNER (Own Cost)
- **SAT MORNING:** EARLY MORNING TILL AFTERNOON BIRDING BUS TRIP TO LOCAL HOT SPOTS. INCLUDES MORNING TEA, LUNCH & AFTERNOON TEA/SNACKS
- **SAT EVENING:** BBQ - RANKINS SPRINGS HALL
- **SUN MORNING:** BIRDING BUS TRIP
- **ACCOMMODATION CHOICES**
 - * CAMPING/YOUR OWN VAN (POWERED & UNPOWERED SITES) AT THE CARAVAN PARK
 - * MOTEL
 - * LOCAL B&B & FARMSTAYS




FOR MORE INFORMATION / BOOKINGS REGARDING THIS FANTASTIC CENTRAL NSW BIRDING WEEKEND – PLEASE EMAIL HELEN AT:

lfwagroup@gmail.com