



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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Hillsborough Road upgrade

We thank Transport for NSW for the opportunity to provide feedback on this project.

As the project is still in the design stage we would like to make a suggestion in relation to wildlife corridors and connectivity between fragmented woodland areas.

With urban development accelerating in line with population growth urban woodland areas are increasingly being subdivided and fragmented. This limits transfer of species and therefore genetic diversity and genetic interchange between these remnant woodland areas.

Hillsborough Road dissects an area of woodland encompassing Charlestown Gold Club an area of conservation land to the South and some vestigial woodland on the Northern side.

Major roads have become barriers and confusion points for bird species during nomadic foraging and seasonal migration as well as limiting genetic interchange. Unfortunately with other than major highways little infrastructure has been put in place to facilitate movement of wildlife across arterial roads.

HBOC would like to suggest that as the Hillsborough Road upgrade dissects a remnant piece of urban woodland that consideration be given to the addition of a wildlife overpass.

Although most avifaunal species will (often with reluctance) cross major roads the smaller species such as scrub-wrens and fairy wrens are not only exposed to traffic (becoming road kill) but open to aggression or predation by urban species such as Butcherbirds, Kookaburras and Noisy Miners. With an estimated 35,000 motorists using this road each day relatively safe opportunities for wildlife to cross would be extremely limited, particularly for diurnal species.

The addition to this project of a vegetated overpass in the vicinity of the Crockett Street junction would give those smaller and more secretive species a safer point of access to the woodland opposite allowing increased foraging and gene-flow.

Whilst terrestrial mammals and reptiles would be the most frequent users research has shown that:

“although honeyeater and large forest insectivore guilds made extensive use of the wildlife overpass as a foraging resource and as a conduit between forest areas, the conservation value of wildlife

overpasses in relation to potential gene-flow lies mainly with the small insectivore species guild, predominantly with forest-dwelling species of lower bodyweight and with flight characteristics not well-suited to sustained direct flight” (Pell & Jones 2015)

We ask that serious consideration be given to the addition of a vegetated overpass to facilitate wildlife movement between the fragmented areas of woodland along Hillsborough Road.

Submission prepared by T. Kendall – Conservation Sub-committee -Hunter Bird Observers Club

5 August, 2021

About the Hunter Bird Observers Club

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was established in 1976 and currently has a membership of 400 members. Although the Club is based in Newcastle NSW membership includes members from other areas in NSW and from interstate. Approximately one third of the membership resides in the Lake Macquarie LGA.

Aims of HBOC

- *to encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat; and*
- *to encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity.*

Activities include monthly regular outings, evening meetings, camps and field studies. HBOC promotes systematic field studies which include regular surveys by volunteers from the membership.

All data gathered from field studies are entered into the national bird record database administered by BirdLife Australia; Birddata <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/> . Data are used to underpin conservation issues and HBOC promotes systematic surveys and data collection.

HBOC has a long history of working in collaboration with local councils, national parks and other state agencies, industry and schools.

For more information go to www.hboc.org.au

References :

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320715000609>

<https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/northern-nsw/port-macquarie-to-coffs-harbour/bonville-upgrade/bonville-cig-overpass-presentation.pdf>

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/wr07027>