



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Issue No. 4/13 August 2013

The Club aims to:

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

Seminar on 7 September 2013

Field Studies of Threatened Birds

On Saturday and Sunday 7/8 September, HBOC will host the biannual BIGnet (Bird Interest Groups network) meeting at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. At the meeting, representatives of Bird Interest Groups from NSW and BirdLife Australia will discuss issues of common concern. As part of the BIGnet meeting, HBOC will hold a free seminar on *Field Studies of NSW Threatened Bird Species* at the Hunter Wetlands Centre theatre, from 1pm to 5pm on Saturday afternoon, 7 September. The program will feature:

- Rufous Scrub-birds in the Gloucester Tops
- Regent Honeyeater & Swift Parrots in the Hunter Valley
- White-fronted Chat response to fire in saltmarsh
- Decline of migratory shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary
- Australian Pied Oystercatchers in the Hunter Region

BirdLife Australia's CEO, Paul Sullivan will officially present the JN Hobbs Memorial Medal to Mike Newman at the beginning of the seminar.

HBOC members and friends are very welcome to attend the seminar- please RSVP to Liz Crawford on 4959 3663 or by email chrisliz@internode.on.net by 28 August 2013.

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Please send Newsletter articles direct to the Editor, Liz Crawford at: chrisliz@internode.on.net
Deadline for the next edition - 30 September 2013

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President's Column

2013 will be remembered by some as the 'Year of the Seawatch'. It has been an outstanding year for watching seabirds from shore, which is a welcome opportunity for people who aren't keen to jump onto a boat and venture into the 'blue paddock'. I can understand this, as I'm sure that not everyone wants to jump into a fishing boat with at least a dozen other binocular and camera-toting, raincoat-clad birders and spend an entire day rolling up and over waves looking for glimpses of seabirds that zip past. To me, this is the quintessential description of a great day birding though!

The thing about 'true' seabirds is that the only reason that any of them come to shore is to breed. Well, the only reason they would choose to come to shore is to breed anyway. Some birds do end up, for various reasons, being washed up along our coasts. When this happens to a number of birds at the same time it is referred to as 'wrecking', which has an obvious link to seafaring terminology, as do many seabird terms.

The beauty of seawatching is that you can see these birds that rarely come near shore, actually from the comfort of the shore. Having said that though, often the best times to go seawatching are when it is cold and windy! This year we have had the unusual circumstances of an ex-tropical cyclone (Cyclone Oswald) in January and last month an unusual push of certain birds more normally associated with colder waters.

Oswald gave us shore-based views of a range of tropical seabirds, with perhaps the most conspicuous being the Lesser Frigatebirds and literally hundreds of Sooty Terns – many of which were observed inland. Recently though, it has been the Southern Ocean breeding birds that have been visible from shore. At least 4 species of albatross have been flying about, which is not that unusual in itself, but it has been the number and reliability of seeing them that has been notable. Fairy Prions have been seen in the surf break, allowing close views of a species for which you need close views to distinguish it from the other prion species. Most unusual though, has been the arrival of Common Diving Petrels – a bird that is normally very uncommon anywhere in NSW, let alone this far up the coast. In fact, they have now been seen as far north as North Stradbroke Island (and Fairy Prions as far north as Lady Elliot Island)!

The best place (I feel) to look for seabirds from shore is at Fort Drive, which is just beneath Fort Scratchley in Newcastle. There are other vantage points but this one is where the birds seem to come closest to shore.

Hmmm...having written this President's Column I think I will write a more specific piece for a future Newsletter about seawatching in the Hunter (stay tuned, but in the meantime hope to see you down at Fort Drive one day).

Mick Roderick

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Bill Anderson - Rankin Park

Robyn & Jeremy Dunlop - Maitland

Shaun McKay - The Hill

John Tracy - Shortland

Val Baxter – Tasmania

John & Vivien Dwyer - Singleton

Miranda Moore, Krishna and Murali Nagarajan - Lorn

Jean Tucker - Nelson Bay

We hope to see you at Club meetings and outings.

HBOC Committee for 2013

President	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237	Committee Members
Vice President	Allan Richardson 4977 2508	Paul Baird 4938 5039
Secretary	Kristy Peters 0438 328 049	Hayley Boyce 0421 175 922
Treasurer	Joy Nicholls 4957 3612	Lucas Grenadier 4962 1987
Membership Secretary	Rob Kyte 4961 6211	Rob Kyte 4961 6211
Records Officers	Alan Stuart (Outings records) 4952 8569 Dan Williams (Club Night and Hunterbirding observations) 0408 023 262	Greg Little 4955 6609 Lorna Mee 4988 6579

Meeting Highlights - Western influence on Hunter Valley birds

The Hunter Valley has a definite influence of birds (and other animals and plants) that are normally associated with habitats found west of the Great Dividing Range. I have a particular interest in this subject and presented the main talk at the June Club meeting on this facet of birds in the Hunter. Note that what I am talking about is the Hunter Valley, not necessarily the Hunter Region (i.e. the boundary is biogeographical as opposed to a political one).

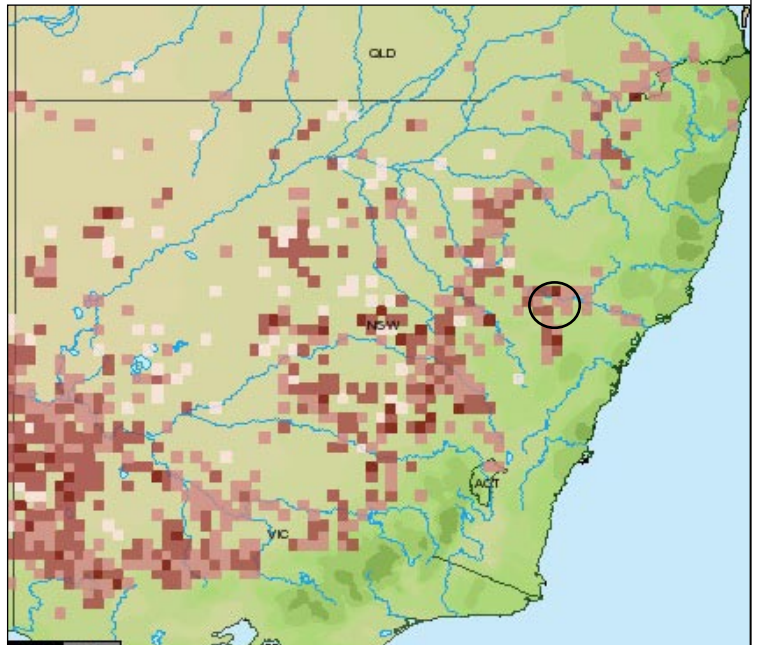
The Hunter River is one of the largest river systems in NSW and the valley is very broad and sweeps a long way west. If you look at a map you will notice that Ulan (at the top of the catchment) is on the same longitude as Narrabri. Not only does the valley spread a long way inland, but the Great Dividing Range, the factor that most influences the biogeography of the east side of the Australian continent, is at its lowest point at the top of the Hunter Valley. If you drive from Ulan along the road to Gulgong you drive right past a sign saying “Great Dividing Range 470m”. Thing is, you’re still in a high gear because you’re on a flat piece of road!

This “gap” in the Great Divide I think has had an influence on the flora and fauna of the Hunter, allowing “western” birds to enter the top of the valley. The thing is, there is also a “western influence” in the flora of the Hunter as well. It is the only coastal catchment in NSW where things like River Red Gums and many species of *Acacia* occur (e.g. Weeping Myalls). White Box trees stretch right in as far east as Branxton and with it, birds more commonly associated with western habitats.

Other factors that may contribute to why we see some western species in the Hunter Valley include the notion that there is a “rain shadow” effect from the Watagans and Wollemi / Yengo massif, causing the southern part of the catchment to be very dry, akin to western habitats. Also, from a geological sense the

Upper Hunter lies within the Gunnedah Basin and the Merriwa Plateau is “black soil plains” just like the Liverpool Plains are.

It is thought that this contributes to providing good habitat for drier country birds and the gap in the divide has provided the opportunity for such species / habitats to flourish, given the lack of a physical barrier from the west. So where’s the evidence in the birds I hear you ask? Well, there are a number of examples really. I think the best example is that of Singing Honeyeaters that have been found in a few discrete locations along Durrigere Road, north of Ulan, including juvenile birds being fed by adults. There are sometimes reports of these birds elsewhere but they are likely vagrant birds – could it be that the Durrigere Road birds are resident, breeding birds due to there being suitable habitat in that area?



Map showing BirdLife Australia Atlas data for White-browed Babbler *Pomatostomus superciliosus* in NSW. The general western preference for the species is obvious, as is the population in the Upper Hunter (circled).



Habitat along Durrigere Road where the Singing Honeyeaters (and White-browed Babbblers, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Southern Whitefaces and others) occur. The vegetation is reminiscent of habitat seen west of the Great Divide. Photo - Mick Roderick



One of the Durrigere Road population of Singing Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus virescens*. Photo - Allan Richardson

Western influence on Hunter Valley birds cont.

Other examples would be Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, White-browed Babblers, Southern Whitefaces and Western Gerygone, which are all likely resident breeding birds in the Hunter. Some other visitors more often associated with western habitats also occur, such as Black-eared Cuckoo, Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Plum-headed Finch and Painted Honeyeater. The latter has an interesting tale connected with the availability of particular Mistletoe species, which in turn are associated with those *Acacia* plants – but I will leave that story for another time!

Historically, Australian Bustards, Apostlebirds and Crimson / Orange Chats occurred and there is even tantalising evidence that things like Malleefowl and Crested Bellbirds did as well (perhaps they still do?).

It is certainly an interesting subject and one that I plan to delve even deeper into in the coming years. For some background, you could have a look at Alan Stuart's article on historical records of birds in the Hunter (in *The Whistler* #3) or an article by P.A. Bourke in the August 1969 edition of *Hunter Natural History* called "The Western Element in Hunter Valley Birdlife".

Mick Roderick

Meeting Highlights - Every 4th Stork is Polish

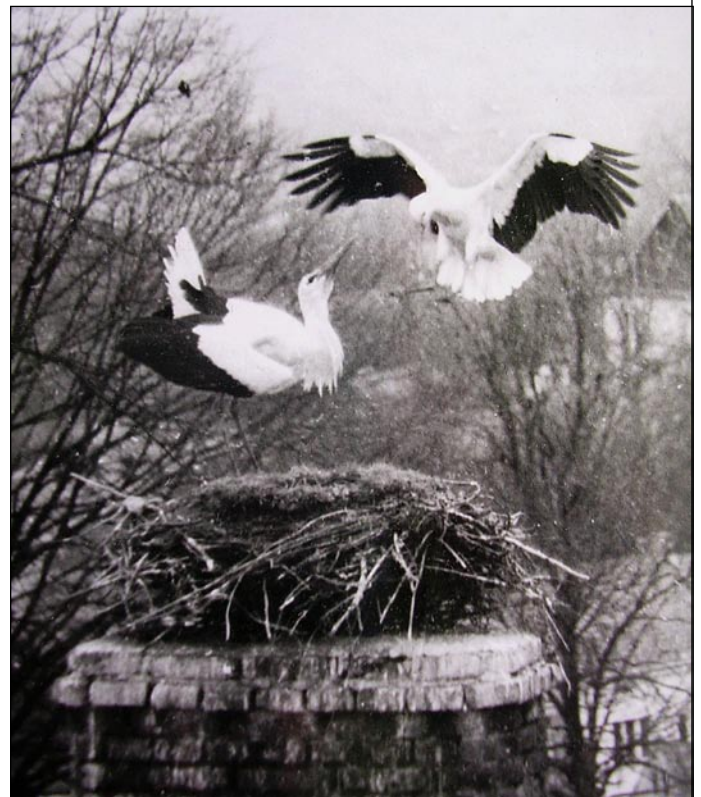
As a child watching Disney cartoons I was fascinated by the character *Mr Stork* whose occupation as a baby-delivery stork was to deliver babies to caring and proper parents. However, it was not until I visited Poland, the homeland of my parents, for the first time in 2004 that I finally came across the real bird, the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*.

It must have been the sheer awe or reverence of seeing my first gigantic stork nest atop a medieval church that drew me to revel in the significance of this species and its prominent place in European culture and social customs.

The Polish word for the White Stork is "Bocian". Whilst visiting my mother's family home in the medieval town of Biecz in south-east Poland, I came across a very old (circa 1950s) and grainy photograph of a male White Stork greeting a newly arriving female at the beginning of spring. This courtship display was taken from the back window of the family home, and it would appear that they are cementing their pair bond with an up-down display. In this display, which is often accompanied by bill-clattering, the birds hold their wings away from their sides and pump their heads up and down.

This is one of my favourite and most inspirational bird photographs, and gives me some clue that birding and nature conservation is in the blood (along with the other Polish treats such as Pierogi, sausages and Vodka).

The White Stork is 1 metre tall with long red legs, a straight pointed red bill, white plumage and black wing feathers. It weighs between 2.3 and 4.4 kg and has a wing span of between 155 and 215 cm. It is a long distance migrant which breeds in Europe (March – September) and over-winters in the savannas of Africa. It is a carnivore that eats a wide range of animal prey and its preferred feeding grounds are grassy meadows, farmland and shallow wetlands. It breeds close to these farmland habitats, building a large stick nest in trees, on buildings (rooftops, towers, chimneys), as well as on pylons, telegraph poles, or on purpose-built man-made platforms. Many homeowners will add embellishments



such as wooden wagon wheels to old chimneys to encourage storks to nest on their houses.

Stork nests are huge: some old nests may be over 2 metres in diameter and nearly 3 metres in depth. They are constructed of branches and sticks and lined with twigs, grasses, sod, rags and paper. Some nests have been in continuous use for hundreds of years. They form loose informal colonies while breeding and will stay with one mate for the breeding season, however they do not migrate or over-winter together. If the same pair reforms in successive years it is largely due to their strong attachment to their nest site. Between 3 and 5 eggs are laid and both parents incubate and feed chicks. Young birds become independent after 2-3 months.

One of the many interesting facts is that they rely heavily on the presence of thermal updrafts during migration.

Meeting Highlights - Every 4th Stork is Polish cont.

These air currents are not found over water, hence White Storks are reluctant to fly across the Mediterranean Sea to reach their wintering grounds in Africa. They solve this problem by splitting into two distinct migratory routes – they either cross at the Straits of Gibraltar or circle around the Mediterranean through the Middle East. Their migration is highly synchronized and flocks contain as many as 11,000 individuals.

It appeared that the species was aided by human activities in Europe during the Middle Ages as woodland was cleared and new pastures and farmland were created. However, a decline in the population began in the 19th century due to industrialisation, pollution and changes in agricultural methods. White Storks now have a patchy distribution in Europe and no longer breed in parts of Western Europe. However, in Poland and other Eastern European countries they are still relatively common. Nearly 41,000 pairs of the estimated 160,000 worldwide breed in Poland, thus, “every fourth stork is Polish”.

The White Stork has had a significant impact on human culture and folklore dating back to Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Islam. For example: in ancient Greece, because storks killed snakes, killing a stork was punished with death, just as murdering a person! The species is also revered in Islam because their annual migration passes over Mecca. In European folklore the stork is a bringer of good fortune, responsible for bringing babies

to new parents, and heralds the arrival of spring and a promise of the end of winter.

Possibly one of the first accounts of “twitching” or early formations of what we now recognise as the “Twitchathon” also comes from ancient Greece where a special prize was awarded to the person who was the first to notice (tick) a stork in early spring and to announce this good news to others.

In Poland, White Stork conservation is still largely based on tradition and social customs (i.e. traditional protection by villagers), with legal measures performing just a secondary function. In recent decades there have been significant conservation efforts across Europe supported by state institutions, power industry companies (massive-scale construction of nest platforms on top of electric poles) and other efforts by environmental and birding groups – to the point where you can even watch live web cams of nesting birds!!

Due to these conservation efforts the White Stork is now described as “overall population trend increasing” by BirdLife International and it is listed as Least Concern (IUCN Red List category). However, further conservation efforts are also needed in Africa where they face a number of threats including hunting, drought and overgrazing.

Lucas Grenadier

Meeting Highlights - Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Program

At the July Club night we screened a video called *Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper* - the true story of a small team going to extremes in far east Russia to take on the biggest challenge of their lives . . . to save a species from extinction. The dedication of the team and the charisma of the little shorebird grabbed us all and we opened our hearts and wallets to help raise funds for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Effort. A stunning \$481 was raised on the night - thank you to everyone who bought raffle tickets, contributed prizes and made outright donations.



The Committee decided to add the funds raised at the December 2012 Club Night to the HBOC donation to the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Effort, resulting in \$846 being sent to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust which manages the project. We will continue to raise funds for this project and other bird conservation projects for the remainder of the year, with a raffle of some beautiful bird artwork donated by the artist James Hough - see page 6. Raffle tickets will be available at the September to December Club meetings.

Here is an update on recent achievements for Spoon-billed Sandpiper recovery on the breeding grounds.

15 July 2013

Twenty critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper chicks have hatched under the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's (WWT's) expert care in the Russian Far East. Conservationists took the eggs from the wild, in order to protect them from extreme weather and predators. The first hatched early on Wednesday morning (11 July) and they continued until the last hatched on Sunday evening (15 July 2013).

Numbers of Spoon-billed Sandpipers plummeted in recent years because of the destruction of wetland habitats and the effects of illegal trapping along their migration route. While tackling these problems, conservationists are boosting

Meeting Highlights - Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery cont.

the productivity of the remaining breeding pairs by taking eggs from the wild, hatching and rearing them in captivity and releasing them once they have fledged.

WWT Head of Species Conservation, Dr Baz Hughes said: "This is conservation at the edge; it's risky work, in difficult conditions, but my colleagues have proved yet again how incredibly experienced they are at rearing endangered birds. The breeding season is brief and brutal for Spoon-billed Sandpipers in the wild, but by intervening like this we can help rear five times as many young and help the population stabilise. But it's expensive to work in the remote Russian Far East and it's only possible due to the financial support we've raised for this charismatic bird."



The Royal Society for Protection of Birds' (RSPB's) Head of the International Species Recovery Team, Dr Rob Sheldon said: "This delightful and engaging bird has been brought to the edge of extinction by rampant habitat loss and severe hunting pressure, which are now being recognised and tackled. The conservation breeding programme is but one part of an international effort to save spoon-billed sandpipers. Head starting is an innovative additional technique that gives the population a helping hand at this critical stage in our attempts to prevent their extinction."

Chief Executive of Birds Russia, Dr Evgeny Syroechkovskiy said: "We have come so close to losing the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Each of these twenty chicks represents a bit more hope for the future of the species. I am very proud of the hard work by our team of fieldworkers, aviculturists and researchers."

Jean-Christophe Vié, Director SOS – Save Our Species said: "At SOS we are delighted to support this project and its innovative conservation methods. The headstarting program had already delivered meaningful results in 2012 and the news of this additional batch of hatchlings in Chukotka fortifies hope for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's future. It is rewarding news not just for the experienced team out there but for all the unsung heroes who strive – often in remote corners of the world – to save our threatened species."

Foxes, skuas and feral dogs take eggs and chicks from the wild, ground-nesting Spoon-billed Sandpipers and sudden changes in the weather can be fatal. Studies show that on average each pair lays four eggs per year but raises less than one chick.

Artificial incubation and captive rearing increases that to more than three and, by taking eggs within days of their being laid, the birds' naturally start again with a second clutch that they incubate and raise themselves.

The approach, known as headstarting, is a short-term tactic. It increases the number of birds approaching breeding age as conservationists tackle the problems of illegal trapping and habitat loss, hopefully enabling the species to stabilise and recover more quickly.

The team is blogging about their progress at www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com

Top Australian artist donates artwork to HBOC for conservation

One of Australia's leading bird artists, James Hough, has donated a framed print and other illustrated items to the Hunter Bird Observers Club. The framed print of Superb Fairy-wrens (illustrated below), as well as a set of Australian Bird Series table placemats and matching coasters, and two signed calendars will be raffled between September and December to help raise funds for various conservation projects supported by HBOC such as the global operation to save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper from extinction.

During 2008, James was elected as a member of Kevin Hill's Australian Top Ten Artists and exhibits with this group all over Australia throughout the year. His work is featured in the 2007 and 2010 Australian Top Ten Artists'



books. As well as exhibiting successfully in galleries throughout Australia his work has been published in a number of magazines such as *The Australian Artist* magazine, *Birds Australia* and *Hunter Lifestyle* and is well represented in many private collections in Australia and around the world.

Prints of artwork by James can sell for hundreds of dollars and we would like to thank James for his generous contribution to HBOC's conservation efforts.

To find out more about James Hough and his work visit www.jameshoughwildlifeart.com.au

Rob Kyte

Activity Reports

Towarri National Park

8 - 10 June 2013

The June long weekend camp was held at Towarri National Park (near Scone). Ten people attended the camp, and the weather was kind to us – a bit of drizzle on Friday night but otherwise it was fine, and occasionally sunny, and the nights were mild (particularly compared to some of our past winter camps). Greg Newling brought us out a trailer load of wood, which also helped.

We found 62 species within walking distance at Towarri. Spotted Pardalotes were just everywhere, and Buff-rumped Thornbills were also plentiful. There were various honeyeater species about, including ~20 Brown-headed which are always great to see. A distant Barn Owl on Sunday night got us excited and we charged off with spotlights but couldn't track it down.

We also made a visit one morning to Greg's patch at Wingen Travelling Stock Route. At Wingen we found ~40 species including a large group of Grey-crowned Babblers and some Brown Treecreepers. And the coffees at the pub afterwards were great.

When leaving on Monday, we found a Spotted Harrier a few kilometres back towards Scone, which was a pleasure for all of us and a Hunter tick for one member of our group. There was also a Spotted Harrier over the highway near Aberdeen when I drove through.

Alan Stuart

New Members' Day Hunter Wetlands Centre

Sunday 16 June 2013



HBOC President Mick Roderick addressing the group at the start of the walk - Lene Parashou

Over thirty new and established members were welcomed to the Wetlands Centre by HBOC president, Mick, who led the group around the site looking at both woodland and waterbirds. The bird of the day was spotted before we even set out, as two Little Eagles soared overhead – a dark morph and a pale morph together.



Pale morph Little Eagle soaring above the Hunter Wetlands Centre - Lene Parashou



Keen birdwatchers surveying Water Ribbon Swamp at Hunter Wetlands Centre - Lene Parashou

The challenge was then on to count the Magpie Geese and Liz took the prize with 115 – the highest ever count at the Centre. The usual suspects were present on the water with high counts of Grey Teal and Eurasian Coot. Six Australasian Shovelers were spotted when the birds suddenly took flight. An unusual bird for the Wetlands Centre, a Spotless Crake, was also heard.

Bush birds were also well represented, including several species of honeyeater – Brown, Yellow-faced, White-cheeked, Lewin's (heard) and White-plumed – the latter two not often present at the Centre. A bird count at lunchtime gave us a total of 68 species.

While we were out birding a small group led by Lorna (Paul, Rowley and Sue) were very busy preparing our barbecue lunch of rissoles, sausages and onions. This was accompanied by salads and slices provided by other members. After we had eaten, Mick outlined the considerable achievements of the Club and encouraged us all to participate in its activities.

The new members all enjoyed this introduction to the Club. A big thank you to Lorna and Mick and their helpers for organising such a successful event.

Margaret Stewart

Activity Reports cont.

Walka Water Works

Tuesday 2 July 2013

The rain finally cleared and 16 of us set out in an anticlockwise direction to catch the bush birds which were also glad to see the sun. They performed on cue with Golden Whistlers, Eastern Spinebills, White-naped and Scarlet Honeyeaters and Spotted Pardalotes out and about. We had a wonderful view of a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and could hear others calling. Rose Robins were also spotted by some.

One of the highlights of the day was the number of different raptor species seen – seven in all - with a Spotted Harrier the best sighting. At least 20 species of waterbirds were enjoying the water, including both Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterel.

The walk around the dam took us about three hours and some people went home after this, but a small group then walked up the hill to check on the bush birds there. In total 78 species were seen, and one heard. Walka is certainly a great spot to visit, even in winter.

Margaret Stewart

Port Stephens Waterbirds Survey

12 July 2013

Doesn't time roll around quickly! All of a sudden it's mid July and time once again for the winter survey of Port Stephens waterbirds. For anyone who is not familiar with these surveys, we do a boat-based survey of all the important habitat for waterbirds (especially waders) in the Port. The survey is done in conjunction with the National Parks & Wildlife Service and is assisted by the Great Lakes-Port Stephens Marine Park Authority. Those organisations provide most of the boats and the skippers – Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project provides the sixth boat. We just have to kick back, count birds, and enjoy ourselves! Afterwards, we all assemble at the NPWS office in Nelson Bay to debrief while enjoying lunch. This year, there were 13 surveyors from HBOC in 6 boats.

Because of the tide time we had the luxury of a later start than usual. However, it was not a very high tide which hindered us somewhat and we might have missed a few birds through not being able to get as close to shore as usual. Nevertheless we managed to record lots of birds!

Without doubt the highlight was to find 4 Beach Stone-curlews on Dowardee Island. The species is Critically Endangered in NSW (with an estimated population of just 13 birds). All previous reports have been of a pair and then of a pair with a single bird which is believed to be their chick. So finding a 4th bird was rather a surprise.

We found a total of 130 Australian Pied Oystercatchers – once again confirming the importance of Port Stephens for this species which is classified as Endangered in NSW. We also found 30 Sooty Oystercatchers (classified as Vulnerable in NSW) – this was our highest winter count of them. Their numbers have been rising steadily each survey and it seems Port Stephens is of growing importance for this species too. For both the oystercatcher species, most of the birds in the Port seem to be adults and I think this reflects that Port Stephens is a holding zone for birds waiting for a breeding site to become available. Their NSW status appears to be constrained by a lack of undisturbed beaches where they can breed.

There were 308 Bar-tailed Godwits – a welcome return to “normal” numbers of pre-breeding (juvenile/immature) birds after a couple of lean winters for them in Port Stephens. The numbers of the other migratory shorebirds (Eastern Curlew, etc) were around normal.

We had very high numbers of Little Black Cormorants (900+ birds). As they were moving around, there might have been some double counting but there is no doubting that there were very many more of them than usual and I presume it indicates that there is currently a plentiful supply of fish in the Port.

Alan Stuart

Seaham and Wallaroo State Forest

21 July 2013

A cool morning greeted us; I was thankful the meeting time was 8am. We met at Seaham Bird Hide, much overgrown these days, with poor visibility from it onto the swamp, but still an excellent educational tool.

First we surveyed the swamp, finding the usual suspects and a Yellow-billed Spoonbill roosting with the Royal Spoonbills. A walk around the swamp yielded three Nankeen Night-Herons roosting in the edge vegetation. Then on to Seaham Park for a bit more birding. By then the temperature had warmed and we had a pleasant morning tea in the sun.

After morning tea we went to Wallaroo State Forest entrance on Italia Road where we had some pleasant birding time along the road and into the depths of the forest. Large-billed Scrubwren gave us some good looks.

A total of 71 species was recorded for the day - a very good tally for a winter outing. I remember one winter long weekend camp when we recorded only 55 species over 3 days.

A good social event, thank you all for attending and for your company.

Lorna Mee

Future Activities

Tomago Wetlands to be included in the Hunter Waterbird Surveys

Your services are required! Here is an opportunity for you to contribute to the welfare of birds. From September this year, HBOC will begin surveying the shorebirds at Tomago Wetlands at the same time as the surveys are done at all the other sites around the Hunter Estuary.

Since the Tomago floodgates were re-opened a few years ago, the regular tidal inundations have transformed the place. Ducks and other waterbirds are now present in large numbers and last summer some shorebirds started to become reliably present. In the 2013/14 season, it is quite likely that many more shorebirds will begin using Tomago Wetlands. We need to monitor this and have a clear understanding whether these are additional shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary or if it is a case of birds moving around.

We need some volunteers to participate regularly in these new surveys, **and also in the existing surveys**, which will be on Saturday mornings once/month, at varying start times (the start time is tide-dependent). We are hoping to form a team of 3-4 people for Tomago, and therefore you wouldn't have to come every month, so long as you can come most months. New surveyors are also very welcome at Ash Island and Kooragang Dykes - contact the relevant team leaders shown on the Activities List.

You do not have to be experienced to take part; beginners are most welcome. Ann Lindsey will be the team leader at Tomago and there is no better teacher than Ann if you are wanting to learn more about shorebird identification.

The Tomago Wetlands site is closed to the general public (because of some access issues) and so this is a great opportunity for you to get regular access to what would almost be your own private wetlands! On the negative side, the survey technique requires a fair bit of walking through water in gum boots.

If you are interested, please contact Ann Lindsey (4951 2008 or ann.lindsey@bigpond.com) and she will give you more details. The first survey will be on Saturday, 21 September at 8.30am prompt. The meeting place will be at locked gates on Tomago Road, Tomago, just west of the entrance to Tomago House.

N.B. The Tuesday surveys at Tomago will continue as usual, at 7.30am on the third Tuesday of the month. It is important to continue the Tuesday surveys as they constitute a long-term data set, different tidal cycles are involved and most importantly, they take place early in the morning.

Directions to October Long Weekend Camp at Durridgere SCA

This October Long Weekend camp is planned for Durridgere State Conservation Area (SCA), accessible by **dry weather roads only**. Mick Roderick did a brief survey of the area a couple of years ago and found birds like Diamond Firetail, Turquoise Parrot and Red-capped Robin within 50m of the campsite, so it promises to be an exciting camp!

To get to the campsite at Durridgere SCA you need to get onto Ulan Road. There are 2 ways of getting there from the direction of Newcastle - either by taking the Golden Highway and taking the turn-off to the left about 7km west of Cassilis, or by going the scenic route, via the Bylong Valley Way and then following the signs to Ulan once in Wollar and then going right onto Ulan Road.

Along Ulan Road, you need to find "Summerhill Road", which is about 5km south of the turn-off from the Golden Hwy along Ulan Road, or about 30km north of Ulan. Take Summerhill Road (there should be paddocks to your left and bush to your right once you are on it) and drive along it for 4.5km. Along the way, you will go round a sweeping left bend, followed by a sweeping right bend. About 1km on from that sweeping right bend, another sweeping left bend appears in front of you. You will notice that there is an entry into the forest on this left bend. There is a sign saying 'Durridgere Central Trail Only' and some mail boxes. You need to take this access into the bush.

You can actually get directions to this very point by typing "Durridgere State Forest, Turill, New South Wales" into Google Maps, which is probably a good thing to do.

You then follow the forest track (which initially heads west, then south) for about 3.3km to some wonderful woodland 'til you get to a fork in the road. At this point, you need to veer left, and follow the track to the campsite (the old homestead site) which is just under another 1km further on. The track is suitable for towing.

Note that these roads are **dry weather only**, so check conditions closer to the date. We will have an alternative location for the camp if wet weather prevents access to Durridgere so **please contact Tom Clarke on 0418 411 785 prior to departure**.



Phelps Hut in Durridgere State Conservation Area

Superb Fairy-wren Part II

Second Nesting Event - Breeding Season 2011/12

My report on the discovery of the first nesting of our wrens in the 2011/12 nesting season, in *Superb Fairy-wren Part I* of the June issue of the Newsletter, concluded with the statement that "On 26 November, Bluey, the female and 2 juveniles were recorded working on the back lawn. The juveniles eventually became working members of the clan". This report examines the behaviours of the clan from that point on, leading up to the outcomes of nesting attempts in the 2011/12 season. The report is based on 67 days (more than 100 pages) of observations recorded in my note books, from 26 November 2011 to the end of January 2012, when a third nesting event was underway.

After 26 November, the wrens were involved in a wide range of activities. They were foraging in the Callistemon, Banksia, Correa, Grevillea and Kangaroo Paw and the ground covers of Native Violet and Brachyscome in the front gardens, the herb and vegetable patches, back lawn and the covered patio and its pots and hanging baskets. The observations have revealed detailed behaviours, but this report will focus on incidents that resulted in significant changes in behaviour patterns.

On 1 December 2011, Bluey and the dominant female (hereafter called Leading Lady) were working in the hanging baskets in our patio, foreshadowing the important role of the baskets in building a new nest. On 22 December, Bluey, the clan's Leading Lady and the two juveniles were observed gathering fibre from the baskets and carrying them over the back fence into the neighbour's Bush Cherry hedge (*Syzygium australe*) immediately behind the fence. The two juveniles from the first nest of the 2011/12 season, as they were growing up, had become helpers of the clan, and could be recognised by their smaller, more slender features.



(Above) A brown helper at a hanging basket in the early stages of the clan collecting fibre to take to the nest in the Bush Cherry Hedge (left) over the back fence.

By 23 December, a to-and-fro routine was underway, carrying fibre from the hanging baskets to the Bush

Cherry hedge, where we suspected a new nest had been established by Bluey, Leading Lady and the helpers. One of Heather's movie clips of Leading Lady demonstrated how vigorous was the struggle to pull off a beak-full of fibre to carry over the fence. The movements of the clan from the back lawn to back fence and drop down into the same part of the hedge was still being maintained 29 - 31 December 2011. My movie clip, dated 5 January 2012, of the wrens feeding on biscuit crumbs in the patio, revealed one of the two juvenile helpers begging for biscuit crumbs and being fed by a brown female. The female had a well developed robust-looking tail, compared with the helper's somewhat shorter and more scraggly tail and was assumed to be Leading Lady.

The Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1982: 408): Superb blue wren stated: *Any one lucky enough to share a garden with a party of superb blue wrens can make friends with them by offering food on a bird-table (placed out of reach of cats). Breadcrumbs can be fried in fat and grated cheese are favoured offerings.* We were lucky enough to have a friendly clan foraging in the gardens, lawn and the patio pot plants and hanging baskets. We were able to recognise Bluey, wherever he was in the property, but we could not easily identify the separate tiny brown birds and we had no access to the federal colour-banding scheme. However, we thought that establishing a food station close to the house would attract the clan close enough to enable photography to gather identification characteristics (a bit like the way whales are identified). We were not enamoured by the idea of bread crumb fried in fat, but decided to give crumbed biscuit a try. This worked OK from the start and was soon improved upon by adding meal worms to the menu, obtainable from local pet stores. It was far less efficient than colour bands but helped us to gather identification clues and work out who was taking the meal worms to where. The worms were certainly popular with the wrens!

The routines we had been watching changed dramatically from 3 January 2012 onwards, when 3 copulations between Bluey and Leading Lady were seen. On 25 January, a brownie helper plucked a fluffy seed head from a dandelion in the lawn, carried it in its beak to the patio birdbath (photographed by Heather) and then flew over the back fence to disappear into the part of the Bush Cherry hedge we had by then decided marked the nest site. The Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1982: 409): Superb blue wren described the nest as being made of *grass stems and blades woven into a framework of spiderweb and lined with finer grasses and feathers.* In the case of this nesting effort, we did not see the birds take any grass stems or blades but we did see a very large amount of fibre being taken from the hanging baskets. A dandelion fluffy seed head was the only first-hand example we had an opportunity to examine as a potential lining at close quarters. The only other example was on 19 January, when a helper doing intense foraging next door returned over the back fence to the nest site with a large beak-full of fluff.

Superb Fairy-wren Part II cont.



A brown helper plucked a fluffy dandelion seed head, carried it to the bird bath and then flew over the back fence and delivered it to the nest. Photo - Heather Maddock

The emphasis had changed from predominantly nest construction activities to gathering food and mainly carrying it over the back fence to the nest. On 7th, 8th and 9th January 2012, Leading Lady was observed and captured in my movie clips, feeding on the nectar oozing from one particular Grevillea Yamba Sunshine yellow flower in the front garden. Grevillea nectar was listed in detailed studies in the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (HANZAB) (2001: 276) and observations of feeding on nectar have ultimately become common in our records.



Nectar oozing from the flower of Grevillea Yamba Sunshine that Leading Lady visited.

Having decided that the nesting site was in a specific area on the Bush Cherry hedge behind our fence, we sought permission from the back-fence neighbour to investigate behaviours from their side. We were given permission to enter at any time. At 1800h on our first visit on 19 January, we located the nest deep in Bush Cherry hedge in the location we had previously decided. We filmed Bluey and Leading Lady arriving and departing and then at 1825h found the female feeding back in the foliage of Grevillea Yamba Sunshine in our front garden. On 22 January, Bluey, the female and the other clan members were coming and going with food in their beaks. At 1745h Bluey came into the back lawn after a hosing, gouged into the soil and dragged out an earth worm (not mentioned as a food in the HANZAB detailed studies list), bashed it on the lemon tree's pot and then flew over the fence to the nest. On 23 January the clan team was still delivering mealworms from our bowl. Bluey was still at the bowl when it was almost dark and chased off a Willie Wagtail, the first defensive action I have observed from a wren. During a visit on 21 January my camera battery went flat and when changing it under pressure not to miss shots, I failed to check to ensure the correct year. Some weeks later I found that the dates had been registering 2013 and consequently I now have to be careful to use 2012 when using dates for those weeks!

On 24 January, when I was watching from the neighbour's garden, the clan team was still active with the repetitive mealworm food routine up to 1120h. Bluey then withdrew from the feeding and spent considerable time in a performance that appeared to me to be an effort to persuade the fledglings to leave the nest. He worked vigorously back and forth along the fence. He stopped to call loudly at intervals (and later I was to hear the calls on my movie). He dived into and out of the nest location, swooped up high to return and start again and eventually abandoned the exercise and returned to the food parade. Despite the following light rain, the wrens kept up the traffic with the mealworms and at 1930h I left and returned home to replenish the mealworms to maintain visitations until dark.



Bluey carried a mealworm from the food bowl on our patio to deliver to the nest in the hedge on the day he was encouraging the babies to leave the nest.

Bluey arriving at the hedge carrying a large insect foraged from the front garden.



On 25 January, there was considerable food ferrying to the nest site all morning, despite intermittent heavy rain. At 1245h a little stubby-tailed new fledgling appeared amongst the pots stored between our shed and the side fence. Bluey and the helpers began to carry food from our food bowl to the fledgling in amongst the pots in the alley, cleaning up the mealworms in the process. At 1430h, the baby tumbled behind the pots, creating agitation from Bluey and the helpers. Later, it fell and disappeared again. Bluey dived after it and reappeared, helping it to scramble back into view. From 1830h to almost dark, Bluey and the helpers worked bringing food from the lawn food bowls, but changed to rocketing to and from the front garden, with no back fence trips; we did not see what happened to the baby fledgling.

Bluey was active on the street nature strip at 0800h on 26 January and from 0800-0850h there was no action over the back fence or at the food bowls. At 0900h the first wren that arrived at the food bowl quickly gathered biscuit crumbs and headed to Grevillea Moonlight in the front garden. Later, Bluey and the brown helpers made occasional visits to the back fence, but all day the trips were mostly to the front gardens, except for

Superb Fairy-wren Part II cont.



25 January 2012: The little stubby-tailed baby wren appeared amongst the pots stored between our garden shed and the side fence.



The little stubby-tailed baby looks up expectantly in the hope of being fed by the brown helper above.



The baby has moved to a new pot and is getting closer attention from the helper.

several visits to the nest site from 1825-1930h, which had us wondering whether there were still young there. However, 27 January revealed a resumption of activity in the Bush Cherry Hedge. One of the helpers started the carriage of fibre from a basket at 0800h to a site further to the left in the hedge from the previous nest. The activity accelerated to intense activity from 0900h onwards and during 1200-1500h the clan's Leading Lady made regular visits with fibre from our place to the new location in the hedge, making her last trip for the day at 1930h. Bluey had made intermittent visits to the new site but collected food from the bowl and carried it to the young hidden in front garden.



27 January 2012: Bluey on his way to the food bowl in amongst the pot plants on our patio. He made intermittent trips to the new nest-construction site in the hedge, but was collecting food from the bowl and carrying it to the young hidden in the front garden.

It took until 29 January for the two baby fledglings to emerge from hiding (4 days after the first day of fledging). They had cuddled together in *Grevillea Yamba Sunshine* and Bluey flew to feed them. On 30 January, they lost balance in *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, demonstrating their uncertain mobility and later in the day were seen around the Garden 2 birdbath. We were unable to determine whether our original stubby-tailed baby was one of the two, or had failed to survive because of the heavy rain. However, it confirmed that there were now two new helpers for Bluey to train.

HANZAB (2001: 286) stated that *the female usually builds a nest within one week (if not too late in the season) and the primary male and helpers continue to feed fledglings while the female incubates*. The Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1982: 408): Superb Fairy-wren stated that *one of the advantages of group life for these wrens is that when seasonal conditions are suitable it enables them to breed in rapid succession*. The next article will confirm whether the female did succeed to build the new nest within a week and whether the seasonal conditions were suitable for them to breed in rapid succession.

Max Maddock

Goshawk after an easy meal

On 12 June 2013, I spent an hour on the back deck of my house in Gloucester attempting to photograph a Brown Goshawk that was trying to get at my neighbour's Cockatiels - eventually I got this shot. The goshawk appeared to have caught one of the Cockatiel's feet in its foot through the wire but, because the wire gauge was so small, it could not bite the Cockatiel. Both birds spent several seconds flapping wildly before the goshawk was forced to let go, while the other Cockatiels in the cage added to the mayhem, shrieking and flying back and forth.



This goshawk had spent most of the day attacking the aviaries next door, crashing into the wire sides, briefly standing on top of the cages, even prowling on the ground, and keeping all the parrots in an uproar. From the brief views I had of it, it looked to be a young bird, maybe second year.

Usually it is a Collared Sparrowhawk that chases the House Sparrows that feed off the spilled grain but this individual was after bigger stuff - can't blame it, a Cockatiel is a much better meal than a puny sparrow.

Penny Drake-Brockman

Marks Point Eastern Ospreys

a)



c)



b)



a) & b) A pair of Eastern Ospreys had been nesting on a light pole at Baxter Oval, Marks Point since 2010.

c) The light pole was due for replacement. After consultation with the Department of Environment & Conservation and Osprey experts, Lake Macquarie Council decided to move the nest to a purpose-built pole and steel basket.

d)



e)



d) The nest was moved in early 2012. The top of the old light pole was cut and brought to the ground, where the nest was lifted into the steel basket.

e) The basket design was based on similar Osprey nest relocation projects on the NSW north coast.

f) The nest was about one metre wide. It was constructed of sticks, bark and seagrass, and contained fish scales.



f)

Marks Point Eastern Ospreys cont.

g)



h)



g) & h) The basket containing the nest was bolted onto a new pole. The Eastern Osprey pair were photographed in their new home two days later.

i)



i) The birds have adapted well, and appear to have successfully bred since their nest relocation. The birds can regularly be seen hunting over Lake Macquarie.

Photographs a) Ben Harrison; b) & i) Symon Walpole; c), d), e), f), g) & h) Lake Macquarie Council

Milestone for Ann Lindsey

On 2 June this year, the word went out that a juvenile Pacific Gull had been sighted around the Newcastle Beach / Fort Drive area. It's a very uncommon species for us locally and many people braved the appalling weather conditions to look for it. For Ann Lindsey though, there was an added dimension – it could become her 400th species seen in the Hunter Region. Ann's morning attempt failed (after a quick dash back from looking at Budgerigars in the rain at Kurri Kurri) – the bird disappeared about 11 am and nobody could relocate it. But in the afternoon, Ann again braved the conditions – and bingo! There it was, standing on Nobbys Beach and providing great views.

Several years ago I had designed badges for the 300 Club and 350 Club but I thought no one would ever see 400 species in the Hunter Region! A 400 Club badge was required – and after consultation with Ann we decided Black Honeyeater was the preferred bird to have on it (based on a combination of aesthetics and local rarity). It was a pleasure to present Ann with her well-deserved 400 Club badge at the June club night.

At the moment (and probably for quite a while to come) Ann is the sole member of the 400 Club but there are more than 20 people who are in either the 300 Club or 350 Club. The way these operate has been slightly modified recently (in fact the changes are still in transition). Anyone who claims to have seen 300 or more species in the Hunter Region is eligible for a 300 Club badge and their name and tally will be shown on the Club website. Those who claim 350 or more birds are eligible for a 350 Club badge but their tally will only appear on the website after their list has been peer-reviewed. For the 400 Club – there is a peer-review process before we present a badge. The peer-review process has been proving to be a lot of fun, as it has been accompanied by many comments such as “surely you've seen Barn Owl in the Hunter?” and also plenty of suggestions as to where people can go to see the species which are missing from their list.

Alan Stuart

BLA Atlas revitalised in Hunter Region

During 2012 more than 2200 atlas surveys were submitted to BirdLife Australia's (BLA's) Birdata system for the Hunter Region. This exceeds by 200 surveys the previous peak made during the first full year of data collection for the New Australian Atlas as shown in the diagram below.

When data collection for the New Atlas finished in 2002 it was decided to keep going because bird populations and distributions are changing all the time. Furthermore there are a number of Atlas junkies driven by the mantra “a survey a day keeps the doctor away”. Alan Morris springs to mind and he remains the most active participant having amassed over 16000 surveys, an incredible 3 surveys/day. How addicted can you get?



Ann Lindsey at Nobbys Beach on seeing the Pacific Gull
Photo - Mick Roderick

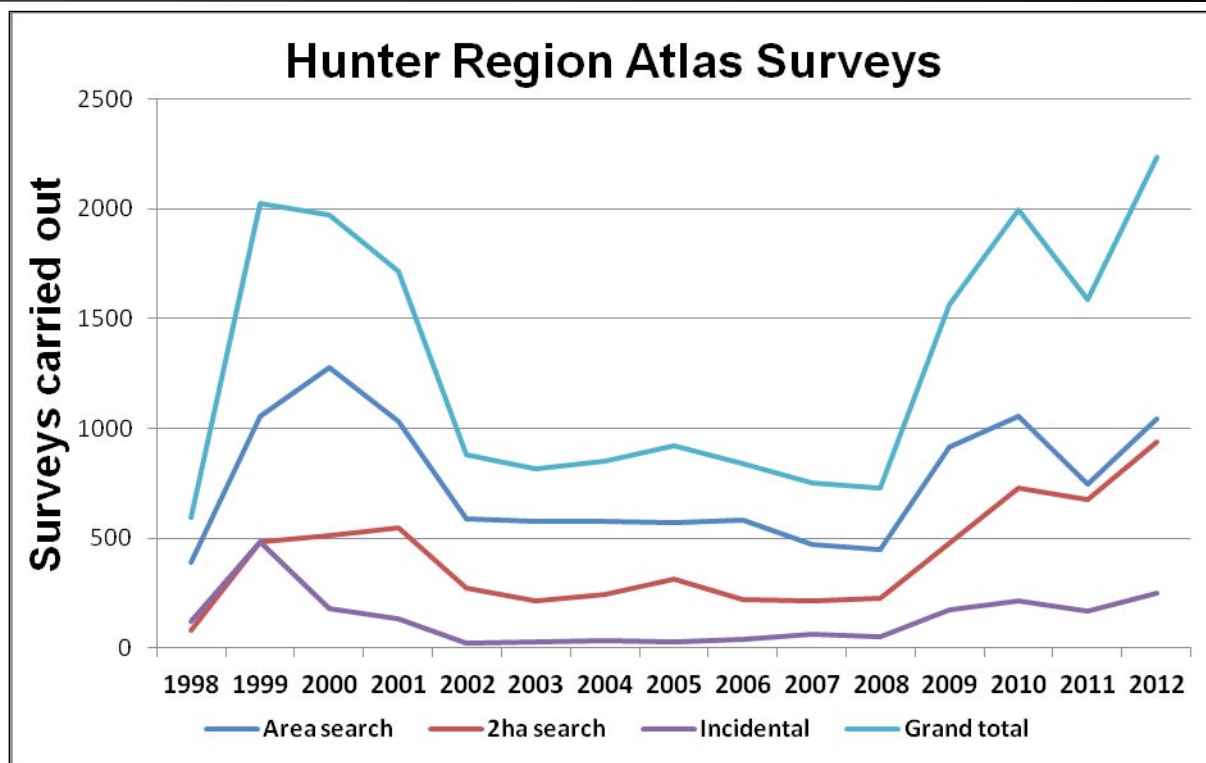


400 Club badge Photo - Alan Stuart

Note: Have you seen 300 or more species in the Hunter Region? If you would like to join the 300 Club, don't hesitate to contact Alan Stuart on 4952 8569

However, Alan was the exception to the rule. Many participants dropped off the Atlas perch and activity fell to around one third of its peak level. One of the problems was that there was seldom feedback on the results directly related to the Hunter Region. To redress that situation we obtained the Atlas data from BLA with help from BLA's Andrew Silcocks and found a couple of HBOC computer buffs with freakish Excel skills, namely Peter Struik and Ian Martin. With their help we were able to generate feedback on our Hunter Region Atlas effort by publishing summary information in the Annual Bird Report series. For the first time there was a measure of how our Hunter Region bird populations changed from year to year.

BLA Atlas revitalised in Hunter Region cont.



During the last four years we have tripled the survey activity. This is an incredible success and thanks to everyone concerned. You have donated an additional effort involving around 1500 hours/annum of your time to increasing our knowledge of the birds of the Hunter Region and their conservation needs. Your efforts are worth about \$45,000 per annum at standard volunteer charge rates.

The importance of feedback goes further than just the motivation of participants; for those of us with a leadership role it is much easier to promote an activity when its value is evident. Ever been faced with that dreadful question “What is the point of this?” when you don’t have an answer?

You will notice that there are three types of Atlas survey with the main effort in 2012 being split almost equally between area searches and 2ha surveys. So which should you use? The answer is horses for courses.

BLA’s preferred method is the 2ha survey which involves a 20 minute search. Using a uniform method like the 2ha survey aids the interpretation of results and the measuring of changes in bird populations. It is the method to use when you are going back to an area regularly or trying to compare two areas. As an example, an HBOC team is using 2ha surveys to compare the impact of a wildfire which occurred in samphire during early 2012 on Ash Island. Rob Kyte will give a brief presentation at the August Club Night on the stunning results we have got showing how White-fronted Chats were almost exclusively recorded in our burnt 2ha sites and absent from the mature samphire. The 2ha survey method was ideal for this project.

However 2ha surveys can be frustrating when you want to learn about rare species, especially at remote locations. In these cases the use of the larger area searches where there is no constraint on time and you have the excitement of generating long lists is preferred. However, it is much harder to compare information generated by these surveys.

Incidental searches cover the situation where you see that rare bird like a Spotted Harrier on a fence post. Well not so rare just now. Stop the car, admire the bird and when it flies off get your GPS out and note the location and submit an incidental survey.

Once again thanks to all who have contributed to a wonderful effort and for those who haven’t it is not too late to boost the 2013 tally.

Mike Newman

Want to try Atlassing?

Your surveys are important! Go to the BirdLife Australia Birddata website to enter your observations:
<http://birdlife.org.au/projects/atlas-and-birddata>

If you need help, don’t hesitate to ask - HBOC has plenty of keen atlassers ready to encourage newcomers to the joys of extending the worth of your bird observations. Try Ann Lindsey on 4951 2008, Greg Little on 4955 6609, Liz Crawford on 4959 3663.

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations

Please note that all sighting reports published in HBOC's newsletter or its on-line forum (Hunterbirding) are unofficial and have not been confirmed by the Club. Such reports are publicised in order that others can be made aware of the sighting(s) reported and have the chance to help verify them. Official records of bird sightings in the Hunter Region appear in the Annual Bird Report, for which written submissions supported by field notes and photographs are a vital part of the process for acceptance of locally uncommon/rare species.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer	Source
Antarctic Prion	1	23/06/2013	Port Stephens pelagic	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australasian Gannet	200+	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Australasian Shoveler	135	15/06/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Australasian Shoveler	300+	24/07/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Australian Magpie	283	29/07/2013	Woodville	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	25	17/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	100+	12/07/2013	Port Stephens	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Australian White Ibis	20+	22/05/2013	Louth	J. & B. Greig	Club Night
Australian Wood Duck	200+	6/06/2013	Goulburn River NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Bassian Thrush	2	10/07/2013	Sharpes Creek	A. Stuart	Club Night
Beach Stone-curlew	3	9/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Beach Stone-curlew	2	21/06/2013	Salamander Bay	L. Wooding	Hunterbirding
Beach Stone-curlew	3	24/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Beach Stone-curlew	1	25/06/2013	Mudbishops Point	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Beach Stone-curlew	4	12/07/2013	Port Stephens	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Beach Stone-curlew	3	16/07/2013	Old Bar	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	2	19/07/2013	Scone	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Black Falcon	1	27/07/2013	Whittingham	A. Simple	Hunterbirding
Black Kite	50+	22/05/2013	Louth	J. & B. Greig	Club Night
Black Kite	3	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Black Kite	7	29/06/2013	Tenambit	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Black Kite	50+	5/07/2013	Summerhill Tip	I. Benson	Hunterbirding
Black Kite	40+	18/07/2013	Scone	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Black Swan	111	15/06/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Black Swan	420	18/07/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel	1	23/06/2013	Port Stephens pelagic	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Black-browed Albatross	c.40	17/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Black-browed Albatross	c.35	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Black-fronted Dotterel	25	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Black-tailed Godwit	8	13/07/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2+2dy	22/06/2013	Belmont South	J. Cockerell	Club Night
Brahminy Kite	1	13/06/2013	Eraring	P. Durie	Hunterbirding
Brahminy Kite	1	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Brahminy Kite	1	13/07/2013	Lake Macquarie	J. Adams	Hunterbirding
Brown Quail	6	29/05/2013	Wollombi	J. & B. Greig	Club Night
Brown Treecreeper	2	1/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Brown Treecreeper	2	21/06/2013	Bunnan	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Brown Treecreeper	2	9/07/2013	Parkville	T. Clarke	Club Night
Brown-headed Honeyeater	10	3/07/2013	Eagleton	T. Clarke	Club Night
Brown-headed Honeyeater	8	4/07/2013	Coal Point	T. Clarke	Club Night
Budgerigar	5	2/06/2013	HEZ	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Budgerigar	c.12	13/06/2013	HEZ	J. Goswell	Hunterbirding
Budgerigar	3	21/06/2013	HEZ	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	5/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Cockatiel	6	21/06/2013	Warrah Creek Reserve	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Common Diving-Petrel	3	20/06/2013	Fort Drive	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Common Diving-Petrel	8	26/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Common Diving-Petrel	103+	27/06/2013	Fort Drive	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Common Diving-Petrel	2	29/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Common Diving-Petrel	1	29/06/2013	Fort Drive	P. Hansbro	Hunterbirding
Common Greenshank	8	13/07/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding
Common Starling	200+	6/06/2013	Goulburn River NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Crescent Honeyeater	2	4/07/2013	Gloucester Tops	A. Stuart	Club Night
Crescent Honeyeater	1	10/07/2013	Gloucester Tops	A. Stuart	Club Night
Crested Tern	c.600	25/06/2013	Forster/Tuncurry	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Diamond Firetail	7	6/06/2013	Goulburn River NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Diamond Firetail	2	21/06/2013	Bunnan	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Diamond Firetail	1	5/07/2013	Jerrys Plains	I. Benson	Hunterbirding
Double-banded Plover	86	25/06/2013	Manning Estuary	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Double-banded Plover	86	16/07/2013	Manning Estuary	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Eastern Koel	1	15/06/2013	Shortland	D. Williams	Hunterbirding
Eastern Osprey	2	9/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Eastern Osprey	1	13/06/2013	Cowrie Hole	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Eastern Osprey	1	22/06/2013	Belmont South	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Eastern Osprey	2+dy	Jul-13	Nelson Bay	R. George	Club Night
Eastern Osprey	1	20/07/2013	Nobbys Head	P. Freeman	Hunterbirding
Eastern Reef Egret	2	18/06/2013	Boat Harbour	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Eastern Reef Egret	3	19/06/2013	Broughton Island	C. Anderson	Hunterbirding
Eastern Reef Egret	1	21/06/2013	Boat Harbour	T. Murray	Hunterbirding

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations cont.

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Emu	1	6/06/2013	Goulburn River NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Eurasian Coot	500+	13/07/2013	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	c.50	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	c.20	16/06/2013	Merewether Beach	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Fairy Prion	100s	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	4	21/06/2013	Boat Harbour	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	2	25/06/2013	Crowdy Head	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	12	29/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	10	29/06/2013	Fort Drive	P. Hansbro	Hunterbirding
Fairy Prion	1	16/07/2013	Nobbys Head	C. Anderson	Hunterbirding
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	3/07/2013	Eagleton	T. Clarke	Club Night
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	3/07/2013	Tenambit	T. Clarke	Club Night
Flame Robin	8+	6/07/2013	Segenhoe	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Fluttering Shearwater	c.1000	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Fluttering Shearwater	1000s	9/07/2013	Fort Drive	A. Richardson	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	36	15/06/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	1	5/07/2013	Newcastle Wetlands	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Freckled Duck	5	24/07/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Giant Petrel sp.	1	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	3	4/06/2013	Grahamstown Dam	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	3	14/06/2013	Murrays Beach	G. Little	Hunterbirding
Great-winged Petrel	100+	2/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Great-winged Petrel	4	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Grey Teal	1019	15/06/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Grey-crowned Babbler	4	16/04/2013	Mulbring	F. Rainsford	Club Night
Gull-billed Tern	121	23/07/2013	Ash Island	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Hoary-headed Grebe	200+	24/07/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Lewins Rail	1	12/06/2013	Tinonee	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Lewins Rail	1	20/06/2013	Broughton Island	C. Anderson	Hunterbirding
Lewins Rail	1	25/06/2013	Harrington	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Little Black Cormorant	900+	12/07/2013	Port Stephens	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Little Corella	c.120	24/06/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Little Corella	c.200	30/06/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Little Eagle	1	17/07/2013	Maison Dieu	P. Alexander	Hunterbirding
Little Tern	1	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Little Tern	2	1/07/2013	Newcastle Baths	R. Nicholas	Hunterbirding
Little Tern	22	16/07/2013	Manning Estuary	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Long-billed Corella	2	3/07/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Maggie-Lark	68	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Masked Lapwing	2+nest	28/06/2013	Williamstown	M. Kearns	Club Night
Masked Lapwing	2+3dy	6/07/2013	Seaham	L. Parashou	Club Night
Masked Lapwing	2+2dy	18/07/2013	Singleton	P. Alexander	Hunterbirding
Masked Lapwing	2+3dy	18/07/2013	Old Bar	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Masked Woodswallow	1	15/04/2013	Mulbring	F. Rainsford	Club Night
Nankeen Kestrel	5	9/07/2013	Parkville	T. Clarke	Club Night
Nankeen Night-Heron	9	17/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Nankeen Night-Heron	3	21/07/2013	Seaham	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Pacific Gull	1	2/06/2013	Fort Drive	I. Benson	Hunterbirding
Pacific Gull	1	20/06/2013	Broughton Island	C. Anderson	Hunterbirding
Painted Button-quail	1	1/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Peregrine Falcon	1	10/06/2013	Raymond Terrace	A. Carson	Hunterbirding
Peregrine Falcon	1	11/06/2013	Galgabba Point	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Peregrine Falcon	1	26/07/2013	Maison Dieu	P. Alexander	Hunterbirding
Pheasant Coucal	1	5/07/2013	Stockton	I. Benson	Hunterbirding
Pheasant Coucal	1	23/07/2013	Salamander Bay	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	43	1/06/2013	Morpeth Wetlands	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	12	15/06/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	c.150	22/06/2013	Ash Island	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	2	12/07/2013	Port Stephens	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Pink-eared Duck	400+	24/07/2013	Morpeth WWTW	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Plumed Whistling-Duck	c.800	10/06/2013	Doughboy Hollow	L. Mee	Hunterbirding
Powerful Owl	1	6/07/2013	Eleebana	A. Gooden	Club Night
Rainbow Lorikeet	37	2/07/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Rainbow Lorikeet	27+2dy	4/07/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Red-capped Robin	1	6/06/2013	Goulburn River NP	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	6	8/06/2013	Leneghans Drive	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	7	8/06/2013	Teralba Wetland	J. Cockerell	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	8	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Red-kneed Dotterel	5	25/06/2013	Cattai Creek Bridge	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Red-necked Avocet	1280	13/07/2013	Kooragang Dykes	L. Crawford	Hunterbirding

Club Night & Hunterbirding Observations cont.

Please note that all sighting reports published in HBOC's newsletter or its on-line forum (Hunterbirding) are unofficial and have not been confirmed by the Club. Such reports are publicised in order that others can be made aware of the sighting(s) reported and have the chance to help verify them. Official records of bird sightings in the Hunter Region appear in the Annual Bird Report, for which written submissions supported by field notes and photographs are a vital part of the process for acceptance of locally uncommon/rare species.

Regent Bowerbird	1	11/06/2013	Murrays Beach	G. Little	Hunterbirding
Regent Bowerbird	1	25/06/2013	Harrington	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Restless Flycatcher	1	6/06/2013	Sandy Hollow TSR	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Rose Robin	1	3/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Rose Robin	1	6/06/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Rose Robin	1	8/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Rose Robin	1	8/06/2013	Pambalong NR	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Rose Robin	1	20/06/2013	Eagleton	T. Clarke	Club Night
Rose Robin	1	9/07/2013	Parkville	T. Clarke	Club Night
Rose Robin	1	19/07/2013	Toronto	P. Durie	Hunterbirding
Rufous Scrub-bird	2	10/07/2013	Gloucester Tops	A. Stuart	Club Night
Rufous Whistler	2	11/06/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Scarlet Honeyeater	2	3/07/2013	Tenambit	T. Clarke	Club Night
Scarlet Robin	1	5/07/2013	Kitchener	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Scarlet Robin	3	5/07/2013	Jerrys Plains	I. Benson	Hunterbirding
Shy Albatross	2	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Shy Albatross	2	17/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Silver Gull	500+	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Silvereye	50+	11/06/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Slender-billed Prion	1	23/06/2013	Port Stephens pelagic	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Sooty Oystercatcher	12	23/06/2013	Shelly Beach	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Sooty Oystercatcher	30+	12/07/2013	Port Stephens	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Southern Emu-wren	3	8/06/2013	Pambalong NR	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
Speckled Warbler	2	30/06/2013	Maitland Vale Road	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Spotless Crake	2	23/07/2013	Ash Island	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	2	11/06/2013	Parkville	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	15/06/2013	Louth Park	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	20/06/2013	Broughton Island	C. Anderson	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	21/06/2013	Ridgellands Road	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	21/06/2013	Mangoola Road	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
Spotted harrier	1	29/06/2013	Wingen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	30/06/2013	Lambs Valley	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	30/06/2013	Rutherford	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	6/07/2013	Aberdeen	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	10/07/2013	Muswellbrook	T. Clarke	Club Night
Spotted Harrier	1	12/07/2013	Deep Pond	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	24/07/2013	Hinton	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Spotted Harrier	1	29/07/2013	East Maitland	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Spotted Pardalote	2	11/06/2013	Nelson Head	T. Clarke	Club Night
Spotted Pardalote	c.10	22/06/2013	Walka Water Works	M. Kearns	Club Night
Spotted Quail-thrush	1	5/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Spotted Quail-thrush	3	5/07/2013	Kitchener	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	2	3/06/2013	East Maitland	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	2	9/06/2013	Raymond Terrace	A. Carson	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	1	22/06/2013	Rutherford	G. Newling	Hunterbirding
Square-tailed Kite	3	4/07/2013	Woodville	M. Newman	Hunterbirding
Striated Heron	1	24/06/2013	Soldiers Point	T. Murray	Hunterbirding
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	8+1dy	1/07/2013	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough	Club Night
Swamp Harrier	1	7/07/2013	Belmont Lagoon	J. Cockerell	Club Night
Swift Parrot	3	1/06/2013	HEZ	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Swift Parrot	10	1/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Swift Parrot	6	2/06/2013	HEZ	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Swift Parrot	26	5/06/2013	HEZ	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Swift Parrot	2	11/06/2013	Murrays Beach	G. Little	Hunterbirding
Swift Parrot	c.30	5/07/2013	Pelton	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Varied Sittella	2	3/07/2013	Eagleton	T. Clarke	Club Night
Wandering Albatross	2	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	9/07/2013	Parkville	T. Clarke	Club Night
White-faced Heron	522	13/06/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
White-fronted Tern	1	9/06/2013	Nobbys Head	R. Nicholas	Hunterbirding
White-fronted Tern	8	14/06/2013	Newcastle Baths	J. Thomas	Hunterbirding
White-fronted Tern	20	15/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
White-fronted Tern	10	25/06/2013	Mudbishops Point	A. Stuart	Hunterbirding
White-naped Honeyeater	30	3/07/2013	Tenambit	T. Clarke	Club Night
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	5	13/06/2013	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey	Hunterbirding
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2	30/06/2013	Luskintyre Road	G. Brosie	Hunterbirding
Yellow-nosed Albatross	c.60	17/06/2013	Fort Drive	M. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Yellow-nosed Albatross	c.20	19/06/2013	Fort Drive	S. Roderick	Hunterbirding
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	3	10/07/2013	Eleebana	A. Gooden	Club Night
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	2	5/07/2013	Stroud	T. Clarke	Club Night

Club Activities June to August 2013

AUGUST 2013

Wednesday 14 August	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Richard Major - <i>White-fronted Chat</i> Bird of the Evening: Steven Cox
Sunday 18 August	Field Outing: Jerrys Plains	8:00am Service Station, Jerrys Plains	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785 Peter Alexander 6573 2649
Tuesday 20 August	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm

SEPTEMBER 2013

Mon - Thursday 2 - 5 September	Rufous Scrub-bird Monitoring, Gloucester Tops IBA	Camp at Sharpes Creek on Mon, Tues and Wed nights	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Tuesday 3 September	Mid-Week Outing - Cooranbong / Boys Walk along Dora Creek	8.00am Cooranbong Park, Freemans Drive, Cooranbong	Robert and Margaret Stewart 4963 2029
Wednesday 4 September	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Saturday 7 September	Bird Watch near Bengalla Mine with BBQ breakfast	8.00am Keys Bridge on Bengalla Link Road	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Sat/Sunday 7-8 September	BIGnet meeting, includes Seminar on Saturday afternoon	Hunter Wetlands Centre 9.30am for BIGnet; 12.30pm for Seminar	Liz Crawford 4959 3663 Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
Wednesday 11 September	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Keith Davey - <i>The Birds and Animals of Kenya and Tanzania</i> Bird of the Evening: Robert Kyte
Sunday 15 September	Field Outing: Glenrock SRA	7.00am Yuelarbah Track car park on Burwood Road, Whitebridge	Rob Kyte 4950 9398
Mon-Wed 16-18 September	Mid-Week Camp – Gloucester	Please book your own accommodation at Gloucester Caravan Park - ph 6558 1702	See Newsletter No. 3/13 June 2013
Tuesday 17 September	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 21 September	Hunter Waterbirds Survey	8.30 am Ash Island 9.00 am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 – Tomago
Thursday 26 September	Biodiversity Day	Blue Gum Hills Regional Park	Green Corridor Coalition and NPWS Alan Stuart 4952 8569

OCTOBER 2013

Tuesday 1 October	Mid-Week Outing – Fernleigh Track / Belmont Lagoon	8.00am Belmont end of Fernleigh Track, Railway Pde, Belmont	Max Blanch 4961 1655
Wednesday 2 October	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Venue TBA	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237 All members welcome
Sat - Monday 5 - 7 October	Durrigere State Conservation Area	Directions to camp on page 9 of this Newsletter	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237 Access is via a locked gate – Please phone prior to the camp
Wednesday 9 October	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Toni Marsh and Peter Struik - <i>Our Brush with Royalty - Princess Parrots at Newhaven</i> Bird of the Evening: Robert Stewart - <i>White Tern</i>
Tuesday 15 October	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 19 October	Hunter Waterbirds Survey	8.30 am Ash Island 9.00 am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 – Tomago
Tues - Thurs 22 - 24 October	Rufous Scrub-bird Monitoring, Gloucester Tops IBA	Camp at Sharpes Creek on Tues 22 and Wed 23 October	Alan Stuart 4952 8569