



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Newsletter

Issue No. 1/18 February 2018

The Club aims to:

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



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Recent interesting sightings: A Red-chested Button-quail was seen and photographed by Mick Roderick in late December, 2017 at Hexham Swamp. Also in December Michael Kearns identified a Common Gull-billed Tern at Stockton Sandspit. The photo above right shows a non-breeding Australian Gull-billed Tern on left with the Common Gull-billed Tern for comparison (see p3)

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Deadline for the next edition: 8th April 2018*

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Allan Richardson: President's Column

It may seem like an obvious statement, but birds, like all animals cannot survive without habitat. Not only that, in many cases a bird species' habitat can be highly specific. The more specific a bird's habitat requirements, the more likely a bird is to be threatened with extinction. Herein, is a dilemma for humanity that too few of us contemplate. Our society's economic well-being is underpinned by growth through increased economic activity. It really is a simple model, more activity requires more resources, more resources results in more infrastructure, requiring more people, who require more resources, and so the cycle continues. This short note doesn't sound very birdy, but it is. It is undeniable that other species are increasingly squeezed into smaller areas of habitat as our human altered environment expands. Those species that can adapt to our built environments will increase like sparrows, starlings, mynas, magpies and Rainbow Lorikeets have in the past, and those that can't, like Regent Honeyeaters, Orange-bellied Parrots and Paradise Parrots will move closer to oblivion. Make no mistake, if the diversity of birds we currently enjoy is to continue into the future, then the diversity of habitats we now have cannot continue to decline, or our birds and other animals will with them. So what can we do about it? At some point in the future greenfield development (removal of native vegetation) areas will disappear through continued growth, like that of the Sydney CBD for instance, and to continue, development will then be forced to change to redevelopment

of the human environment. If our natural environments are to survive into the future, and our birds with them, then continued pressure on natural environments must cease well before the Sydney CBD stage. Such talk sometimes sounds a little alarmist in the present, but when we consider that the Sydney CBD would have once supported birds that are now threatened with extinction, and now it is mostly incapable of that support, it should make us reflect on what the long-term future might look like for all natural space. We only have to think back a few years to recollect how changes continue to occur to natural habitats we've lived by to see how ongoing development affects change to the natural world. It's not any one big development project that has pushed so many of our native species to the brink of extinction, it's the death of a thousand small cuts, which endlessly change the environment. To affect change personally, we can start at home. We can reduce our own environmental footprint in reducing waste and we can become good stewards of the land under our own care. We can be advocates for a conservative environmental culture among our family and friends, and we can participate in conservation initiatives in the community by being an active contributor to environmental community groups just like the HBOC. Ultimately though, if our unique diversity of birds are to have a sure future, we must change our attitudes toward the environment across the majority of the community. That's a big goal, but if the earth is going to have a future where our diverse avifauna are present then it needs to become a reality that starts with me and you. Happy and thoughtful birding for 2018.

New Members

We hope to see you at club meetings and outings

Christoe Caius, Eleebana
John and Karen Connors, Karuah
Helen Fairlamb, Balmoral
Ralph and Jenny Gill, North Haven
Joanne Hanley, Hamilton
Katelijjn Hullegie, Tighes Hill

Rachel Klyve, Merewether
Rowena McLean, Marmong Point
Philip Reid, Cooks Hill
Bill Shannon and Paula Winchester, Lemon Tree
Robert Stabler, Cardiff
Phil Straw, Speers Point

2018 Membership Fees are now due. Fees are:

Single \$35 Family \$40.

If you prefer to pay by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).
Please include your NAME in the transaction.

BANK DETAILS:

INSTITUTION

Name: Greater Building Society
BSB: 637 000

ACCOUNT

Name: Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.
Number: 782260316

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.

Clarifying the name of Gull-billed Terns at SSS (see p.1 photo)

Mick Roderick

HBOC follows BirdLife Australia taxonomy (who in turn follow BirdLife International and the Handbook of the Birds of the World). We have been recording the bird in Birdata and will be referring to it in the newsletter, bird report etc as 'Common Gull-billed Tern'. The scientific name is *Gelochelidon nilotica*. The 'regular' Gull-billed Terns that we see are 'Australian Gull-billed Terns'. Their scientific name is *Gelochelidon macrotarsa*.

This came about because the Aussie birds were considered different enough to other Gull-billed Terns around the world to be split off as a separate species. There are another 5 subspecies around the world, the status of which under HBW I'm not that sure about. The Aussie species is the largest of the group of Gull-billed Terns.

The term 'affinis' only applies because it is the Asian subspecies of the Common Gull-billed Tern that visits Australia, so when we refer to it as 'affinis' or if we call it "Asian Gull-billed Tern" we're just referring to the subspecies name, just the same as we might refer to "Yellow-tipped Pardalote" or "Tasmanian Silvereye" instead of "Striated Pardalote" or "Silvereye".

And it's not a bad thing either. I applaud BirdLife for giving all subspecies a common name. It gives them

an identity and helps justify conservation work at the ultrataxa level.

Of course, not everyone follows BirdLife taxonomy. The International Ornithological Congress (IOC) still retains it as a subspecies though I have heard people say it is likely to be split under the IOC soon.

The current Birdlife Australian list (which includes all subspecies, complete with common names) is at: <http://birdlife.org.au/conservation/science/taxonomy>

Anyway, enjoy looking at the bird, whatever we want to call it. I reckon it looks like a miniature Silver Gull with that darkish back. Cool bird!



Common Gull-billed Tern photo by Bruce Hoskens

Results of the National Twitchathon 2017

Mick Roderick



Hunter Home Brewers 2017 Twitchathon

The BirdLife Australia Twitchathon was run again in 2017, this year raising funds (in NSW) for the Bitterns in Rice project. At the time of writing I understand that something around \$18,000 has been raised – a hearty thanks to all of the generous

sponsors! As alluded to in the December newsletter, the Twitchathon is going through a major transitional phase as it becomes a national event with an expanded focus. There were some definite lessons taken from the 2017 event which we hope to learn from, to improve the 2018 Twitchathon. Below is some paraphrased text from national coordinator Ashwin Rudder outlining results relevant to the Hunter. For a full run down on other results (such as the national Birdathon, Junior Races etc) go to: <http://www.birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/national-twitchathon>

30hr Big Weekend Race

Backing up for the fourth year in a row, the Dodgy Drongos - Grant Brosie, Max Breckenridge, and Simon Gorta - topped the species tally in the new 30-hour format with a whopping 264 species. The Top 5 teams were as follows (noting that the Top 4 are all Hunter teams):

- 264: Dodgy Drongos
- 256: Menacing Monarchs
- 249: The Back O'Bourke Buzzards
- 246: Hunter Home Brewers
- 238: Black-necked Stalkers

The Best Bird was deemed by a small panel of judges to be the Australian Bustard seen by the Dodgy Drongos. Australian Bustards are now a very scarce species in NSW, and the sighting by the Drongos near the Macquarie Marshes is one of the most easterly sightings of a Bustard in NSW in many years.

12hr Champagne Race

Matt Hinze & Liam Murphy of Raven On, broke through the 200 species mark to record an incredible 206 in their 12 hours. Hunter team, the Nagy Maggies came in 3rd with 148 – well done guys!

206: Raven On

181: Duck Norris

148: Nagy Maggies

Below is a direct link for the results of the 2017 twitchathon.

[!http://www.birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/national-twitchathon](http://www.birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/national-twitchathon)

National Competition

There is also a “national competition” in the Big Weekend Race that is done using a very clever algorithm developed by Dan Williams. We hope to have a description of this system up on the Twitchathon website ahead of the 2018 event (and are always happy for constructive feedback if it could be improved). Not surprisingly in the Big Weekendevent (because NSW is the *premier* Twitchathon state!) the national results saw the same Top 3 teams from NSW take out the Top 3 places there. This was not the case in the 12hr, where remarkably the Top 5 places were taken by teams from (in order) Victoria, NSW, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. This is exactly what we’re trying to achieve in making the Twitchathon a national event and hopefully the other states will stand up to NSW in the main race in 2018

HBOC's ongoing Study of Broughton Island's Terrestrial birds

Alan Stuart



Seven of us plus the Broughton Island NPWS Ranger, Susanne Callaghan, spent three days on Broughton Island over 19-21 January, as part of HBOC's ongoing study of the island's terrestrial birds. On the Friday (day 1) we were joined by four day trippers plus a reporter from the Newcastle Herald.

Birdwise it was quieter than any of our previous visits to Broughton - perhaps a combination of the hot weather and the finish of breeding. We added two new species to the island's list, Tree Martins and a New Holland Honeyeater. Neither species seemed to stick around. We had the usual grassbirds, pipits, cisticolas etc and both species of rail. A surprise was the absence of any Little Wattlebirds, which we have recorded on every visit since March 2014 and had begun to consider as a newly arrived resident. We will have to re-think!

The numbers of Silvereye continued to be high (at least a couple of hundred birds on the weekend) but there were fewer of them than in our October 2017 visit when the *Monotoca* shrubs were full of berries.

Part of our study now involves banding some of the birds so that eventually we can get some sort of understanding about the population dynamics of birds on an island. We banded 30 or so Silvereyes all of which were of the *cornwalli* sub-species which is not a surprise at this time of year. We also banded nine Tawny Grassbirds, many of which were young birds and it will be interesting in our future visits to see if they have established territories that are close to where we found them this time or conversely, to see how far they disperse.



One of the species we are keen to learn more about is the Brown Quail, which is an isolated population on Broughton Island that perhaps has been isolated for a very long time.

There are lots of them on the island now that the vegetation is recovering. In previous visits they have been rather elusive but this time we tried out some new ideas and had some success. The photo above is of the first banded Brown Quail on Broughton Island, a young bird (we also caught another, and then an adult).



Most of our work was on land birds but we also helped Susanne in a seabird study. She and Nicholas Carlile are fitting geolocators to some Wedge-tailed Shearwaters aiming to put them onto both the male and female birds of pairs with successful breeding track records, to find out how far they roam when foraging at sea. They had a couple of birds still to catch (only one of the pair is usually present at the burrow, and sometimes neither). It was interesting that several of the burrows probed had chicks in them, at least a few days old. That was early according to Nicholas Carlile.

Non-bird highlights included sea turtles (seen at three locations), egg sacks of the Magnificent Spider (which presumably therefore is on the island!), several Lesser Bent-nosed Bats flying around the huts and a small mammal seen briefly. There are no records of mammals on Broughton (except when there were feral eg rabbits & rats) and some follow-up work will be required on this.

Future Club Activity Easter Camp at Borah Creek TSR: Directions

The camping permit is from Thursday 29th March until Monday 2nd April 2018

A scenic route to the campsite is as follows:
From Newcastle, head North along the New England Hwy (A15) to Tamworth. From Tamworth, head North-West on the Fossickers Way (B95) to Manilla. After crossing the Namoi River take the first left (Lloyd Street), then at the T-intersection, turn left onto Rangari Road. Travel 15km along Rangari Road, you will cross Spring Creek and shortly afterward turn right onto Borah Road. Continue along Borah Road for 16km, you will cross Borah Creek

and not far beyond there turn right into the campsite where there will be HBOC signs to guide you.

An alternative route, which keeps you on sealed roads until almost there, is to continue on the Fossickers Way through Manilla, heading towards Barraba. Go past the turn-off to the Split Rock Dam, turn left at the bridge on to Borah Road, drive past the Tarpoly Reserve and continue on to the Borah Reserve.

Check the HBOC website for up-to-date information closer to the camp date.

Visitors to the Aleutian Terns: Would you like to help with this study?

Corey Callaghan



The study aims to find out how important the recent Aleutian Terns which have been observed by numerous birdwatchers at Old Bar, NSW are to our economy. We think the incredible interest is worth measuring to provide some economic information on the importance of conservation, particularly rare,

vagrant birds. This in turn can provide valuable information to policy makers in how birdwatchers value their hobby and the diverse natural habitats required to sustain high avian biodiversity.

It is critical to understand and value our biodiversity in order to communicate how we as birders value that biodiversity in our hobby to policymakers.

Ultimately, all birds depend on their habitats and so the benefits to the economy from birding need to be balanced against environmental threats that destroy their habitats, such as development.

If you could take this survey the link is here:
<https://goo.gl/forms/OS41U2VLimvS3Hw1>.

Banded Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross sighted off Swansea

Mick Roderick (and thanks to Christina Port for the use of her images)

On the 9th July 2015 Allan Benson organised a pelagic birding trip out of Swansea. There were members of HBOC and the Central Coast chapter of Birding NSW on board. All-in-all it was a pretty quiet day, though we did have 3 Buller's Albatrosses that day, all around the boat at the same time. We also had very good numbers of Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (IYNA) as well; greater than 170 birds in total and up to 150 of them visible at the one time. IYNA is the smallest and most numerous albatross that we see off the Hunter and it is not unusual to record a hundred or more in a day (in fact I've seen nearly a hundred of them feeding behind fishing trawlers coming back into port at Newcastle).

Recently it came to my attention that one of those IYNA that had been photographed by Central Coast birder Christina Port, was sporting a band on each



leg. One of the bands contained a numeric that could clearly been seen in Christina's photos. She sent the information off to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, who responded to her with the information set out below the photos.

The time between banding and recovery is 6 years 7 months 7 days. The bird had moved a distance of: 6532 km with a bearing of 110 degrees.

So the bird was banded as a chick on the breeding grounds in the Indian Ocean and at 8 years of age at the time of writing (Jan 2018) we are hoping that he/she is busy raising a chick themselves!



FINDING DETAILS

Band Number: CF41316 Engraved Leg Flag: White S37 was sighted on 09/07/2015

At: OFF THE COAST AT SWANSEA NSW

Latitude: 33deg 5min 20sec S; Longitude: 151deg 43min 23sec E;

The bird was: COLOUR MARKING SIGHTED IN FIELD (BAND NO. INFERRED)

And: WAS ALIVE IN THE WILD WITH THE BAND.

BANDING DETAILS

The band that you found was placed on a(n): Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross
or scientific name: *Thalassarche carteri (bassi)*

on: 02/12/2008

at: ILE AMSTERDAM, INDIAN OCEAN, FRANCE

Latitude: 37deg 50min 0sec S; Longitude: 77deg 51min 0sec E;

The bird was age code: FIRST YEAR, sex code: UNKNOWN

It was banded by: THE CNRS (FRENCH BANDING SCHEME)

Report a banded bird or recovery in Australia

If you happen to find a band or a bird with a band, wing tag, or some other marking, the ABBBS would like to hear about it. Details on how to do this can be found on HBOC website. <https://www.hboc.org.au/field-studies/report-a-banded-bird/>

Shorebird Habitat Restoration in the Hunter Estuary: a constant volunteer effort

Tom Clarke

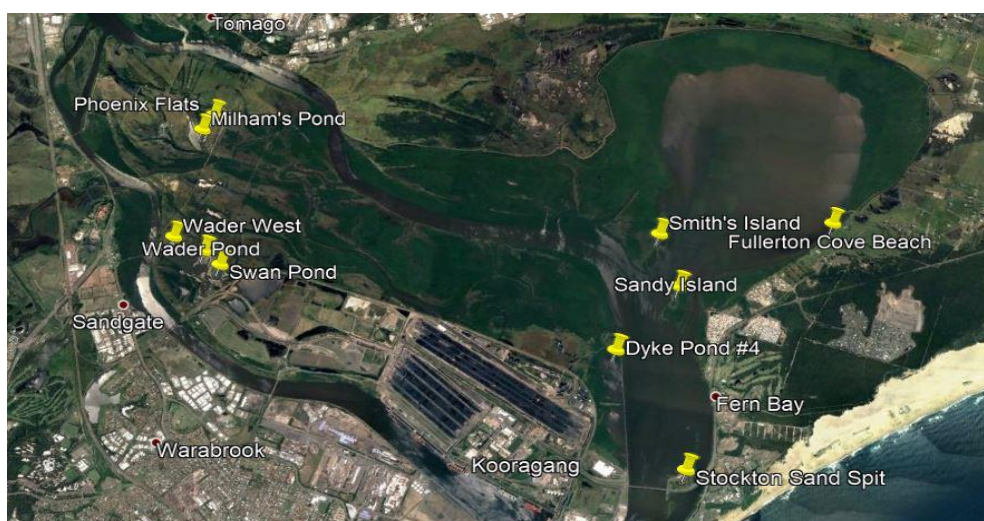
Since 2003, members of Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) have maintained a constant volunteer effort with various restoration works in the Hunter Estuary. These projects all focus on shorebird habitat and the project sites have been chosen for their strategic importance to the birds. Project sites exist at Stockton Sandspit, Ash Island (Milham Pond, Phoenix Flats, Wader West, Wader Pond and Swan Pond) and a collection of remote sites (Smith Island, Sandy Island, Fullerton Cove Beach and Dyke Pond #4) within the estuary.

Currently the combined projects cover over 150 hectares of the Hunter Wetlands National Park and since early 2003, more than 8,600 hours of volunteer effort has been accrued in these endeavours. The combined volunteer effort in 2017 across all the projects amounted to just over 700 hours of willing contribution.

Restoration of shorebird habitats at strategic sites over the breadth of the Hunter Wetlands National Park
And now that 2018 is upon us we need to get cracking again to consolidate the gains we have made over the years. A detailed look at the 2018 tide predictions reveals several opportunities where conditions will favour the work planned and shorebird disturbance is kept to a minimum. The schedule below contains some key dates when our work can take place

HBOC Volunteer days for 2018 at various sites.

Date	Event	Meet	Contact
January Monday 8 th	Remove mangrove seedlings Stockton Sandspit	08:00 Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418411785
February Monday 5 th	Remove mangrove seedlings Area E, Ash Island	08:00 Wagtail Way Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418411785
March Sunday 4 th	Clean Up Australia	08:00 Stockton Sandspit	Juliana Ford 0417651820
April Monday 9 th	Remove mangrove seedlings Milham Pond	08:00 Radar Buildings Milham Road, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418411785
May Monday 7 th	Sweep marshes for weeds Stockton Sandspit	08:00 Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418411785
June Monday 25 th	Create shelly sand Stockton Sandspit	08:00 Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418411785
July Monday 9 th	Create shelly sand Stockton Sandspit	8.00 Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418411785



All the tasks are, by nature, physical activities but volunteers are encouraged to work within their personal limits. Of course staying hydrated and sun-safe are high on the list of priorities too as all the work is in mostly exposed areas of the estuary. And don't forget that regular shorebird observations are an essential part of the volunteer effort. So if you are keen to get involved please get in touch and register your interest.

Club Activities

December Meeting

13th December 2017

A scene from our December meeting held at the Wetlands Centre on Wednesday night, 13th December. As always, the December meeting is rather special. Instead of a guest speaker, various of our members give ~5 minute presentations (about anything to do with birds; and the emphasis being on having fun).



Tom Kendall during his talk.

Grahame Feletti invited us, at the meeting, to think about how we became bird watchers and to discuss this over supper. His contribution appears below. It also encouraged the Clicker's Corner contribution in this newsletter.

Reflections on our interest in birdwatching after reading about WDK Macgillivray (1868-1933)

What triggered or fostered your own interest in bird watching?

Going out with a relative or friend who knew bird stuff
Reading bird books or getting your first pair of binoculars
Trapping, rearing or even rescuing birds
Finding nests, taking photos, recording calls, making notes
Knowing when and where to look for certain species
Having your own bird museum (feathers, eggs, nests, skeletons)
Keeping an aviary, breeding or even showing birds
Keeping records of observations and sharing that info
Being inspired at your first outing or bird talk
Becoming more focused (systematic) in your approach to birdlife



WDK Macgillivray developed an avid interest in Australian birdlife before he was a teenager. He became a well-respected GP in Broken Hill, and was able to pursue that interest, notably in North Queensland, along with other noted ornithologists.

Read his short biography (links below) and look for behaviour patterns similar to your own history.

Significant events for WDK Macgillivray:

Born in 1868 on Killara Station on the Darling River. His father was a pastoralist. Family moved to another property at Eastern Creek, off Flinders River QLD in 1810. He began collecting insects, stones, fossils and birds' eggs and had a museum before he was 10.

Studied medicine at Melbourne University 1886-91, then practised in VIC, TAS and NSW.

Attended the RAOU meeting in Brisbane in 1910; then sailed for the Great Barrier Reef. Surveyed seabirds in areas of Nth QLD with ornithologists E. D'Ombra, W. MacLennan.

Sailed for England with MacLennan in 1916 to join the Australian Expeditionary Forces. He compiled extensive data on seabirds seen during his voyage on the troopship.

Accompanied by his son Ian, investigated nesting of the Australian pelican at Cawndilla Lake, Darling River. This resulted in a treatise on the A. pelican and other birds of inland waters.

Journeyed in 1928 to the Gulf of Carpentaria from Broken Hill, through South-western Queensland to Cloncurry, and on to Eddington Station. He wrote extensively on this trip overland by car for the *Emu* in 1929 under the title "Through a Drought-stricken Land."

Became honorary ornithologist and naturalist in 1929 to the scientific expeditions organised to the Great Barrier Reef by E. M. Embury and continued as such until his death in 1933.

Intended to put into book form the notes he had made on Australian birds. Fortunately, before his death the notes for the book were completed.

*The Cloncurry Parrot
Barnadius zonarius
macgillivrayi is named
after the Nth Qld town
Cloncurry, but its
scientific name may
honour his contributions
to Australian ornithology.*



These notes on Macgillivray are extracted from various published sources, including <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/macgillivray-William-david-15571>, <http://www.eoas.info/biogs/P001910b.htm> and <http://www.thuringowabirdclub.com/parrots.html>

Grahame Feletti

Minmi

17th December 2017

We had an early 7.30am start meeting at Minmi Pub. Conditions were overcast, very light breeze and hot. The group was 14 regular HBOC stalwarts plus a keen newbie who'd signed up earlier in the morning.



We drove a few kilometres up the road to a safe location on Lenaghans Drive, parked and walked through the old rail tunnel under the freeway to Pambalong Swamp. Here we saw a variety of birds but not many waterbirds, standouts being Lathams Snipe, Tree Martins, Varied Sittella, Shining Bronze-cuckoo and Horsefields Bronze-cuckoo.

We then moved a little further along Lenaghans Drive, parked and walked along the private road to the end. Here members saw Channel-billed Cuckoo and Tawny Grassbirds. The swamps here are overgrown and choked with Bulrush at the edges and numerous other wetland plants leaving little if any open water. This makes seeing waterbirds difficult

however we did quickly see a flock of waders of some sort with no identification.

It was a good mornings outing we saw and listed about 63 bird species, talked bird identification, cameras and binoculars. At Lenaghans Flat a couple of local young fellows about 8-10yo, each with binoculars, joined the group. Their mother says they are keen about anything that moves so they may be future members. Hopefully we made a good impression on them.

We finished at about 11.30am then moved back to Minmi Pub for a cool drink and the bird call.

Guided and reported by Greg Little

January Weekend Camp at Myall View

Australia Day 26th to 29th Jan 2018.

As we drove along the dusty Violet Hill Road it was easy imagine the opening scene of a movie and begin to speculate about what might be hidden behind the fences and gateposts with their notices warning of fox baits and penalties for trespassing. Luckily we soon entered the gate of Myall View with its reassuring sign that it was a Wild Bird Sanctuary. The stage was set for our weekend camp, tall shady trees sheltered the campsite and a large paddock was at our disposal.



*Glossy Black Cockatoo
Photo by Rob Palazzi*

The first characters to appear were 7 Glossy Black Cockatoos which greeted us and reappeared at regular intervals over the weekend. The sound track was provided by the Cicadas who performed tirelessly once they warmed up. The scene stealer was an Oriel feeding young in a nest above the tents.

Camp continued



Fifteen campers settled in for the weekend and several day visitors joined us. Our host, Rosemary made us welcome and described the walking tracks on her property and those that allowed us to access the neighbouring National Park. This area was once State Forest and it includes a variety of native species plus an area of rainforest.

Observers explored the trails and nearby roadsides and most agreed that like the birds we were challenged by the heat, humidity and wind. The cicada chorus made it impossible for solo performers to be identified by song only.

Nevertheless a total of 45 species was counted by the end of the first day. By the end of the camp the total had increased to 68 and the highlights included 2 Varied Sittella, 2 Spectacled Monarch (including a fledged young being fed), 3 Bassian Thrush and listening to an Australian Owlet-nightjar.

On Sunday 2 cars made the journey to Mungo Brush to successfully find the Turquoise Parrots with the bonus being a family of 3 Black-necked Storks.



© Bruce Watts
Turquoise Parrot near Mungo Brush by Bruce Watts

Overall the campers enjoyed the peaceful setting at Myall View particularly in the cool of early evening when there was time for convivial good company. We look forward to the sequel at Easter when we will be travelling to Borah TSR near Barraba

Lyn Karpel

Tuesday Outing to “Bush Haven”, Italia Road East Seaham

6th February 2017



We were worried that there might be more birders than birds when 32 observers arrived at Jenny Musika's property at East Seaham. Jenny had warned us that because things had been so dry many of the little birds had disappeared. However with 64 keen eyes we soon began to tally up species, including White-headed Pigeon and Bar-shoulder Dove, with six Peaceful Doves posing beautifully in a tree for the photographers. Two Needletails were spotted overhead.

Several species of lorikeet were seen including two Musk Lorikeets. We had to check with one of the photographers to prove that the large flock of lorikeets flying over were indeed Scaly-breasted.



Despite Jenny's worries about small birds disappearing, flocks of both Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens were spotted as well as gerygones and thornbills.

The ground was indeed very dry and we were able to walk in what is usually a swamp, but by 11 am we had spotted 49 species. Our thanks to Jenny and Kirsti (and the two dogs) for showing us over their wonderful property.

Margaret Stewart

Clicker's Corner

In this regular Newsletter section, we profile one of our many talented photographers, including some background as to their photographic interests and techniques, as well as exhibiting a selection of their captures.

Peter Weinstock



Wedgetailed Eagle

I have been asked whether I am a photographer or a bird watcher first and my answer is that it depends on the circumstance.

My father was a keen amateur photographer exhibiting in royal shows and having his photos published in local newspapers. I got my first camera on my eighth birthday and Dad taught me how to process black and white film and print enlargements in his home built darkroom. As a teenager I inherited Dad's 35mm Agfa camera and he upgraded to a Rolliflex and then a Bronica 2¼" x2¼" .

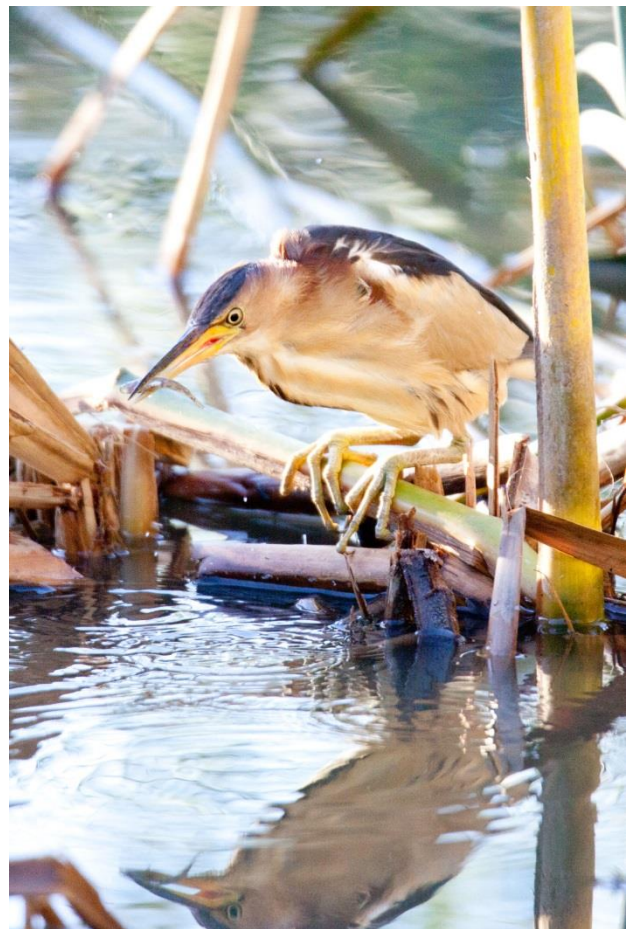
My maternal grandmother was a member of the RAOU, a friend of Dr McGillivrey, bird curator at the Melbourne museum. I have a nice letter from Dr McGillivrey thanking me for my "donation" to their collection of an albatross skull I left with the museum for identification. My grandmother also went on birding trips in Asia and Australia with Brigadier Hugh Officer. My sister Margaret married one of the Brigs great nephews, helped care for him when he was incapacitated and inherited a large chunk of his natural world collection.

As a teenager I went birding with my grandma, day walks and camps such as bird banding on mud island in Port Phillip Bay. I carried my Agfa camera with its 40mm lens and marvelled at the old guys with 100mm lenses on their Pentaxes.

University life, friends and cars didn't leave much time for birding but gave plenty of opportunities to make money as a news-style photographer covering fashion shows, weddings and parties. The money earned allowed me to travel around Europe and meet the person who is now my wife.

Working as an engineering project manager meant I was doing a lot of travelling in country areas so I drifted back to bird watching and bird photography. I was dubious about digital photography at first, relying on my darkroom skills and 135mm lens but after my experiences with a small point and shoot camera, my old 35mm pentax got the flick and I worked my way up through the digital offerings to where I am today.

I get two thrills, one is a new species, this year's count in Hunter region is 253, and secondly the great unexpected picture like tern with large fish or raptor with snake.



Australian Little Bittern

In the June newsletter Dick Jenkins describes well the processes and requirements for good bird photographs. I believe there are two types of bird photos, firstly the carefully planned and secondly the opportunistic. If one studies the habitat, consults the bureau of meteorology and plans an outing, if the bird is there one can end up with some good views. On the other hand, if one is out and about and something catches your eye then you record what you can. Of course sometimes the unexpected can produce stunning results and this leads me to equipment.

No matter what camera body you have, study its manual and learn what functions it has.

What is the highest ISO it will run and still give printable photos, what range of focus pints does it have, will it focus on a moving object? Learn how to adjust your camera to suit the light conditions and subjects. Are you aiming for large birds in flight, raptors, egrets, pelicans or tiny things hidden in semi darkness under trees.



© Peter Weinstock
Oriental Cuckoo

Previous contributors to this column have mentioned the all important necessity to understand how to set the ISO, f stop and shutter speed to the occasion. It makes all the difference in getting “a keeper” or not. This basic knowledge will separate the novice from the serious amateur.

With the taking of photos, don't forget that you have to store your images. Well set up folders is critical. Also, revisit your files and as you get more and hopefully better images of species delete the older or poorer ones. I have a goal of no more than thirty images per species. I still have 300 nankeen night herons.

My equipment today is a Canon 5D mkiv coupled to a Canon 200-400 f4 with inbuilt 1.4x extender. This gives me 200-560mm at hand. The lens is waterproof and internally focussing. I carry it as hand

luggage on aeroplanes in a camera bag, weight 7kg. To get round the weight limit, all the accessories including a notebook computer and camera body are worn in a fishing style vest with lots of pockets, carried weight 4kg. So far no air line has refused me.

Print your best shots and hang them up, be proud of them and relive the memory of how you got them.

THE WHISTLER or ANNUAL REPORT

Reminder to pick up your copies:

If you would still like a copy of The Whistler or Annual Bird Report please contact Rob Kyte at robhbc@bigpond.com



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Contact: Dick Jenkin 0407 267207

E: richardnjenkin@bigpond.com

W: www.jenkinphotography.com.au

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 and 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: 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.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
White-fronted Chat	8	16/12/17	Swan Bay	L. Mee
Stubble Quail	1	19/12/17	Hexham Swamp	R. Warnock
Channel-billed Cuckoo	11	21/12/17	Dungog	D. Jenkin
Latham's Snipe	32	21/12/17	Fletcher	M. Roderick
Latham's Snipe	14	22/12/17	Irrawang Swamp	B. Watts
White-throated Needletail	900	23/12/17	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick
Fork-tailed Swift	5	23/12/17	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick
Yellow Wagtail	1	24/12/17	Hexham Swamp	I. Benson
White-fronted Chat	15	24/12/17	Hexham Swamp	I. Benson
Red-chested Button Quail	1	28/12/17	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick
Brown Songlark	10 (3F)	28/12/17	Hexham Swamp	M. Roderick
Ruff	1	28/12/17	Stockton Sandspit	R. Jenkin
Common Gull-billed Tern	1	29/12/17	Stockton Sandspit	M. Kearns
Glossy Ibis	3	01/01/18	Stockton Sandspit	L. Mee
Lesser Sand Plover	2	05/01/18	Old Bar	L. Hoskens
Turquoise Parrots	17	11/01/18	Myall Lakes NP	T. Clarke
Pied Oystercatchers	82	10/01/18	Stockton Beach	S. Roderick
White-headed Pigeon	4	13/01/18	Adamstown	R. Kyte
Square-tailed Kite and fledged young	2+1	13/01/18	Holmesville	M. Simpson
Grey Ternlet	1	18/01/18	Nobbys Breakwall (end)	G. Carter per AL
Osprey on old nest	2	21/01/18	Ash Island	N. McNaughton
Regent Honeyeater	2	23/01/18	Tanilba Bay	Per M. Roderick
Red-necked Avocet	11	24/01/18	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Common Greenshank	44	25/01/18	Smith Is, F Cove	T. Clarke
Sooty Oystercatcher	43	29/01/18	Bogey Hole	R. Nicholas
Painted Button-quail	3	30/01/18	Old Gibber Rd	B. Watts
Aleutian Tern	18	03/02/18	Old Bar	A. Stuart
Sanderling	7	03/02/18	Old Bar	A. Stuart
White-winged Chough	7	03/02/18	Fassifern Station	R. Palazzi

Club Activities February to April 2018

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE/TIME	CONTACT
FEBRUARY 2018			
Fri 16 th Feb	Port Stephens Waterbirds Survey	8.30am Locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 Essential to ring to confirm
Sat 17 th Feb	Hunter Wader Survey HT-10.15am, 1.80m	10.00am Ash Island and Tomago 10.30am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Dan Williams 0408 023 262 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 0409 848 390 – Tomago Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 - Hexham
Sun 18 th Feb	Field Outing – Bingleburra Rd	Meet – 7.30am Dungog Visitor Centre, Dowling St, Dungog	Dave Stuart ph 4992 1899
Tue 20 th Feb	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Please ring to confirm
MARCH 2018			
Sun 4 th Mar	Clean Up Australia	08:00 Stockton Sandspit	Juliana Ford 0417651820
6 th Mar	Mid-week Outing – Hexham Swamp	Meet – 7.30am McDonalds car park	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Wed 7 th Mar	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	President to be elected All members welcome
Wed 14th Mar	Club Meeting	7.00pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Speaker: Ross Crates – Ecology of the Regent Honeyeater (PhD) Bird of the Evening: Paddy Lightfoot
Sat 17 th Mar	Hunter Wader Survey HT-9.09am, 1.77m	8.30am Ash Island and Tomago 9.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 0409 978 171 – Ash Island Dan Williams 0408 023 262 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Steven Cox 0409 848 390 – Tomago Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 - Hexham
Sun 18 th Mar	Field outing – Hunter Estuary, Ash Is & SSS	Meet – 7.30am Hexham McDonalds	Greg Little 0414 562169
Tue 20 th Feb	Australasian Bittern Survey	7-9pm (dusk) at various sites in Hunter Estuary as directed	Hayley Boyce 0421 175 922 Mick Roderick 0421 761 237 You must be registered to take part
Tue 20 th Mar	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 Please ring to confirm
Fri 30 th Mar – Mon 2 nd Apr	Easter Camp – Borah Creek TSR	Meet – see HBOC web site for directions	Andrzej and Lyn Karpziel 4952 3458 / 0427 483 663
APRIL 2018			
Tue 3 rd Apr	Mid-week Outing – Myuna Bay/Morisset	Meet – 7.30am at the park Myuna Bay	Di Johnson 0413 317 710
Wed 4 th Apr	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Mon 9 th Apr	Remove mangrove seedlings -Milham Pn	08:00 Radar Buildings Milham Road, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Wed 11 Apr	Club Meeting	7.00pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Darren and Tahlia Broughton – BIBY TV Bird of the Evening: Eula McKane