

HUNTER BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB ANNUAL REPORT 1997

I am presenting to you tonight the Seventeenth Annual Report of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. It will be tabled for you to read after the meeting.

1997 was a year during which members made many contributions to the running of the Club and during which we had enlightening talks and exciting field trips to many different parts of the Hunter Region. I remember, in particular, our trip to Main Creek where Debbie and John Hancock were more than generous hosts.

Clean-up day in March at Stockton Sandspit was attended by 11 volunteers wearing old clothes and thick gloves. After we collected 40 bags of rubbish plus larger items, we spent a couple of hours watching the waders as the tide went out. Following this successful effort Tom Clarke organised two more weeding days for July and November in a bid to reduce the growth of Bitou Bush and Juncus acutis. Waders need an open area upon which to roost and we were delighted to see no fewer than 94 Golden Plovers using the area in January. This is in part due to members' efforts to keep the site open and vegetation low.

In September, Club members organised and ran a beginners' bird course at the Shortland Wetlands Centre. The Club had provided similar courses for the WEA in previous years but this time the \$500 raised was donated directly to the Wetlands Centre. The 10 participants and the teachers spent the day practising field identification from slides, learning something about the structure of a bird and how to use binoculars. Later, these newly acquired skills were practised on the birds out in the Wetlands.

The Shortland Wetlands Centre was the venue for many other events during the year. Several members attended International Wetlands Day in February and were available to provide information and for taking visitors on bird walks.

The Club was present at the Society for Growing Native Plants Wildflower Spectacular in August with Tom Clarke and others on the HBOC stall and taking bird walks. We were also present at the Wetlands Centre for the final weekend of Bird Week. Margaret and Keith Woods set up the library for public viewing and people were available for a Kids Club and walks. On that same weekend the Club had two teams participating in the NSW Twitchathon. The Champagne Team came in second with 125 species as did the Twenty-Four Hour team, the Hunter Thickheads with 199 species. Barrington House generously donated accommodation on Saturday night and on Sunday, breakfast and a packed lunch. Several members attended the finish of the race and barbecue at the Wetlands Centre. Altogether \$1412.00 was raised.

It had been suggested that we could be more active in primary schools where the children are doing a project on birds. One member went to Mayfield East Public School to help with a bird census of the playground and fifth/sixth classes later created a bird week of their own.

The organisation now known as Birds Australia purchased a large, mallee scrub covered property in South Australia called Gluepot Station which has no fewer than six endangered species present. Special thanks should be given to our members for the \$300 raised on one Club night. The money was sent to Birds Australia specifically for Gluepot Station.

In December we made a part payment of \$500 from the Keating Fund to David Geering for the Latham's Snipe project. The \$1000 granted for the project will be spent on radio transmitters so that birds can be tracked to their feeding areas at night. Club member, Michael Todd is also involved in the project.

Several members continued to support the Garden Bird Survey collated by Peter McLauchlan. Peter also attended two Bird Interested Groups Network or Bignet meetings where issues common to all clubs are discussed. The fourth Annual Bird Report for the Hunter Region edited by Alan Stuart was published; 311 species were recorded in 1996 including eight new species and three new breeding species. Thanks go to Alan Stuart for his many hours of work and to the many contributors who sent in their records.

FINANCIAL REPORT

We are to be grateful to our treasurer, Rowley Smith and assistant, Lesley Marshall, for their work. The Club finished 1997 with a balance of \$8528.38 which includes a profit of \$340.08 for the year. The profit derived mostly from income from Eco-Consulting firms. The subscription income remained stable. The biggest expense was the purchase of library books. The budget allowed for a loss on the publication of the Annual Bird Report. Costs were not covered for the hire of the bus for the trip to Harrington. After some deliberation the committee decided to increase the 1998 membership fees and the new rates are: Family \$20, Single \$18 and Junior \$2.

APPENDIX B

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Club finished the year with a total of 202 members, a decrease of one from the previous year. Membership was made up of 74 single members, 122 family members and 6 junior members.

APPENDIX C

CONSERVATION REPORT

Under the leadership of David Kibble the conservation committee investigated and supported several claims for maintaining or improving bird habitat.

Submissions were made about:

- Big Pond on Kooragang Island – the submission received a sympathetic response from the Minister for the Environment.
- the proposed Charlestown By-pass - particular concern about Powerful and Masked Owls;
- a proposed development at Apollo Drive, Charlestown, concerning the Masked Owl;
- conditions of use in Wollemi National Park and
- support was gained for the conservation of Little Tern at the Coastline Management Workshop organised by Lake Macquarie Council.
- the proposed building of a fan shaft in Awaba State Recreation Area by the colliery at Teralba which did not proceed.
- HBOC supported the successful campaign to stop a chemical plant being built on land used by the threatened species, Orange-bellied Parrot, in Victoria.

An altogether active and successful year for conservation. Many thanks to David Kibble, Liz Crawford, Ray Walker and Michael Todd.

APPENDIX D

MEETINGS

Eleven meetings were held at the Shortland Wetlands Centre with an average attendance of 42. Members made enthusiastic contributions to the Bird of the Evening segment covering such groups and species as the corvids, Plains Wanderer, Orange-bellied Parrot, Tawny Frogmouth, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Rock Warbler and Little Tern. Main topics covered a wide range of subjects not all of them about birds - remember the wonderful shore crabs, the reptiles of the rainforests, the Homebush Bay Olympic site, Riversleigh revisited, Kenyan wildlife, the Bar-tailed Godwit story, seabirds and the owls of the Lower Hunter. Sincere thanks to our guest speakers for their time and effort. A Christmas party rounded off the year with members showing slides, raising \$73 in the Christmas raffle and just having a good chat.

APPENDIX E

OUTINGS AND CAMPS

The program took place as advertised with two exceptions. The field outing to Howes Valley was cancelled and replaced with one to Milbrodale because of bushfire danger and a bus was hired for the outing to Harrington. This latter trip may not have been a financial success but we saw more species on this trip than on any other in the year, namely 105.

The midweek outings starting at 8 am and finishing usually by midday were organised by Keith and Margaret Woods and Max Blanch. They were well supported by a regular group of enthusiastic birdos.

Five Regent Honeyeater surveys took place with visits to the Dungog area, Duns Creek, Lemon Tree Passage, Tomago and Bulga. Alas, no Regent Honeyeaters were seen, but we did survey areas not usually visited by birdwatchers.

The Club offered four camps - Widden Valley, Swans Crossing, Smiths Lake, and Gloucester Tops. Attendances at all venues were better than on previous years and more birds were seen than ever before. In line with Club policy the observations made at all of these outings were noted and added to Club records.

APPENDIX F

LIBRARY REPORT

There are 262 books, journals and reports in the library which has again proved popular with an increase in borrowings. Eighty-five items were taken out and nineteen new publications were acquired through purchase and donation. Thanks to Wilma Barden, Paddy Lightfoot, Margaret Woods and Warringah Shire Council for those donations.

APPENDIX G

AUDIO-VIDEO LIBRARY

At the end of 1997 this library contained a total of 83 recordings comprising 57 audio cassettes, 18 video cassettes and 8 compact discs. The calls and songs of 625 Australian

bird species are now represented. These recordings continue to be available for members on a monthly loan basis. It is pleasing to see that one item lost since 1996 has been returned and that another lost item is to be replaced. The Users Award for 1997 goes to junior member, Michael Kearns, who borrowed 9 audio and video tapes. Runner up was Ken Gibson with 8 videos.

APPENDIX H

SLIDE LIBRARY

Twelve people borrowed 145 slides during 1997 and the Kooragang Island Rehabilitation Project arranged to copy 28 slides of birds commonly found on the island for use in displays. Once again a number of slides were donated.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic contributions of the people running our Club: Judith Smith is our welcoming person on Club nights and she has been publicity officer for a number of years. Judith handed this latter role over to Peter Phillips during the year. Thanks to Marion and Ray Walker, Randall Watson - auditor, Liz Crawford - activities officer, Pat Poutney - library assistant and suppers, John Cockerell - slide library, Ken Gibson Club - night organiser and Lesley Marshall – assistant treasurer. A special thank you to Margaret and Keith Woods for their library work over the past three years and it is with regret that I announce their resignation from this position. I would like to pay a special tribute to David Geering who is the new national coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort. David was an active committee member and a willing supporter of the conservation team. He was always full of ideas and plans which he shared willingly. He gave several talks at Club night - remember the amazing photos of Latham's Snipe sitting out on fence posts in Japan, his trip to South Africa, the Birds of Capertee Valley and those mind chilling slides of the Death Adder outside the hut at Wollemi. We shall indeed miss David but wish him every success in his new position.

It is with mixed feelings that I now announce that I am resigning as President of this Club. I have had the support of an absolutely marvellous committee who have been constantly helpful and infinitely patient. On behalf of the Club, and of myself, thank you Peter McLauchlan, Tom Clarke, David Geering, Wilma Barden, Sue Hamonet, Rowley Smith and Peter Phillips. I have, however, not retired from the Club. I intend to continue working in one capacity or another and I dare say I will never give up my interest in and concern for our wonderful birds.

Thank you.

Ann Lindsey, President 1997

Office Bearers 1997

President – Ann Lindsey

Vice President – Peter McLauchlan

Hon. Secretary – Peter Phillips

Hon. Treasurer – Rowley Smith

Management Committee – Sue Hamonet, Wilma Barden, Tom Clarke, David Geering