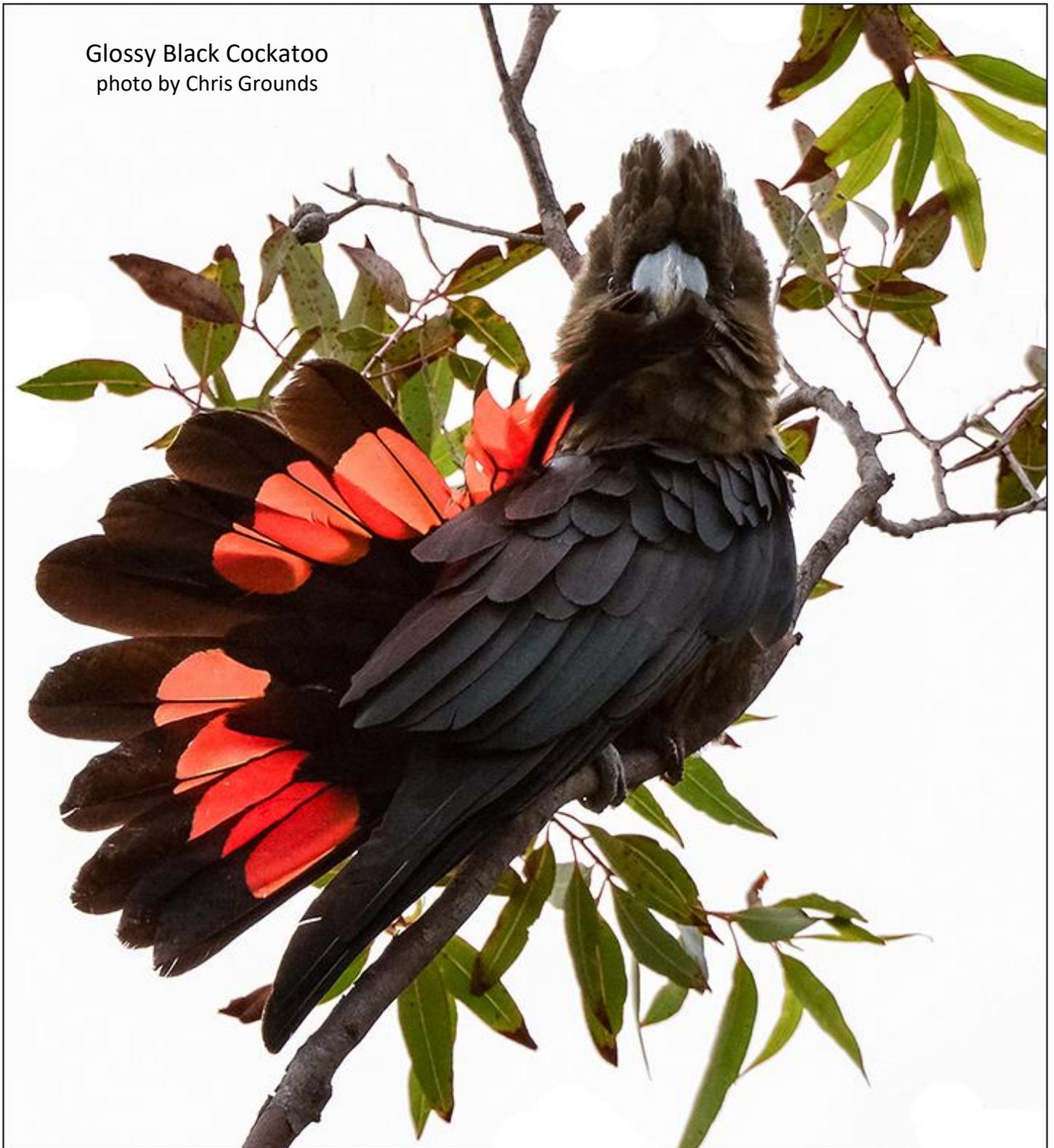


Glossy Black Cockatoo  
photo by Chris Grounds



## In this issue ...

### Apology

In the Wilfords Lane Wetlands article in the Summer magazine, we made an error with the name of one of the generous landowners who will be allowing bird hides on their property. The landowner was not Wal Wilford as stated, but Wal Payten. Apologies to Wal!



### Threatened Bird Species of the Shoalhaven ... [page 6](#)

The Shoalhaven region has 62 Threatened bird species, four of which have Critically Endangered status in NSW. 17 of the 62 species are also listed on the Commonwealth Threatened Species listing. Here is the definitive list.



### Conservation Curiosities - by Chris Grounds ... [page 8](#)

Chris comments on a number of "Conservation Curiosities" that have popped up in the Shoalhaven in recent months, including a Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Wollumboola, a Rose-crowned Fruit Dove in suburban Vincentia, and a white morph of a Grey Goshawk in the Bherwerre Wetland in Sanctuary Point.



### Interview with Chris MacGregor ... [page 11](#)

Chris MacGregor is a Senior Research Officer for the Conservation and Landscape Ecology Group of the Fenner School of Environment and Society with the ANU (Australian National University) in Canberra. He lives in the Shoalhaven and works at Booderee with all the animals in the national park, but especially with the birds and arboreal mammals.



### Birding in Cairns - by Yolande Cozijn ... [page 27](#)

Yolande and photographer husband Warren Wilson travel to Far North Queensland in the heat of late November in search of the Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher.

### Also ...

President's Report ..... [page 3](#)  
Conservation Officer Report ... [page 5](#)  
Web Watch ..... [page 17](#)

The Magic of Vines .... [page 22](#)  
Save our Shoreline .... [page 23](#)  
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3 bird talks ... [page 24](#)  
Shorebirds ... [page 25](#)  
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## President's Report

- by Rob Dunn

### Celebrating Lake Wollumboola

Lake Wollumboola has just been featured as the "Key Biodiversity Area in Focus" in BirdLife Australia's March magazine. With a distribution of over 12,000 copies, this will be the perfect promotion of this critical site for conservation in the Shoalhaven.

The same magazine also includes a letter from BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS) member Duade Paton about his friendship and photographic adventures with Matt Jones, who was an amazing advocate for our local birds.

Duade puts it perfectly in his closing paragraph - "Sadly Matt passed away last year, which was a great loss to those who loved him. But thankfully we still have his beautiful and inspirational photos – a legacy that we and future generations can appreciate forever."



Photo by Matt Jones

BLS will continue the focus on the lake on 23 June in "A Celebration of Lake Wollumboola" at Culburra. Details are provided later in the magazine - on [page 24](#).

### 2109 AGM

Many thanks to those of you who made it to the BLS AGM in Ulladulla in February. It was overdue that we held the AGM "down south" to acknowledge the great support we have had from MUD Birders since BLS was established back in 2014.

As well as the normal business of an AGM, Charles Dove arranged a bird outing at Burrill Lake beforehand and Brett Davis helped close the meeting with his now traditional trivia quiz. Many thanks to them both.



Oisín Sweeney

The AGM confirmed the reappointment of the BLS Committee and the addition of a new member, Oisín Sweeney. Oisín works as the Senior Ecologist with NPA NSW, is the President of the Jervis Bay Protection Alliance and he has also recently worked with BirdLife Australia on the development of their Woodlands Bird Conservation Action Plan. His connections within the greater conservation community and his love of birds will be a great addition to the Committee.

The AGM minutes are available from the following link - [2019agminutes.pdf](#)



Wilford Lane Wetlands - photo by Kim Touzel

### What is the BLS Committee talking about?

In February the Committee reviewed its priorities for the coming year. This is summarised in our Annual Plan, at [www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/whoweare.html](http://www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/whoweare.html).

This allows BLS to target our scarce resources to where they are needed most, and assess what new initiatives we want and can realistically take on.

A key focus this year will be to have interpretative signage installed at some top birding locations. Charles Dove is continuing to work with landowners and South East Local Land Services to have bird hides built at the Wilford Lane Wetlands, as reported in our last magazine. Recently, construction of the new bird viewing platform was finished at Lake Wollumboola - fully funded by Council. New signs will be installed at the platform soon.

There will also be signs at Shoalhaven Heads with funding from the NSW Government "Save our Species" program. The BLS Committee approved the allocation of our surplus funds to signage at these two locations, and we are also seeking additional funding for signs at some of the walks featured in our Bird Walks brochure. Council are keen to work with us to seek external grants and have committed to install the signs and update the maps at each site - so hopefully we will see progress made this year.

The meeting discussed our membership numbers. We now have 219 members and 375 supporters, as well as over 600 Facebook followers and 80 Twitter followers. Our supporter database continues to grow.

Of course, our aim is for BLS supporters to become full members of BirdLife Australia and provide much needed financial support for bird conservation.

We also reviewed our involvement in upcoming events, including how we could run a BLS stall at the Council's Environmental Expo 2019 in June, as most of the Committee would be unavailable. It was agreed to send a one-off email to our 600 BLS members and supporters. This was the first time we had done this and in no time we had six people wanting to help out.

This is really pleasing. A healthy community group is one with a skilled and hard-working Committee, which we certainly have, but also with members willing to help out from time to time. We will be looking at other ways more of you can play your part in spreading the word, if you have the time.

### Birds have friends in high places

I was in Sydney the other day and stayed in a hotel on Phillip Street near the NSW Law Courts chambers. The building opposite was covered in scaffolding, as half of Sydney seems to be these days. However, this building was adorned with banners of some of our native birds!

I have no idea who had put these up or why, but I am sure that 99% of the barristers in the building would not be able to name all eight species.

Clearly, bird conservation has some friends in high places!

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# Conservation Officer Report

- by Chris Grounds

## Threatened Species

The recent development of a scientific collaboration to produce a system for monitoring, assessing and auditing the status of Threatened Species, the **Threatened Species Index [TSX]**, is an exciting development, especially as the work has started with a component, the **Threatened Bird Index [TBX]**.

The Threatened Bird Index is a joint initiative of the Threatened Species Recovery Hub and BirdLife Australia and pulls together data from monitoring programs across the country.



Eastern Curlews - photo by Chris Grounds

An Index is a basic mathematical system for standardizing an entire set of information by setting a baseline for comparisons. Information as data is basically set to a value, which is 1.0 for a particular year, in this case 1985 for the TBX so any developments in data for any number of species can be read, compared and analyzed both over time across species.

The development of the species and bird index are in the early stages but the developing outcomes will be an exciting research and communication tool. The BirdLife Australia website of course has interesting inclusions on the TSI AND TBX and we will be hearing more about it as time progresses.

The Media release for the Index noted that "On average, populations of Australia's threatened birds have decreased by half since 1985, according to Australia's new Threatened Bird Index."

Threatened migratory shorebirds have suffered the largest decrease, dropping by 70% on average in the last 30 years. "The objective of the index is to enable policy makers, the public and conservation groups to better understand how threatened birds are faring. So far the index combines data from 180,000 individual surveys, from 35 monitoring programs on 43 bird species and subspecies, and we are constantly adding new data as it becomes available".

Early work is developing a list for NSW from the EPBC Act and BirdLife Australia catalogues and 16 Taxa are included to date including the following (\* occur in Shoalhaven):

- Australian Gould's Petrel
- Curlew Sandpiper \*
- Far Eastern Curlew \*
- Great Knot \*
- Greater Sand Plover \*
- Lesser Sand Plover \*
- Red Knot \*
- Eastern Regent Parrot \*
- Northern Eastern Bristlebird \*
- Painted Honeyeater
- Northern Rufous Scrub-bird
- Australasian Bittern \*
- Lord Howe Island Woodhen



Eastern Bristlebirds - photo by Chris Grounds



Red Knots - photo by Chris Grounds

## Shoalhaven Threatened Species

Given these developments are occurring with threatened species of birds, BLA involvement and our BLS website is being revised, it has been an opportune time to complete a revision of the list of threatened species for the Shoalhaven that BLS published in our newsletter of Summer 2015.

Readers should note it is based in the Jervis Sub-region of the Sydney Basin Bioregion, which is an area south of the Shoalhaven River to near Batemans Bay and thus quite specific to our area of interest.

All species have been cross checked to the Office of Environment and Heritage website and BirdLife Australia species profiles.

## Threatened Bird Species of the Shoalhaven

The Jervis Sub-region list includes 62 Threatened species. Four of these species have **NSW Critically Endangered** status and are shown first in the list because of that status. As well, **17 of the 62 species** are also listed on the **Commonwealth Threatened Species listing**. This is shown after the NSW status. There are a further three threatened species in the Shoalhaven not listed for NSW.

Regent Honeyeater  
Beach Stone Curlew  
Orange-bellied Parrot  
Hooded Plover

*(Anthochaera Phrygia)*  
*(Esacus magnirostris)*  
*(Neophema chrysogaster)*  
*(Thinornis rubricollis)*

Critically Endangered / Critically Endangered  
Critically Endangered  
Critically Endangered / Critically Endangered  
Critically Endangered / Vulnerable



Regent Honeyeater - photo by Dean Ingwersen



Beach Stone Curlew - photo by Chris Grounds



Hooded Plover chick - photo by Chris Grounds



Bar-tailed Godwit - photo by Chris Grounds

Australasian Bittern  
Curlew Sandpiper  
Swift Parrot  
Eastern Bristlebird  
Wandering Albatross  
Southern Giant Petrel  
Great Knot  
Glossy Black Cockatoo  
Lesser Sand Plover  
Black-browed Albatross  
Greater Sand Plover  
Gibson's Albatross  
Northern Giant Petrel  
Shy Albatross

*(Botaurus poiciloptilu)*  
*(Calidris ferruginea)*  
*(Lathamus discolour)*  
*(Dasyornis brachypterus)*  
*(Diomedea exulans)*  
*(Macronectes giganteus)*  
*(Calidris tenuirostris)*  
*(Calyptorhynchus lathamii)*  
*(Charadrius mongolus)*  
*(Thalassarche melanophris)*  
*(Charadrius leschenaultii )*  
*(Diomedea gibsoni)*  
*(Macronectes halli)*  
*(Thalassarche cauta)*

Endangered / Endangered  
Endangered / Critically Endangered  
Endangered / Critically Endangered  
Endangered / Endangered  
Endangered / Endangered  
Endangered / Endangered  
Vulnerable / Critically Endangered  
Vulnerable / Endangered  
Vulnerable / Endangered  
Vulnerable / Vulnerable  
Vulnerable / Vulnerable  
Vulnerable / Vulnerable  
Vulnerable / Vulnerable

**Species Commonwealth Listed but not NSW Listed are:**

Eastern Curlew	( <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i> )	Critically Endangered
Red Knot	( <i>Calidris canutus</i> )	Endangered
Bar-tailed Godwit	( <i>Limosa lapponica baueri</i> )	Vulnerable

Bush Stone Curlew	( <i>Burhinus grallarius</i> )	Endangered
Striated Field Wren	( <i>Calamanthus fuliginous</i> )	Endangered
Black-necked Stork	( <i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i> )	Endangered
Pied Oystercatcher	( <i>Haematopus longirostris</i> )	Endangered
Little Tern	( <i>Sternula albifrons</i> )	Endangered

Flesh-footed Shearwater	( <i>Ardenna carneipes</i> )	Vulnerable
Dusky Wood Swallow	( <i>Artamus cyanopterus</i> )	Vulnerable
Sanderling	( <i>Calidris alba</i> )	Vulnerable
Gang-gang Cockatoo	( <i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i> )	Vulnerable
Spotted Harrier	( <i>Circus assimilis</i> )	Vulnerable
Brown Treecreeper	( <i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i> )	Vulnerable
Varied Sitella	( <i>Daphoenositta chrysoptera</i> )	Vulnerable
White-fronted Chat	( <i>Epthianura albifrons</i> )	Vulnerable
Little Lorikeet	( <i>Glossopsitta pusilla</i> )	Vulnerable
Sooty Oystercatcher	( <i>Haematopus fuliginous</i> )	Vulnerable
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	( <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i> )	Vulnerable
Little Eagle	( <i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i> )	Vulnerable
Black Bittern	( <i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i> )	Vulnerable
Broad-billed Sandpiper	( <i>Limicola falcinellus</i> )	Vulnerable
Black-tailed Godwit	( <i>Limosa Limosa</i> )	Vulnerable
Square-tailed Kite	( <i>Lophoictinia isura</i> )	Vulnerable
Turquoise Parrot	( <i>Neophema pulchella</i> )	Vulnerable
Barking Owl	( <i>Ninox connivens</i> )	Vulnerable
Powerful Owl	( <i>Ninox strenua</i> )	Vulnerable
Sooty Tern	( <i>Onychoprion fuscata</i> )	Vulnerable
Blue-billed Duck	( <i>Oxyura australis</i> )	Vulnerable
Olive Whistler	( <i>Pachycephala olivacea</i> )	Vulnerable
Eastern Osprey	( <i>Pandion cristatus</i> )	Vulnerable
Scarlet Robin	( <i>Petroica boodang</i> )	Vulnerable
Flame Robin	( <i>Petroica phoenicea</i> )	Vulnerable
Pink Robin	( <i>Petroica rodinogaster</i> )	Vulnerable
Eastern Ground Parrot	( <i>Pezoporos wallicus</i> )	Vulnerable
Providence Petrel	( <i>Pterodroma solandri</i> )	Vulnerable
Superb Fruit Dove	( <i>Ptilinopus superbus</i> )	Vulnerable
Rose-crowned Fruit Dove	( <i>Ptilinopus regina</i> )	Vulnerable
Little Shearwater	( <i>Puffinus assimilis</i> )	Vulnerable
Diamond Firetail	( <i>Stagonopleura guttata</i> )	Vulnerable
Freckled Duck	( <i>Stictonetta naevosa</i> )	Vulnerable
Masked Owl	( <i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i> )	Vulnerable
Sooty Owl	( <i>Tyto tenebricosa</i> )	Vulnerable
Terek Sandpiper	( <i>Xenus cinereus</i> )	Vulnerable

**SOURCE :**

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/profile](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/profile)

N.B. BirdLife Australia's species profiles and The Australian Bird Guide have also been referenced in the revision.



## Conservation Curiosities

- by Chris Grounds

### Pied Oystercatcher



Photo by Sally Leonard

Sally Leonard, is a very busy member of the Shorebird Recovery Program based at Shoalhaven Heads. She received a report from Gerroa in January of a Pied Oystercatcher in distress with both legs tied together with fishing line. It proved rather challenging to catch the bird as it could still fly and noose mats, decoys and audio were all employed. The partner was caught on one day and success followed the next day on soft sand.

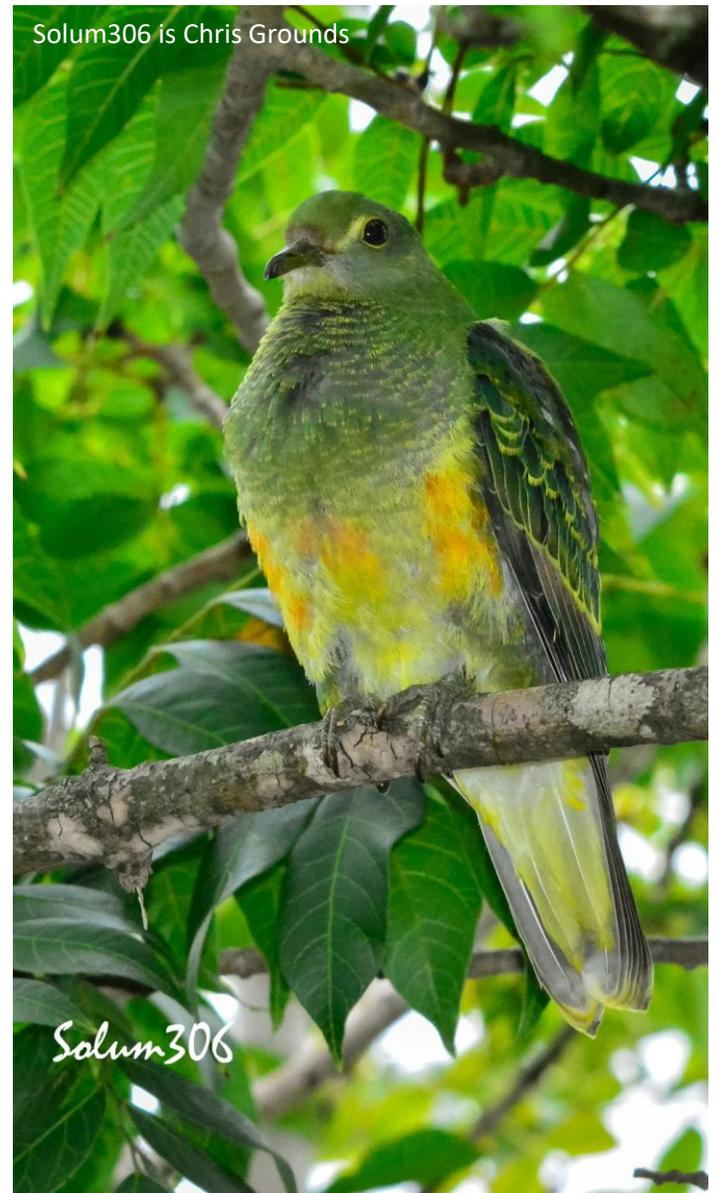
### Great Cormorant



Photo by Christine Rigg

Christine Rigg watched intently for over thirty minutes last November at Huskisson as a Great Cormorant battled with a great fish catch, a very big fish catch, a "too big" fish catch. The idea is of course to swallow the fish head first and let it slide down. The cormorant had to eventually surrender its prize back into the water, and it was just a little exhausted by its efforts. Just some "birdy goings-on" in the Jervis Bay Marine Park!

### Rose-crowned Fruit Dove



The Rose-crowned Fruit Dove is somewhat of a rarity in the Shoalhaven so a juvenile using Robyn Hill's Vincentia garden as a refuge in March, immediately opposite Jervis Bay National Park, was a real birding treat.

The excellent sighting was followed by much interest from within the Shoalhaven and further afield, with a group of Illawarra Birders coming down to tick the bird!

## Hooded Plover



Toward the end of January Brett Davis sighted and photographed a Hooded Plover juvenile on Bherwerre Beach, which is monitored by a team of Shorebird Recovery volunteers. One of the unflagged pair reared on Cave Beach had turned up at Shoalhaven Heads. Without any flagging to support identification, this could have been the same bird but the suspicion has been that it was the other sibling juvenile, especially as there was a later report of a sighting of one Hooded Plover juvenile on Berrara Beach. A very rare pair of juveniles of a NSW Critically Endangered species, they were the northern-most breeding success in the south-eastern Australia distribution in 2018-2019.

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## Grey Goshawk



A range of birds has been added to the original Heritage Estate list over the years, with additional orchids and fungi proving the area is of even higher value than originally assessed. The latest was an encounter in March with a White Goshawk on the fringe of the Estate. The White Goshawk is a morph of the Grey Goshawk and they interbreed. Both are visually impressive raptors!

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## Hudsonian Godwit



BirdLife Shoalhaven reported the verified sighting of a Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Wollumboola at the end of March. The only records of the bird in the Shoalhaven - ten in total - have all been at Lake Wollumboola. These recorded sightings have all been made since 2015 with our BirdLifers and E-Birders accounting for all the good work. Amazingly it is a species of Godwit that normally migrates from the Arctic margins to South America, though very small numbers migrate to New Zealand and several "vagrants" have been known in Australia – including the Shoalhaven. It appears these would have joined flocks of Bar-tailed or Black-tailed Godwits.

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## Beach Stone Curlew



The critically endangered Beach Stone Curlew has been the subject of numerous sightings at both Shoalhaven Heads and Lake Wollumboola over the summer and this special bird has hung around for quite some time allowing recent sightings.

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## White-bellied Sea-Eagle



The White-bellied Sea-Eagle is listed in NSW as vulnerable but could be rated a common sighting around Jervis Bay. A pair of the mature birds has perched over the years along the Murrays Beach boat ramp shoreline in Booderee NP and has a known attachment to Bowen Island. The first of a number of recent sightings for Marly and myself included the spectacle of a trio of similarly mature Sea Eagles confronting this pair over the waters toward HMAS Creswell. These birds came out of the Blackbutt forest toward Hole In The Wall for what seemed a territorial stoush.

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## Eastern Osprey



A February sighting of the vulnerable Eastern Osprey at Bherwerre Wetland suggests it could be one their main haunts in the St Georges Basin area as this was the third sighting of four birds in recent years. A pair were sighted and photographed there in late 2018. Their Basin View nest was abandoned last breeding season. A "Reading Bherwerre Wetland" exhibition will be a feature of the forthcoming See Change 2019 Arts Festival commencing on June 1.

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## Sacred Kingfisher



It would be thought that raising a nest of Sacred Kingfisher hatchlings through January and February would be a highly uncomfortable task in the record-breaking heat of our last summer. Sightings at two local nests certainly verified the resilience of these birds. One of the nests - located in the Corramy Conservation Park on St Georges Basin - was a particular delight as it was located in an old growth Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) and such trees are certainly under threat due to developments in the St Georges Basin area.

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## Eastern Ground Parrot



Rainy days in March and the vulnerable Eastern Ground Parrot will venture out of the heath for some productive foraging on seeding grasses. The enigmatic bird is a special member of the 28 strong parrot group in the Shoalhaven.

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## An Interview with Chris MacGregor

- with Brett Davis

Chris MacGregor is a Senior Research Officer for the Conservation and Landscape Ecology Group of the Fenner School of Environment and Society with the ANU (Australian National University) in Canberra. He was born in Sydney (at Belrose) in 1965, but moved to Armidale in the 1980s to study for a Bachelor of Finance and Administration at the University of New England, which led to a job at the Commonwealth Bank in their Corporate International Computer Group, and Chris later joined the accounting firm Coopers and Lybrand as an IT auditor.



**BLS:** Were you are birdwatcher at this stage?

**CM:** No, not at all! It wasn't until the final few weeks of the final year that David Lindenmayer was a guest lecturer and he asked for volunteers to assist with a bird observing experiment he was running. David is a research professor at the ANU in Canberra. He took two complete bird-watching beginners - myself and a girl from Western Australia - and gave us an intensive week of listening to bird calls on tapes. The following week we were joined by a group of experienced birdwatchers from Canberra, and we all did bird surveys at the same sites, with the surveys repeated on different days.

David was actually comparing bird observers rather than worrying about the birds, and when the results came out, although there were no names specifically mentioned, I think that I was the worst birdwatcher in the group by a long shot! The main result from that study was that there will always be different abilities in any group of observers, so it is always wise to use multiple observers in large scale bird surveys.

After I got my degree I did some more volunteer work for David, helping him to catch Greater Gliders in the Tumut area as part of his Tumut Fragmentation Study. A bloke by the name of Matthew Pope was doing a Masters degree on Greater Gliders - he was radio tracking them - and it was a really fun experience trying to catch them!

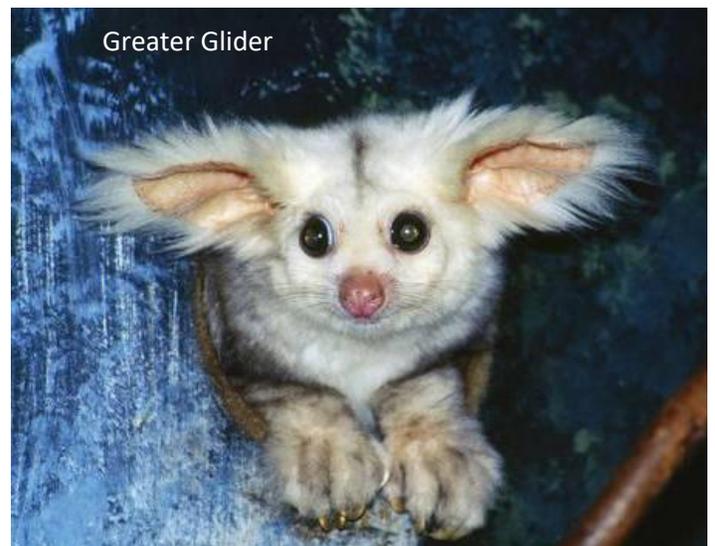
**BLS:** How did you get working in the banking industry to a job in environmental science?

**CM:** I took leave without pay and went to Canada and the U.S. for close to twelve months. I did a ski instructor's course, but I decided that being a ski instructor wasn't the lifestyle I wanted.

When I came back home, the office I had been working in at Chatswood in Sydney had closed down, and I sort of re-evaluated everything. I actually did a 21 day Outward Bound course just outside of Tharwa in the A.C.T. which really influenced me quite a bit. We did all sorts of activities on the course - hiking, climbing, caving, rafting - and it sort of gave me the confidence to make a big change in my life. It certainly made me realize that I much preferred working outdoors rather than indoors, and I decided to go back to university.

**BLS:** What year was that?

**CM:** 1994. I studied for a Bachelor of Science in Resource and Environmental Management, and was aiming for a ranger-type role with National Parks or something similar. I really enjoyed doing the degree with all the different sciences that it involved.



Matthew was a marksman, and he would shoot the branches out from underneath the gliders, making them move. If we were lucky they would glide to the forest floor and we then had to chase after them and hopefully catch them before they ran up a tree again. This was all done at night while carrying a big spotlight powered by a car battery that we wore on our backs. I think David dislocated his shoulder one night, running around the forest in the dark!

**BLS:** You weren't getting paid for this?

**CM:** No, not at all. I was also volunteering for NSW National Parks and ACT National Parks, so it was a really hectic time, doing a lot of volunteer work and hoping to find full-time employment. It is just as hard today to get full-time jobs with National Parks - and probably worse - and it is hard to keep those jobs - it is all 3 year contracts these days!

**BLS:** So you had quit your job, gone overseas for a year, come back home to do a university course, and were then doing only volunteer jobs - how were you making ends meet?

**CM:** At that stage I was on the dole - unemployment benefits - and I was on the verge of having a case manager appointed! I was really dreading that, because I figured they were going to tell me to go back to accounting! But then David offered me a paid position under him at the ANU. The timing could not have been better!

**BLS:** Was that at the Fenner School of Environment and Society?

**CM:** Yes. It used to be called the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies but it has had a name change. It is over 20 years now that I have been working for David. He is a bit of a workaholic, but I think he has given up trying to get me to be the same! Even so, we work some crazy hours! All my colleagues have a passion for the work we do, and we are quite prepared to put in long hours.

The initial work I did for David was based at Tumut, and that was helping to set up the Nanangroe Experiment which is a large scale experiment turning grazed woodland into pine forest. It is crazy how that place has changed! I still go out there to assist with bird surveys and it is interesting to see how the woodland birds have moved out of the area but the forest birds - like lyrebirds - have moved in.

The only small bird that seems to be happy in both environments is the Eastern Yellow Robin, but there are a few larger birds like Ravens and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos that like the pine forests too.



Leadbeater's Possum

Apart from the Nanangroe Experiment, I spent the summers in central Victoria researching David's main area of expertise - the Leadbeater's Possum.

**BLS:** Since those humble beginnings when you considered yourself the worst birdwatcher in the group, do you now consider yourself to be a proper birdwatcher?

**CM:** Oh yeah! While I was in the Canberra area I joined COG - the Canberra Ornithologists Group - and I only quit that when I moved to Jervis Bay and joined BirdLife Australia and the newly formed BirdLife Shoalhaven branch. David had asked me if I would mind going down to the coast, and initially I was a bit hesitant, because I was spending my winters in Tumut which is really close to the ski fields, and I had also taught myself fly-fishing - neither of which I have done much of since moving down here - but this area more than compensates for that!

**BLS:** One of my earliest recollections of you in the Shoalhaven was in the Booderee Botanic Gardens when you had allowed the Basin Naturalists access one night to go spotlighting, and there had been reports of Sooty Owls in the park. I remember you playing the "What Birdcall is That?" tape of the call of the Sooty Owl, preceded by the narrator's big, booming voice saying "Sooty Owl"! When the call was played, three Sooty Owls immediately flew into the trees over our heads, and almost all of us could tick off a lifer!



Powerful Owl

**CM:** I would like to do that again! A few weeks ago we did some spotlighting surveys in the park, and there were quite a few Powerful Owls around. There is also a huge Grey-headed Flying Fox colony at the Gardens right now - and I think that the Powerful Owls are really dining out on the Flying Foxes!

**BLS:** I remember being told about the presence of a Powerful Owl in the Corramy Regional Park at Basin View, and underneath its roosting spot was a mass of bits and pieces of Flying Foxes.

**CM:** Oh mate, they are a soft target, I think!

**BLS:** I remember hearing a few years ago that Powerful Owls were absent from the park?

**CM:** Their numbers move up and down depending on what's available, and they have such large home ranges, so they could still be in their home range but not necessarily in the park. They go to one area in their range, clean it out of prey, and then move on, and rotate through their range.

**BLS:** Apart from Flying Foxes, Powerful Owls really target possums. What's the possum situation in Booderee?

**CM:** There's no shortage of Brushtail Possums - in fact they are possibly over-abundant - but there is definitely a shortage of Ringtail Possums and Greater Gliders.

There has been an ongoing and very successful fox-baiting program in the park for a number of years, and initially all the possum species benefited from it, but especially the Brushtails which spend a lot of time on the ground.

One of our studies showed that the Ringtail Possums in Booderee tend to use tree hollows a lot more than they use "dreys" (the nest of a possum, typically in the form of a mass of twigs in a tree), so they are in direct competition with Brushtail Possums for nesting hollows.

There is a possibility that an unintended consequence of the fox-baiting program was an increase in the number of Brushtail Possums using nesting hollows which caused Ringtail Possums to be greatly reduced in numbers, and Greater Gliders to become extinct in the park!

But the initial increase in Ringtail Possums and Greater Gliders might have been discovered by Powerful Owls, and they might have come in and cleaned up the Ringtails and Gliders.

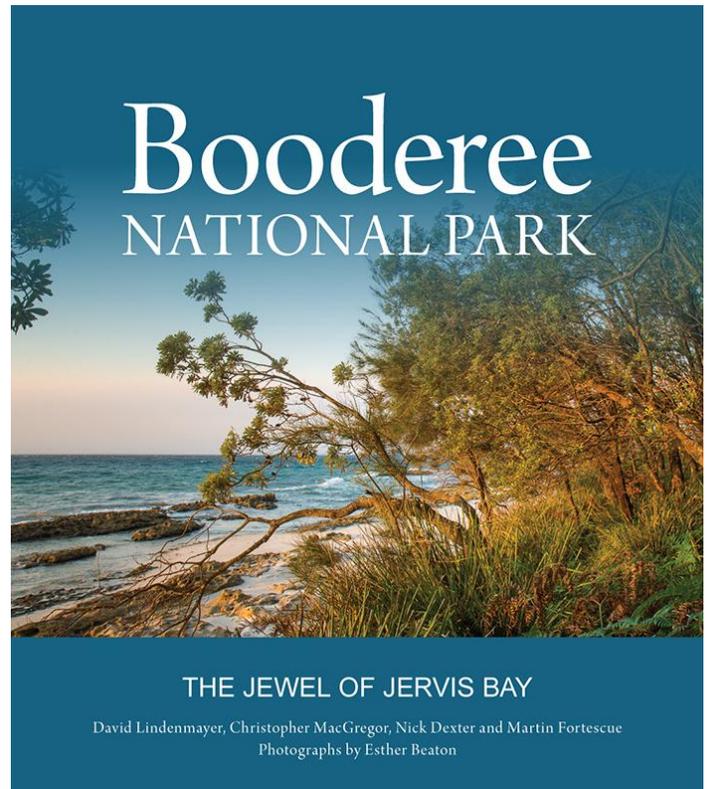
Another possibility is disease in both species, but it is all a bit of a question mark. We don't really know for sure what has caused the declines. It could be a combination of all three factors, or even more - we just don't know! Ecology is not like rocket science - it is a lot more complicated than that!

**BLS:** It would have been difficult to foretell that a successful fox-baiting program could lead to the extinction of Greater Gliders in the park?

**CM:** We don't know for sure that there is a direct link, but we are hoping to test the hypothesis in the next couple of years by re-introducing Greater Gliders into the park.

**BLS:** I hear you are an author?

**CM:** Yes, I co-authored a book on Booderee - "Booderee National Park – The Jewel of Jervis Bay" - that was a lot of fun to put together. I don't think it is a best-seller but it is still out there for sale. It's a great book and everyone should run out and buy a copy immediately!



**BLS:** I also see that you are the co-author of about 45 peer-reviewed scientific papers?

**CM:** David is very good when he produces papers because he acknowledges the contribution of his field staff in data collection and also the contribution we make in being on the ground in the various projects. He is really good in including us as co-authors. He does most of the writing, but he relies on me for insights or alternate explanations for the causes of the results he is seeing in the data.

**BLS:** Do you have a life list of birds?

**CM:** Yes, it would be about six hundred and something, but about 350 of those were added about this time last year in Ecuador. I did an organized trip with a company called Rockjumper who specialize in bird tours. It was a great way to do it, because you stay in lodges - like ski lodges really - only they are set up for birding. Great meals, good accommodation - it was kind of "birding boot-camp" because you are birding from before dawn until dusk - and sometimes beyond!

It was a bit frustrating at times because I didn't always know what I was hearing and seeing, and although the guide is telling you, unless you get a good photograph of

the bird you can't really correlate what is in your memory to what you see in your field guide later on. But Ecuador was awesome, and I can really recommend it!

**BLS:** So how many Aussie birds have you seen?

As far as Australian birds go, it would be somewhere between 330 or 400 or so, but I am not really a "lister" and I really haven't travelled a lot in Australia. I haven't been out west, or to north Queensland, and in Western Australia I didn't get out of Perth. I haven't done any birding in Tassie either, although I did go fishing there once, but it is difficult looking for birds when you are concentrating on catching a fish!

**BLS:** Do you have any favourite birding areas?

**CM:** I like birding in woodland areas like on the SW Slopes of NSW, because you get more of a chance of seeing the birds in the open, as compared to heathland or rainforest. I suppose I should say Booderee as well, because you get the coastal species as well as the occasional vagrant.

**BLS:** Do you have any bogey birds?

**CM:** One that eluded me for a long time was the Beautiful Firetail. It took me years to see one in Booderee, and it still eludes me, because I think I have only seen two there, even though they are not uncommon.

The other bird is the Pheasant Coucal - other than Taronga Zoo! I have heard it in Booderee, and across the Bay in the Weapons Range on the Becroft Peninsula, and it's such a relatively big bird too, but I just haven't seen one yet!

**BLS:** Were you involved in the translocation of Eastern Bristlebirds from Booderee to Becroft a few years ago?



**CM:** Only on the periphery, but I did do some surveys over there in November last year. Out of 40 different sites surveyed, in heath, we heard Bristlebirds in all but two of

the sites, so the big fire over there a few years ago does not appear to have done them too much harm.

**BLS:** I read recently that as long as there aren't any foxes around, Eastern Bristlebirds handle fire and its aftermath pretty well.

**CM:** Yeah, I'd agree with that. Nick Dexter and I did surveys in Booderee after the big fire in 2017 and we did notice an increase in calling in the unburnt patches surrounding the fire. The inference is that quite a lot of birds actually moved and escaped the fire, but I have no doubt that a lot of birds probably got barbecued as well! The fire was pretty all-encompassing, even though it wasn't as hot as the one we had in 2003. It was eventually stopped by the Great Eastern Firebreak - commonly known as the Pacific Ocean!

**BLS:** Do you need volunteers to help with your surveys?

**CM:** We need volunteers with superior skills at recognizing birds from their calls only (like being able to tell Variegated Fairy Wrens from Superb Fairy Wrens). The surveys are done in Spring - late September or October - and if people have the skills they are most welcome to give me a shout!



**BLS:** I remember doing the surveys with you and finding that the Eastern Bristlebirds were basically everywhere in Booderee - not just in the heath but in woodland and even in the bitou bush in the dunes behind the beach! Is that a result of the fox-baiting program?

**CM:** Probably. There appears to be sufficient cover and food for them in those areas, and they now don't have to stay exclusively in the heath to avoid the foxes.

**BLS:** How many survey sites do you have in Booderee?

**CM:** We have about 130 sites. Each of them is 100 metres long. For the bird surveys, we do 5 minutes of recording all birds seen or heard from a spot 20 metres along the line, and then 5 more minutes at the 80 metre mark.



Chris with an Eastern Pigmy Possum

**BLS:** The web says you are doing a Masters Degree on the patterns of habitat of Long Nosed Bandicoots and Common Ringtail Possums at Jervis Bay?

**CM:** Well, the Ringtail Possums are no longer part of that study, so it's just the Long Nosed Bandicoots. They are local area residents and are quite resilient to human occupation. Their numbers peaked in 2006 but have declined since then, although the population is now fairly stable. They also benefited from the fox baiting as well.

**BLS:** With Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers nesting on Bherwerre Beach, has it been targeted for fox baiting too?

**CM:** Yes it has. Some of the tracks leading to the beach have been baited, and there has been fox baiting done at the back of the beaches as well. A lot of fox baiting has been done, but there are still foxes in the park, and it doesn't take many foxes to cause a lot of damage to native fauna, but it would be an awful lot worse without that baiting.

Along the beach actually lends itself to fox shooting, and just last month fox shooters were in to try to knock off some resilient foxes that have not been taking baits.

**BLS:** Apart from baiting and shooting, is there any other method you use to control fox numbers?

**CM:** There is trapping as well. The park has just bought some traps to try that out. They are not the old style traps that chomp legs - they are huge cages that are baited with chicken to catch the foxes live, and then they are humanely dispatched.

**BLS:** Have there been significant changes to bird numbers in the park over the years?

**CM:** No, I don't think so. One of the things I am starting to look into - and I don't have any results as yet - is whether there have been any changes to the numbers of hollow-breeding birds in the park, mainly from the perspective of them being booted out by the Brushtail Possums.

We have realized the importance of long term studies, because although there are short term fluctuations in the numbers of different bird species from year to year, the research over time seems to show that there hasn't been a great deal of change. There are fluctuations in numbers in parts of the park where there have been fires, but within ten years the numbers seem to be back to the baseline again.

Having said that though, over the past five years there has been an apparent increase in the number of White-cheeked Honeyeaters in the park. They were once restricted to wet shrubland and melaleuca swamps but now they seem to be more widespread. I don't know whether they are displacing the other species of honey-eaters, but it doesn't appear to be the case. I don't have any theory on why there has been the increase as yet, but the research goes on.



White-cheeked Honeyeater

Photo by Charles Dove

**BLS:** Booderee is introducing Eastern Quolls, Long-nosed Potaroos and Southern Brown Bandicoots to the park. How is that going?

**CM:** The Bandicoots are doing okay, but the Potaroos not so well. They suffered from the fire in 2017 which occurred only 18 months after their re-introduction. The two species have very different life histories. Potaroos are much longer lived and only have one young per year so they breed a lot slower, which makes them more susceptible to big changes like those caused by large bushfires. The Bandicoots have shorter lifespans, but can have three or four young at a time, and possibly two litters per year, so their numbers are able to recover a lot more quickly.



Bandicooters



Eastern Quoll

The Quoll reintroductions are still happening, and there will be another 40 animals released into the park soon - they will be keeping me busy for the next two months. They are coming from sanctuaries in Tasmania and a sanctuary at Barrington Tops. Hopefully they can keep themselves alive long enough to breed.

A couple of weeks ago one of them turned up at the RSL club at Sussex Inlet. He crossed the Inlet from Christian's Minde - I suspect he was sniffing out a Chicken Schnitzel and a schooner of Old (laughs) - and it took me quite a while to catch it! I was parked outside the RSL for two nights with traps, and the quoll was literally in the drains in the driveway of the RSL. I finally trapped it and it seemed quite happy and healthy, but it would have gotten a bit lonely over there!



**BLS:** So what does the future hold for you?

**CM:** More research - I have no plans to leave the area - and I have lots of leave up my sleeve, so more travel too - there are lots more birds to see out there!

## Web Watch

- by Chris Grounds

It is really interesting just how much bird news reliable mainstream media publishes and even more interesting with what it tells us. Remember, just copy and paste the web link on your own browser for the full story on any item.

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### Eastern Curlew

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-24/threatened-migratory-birds-detected-at-port-stephens/10836944>

Threatened migratory birds detected at Port Stephens by citizen scientists. Birdwatchers on the New South Wales mid coast have reported spotting record-breaking numbers of migratory and threatened waterbirds in an annual summer survey.

The Hunter Bird Observers Club recorded 3,773 individual waterbirds in one day in Port Stephens, north of Newcastle, in a survey undertaken by volunteers observing from a "choreographed flotilla".

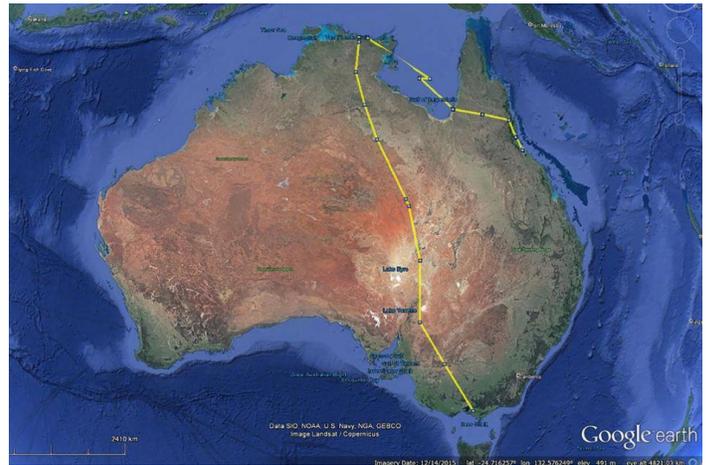
Notably, the survey detected significant numbers of the critically endangered Eastern Curlew.



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-10/far-eastern-curlew-encounters-cyclonic-wind-migration/10988200>

One endangered bird's northern migration has unravelled into a cross-country journey of confusion, loneliness and cyclonic winds. Rup is a Far Eastern Curlew, a migratory shorebird that makes an enormous annual journey from Australia to breeding grounds in northern China and Siberia.

A local conservation project tracking the birds shows Rup's travel through Victoria, Central Australia and into the western Top End. "Its two fellow flock members left Victoria just a few days beforehand, so it was maybe a bit late to leave," Ms Lilleyman said



### Invaders

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/21/we-are-clearly-losing-the-fight-scientists-sound-alarm-over-invasive-species>

"We are clearly losing the fight": scientists sound alarm over invasive species

Invaders are a greater threat to native species than climate change, land clearing and energy production, experts say. He says Australia's history as a large, isolated island means its flora and fauna are "poorly prepared" when invaders come in. When Europeans first arrived in Australia, so did a whole suite of invaders – rabbits, deer, horses, foxes, pigs and cats.

Andy Sheppard, a senior principal research scientist at CSIRO working on invasive species management, says: "That might be a long time ago, but those species spread rapidly and now in Australia foxes and feral cats are driving more native species to extinction than any other impacts. As a result, we have a higher extinction rate of native mammals than anywhere else in the world."



## Aussie Forests reshaped by Climate Change

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/07/whole-thing-is-unraveling-climate-change-reshaping-australias-forests>

Australia's forests are being reshaped by climate change as droughts, heat waves, rising temperatures and bushfires drive ecosystems towards collapse, ecologists have told Guardian Australia. Trees are dying, canopies are getting thinner and the rate that plants produce seeds is falling. Ecologists have long predicted that climate change would have major consequences for Australia's forests. Now they believe those impacts are unfolding.

"The whole thing is unravelling," says Prof David Bowman, who studies the impacts of climate change and fire on trees at the University of Tasmania. "Most people have no idea that it's even happening. The system is trying to tell you that if you don't pay attention then the whole thing will implode. We have to get a grip on climate change."



## Jesus Bird !

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-27/combcrested-jacana-waterbird-carrying-chicks-to-safety/10737512>



Sometimes referred to as the lotus bird, or Jesus bird, for its ability to seemingly walk on water, the comb-crested jacana is a highly distinctive Australian native waterbird with some very unusual behaviours.

If a male senses his chicks are in danger, he bundles them up under his wings and carries them to safety, with only their dangling legs visible beneath his feathers.

Sally Corte, from Maryborough in the Fraser Coast region of Queensland, was lucky enough to witness a display of that remarkable behaviour on her backyard dam and managed to capture it on camera.

## Climate change driving birds to migrate early

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/dec/28/climate-change-driving-birds-migrate-early-research-reveals-edinburgh-global-warming>, research reveals

A University of Edinburgh study finds birds are arriving at breeding grounds too soon, causing some to miss out on food. The main reason birds take flight is changing seasonal temperatures and food availability. The time they reach their summer breeding grounds is significant, because arriving at the wrong time, even by a few days, may cause them to miss out on vital resources such as food and nesting places. This in turn affects the timing of offspring hatching and their chances of survival.

Migrating birds are responding to the effects of climate change by arriving at their breeding grounds earlier as global temperatures rise, research has found. The University of Edinburgh study, which looked at hundreds of species across five continents, found that birds are reaching their summer breeding grounds on average about one day earlier per degree of increasing global temperature.



## Australian Government involved in sale of rare birds?

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/19/government-doesnt-know-if-exported-rare-birds-are-still-in-german-facility-senate-hears>

The government doesn't know if exported rare birds are still in a German facility, Senate hears. Australian officials have not visited the centre where hundreds of rare and endangered birds were sent.



Glossy-black cockatoos were among the birds the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots (ACTP) was permitted to import from Australia.

The federal environment department does not know if hundreds of rare and endangered Australian birds exported to a German organisation headed by a convicted kidnapper and extortionist are still at the group's facility in Brandenburg. Department officials told Senate estimates on Monday night their wildlife compliance unit was investigating after Guardian Australia reported the government had been warned birds sent to the ACTP could be sold to collectors at a huge profit. Officials told the hearing they had received multiple allegations about ACTP's activities dating back to late 2016.

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## Malleefowl chick on Eyre Peninsula

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-11/malleefowl-chick-discovery-on-eyre-peninsula/10797772>



A Malleefowl chick has been discovered for the first time in a wildlife refuge on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula. Cameras recently captured a Malleefowl chick scratching about in the dirt at the Mallee Refuge, inside the Secret Rocks Nature Reserve, near Kimba. Ecologist John Read has been monitoring the area for nine years and said the discovery, made on his birthday, was an exciting one.

"We used to have lots of Malleefowl. Ten years ago we'd find 18 or 20 active mounds every year of about 200 mounds in our area," he said. According to BirdLife Australia, Malleefowl lay their eggs inside cavities on the top of mounds. "The Malleefowl does not build a nest like other small birds. Instead it uses its strong feet to scrape large amounts of leaf litter and sand from the ground and into a large pile," it said.

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## New Zealand Seagulls under threat

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/13/new-zealand-seagulls-under-threat-after-90-decline>

New Zealand seagulls are severely at risk, but there is little public awareness or sympathy for their plight, with some colonies experiencing "unbelievable declines", and others disappearing altogether over the past few decades.

New Zealand is home to three species of seagull but the native red-billed seagull – the beady-eyed interloper who makes an appearance at every beach picnic up and down the country - is the most common.

Despite seeming to be in abundance because of their noisy antics and attraction to urban and inhabited environments, experts say the birds are severely at risk, with just 27,800 breeding pairs left nationwide, and the main offshore breeding colonies suffering population plummets of 80% to 100% since the mid-1960s.

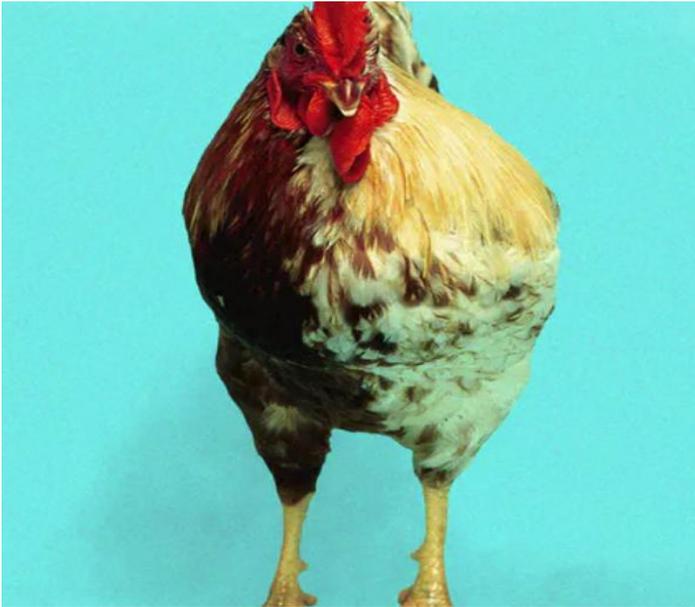


## Eggs are the deciding factor in bird sex

<https://theconversation.com/how-birds-become-male-or-female-and-occasionally-both-112061>

In humans, it's the sperm that determines whether an embryo is pushed along a male or female development pathway. But in birds, it's the other way around. Eggs are the deciding factor in bird sex.

There are other fascinating aspects of bird sex that are not shared with humans. Female birds seem to have some capacity to control the sex of their chicks. And occasionally a bird that is female on one side and male on the other is produced. So what is it about bird chromosomes that makes bird sex so different from human sex?



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## Remove ferals from the World's islands

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/27/cull-invasive-mammals-to-save-island-species-experts-urge>

House mice introduced onto Gough Island in the South Atlantic Ocean by 19th-century seal-hunters have evolved to twice their normal size and eat seabird chicks alive.



Nearly 10% of the world's animal species currently on the brink of extinction could be saved by killing invasive mammals on 169 islands. Islands comprise just 5.3% of the Earth's landmass yet have experienced 75% of known bird, mammal, amphibian and reptile extinctions since 1500.

More than a third of species currently classified as "critically endangered" on the IUCN Red List are found on islands, vulnerable to just eight feral species – including cats, rats, pigs, dogs, goats and mongooses.

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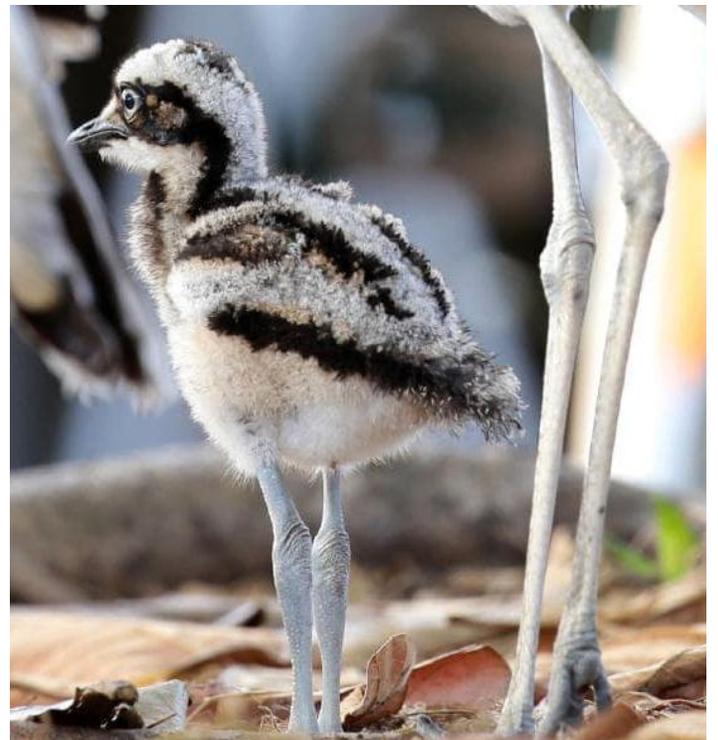
## Bush Stone Curlews

<https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/cairns-gone-wild/curlew-breeding-season-in-full-swing-in-and-around-cairns/news-story/ed01833360339221e366d786a7169317?nk=a6c91652f9814f0c46bbcb2576109c1e-1556517062>

Bush Stone Curlews been turning heads in the city recently, with chicks popping up everywhere from beer gardens to traffic islands. Ms Shurcliff said the curlews were once very common across Queensland, but their footprint was shrinking.

"They are now on the threatened list because they're disappearing further south", she said. "They're a bird we take for granted but we shouldn't, because they could just disappear." Bush stone-curlews mate for life and partners remain together throughout the year.

They will generally hatch two chicks per year and will often return to the same nests, which are almost always on the ground, year after year.



## Plains-wanderer chicks snuggle up to feather dusters

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/video/2019/mar/25/plains-wanderer-hatchlings-snuggle-up-to-feather-duster-father-video>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/25/australian-zoo-breeds-rare-plains-wanderer-bird>



The captive population of Australia's most unique critically endangered bird has doubled thanks to a plan hatched by Werribee open range zoo in Victoria. Last week, nine Plains-wanderer chicks came into the world within 24 hours of each other. One of the clutches was hatched in an incubator and raised under the paternal care of a feather duster after one of the fathers, a four-month-old who was daunted at raising his first chicks, stopped sitting on them. Within four days, the zoo director Glen Holland said, the chicks were eating crickets 'the size of beans' and zooming around their enclosure 'like bumblebees'. 'They have been snuggling up to the feather duster, pushing up into the feathers,' Holland said.



## Franzen wants focus on more immediate threats to birds

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/14/jonathan-franzen-climate-change-isnt-the-only-danger-to-birds>

Birdwatching was once an activity that elicited a sense of mild shame in Jonathan Franzen. The author stalked New York parks with binoculars in hand, rather than on a strap, carefully hiding from view the word "birds" on his field guide. Debonair friends in London recoiled in horror when told of his pastime. Franzen was furtive, almost embarrassed. Now, he is one of the most famous bird-watchers in the world.



"I totally let my freak flag fly now," Franzen says as he scans for birds at a community garden near his home in Santa Cruz, California. His phone has an app that deciphers bird sounds. He travels the world to see recondite species. He has written about birds in essays, op-eds and novels.

Climate change looms as a further hammer to birds but Franzen has argued conservationists have gravitated to climate campaigning at the detriment of more immediate threats, such as the loss of wetlands or, in the case of seabirds in remote locales, rats that eat hapless chicks alive.

## The Magic of Vines

- by Norm Webb

Some years ago, in an effort to keep wandering cats from our garden, I extended the height of our wooden fence by fixing 3 x 2 uprights to the fence posts, then by drilling holes in these uprights it was possible to run two strands of fencing wire to which 40mm wire netting was attached.

Pandorea vines were planted at intervals along the length of the fence and now some years down the track we have flowering vines framing our native garden, giving us lovely views of the flowering vines and better still - a haven for small native birds.



In another section of the garden where our large side windows looked directly onto the side windows of our neighbours house, we came up with an even better idea that not only gave us privacy but much more.

The idea was to build a structure to support native vines that was independent of the fence but also used the fence as extra support.

The structure was made of 50mm x 50mm galvanized posts with weldmesh panels fixed to those supports and was erected 600mm from the existing fence - parallel to it and higher.

More vines were planted and now many years since, the entanglement of vines is a protective haven for small birds and a beautiful accompaniment to our native garden.

The vines have thrived on the support, spilling on to the fence providing even greater safe habitat than the somewhat lesser habitat provided by vines on fences only.

Another advantage is that non-understanding neighbours can't prune vines that are not on their property. Luckily we have no problems with our neighbours!

Blue Fairy-wrens, Scrubwrens, Red-browed Finches and Whipbirds spend a lot of their daylight hours looking for grubs and resting in the safe depths of the vines. They have a handy place to retreat to when under threat from attacks from Butcherbirds and others.

Only this week I was in the garden when a blue wren was caught by a butcherbird. As it tried unsuccessfully to reach the cover of the vines, it screamed pitifully as the butcherbird caught it by the wing. I threw the trowel I was using in its direction, to no avail, as the Butcherbird flew to a nearby shrub and disposed of the poor little fellow.

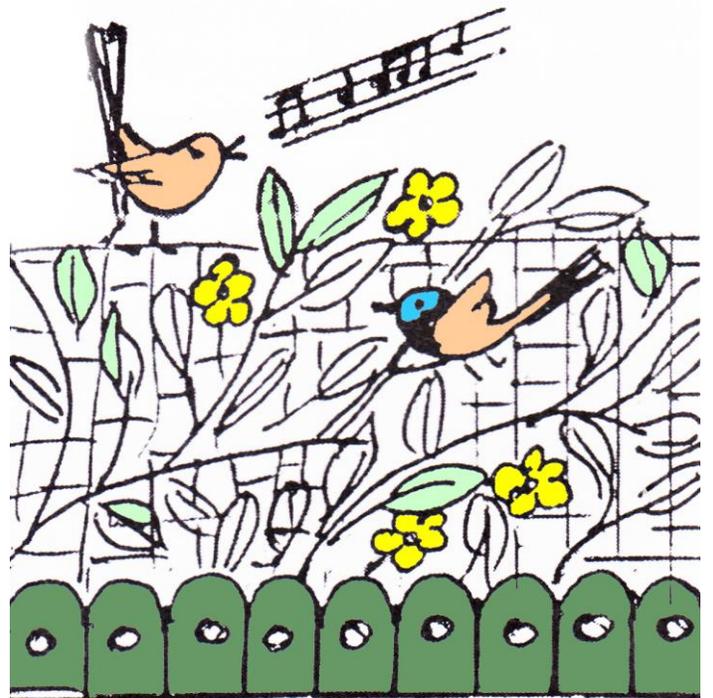
If the fairy-wren had reached the labyrinth of the vines first then it would have been no contest.

I read an article some years ago in Nature magazine, where the writer nostalgically recalled the large numbers of blue wrens that inhabited Sydney's Western suburbs' backyards in the 1960s. The reason was simple - every yard had a septic tank, usually hidden by a dense covering of what was nearly always choko vines.

There was probably a multitude of flying insects attracted to that tank!

We may not need the insects but wouldn't it be wonderful to bring wrens back to local gardens simply by supplying them with linking corridors of vines - be they native, exotic, passionfruit, choko or whatever.

Our garden would not support the many species of small native birds it does now if not for "The Magic of Vines" ...



## Save our Shoreline!

- by Karen Davis

Volunteers needed who enjoy beach walking!

The South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program was established in 1999 by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to reduce the rate of decline of threatened shorebirds and recover populations by enhancing breeding success.

One of the local groups involved in this program walks the length of Bherwerre Beach from Cave Beach west to the entrance of Sussex Inlet. This is a walk of about 6kms. We are looking for new volunteers who could share the load of surveying this beach over the breeding season September to March (or part thereof as we all take holidays at some time).



Along this walk you get to enjoy the wild beach scene while looking for Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers and their nests as well as enjoying other species along the way. Good eyesight is required and preferably a good zoom camera to help identify the letters and numbers on any flags the birds may have on their legs.

You don't have to be an experienced birder or have any skills to start as training is provided to give you all the skills you will need such as bird identification and behaviour, predator track identification, how to survey and not disturb the birds etc.

People who are happy to be a driver and collect walkers at the far end are also welcome.

If you are at all interested or would like to know more please contact Karen Davis on 0487 208437 or email her at [karen@brettdavis.com.au](mailto:karen@brettdavis.com.au)

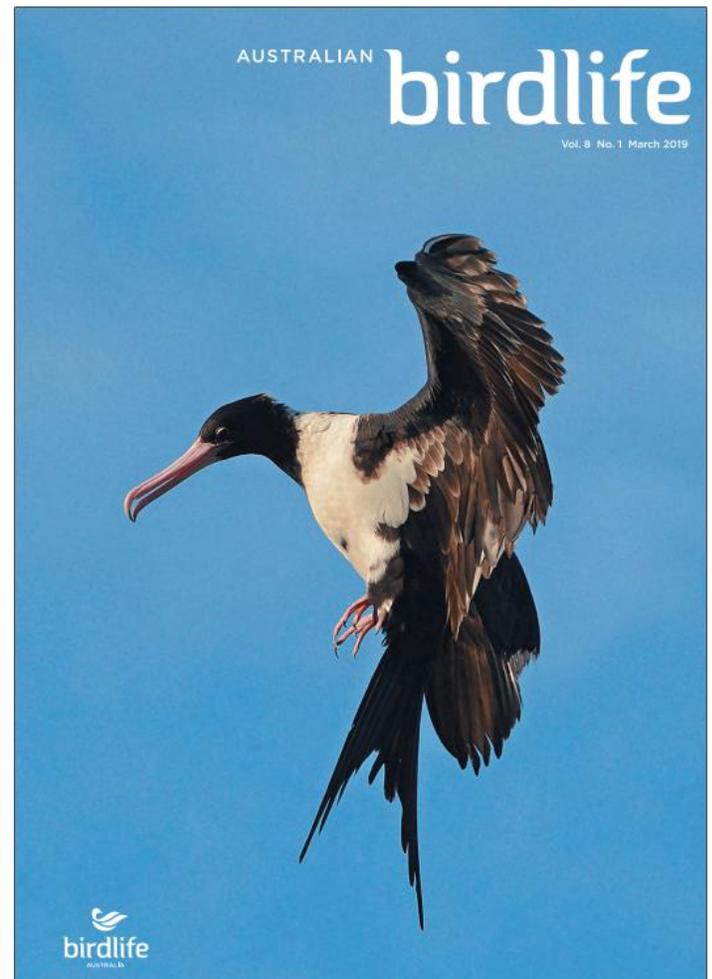
You will be glad you did!

## Become a Member or Wildbird Protector

If you are reading this magazine but are still not a member of BirdLife Australia or one of their Wildbird Protectors, and you are really concerned for the future of our native birds, please consider joining Australia's oldest and largest bird conservation organization - BirdLife Australia.

Your membership money will not only contribute in a meaningful way to the real conservation of birds and their habitats in Australia, but as a bonus you will receive the beautiful and informative BirdLife Australia quarterly magazine which is vastly superior to this humble magazine offered for free by BirdLife Shoalhaven.

BirdLife Australia Wildbird Protectors receive many of the same benefits as BirdLife Australia members, but their money - as little as \$10 a month - two cups of coffee! - goes directly to core conservation projects that save threatened native birds from extinction and increase breeding rates for birds like the Hooded Plover. You can set up a regular deduction from your bank account and you will not have to worry about renewing your BirdLife Australia membership ever again, while at the same time knowing you are making Australia a better place for its native birds!



### 3 bird talks and events for your diaries

#### Shoalhaven Environmental Expo - Wednesday 5 June



To mark World Environment Day, the Shoalhaven City Council is holding the Shoalhaven Environmental Expo 2019 on Wednesday 5th June from 10am to 4pm at the Entertainment Centre in Nowra.

The Expo is designed to promote sustainability and positive environmental actions in the Shoalhaven. There will be information stalls, talks and demonstrations, roving environmentally focused performers and more!

BLS will have its own stall and Chris Grounds, BLS Conservation Officer, will be one of the speakers. Many thanks to those who volunteered to man our stall. To join them, please email [president@shoalhaven.org](mailto:president@shoalhaven.org)

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#### A Celebration of Lake Wollumboola - Sunday 23 June



BirdLife Shoalhaven invites you to "A Celebration of Lake Wollumboola" to be held on Sunday 23 June from 2pm to 4pm at the **Nowra Culburra Surf Life Saving Club**.

Lake Wollumboola is vital for the survival of many of our threatened migratory shorebirds and beach nesting birds, but other key aspects of the Lake's significance and ecology are often overlooked. We hope to fill in some of these gaps, as part of a celebration of Lake Wollumboola and the people that have fought for its protection.

As part of her welcome to country, Delia Lowe, Jerrinja Elder, will talk about the significance of the lake for the Jerrinja people over thousands of years.

Kerryn Stephens will lead an interactive session exploring the unique, quirky and unusual aspects of Lake Wollumboola and its inhabitants, occasional visitors and admirers. Kerryn's involvement with the Lake dates back to 1997, when she was part of studies to understand the complexities of its hydrology and ecology. Kerryn continued to work with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage until 2013 undertaking a leading role in development of its Estuary Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Program. After studies in communication and media, she assisted the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association with the development of its website.

This event gives BLS the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Association, which has fought tirelessly for the survival of this globally significant site. Frances Bray has been the public face of this often acrimonious fight over more than two decades. Her amazing contribution will be recognised by BirdLife Australia with the presentation to Frances in May of their prestigious Distinguished Services Award. The event will allow her many friends on the South Coast to celebrate this achievement with her.

After afternoon tea, we hope you will have time to visit the new bird viewing platform on the edge of the Lake to observe the birds.

Hopefully you will be able to make it. I am sure you will go away with a greater understanding of why the Lake must be protected into the future.

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#### Bird Haven Festival - Friday 18 to Sunday 20 October



Following the success of the fledgling Festival in 2018, planning for the 2019 Bird Haven Festival is well underway. It will be held from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 October, in the lead-up to the Aussie Backyard Bird Count and Bird Week.

This year's Festival and Expo will be held at multiple venues in Shoalhaven Heads. As well as a ticketed program of talks and walks, there will be optional add-on workshops, dinners, stalls, an art exhibition, children's activities, a bird-themed market and more.

Watch this space for announcements on the keynote speakers!

## Shorebird Report

- by Jodie Dunn, NPWS Shorebird Recovery Coordinator

(This article is highly edited. See full report - text only - at [www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/2019shorebirdreport.pdf](http://www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/2019shorebirdreport.pdf))

Thanks to all the amazing shorebird volunteers, NPWS staff, fox control and education contractors and council rangers that were out there over the holidays monitoring the birds, protecting their nests and chicks and talking to beach goers (especially the ones with off leash dogs!). Our hard work has paid off.

The Little Tern's main colony in the Shoalhaven area this season was at Lake Conjola. After the stormy weather in late November flooded 23 nests on the sandflats in the lake and 5 nests at the back of the beach, only one nest containing 3 eggs remained in the dunes and a total of 73 eggs were lost. Thankfully the terns hung around, and re-nested on the sand spit and in the dunes 2 weeks later.

The chicks of this second round of nesting began hatching on Christmas day and then the human population of Lake Conjola literally exploded the day after. We did our best to fortify the nesting area, joining all 4 spit fences together to allow the chicks to roam wider and provide more protection from disturbance, plus adding a lot of signage. Lots of half buried plant pot "chick shelters" were installed to encourage chicks to stay inside the fences, and avoid venturing out where they would be trampled.



A vandalism incident saw the western side of the dune fenced ripped down and the plant pot chick shelters stomped on and broken. Very disappointing but thankfully no chicks harmed that we could see.

In early January the council began work on trying to open the lake again. There were between 40 and 50 chicks on the spit and in the dune. Nearly every plant pot in the spit fenced area had a chick or three inside! In the dunes we

didn't see the chicks, but the little footprints between the vegetation indicated there were quite a few.



The council works continued for more than a week and chicks grew up and became highly mobile, a few ventured over to where the machinery was working, and one even needed to be rescued as it became trapped in the wheel ruts from the huge trucks. The work site was cleared of chicks each morning before works commenced, and council staff assisted by keeping a lookout.

The works also attracted many onlookers, so the council constructed a buffer fence to reduce disturbance and the proximity of people to nests and chicks.

At Lake Wollumboola foxes and wash-overs resulted in only two fledglings, but we had **47 Little Tern fledglings** in total for the season - an amazing result!

The Hooded Plovers have had a few successes over the summer holidays. In Booderee our northernmost pair (C7/E6) at Caves Beach fledged 2 chicks. At Inyadda Beach, a third nesting attempt was successful.



So far 7 definite (and another probable) Hoodie fledglings for the Shoalhaven area with another almost fledged at Buckley's Beach and 2 eggs still to hatch at Caves. Looking like a pretty good season so far.

The Pied Oystercatchers are finished nesting for the season. In the Illawarra region, at Horsley Inlet, Oak Flats the pair with a chick that was being monitored in December, actually turned out to have 2 chicks which fledged in mid-January!

Further south at Gerroa, the new Pied pair did not nest this season. One of the adults was reported with fishing line entanglement around both legs. Shorebird site coordinator, Sally Leonard, constructed special noose mats, successfully trapped the bird, removed the fishing line and released it right away. A great result!

At Shoalhaven Heads the Berm pair fledged a chick in mid-December. The Rivermouth pair frustratingly abandoned their eggs just before hatching. The Comerong Island pair hatched one of their chicks in mid-January and abandoned the other egg, despite it containing a full term chick. The pair soon lost their small chick, possibly to the fox that has evaded control efforts all season.

The Crookhaven Breakwall pair did not re-nest, and the Coalwharf pair's two chicks disappeared into the mangroves. A great hiding place for chicks, so let's hope they survived! The Lake Wollumboola Pieds fledged a chick in November.

On Beecroft Peninsula (Defence Australia) the Green Island Pieds did not re-nest after abandoning their nest in November, no nest was found at all this season for the Cabbage Tree Beach pair and the Long Beach South pair hatched 2 chicks with one surviving to fledge recently.



In Booderee NP the Greenpatch pair fledged a chick in December. The Mary's Bay Pieds did not re-nest after the loss of their chick. Bherwerre Beach is a long remote stretch of beach with sporadic monitoring, but it seems we have two fledglings in January from a pair nesting on the western half of the beach, plus the November fledgling from the pair nesting right down at the western end of the beach at the Sussex Inlet entrance.

In St Georges Basin, on Oaky Island one pair lost their nest in November and no nest was found for the second pair and no nests were found on either Sepulchre or Garden Island. The Berrara Pieds nested 3 times with no success. From the 2 nesting pairs at Lake Conjola spit, one chick fledged. On the islands in Lake Conjola 2 nests were sighted but no fledglings eventuated.

One of the two Pied chicks at Termeil creek survived to fledge in mid-January. At Narrawallee Inlet the 2 pairs had 5 nesting attempts between them, with only one chick surviving to fledge. Another fishing line entangled Pied Oystercatcher was rescued in mid-January, however this one was in much worse condition as the fishing line had cut into its legs and caused significant scarring. Three entanglements in less than 2 weeks. Discarded fishing line is a death trap for wading shorebirds!



A pair hung out at Tabourie Lake but didn't nest. The Island Beach Pieds fledged one of their three chicks in October, and another new pair nested at nearby Dawson's Beach but their nest was lost in November. Down at Durras Lake entrance one pair fledged 2 chicks and the second pair lost their chicks soon after hatching. At Batemans Bay Marina site the pair have not re-nested after losing an early nest. This gives at least **17 fledglings for the Pied Oystercatchers** this season.

The Shorebird Education Program that was run over the school holidays by Jackson and Monica has been a great success. They directly engaged almost two thousand beach goers, dog walkers, locals and tourists through shorebird education tents at key nesting sites and local markets and kids activities in caravan parks. This is an important initiative supported by Saving our Species (OEH), Holiday Havens (SCC) and the Shorebird Recovery Program (NPWS). Thanks so much for all your hard work Jackson and Monica!

And a big thank you to all the local volunteers who give hundreds of hours each endangered shorebird nesting season, to ensure the survival of our beautiful beach nesting birds on the south coast!

## Birding around Cairns

- words by Yolande Cozijn  
- photographs by Warren Wilson

This story should be subtitled "Sweating your way around the bird hotspots of Far North Queensland" as we were in Cairns and Julatten during the hottest November weather on record!

As most avid birders know, Far North Queensland is a wonderful birding hotspot at any time of the year. Most of us have the good sense to visit in Winter, however there are many migratory species that can only be seen during Summer, so it was when we met other birding friends and made the trip north to specifically photograph one bird - the Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher (BBPK).

This lovely rainforest bird makes the trip down from New Guinea to mate and breed in early November annually. The aptly named Kingfisher Park has a few resident BBPKs at this time of year and so we stayed there for a few days to see what we could see.

As the only non photographer in the group I was happy to actually catch a glimpse of a BBPK on our first day - the territorial calls of the male had made it relatively easy to find - BUT - as it's a rainforest bird it seemed to be always perched in dense foliage making it exceptionally difficult to photograph.

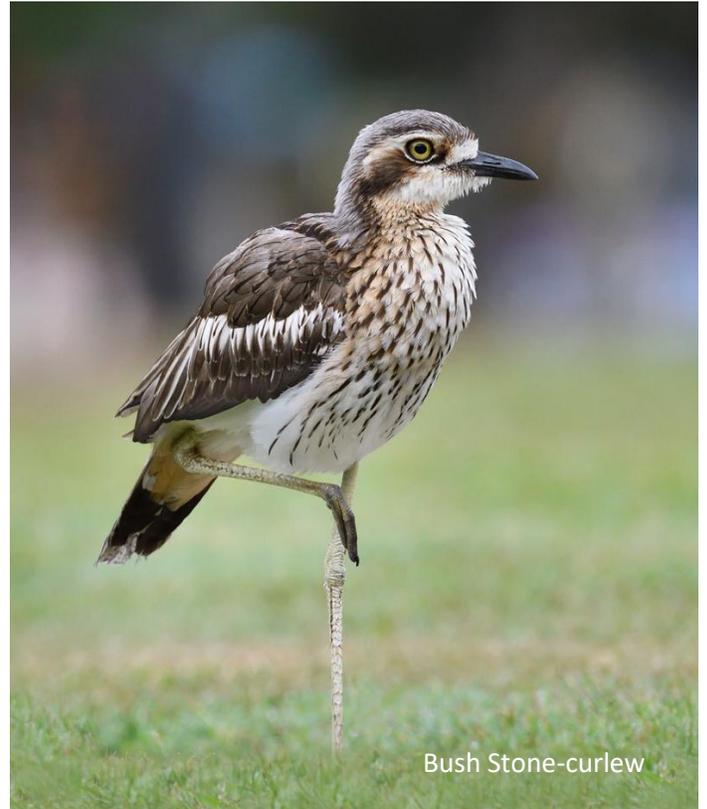


Macleay's Honeyeater

Happily, there are plenty of other birds to be seen in and around Kingfisher Park and the hot weather made the bird baths one of the best spots to birdwatch. Every afternoon many birds sought to escape the heat in the bird baths.

After four mornings of rising at 5.30am to photograph the elusive BBPK, it was on our last morning that one finally broke from the dense cover they seem to love to sit in. It perched obligingly for us. Thank goodness!

Then it was down to Cairns to spend some time at the Centenary Lakes, the Cemetery and the Cairns Esplanade. Cairns is one of the world's premier birding hotspots and has so many great places to go birding that you can be spoilt for choice. We chose the above three locations to photograph specific birds.



Bush Stone-curlew

The cemetery has a resident population of Bush Stone-curlews and the Rainbow Bee-eaters love using the headstones and small trees to perch on before swooping to feast on insects.

The Cairns Esplanade can be a great place to see many wader species. The peak time of the year is September to March when the migratory waders are visiting and the best time to see them is usually the last two hours before high tide. Local birders meet daily at 4.00pm on the board-walk in front of the RSL club.



Chestnut-breasted Mannikins

We were fortunate to spot a pair of Beach Stone-curlews feeding on the mud flats early one morning. Sadly they were just too far away for a suitable photograph.



On the Cairns Esplanade



Birds out on the mudflats

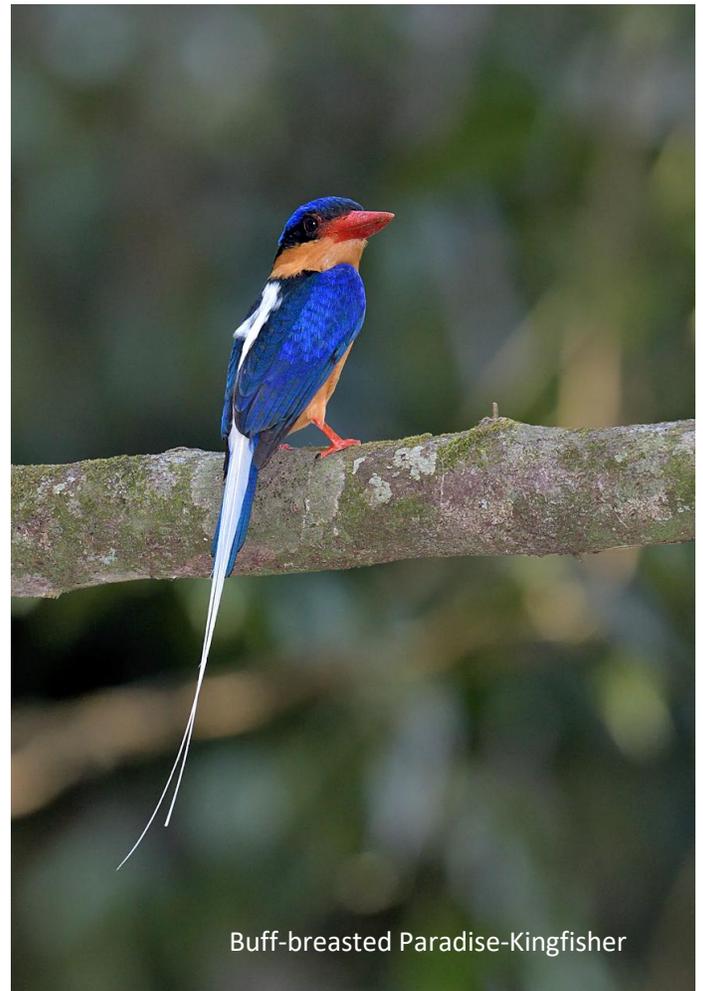


At Centenary Lakes

So if you can handle the heat, humidity and storms, a trip up to Far North Queensland in November or December can be very rewarding!



Rainbow Bee-eaters



Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher

# BirdLife Shoalhaven Calendar for 2019

Date	Event / Location / Group*	Details - meeting time and place, leaders etc.
May 10th (Fri)	Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve	8am back of Harry Higgs Room. Leader: Chris Shinton 0423 352 718
May 19th (Sun)	Jerrara Dam / Spring Creek	8:30am Apex Park, Albert Street, Berry. Contacts: Su and Stan - 0419 287 224 or (02) 4443-4828
May 24th (Fri)	Ulladulla Sports Ground	8am south end Camden Street. Leader: Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Jun 2nd (Sun)	Bangalee Reserve	8:15am at Bangalee car park. Leader: Kim Touzel 0418 655 311
Jun 5th (Wed)	Shoalhaven Environmental Expo	10am to 4pm at the Entertainment Centre in Nowra
Jun 7th (Fri)	Kioloa Circuit (O'Hara's Head)	8am Kioloa boat ramp. Leaders: Marg and Maggie 4457-1129
Jun 16th (Sun)	Vincentia WTP / Moona Ck	8:30am at treatment ponds entrance, Berry St
Jun 21st (Fri)	Garrads Reserve Narrawallee	8am: Back of Harry Higgs Room or 8:15 at the end of Leo Drive Leader: Bob Rusk 4455-2169
Jun 23rd (Sun)	Lake Wollumboola Celebration	See page 24 for details
Jul 5th (Fri)	Meroo NP	8am Lions Park Burrill Lake or 8:15am at the Meroo NP car park Leader: Mike Jefferis 0412 480 371
Jul 19th (Fri)	Warden Head	8am at the lighthouse. Leader: Chris Shinton 0423 352 718
Jul 21st (Sun)	Currarong	8:30am at the corner of Coonemia and Currarong Roads
Aug 18th (Sun)	Fitzroy Falls	8:30am at Kangaroo Valley Showground
Sep 15th (Sun)	Booderee Botanical Gardens	8:30am at the Booderee Visitors Centre car park
Oct 18 -20	Bird Haven Festival	See page 24 for details

\* BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS) activities are shown in black  
 \* Milton Ulladulla Birders (MUD) activities are shown in blue  
 \* Shoalhaven Birders (SB) activities are shown in green

\* Unless otherwise stated, most activities go for 2 to 3 hours.

BLS members can attend all activities. SB contacts are Stan & Su Brown 4443-4828 and 0419 287 224. MUD contacts are Marg Hamon 4457-1129 and Chris Shinton 4454-5584 or you can email [mubirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:mubirdclub@gmail.com).

**Contributions** - any bird photographs, articles, conservation issues, birding experiences, anecdotes or sightings that you would like to share with fellow members, please send to the editor (Brett Davis) at [shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au](mailto:shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au)

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