



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
PO Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305
www.hboc.org.au
ABN 62 415 889 446

E-news

April/May 2020

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.

These are unusual times and your committee is working hard to keep members informed and connected.

COVID-19

Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, all of HBOC's group activities are cancelled until further notice.

While we are in self-isolation our committee has worked hard offering some at-home replacement activities, currently they offer the following:

- Kids Quiz. This 5 minute quiz is updated weekly, superseding the previous one. To access the quiz, click [here](#), type in HBOCQUIZ (in capitals) into 'Room Name' and then enter your 'name' when prompted.
- Also, we are an associate club of BirdLife Australia who have additional resources on their new [Birding at Home](#) page to find out how you and your household can continue to enjoy the beauty of our feathered friends. You'll find activities to occupy kids while our movements are restricted, links to their Autumn Birds in Backyards survey and Bird Finder, and information on how you can act to protect birds.
- The 2018 ABR has been published and distributed. If anyone hasn't got a copy yet they could email the Secretary, secretary@hboc.org.au.
- May is normally Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot survey time. These surveys have been "officially" cancelled by BirdLife Australia but people are welcome to look for them if they're out and about. Report any sightings of both species ANY TIME you see one.
- Even if you can't get out you can still look at some of the stunning photos taken by our members by browsing the club member photo galleries [here](#) or by joining Hunterbirding.

Vale Graeme O'Connor

In early April this year we lost an HBOC stalwart, Graeme O'Connor, after his lengthy battle with cancer. I can't exactly remember when I first met Graeme, but it must have been at an HBOC camp sometime in the mid-1980s. Graeme, initially with his son James and later with his wife Barbara, was a very keen camper, over the years bringing an array of different caravans to our many and far-flung camping spots. At those camps, Graeme would walk huge distances, always finding lots of interesting birds which he

would delightedly report during the bird call at the end of each day. Graeme was also a regular at the post-dinner sessions around the campfire, chuckling at other people's stories in that special way of his, and telling plenty of stories too.

Graeme was HBOC's Activities Officer for several years in the 1990s, and always was able to put together a program of visits to an interesting range of habitats and bird species. He also organised our first ever pelagic trip, from Port Stephens in 1992. That wasn't a hugely successful trip, in that we didn't get very far beyond Broughton Island and several people were seasick even before we'd passed the heads! However, we did see a couple of albatross species. Graeme then became a very keen and regular participant in the pelagics from Swansea which started in 2000, and later the trips from Nelson Bay.



Graeme out birding in Torres Strait

Graeme was a very active birder both within the Hunter Region and Australia-wide. His Hunter tally of 385 species seen is very impressive. I can recall a few times when Graeme would pull up on his way to or from his work shift at Tomago, to chase down a report of some vagrant species. Our last joint Hunter twitch was for the SIPO on Newcastle Bight in June 2019; we crossed paths along the beach, Graeme with a big grin as he was on his way back from finding the bird. Unfortunately, because of failing health, he was unable to try for the Roseate Tern at Old Bar this summer.

Graeme's Australian tally was in the high 600s. I was with him on a Torres Strait tour in 2006, when we both added ten or so species to our Australian lists, and I know that several others from HBOC did birding trips with Graeme over the years eg to Iron Range, Northern Territory, Bamaga/Cape York. He was great company.

Graeme's birding also had a serious side. For a while he was an active bird bander, working with others at sites around the Wetlands Centre on a study of wetland passerines. Later, he became a volunteer with the NPWS Gould's Petrel project on Cabbage Tree Island, making several visits to help monitor the status of the seabird population.

We'll all miss Graeme very much. In this time of the Covid-19 outbreak and community lockdown, it's so unfortunate that we weren't allowed to join together with Barbara and family to mourn Graeme's passing plus celebrate his contributions to the joy of birding. I hope that when normal life resumes, there can be a way found for us to do that.

Happy sky-birding Graeme.

Alan Stuart

Vale Margaret Woods.

During Ann Lindsey's presidency, Keith, Margaret and I decided to start up a midweek group. We thought once a month, on a Tuesday, starting early, 30 minutes or so distant from Newcastle would do the trick. With help from Ann the project got off to a rocky start. The first year or so, we were only four starters, Keith, Margaret, Paul Huolohan and I. After a year or so others came on board and so we got under way. Margaret was always there, always cheerful and, as others joined, always warmly welcoming. She was a first class communicator and a lively bright personality. Margaret and Keith regularly looked at some likely place during the month with a view to a visit from the "Tuesday mob". The Tuesday mob's first annual camp in September was Keith and Margaret's idea. Their family

connections in the Nowra area meant that they were familiar with the area so our first annual camp was to the south coast. Margaret and Keith sorted out the travelling, accommodation, everything to make it a success, and put together the program of daily doings. It was a welcome addition to HBOC's events and became an annual happening, still in place today.

Margaret was the same with her support for all HBOC activities, always willing and helpful with whatever needed doing and ready to help with the planning needed for happenings.

Max Blanch

New Members

Winifred & Garry Warner

Sophie Poole & Drew Garnett

Jessica Logan-Warner

Daniel Allen

Tricia, Christophe & Tiare Olaizola

Colin Nicholson

Valentine

Wangi Wangi

Leconfield

Argenton

Lambs Valley

Hawks Nest

Welcome. We look forward to seeing you at meetings and outings

eNews

Shorebirds Site Action Plan

An update of exciting plans for shorebirds in the Hunter Region. With government funding a 5 year project to improve conditions for migratory shorebirds has been planned. To read more about these plans and the way the planning was done in these challenging times. [Click Here](#)

Australasian Bitterns

In another initiative HBOC is working with Hunter Local Land Services to improve conditions for the endangered Australasian Bittern. The project uses pioneering work using a drone to track down birds. [Read More Here](#)

Update on Black-necked Stork "Yellow Blue"

We all remember the excitement when Black-necked Storks bred at Tomago Ann Lindsay updates us on their progress. Click [here](#).

Explore your Local Wetlands: 1. Warabrook and Rural Drive

Many members have been doing regular surveys of small local wetlands over many years. The figures for these are no longer listed separately in our Annual Bird Report. For those wetland areas available to the public and not included in our Birding Route brochures, we begin a series of articles about small local wetlands that you might like to visit. They describe the locality and species likely to be seen there. We start with Rob McDonnell's surveys at Warabrook and Rural Drive. [Read More](#)

Belmont State Park Field Outing

THE February Outing was to Belmont Wetlands led by Grahame Feletti

[Read More](#)

Jerusalem Creek Field Outing

Our other February outing was to Jerusalem Creek led by local, David Stuart. We thank Dave n and Marion for their hospitality at their property.

[Read More](#)

Penta Puzzles

Those of you with access to Hunterbirding will be familiar with Alan Stuart's Penta Puzzles. You can find three of his early efforts [here](#).

What's in a Meme

The word, 'meme', has a complex range of meanings but in the internet age it refers to something like an illustration, picture or video that has been changed to give a message in an amusing or witty way and that is transmitted from person to person often through social media. Stephanie Owen has created a meme based on one of her bird photos.

[View it here](#) then perhaps try one of your own.

Your Observations

February 2020

Species	Count	Date	Location	Observer
Little Penguins		31 January 2020	Redhead Beach	John Lawson
Brush Bronzewing	1	4 February 2020	Karoo fire trail, Belmont	HBOC Group
Black-necked Stork	1	8 February 2020	Cessnock area	John Goswell
White Tern	1	8 February 2020	Maitland area	Margaret Clarke
Diamond Firetails	12	8 February 2020	Merriwa area	Ando Brew & Ian
White backed Swallows	12			
Sooty Terns	8	9 February 2020	Newcastle Harbour	Mick Roderick
Bullers Shearwater	1	9 February 2020	Fort Drive	Michael Kearns
Streaked Shearwater	1	9 February 2020	Stockton Breakwall	Steve Roderick
Logrunners Spectacled Monarch Brush Cuckoo Large-billed Scrubwrens		14 February 2020	Gloucester	Alan Stuart
Arctic Jaeger	1	15 February 2020	Nobbys	Archie Brennan
Speckled Warbler Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater Horsefields Bushlark Cicadabird		16 February 2020	Martindale Road and Medhurst Bridge	Rob Kyte

Wedge-tailed Eagle	3	19 February 2020	East Seaham	Thomas Kendall
Square-tailed Kite	1			
White-throated Needletail	15			
Plum-headed Finch	5	20 February 2020	Bureen Road	Grant
Gang Gang Cockatoo	2			
Little Eagle	1		Muswellbrook	
Tawny Grassbird	1	22 February 2020	Wingen	Greg Newling
Brush Cuckoo	2	25 February 2020	Galgabba	John Adams
Little Ravens Flame Robin Scarlet Robin Rufous Scrub- bird		25 February 2020	Gloucester tops area	Alan Stuart
Goulds Petrel White-capped Albatross Pomarine Jaeger and others		26 February 2020	Port Stephens Pelagic trip	Mick Roderick & oth
Reef Egret	1	28 February 2020	Dark Point	Neil
Cicadabird	1	27 February 2020	Wetlands Centre	Archie Brennan

March/April 2020

Species	Count	Date	Location	Observer
Cicadabird	1	27/2	Wetlands Centre	Archie Brennan
Reef Egret	1	28/2	Dark Point	Neil Fraser
Male and Female Scarlet Robin	2	9/3	Gloucester Tops	Jim Stone
Flame Robin	1			Ted Elks
Plumed Whistling Duck	1	10/3	Wetlands Centre	Dauids2420
Glossy Black Cockatoos	4	13/3	Awabakal Redhead	Jim Stone
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1			
Beach Stone-curlew	1	19/3	Soldiers Point	Jon Spicer-Bell
Streaked Shearwater Black-browed Albatross Wilson's Storm Petrel Grey-faced Petrel Fluttering Shearwater Short-tailed Shearwater Campbell Albatross Pomarine Jaeger Artic Jaeger Solanders Petrel		19/3	Out from Swansea	Pelagic Group
Diamond Dove	1	22/3	Sandy Hollow	Nick L
Regent Bowerbirds		26/3	Highfields	Maree McCarthy
Female	2			
Male	1			
Brown Skua	1	28/3	Redhead	Archie Brennan
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	1	5/4	Dungog	David Stuart

Pair Plumed Whistling Ducks and Chick	3	8/4	Dunns Creek	Helen McCall
Blue-faced Honeyeater	5	12/4	At his home	John Goswell
Beach Stone-curlews and chick	3	13/4	Soldiers Point	Peter Weinstock
Spotted Quailthrush	1	13/4	SSCA	Rob Kyte
Black Bittern	2	16/4	Dora Creek	Archie Brennan
Gull-billed Tern	1	24/4	Stockton Sand Spit	Alwyn Simple
Rose-crowned Fruit Dove – Juvenile	1	29/4	Old Redhead Rubbish Tip	Gary Tong
Striated Pardalote	1	29/4	Earthcare Park	Raymond Burton