

BirdLife Shoalhaven Magazine

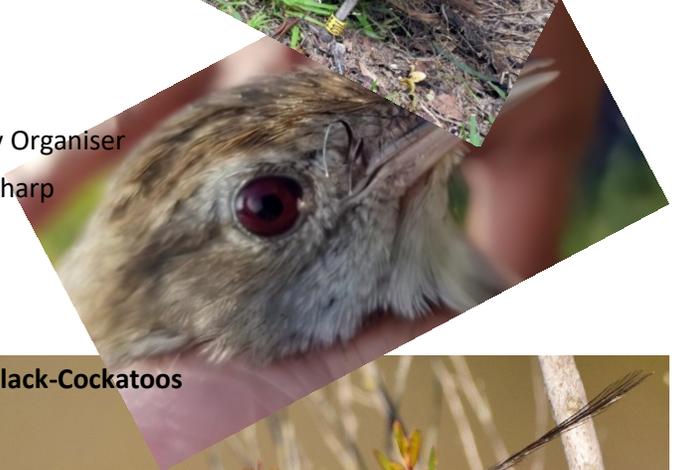


Autumn 2022



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Cover Image: This season's cover depicts the flag of Ukraine superimposed by a silhouette of the Ukrainian national animal - the Common Nightingale. See "Presidential Musings" on page 3 for the relevance of the flag

Acknowledgment: BirdLife Shoalhaven acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the Shoalhaven, their care of country, birds and habitat, and pays respects to all Elders.

Presidential Musings

- by Rob Dunn, President of BirdLife Shoalhaven

1. In the front-line of war and conservation

At the end of February, Paul Sullivan, the CEO of BirdLife Australia, sent this email to the BirdLife network:

"We are all deeply saddened by the troubling developments in Ukraine. Some BirdLife partners are on the front line of this political and military conflict. I recently extended our support to BirdLife Belarus (APB), which has recently been accused by its government of being an extremist organisation. It's not, they are totally amazing. The CEO's response reflects their commitment to keep fighting for the birds:"

"Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."

"We stand with our partners around the world who are fighting the biodiversity crisis and keep going through the horror of warfare and civil unrest."



The logo of BirdLife Belarus (APB)

Since this email, the Guardian has reported that APB has been ordered by a court to close in May after 24 years of work after accusations of "extremist activities". It's employees have been arrested and one jailed for six months under suspicion of attempting to destabilise the political situation in the country under the guise of protecting birds. The evolving situation at the Ukrainian Society for Protection of Birds (USPB) remains unclear. It can only be assumed to be dire.

A source told the Guardian: "The darkness that has engulfed ... our region is catching up also with those protecting the environment. Aside from the sheer injustice, this a massive blow to conservation at a global scale."



The Common Nightingale is the national animal of Ukraine

Ukraine and Belarus are part of Polesia, a wetlands area more than two-thirds the size of the UK. The landscape is a labyrinth of gigantic bogs and swamps that supports large populations of wolves, bison, lynx and 1.5 million migratory birds. It has been called "the Amazon of Europe".

Polesia has been under the threat of the construction of the E40 waterway, a 2,000km inland shipping route linking the Black Sea and the Baltic. This would slice through the wilderness and involve dredging inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone and stirring up radioactive sludge.

APB and USPB have been part of the conservation battle to stop this infrastructure development. War is now the latest threat to this pristine part of Europe.

Oleg Dudkin, USPB CEO says "Hopefully these nightmares and daymares will end very soon and we will watch sky not awaiting bombs and rockets, but only watching migrating birds."

2. An Evening at the Heads

During the pandemic we have had very few opportunities for face-to-face BLS events. We managed to rectify this in early February with an evening talk at Shoalhaven Heads by Nicholas Carlile on the NSW Government's successful rodent eradication program on Lord Howe Island in 2020.



Prior to the talk 20 people gathered for the scheduled pre-talk bird walk on the Shoalhaven Heads sand flats. They were rewarded with good sightings of resident and visiting shorebirds prior to dinner at the club and the talk.

In his talk Nicholas outlined the prolonged process of research, approvals, planning, community consultation, funding, challenges with implementation, follow-up work and more. This would have been one of the largest projects of its kind and has been an outstanding success.

A rat incursion in April 2021 was identified quickly, with the rats eradicated. Biosecurity has since been improved. Nicholas went on to show the significant effect the project has already had on bird numbers.

I can attest to this, having just returned from a trip to the island - see the article about Lord Howe Island on page 7. The Lord Howe Island Woodhen can now be seen throughout the township. Previously, the presence of rodents had restricted this critically endangered bird to the slopes of the impressive Mount Gower. This is an amazing bird conservation success story!



After Nicholas's talk, I outlined BLS's achievements in 2021 and plans for this year, which were included in the summer magazine. This also gave me the opportunity to cover the requirements of our AGM and confirm the new BLS Committee as follows:

- President - myself
- Vice-President & Secretary – Phil Hendry
- Treasurer - Karen Davis
- Conservation Officer – Emily Dyball (new)
- Communications - Brett Davis
- Media Officer - Yolande Cozijn
- Bird Walk Coordinator – Sue Mitchell (new)
- General Committee - Oisin Sweeney

I also expressed my thanks for the great work of Chris Grounds, as Conservation Officer, and Mike Jefferis, Secretary, over several years, who both resigned from the Committee since the last AGM.

The whole evening was a great success with 80 people turning up to hear an excellent speaker, showing the interest of our supporters to still come together to hear about birds and their conservation.

3. A film on lyrebirds is coming and the Festival returns!

The turnout to hear Nicholas Carlile's talk gave us the confidence to organise four upcoming events in June and October despite the ever-changing Covid situation.

The first will be a screening of a new award-winning movie, 'The Message of the Lyrebird', at the Huskisson Pictures at 7pm on 23 June. To find out why you should come, click this link - www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKEXl4kILyI. The film producer will also be there for a Q&A afterwards. Tickets will go on sale at the end of May.

Then in October the Bird Haven Festival returns! It was a huge success in 2018 and 2019, bringing hundreds of people together in Shoalhaven Heads to celebrate and learn more about birds. This year it will be a smaller event due to time constraints on the original organisers caused by Covid, but BirdLife Shoalhaven is delighted to be running three events to get the Festival back on the birding calendar.

The first is a talk by Dr Holly Parsons on 'The weird and wonderful life of birds' at the Ulladulla Civic Centre on Saturday 15 October, 2-4pm. While this is aimed at 'aspiring' birdwatchers, I am sure everyone will learn something new. Afterwards you will be invited to do your first Aussie Backyard Bird Count. Admission will be free.

Then at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum in Huskisson on Wednesday 19 October, 3-6pm, we will run guided bird walks to improve the bird ID skills of 'emerging' birdwatchers.

The last event will be the 'Bird Haven Festival Conference' at the Shoalhaven Heads Bowling Club on Saturday 22 October, 11am-5pm. This will be an ideal opportunity to hear leading ornithologists and researchers speak about their work in bird conservation and the ecology of some of our bird species. A full list of speakers will be released in June when tickets go on sale, initially to members of BirdLife Shoalhaven. Make sure you get the first chance to buy tickets for the Conference by joining BirdLife Australia at www.birdlife.org.au/support-us/join-us

More details will be released soon, but in the meantime please put these four events in your diary!

NO OTHER BIRD ON THE PLANET CAN DO WHAT THE LYREBIRD CAN DO



THE
MESSAGE OF THE
LYREBIRD

Huskisson Pictures on Thursday 23 June at 7pm

BALANGARA FILMS PRESENTS

A BALANGARA FILMS PRODUCTION STARRING ANASTASIA DALZIELL CAM WALKER KEVIN MASON THE SHERBROOKE LYREBIRD
STUDY GROUP CAROL PROBETS FRANCES BODKIN EDITED BY MARK B PEARCE MUSIC BY COLIN OFFORD MATTHEW DOYLE
RILEY LEE SOUND DESIGNER MICHAEL SLATER CINEMATOGRAPHY NICK HAYWARD COLOURIST MILES BENNETT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
MARK B PEARCE NICK HAYWARD LOUISA D PEARCE STORY BY MARK B PEARCE PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY MARK B PEARCE

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BALANGARA
FILMS

Huskisson Pictures Thursday 23 June at 7pm

THE
MESSAGE OF THE
LYREBIRD



In 1998, wildlife cinematographer Nick Hayward filmed the famous *The Life of Birds* sequence, in which Australia's most creative songbird imitates the sound of a chainsaw chopping down a tree. The bird was filmed in captivity, but ever since then, the world of birding enthusiasts have wondered, do lyrebirds imitate man-made sounds in the wild?

This question begins a journey deep into the native forests, where a cast of characters help us not only understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird, but what its message may be for humanity.

"The Message of the Lyrebird combines a deep understanding of the lyrebird's natural history with deft storytelling and the film is, in my opinion, a critically important work."

– Dr Anastasia Dalziell, Behavioural Ecologist



Set in a natural wonderland where an exquisite forest faery has been performing his astonishing song and dance routines for 18 million years, *The Message of the Lyrebird* takes the audience on a journey of self-reflection, connection and a call to remember to live without destroying the things we love.



THE HISTORY OF THE FOREST IS RECORDED IN THEIR SONG



THEMESSAGEOFTHELYREBIRD.COM

BALANGARA
FILMS

Bird Resurgence on Lord Howe Island

- by Brett Davis

I attended the talk by Nic Carlile on "Rodent Eradication on Lord Howe Island" at Shoalhaven Heads on February 7th and was blown away by the science - the project's planning, implementation and success were absolutely remarkable.

By one of those strange quirks of fate, six weeks later I was on Lord Howe Island with a group of 30 Shoalhaven Bushwalkers, and I would have a chance to see the results of the eradication project for myself.

My wife Karen and I first visited the island 32 years ago on our honeymoon in 1990. Even though we were not birdwatchers at the time, the birdlife on the island could not be ignored.

We revisited the island in late 1995 as part of a 5 person yacht crew. By this time we were birdwatchers, having made that decision in 1993. The birds hadn't changed at all in the five years that we had been away.

Feral cats and pigs were eradicated from Lord Howe Island during the 1980s and 1990s. Karen and I had seen goats in the Goat Cave on Mt Lidgbird in 1990, but goats were almost eradicated by the early 2000s. Three were sighted (and one shot) after the eradication program was finished - hopefully the two that were left were the same sex!

On our arrival in March it was immediately obvious that bird numbers were very much greater. In 1990 we had seen two of the then critically endangered Lord Howe Woodhen near the base of Mt Lidgbird and another on the top of Mt Gower. On this trip we saw a group of nine in the main street, with one even wandering around the tables inside a café!

On a 15 kilometre bike ride covering almost all of the roads on the island, I counted 30 Woodhens. According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the population of adult Woodhens on Lord Howe Island in 2016 was 232.

In October 2021 the estimated number of Woodhens on the island was 600. I wouldn't be surprised if the actual figure is a whole lot more!



But it's not only the Woodhens that are flourishing. A Buff-banded Rail lived in our backyard for a couple of weeks a few years ago, and they are a "resort bird" on Lady Elliott island, but on Lord Howe Island they are now everywhere - easily outnumbering the similarly shaped but larger Woodhen.

Even the White Terns (pictured below) for which Lord Howe Island is famous are now in much greater numbers. They nest on bare branches in the Norfolk Island pines lining the two main streets on the island. The rough bark of the pines made it easy for rats to climb the trees to get the tern eggs.

Although my observations are only anecdotal, there seemed to be a lot more Emerald Doves, Noddies, Petrels, Tropicbirds and Pacific Golden Plovers on the island as well.

In Rob's "Presidential Musings" he says that a rat incursion in April 2021 was identified quickly, with the rats eradicated. Biosecurity has since been improved."



We saw evidence of this biosecurity during a walk to North Beach. We met a guy with a dog (it looked like a Jack Russell) who explained to us that he and his dog were on the island for three weeks - and were regular visitors to the island where they are employed to search for any sign of rats.

When asked how difficult was it to train his dog, the "rat catcher" said that terriers are natural "ratters" - the hard part is training them not to chase after anything else!



Urban Tree Policy

- by Oisín Sweeney

It's time for Council to turn over a new leaf in urban tree policy!

The Shoalhaven is a coveted destination for those looking to escape the city life, whether as visitors for a holiday or to permanently relocate. The natural environment is the prime reason the Shoalhaven is so desirable: survey after survey of residents ranks protecting the environment top, or near top, of their list of issues of concern.

For many residents of the Shoalhaven's towns and villages, the large trees and natural vegetation that share their spaces are a source of joy - whether in their own right, or via the plethora of native animals they host that visit our parks and gardens. Such trees and patches of bush are a legacy of a time when development did not, as a matter of course, involve flattening everything and starting from scratch. Given the age of many of our trees, they're irreplaceable for many generations.

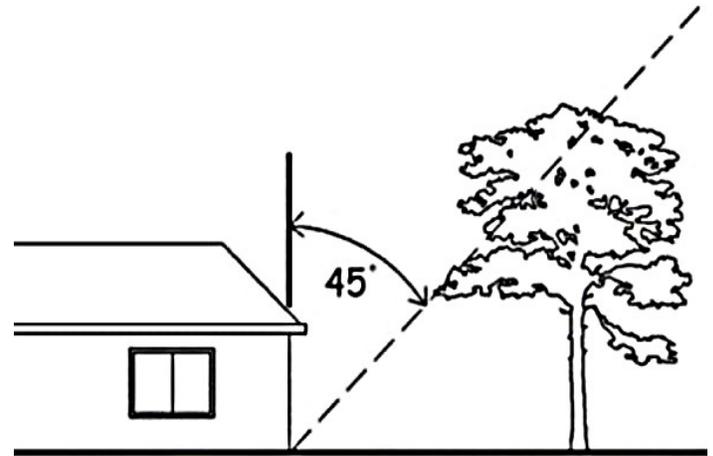


Besides the emotional benefits we get from trees, they're serving us in many ways: everyone is familiar with the concept of trees as 'lungs', provisioning us with oxygen and clean air.

But it has now become clear that trees are one of the cheapest ways we can keep cities, towns and villages cooler in the face of the increasing temperatures and more frequent heatwaves that global heating is bringing.

This goes beyond just making ourselves more comfortable, for some it's life or death. Global analyses show that people in hotter areas of cities are more likely to die from the effects of extreme heat - with the old, young and less well-off most vulnerable.

In light of the services trees provide to us, you'd think retaining them where possible would be a priority. Yet Shoalhaven Council performs very poorly in this regard. It's obvious to everyone that our large trees are being whittled away and canopy cover decreasing.



An effective tree and vegetation policy needs to do more than just telling people not to cut down trees. In some cases removal will be required on safety grounds, or due to trees becoming old and dying. A good policy needs to prioritize tree retention while addressing the safety concerns of residents and providing a mechanism for replacing lost trees and retaining or increasing canopy cover. This will require resourcing, but it's worth it: cities in the US have estimated that a dollar invested in trees returns up to \$3 in benefits every year.

On the 21st February, Council voted to defer a vote on repealing the '45 degree rule' to make sure that grey areas around safety and what happens in the absence of the 45 degree rule were cleared up before any vote. This gives Council a great opportunity to implement a holistic policy that both respects the concerns of some residents while increasing canopy cover to make sure we retain natural beauty while simultaneously adapting our urban areas to inevitable heating.

Imagine the excitement if someone invented a machine that simultaneously absorbed carbon dioxide and pumped out oxygen. A machine that did this all day every day, required no power to run and had a lifespan of hundreds of years. This is precisely what trees do for us.

Yet in return we in the Shoalhaven treat them as utterly expendable and often remove them at a whim. Surely it's time for this to change.

Eastern Bristlebird Translocation

- by Karen Davis

As the Jervis Bay KBA Guardian, I was lucky enough in early April to observe David Bain, Dion Maple and helpers attempt to catch Eastern Bristlebirds in a mist net.

It was very interesting observing the birds up close, but I felt a bit sad for the birds knowing they were going on a long trip, far from home, never to return to Booderee.



In 2021, Booderee National Park was approached by Wilsons Promontory National Park and Parks Victoria to participate in a national conservation initiative to conserve the Eastern Bristlebird. The project involves sending birds from Booderee to establish a new population at Wilsons Promontory. In August of 2021 the Booderee Joint Board of Management endorsed the proposal.



Bristlebirds are listed as Endangered in Australia under Commonwealth legislation and in June 2021, the Victorian population was listed as Critically Endangered following the devastating 2019-2020 wildfire season. The wildfires almost wiped out the entire Victorian population at Croajingolong National Park near Mallacoota.

Along the east coast, bristlebirds have declined from a vast historical range to three isolated populations: one in the Queensland/NSW border area; one in the Illawarra and Jervis Bay; and one in the NSW/Victoria border area. Booderee and Jervis Bay National Park (JBNP) form part of the central population. This population is considered a stronghold for the species following 20 years of dedicated fox control and fire management.

The total national population of Eastern Bristlebirds is estimated at 3,500 birds, with the Booderee/JBNP population consisting of about 1,250 birds.



Two translocations of bristlebirds have already occurred. One across Jervis Bay to Beecroft Peninsula in 2003-05, using 50 birds from Booderee and JBNP, and one to Cataract Dam in 2008, using 50 birds from Barren Grounds. Both are considered successful translocations.

Monitoring of bristlebirds in Booderee has been conducted three times a year since 2003 (Spring, Summer & Autumn). Booderee has a stable population that is resilient and has effectively recovered from the past two large wildfires.

Actively managed threats include wildfire and fox predation. Efforts by Booderee Rangers over the past twenty years to protect the bristlebirds mean that Booderee is well placed to support this nationally important initiative.

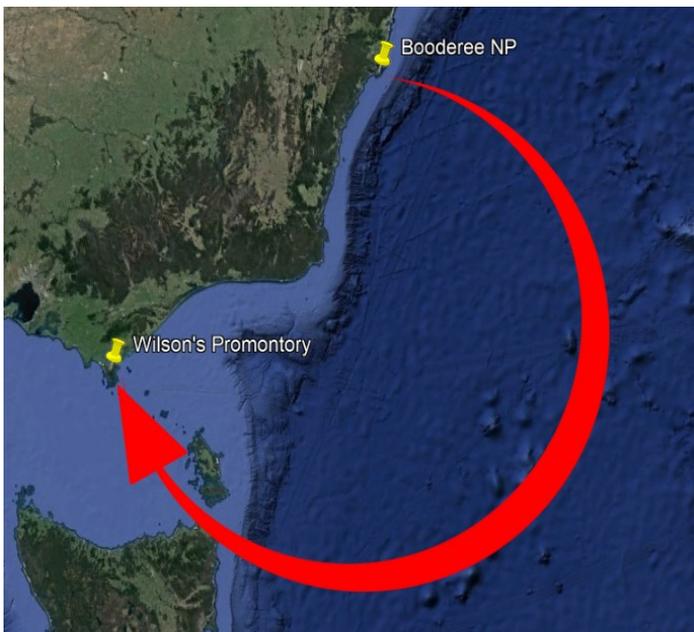
The translocation project developed by the Victorian Government aims to establish a new population of the Eastern Bristlebird in Victoria, through reintroducing the species to Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Wilson's Prom has extensive areas of suitable habitat for the species and is managed primarily for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism.

Sixty individuals (over three years) would be sourced widely from across the Bherwerre Peninsula in Jervis Bay and from the current Victorian population at Croajingolong National Park.

The translocation will be managed by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning along with project partners from Parks Victoria, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and Parks Australia.

Translocations would occur in autumn of three consecutive years, commencing with 16–20 individuals from Bherwerre Peninsula (Booderee and/or Jervis Bay National Park) in April this year. Birds are safely captured using a mist net.



Birds will be transported overnight by road, released directly into a large area of heath vegetation and monitored intensively. The proposed translocation has been strongly influenced by learning from past translocations of Eastern Bristlebirds and has a moderate-high likelihood of success.

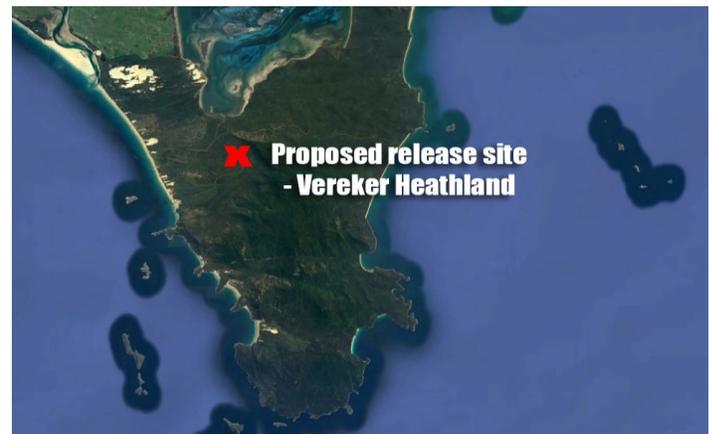
Monitoring of the Bherwerre Peninsula source population will be incorporated into the ongoing spring surveys undertaken at JBNP and at Booderee. All translocated birds will be fitted with radio transmitters and radio tracked frequently to determine the location of released individuals, thereby providing data on survival and movements.

In the spring following release of each group, the release site area will be surveyed using the same transect method used at Booderee.

Booderee has reintroduced three species in the last ten years sourced from areas as far away as Tasmania. The Eastern Bristlebird translocation will give Booderee the chance to supply animals for a similar project rather than be the receiver which seems like a worthwhile gesture to conserve this iconic species.

Dion reported that they were successful in catching 17 birds which were all healthy and safely released the next morning at Wilsons Promontory. They are currently discovering their new environment and new bird pals, but probably wondering where their mates are!

It is hoped that in the near future Wilsons Prom will be made a sanctuary that supports populations of threatened fauna, including those that may be established through reintroduction, such as the Eastern Bristlebird.



The on-ground priorities of the Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary project until mid-2023 are threat management and construction of a 10km feral-predator-proof fence. The Eastern Bristlebird translocation does not rely on these activities, though it will benefit from them.

The ultimate objectives of the project are to:

- * establish a large, self-sustaining second population in Victoria, which requires limited long-term management intervention and is geographically isolated from the current population, and
- * if deemed feasible, improve the genetic diversity and fitness of the surviving population in Victoria through genetic augmentation.

These actions will reduce the extinction risk of the species in Victoria as well as globally by increasing the total population size, the number of populations, the area of occupancy and extent of occurrence, and by spreading the risk of extinction across widely separated populations.

Moreover, re-establishing a population at the southern extent of its former distribution may mitigate the potential long-term negative impacts of climate change on the species.

The HERITAGE ESTATE NETWORK [HEST]
is hosting and invites you to a special screening of

RIVER

on World Environment Day June 5 at Huskisson Cinema

[Further details to be announced]

"STUNNING"
DEADLINE



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **SHERPA** AND **MOUNTAIN**
WITH THE **AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**

RIVER

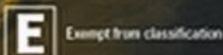
WITH MUSIC BY
**RADIOHEAD, JONNY GREENWOOD,
RICHARD TOGNETTI AND WILLIAM BARTON**

NARRATED BY **WILLEM DAFOE**

SCREEN AUSTRALIA AND THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION ABC DECADES AND WILLOW PRESENT A STUNNED THIN FACTOR PRODUCTION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARTIST PICTURES "RIVER" MUSIC BY RICHARD TOGNETTI WRITTEN BY ROBERT MACFARLANE NARRATED BY WILLEM DAFOE FILM EDITOR SMITH BLAKE MUSIC EDITOR ROBERT MACKENZIE DREAMWORKS CO-PRODUCER LORELEI KUMAZON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANNA GREGG DAVID CROSS GUY HARGREAVE PAUL WESBARD WRITTEN AND CO-DIRECTED BY JOSEPH NLEHI PRODUCED BY JO ANNE MACKENZIE JENNIFER PEEBOM AND JOHN SMITHSON WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JENNIFER PEEBOM



© 2021 Stunned Thin Factor Films Pty Ltd



The Development Birdwatch

- by Chris Grounds

As we all know bird biodiversity, threat and conservation figure in so many development proposals or "DAs" and associated implementation.

These DA concepts and projects can involve Review of Environmental Factor statements, Biodiversity Reports and Environmental Impact or Effects statements. They should all be examined with considerable critical scrutiny.

One of my first conservation officer actions for BLS involved the Shoalhaven-wide Dredging Project, which was up and running in 2014-5 under the auspices of the then Mayor, Jo Gash and Currumbene Creek and thus Myola Spit was in the spotlight.

The Review of Environmental factors [REF] was extensive but hidden in the shadows was some bird detail but it was immediately apparent that the list of birds provided for Myola Spit on Currumbene creek at Huskisson was quite wrong.

Essentially the list was only 50% of the known species at that site, which is arguably the most important shorebird resting site in Jervis Bay. That is what happens when the consultant visit the site for two lunchtimes! A quick submission to Council ensured the list was rectified.



Fast forward past other sites of concern each with their own particular stories such as Manyana and Murdoch Street at Moona to January 2022 and to the Development Application for a 'Crematoria, Funeral Home and Associated Facilities' on The Wool Road bypass at St Georges Basin.

In a nutshell, this is a 42ha bushland site rated with very high biodiversity, corridor and significant vegetation value.

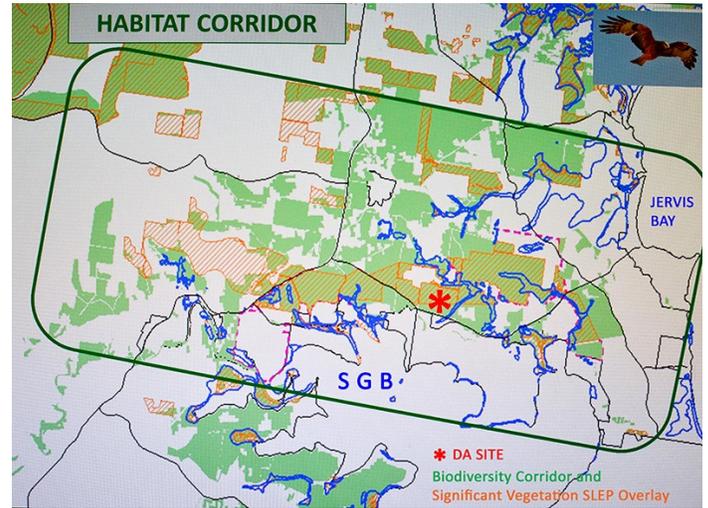
BLS made a major submission to the exhibition of the DA and readers can consult the detail of that position on our website conservation section but permit me to paraphrase the bird issues.

The detail regarding birds at the site occurred in the 'Biodiversity Report' of the DA.

In its simplest form the consultant authors claimed 30 bird species from survey of the site without any reference to the various sources known to we birders such as Birdata,

the Atlas of Living Australia and eBird. Those sources have recorded more than 80 species within the 1km radius of the site. That is not a small error.

The DA consultant author noted that a "definitive list was not possible" but excused this with the idea that there were 'time and budgetary constraints'.



Habitat Corridor Mapping from community submissions

A major perspective missing with critical implication for birds was any adequate assessment of the habitat corridor, which is an extensive and recognized zone that essentially connects the Jervis Bay coast and JBNP to the escarpment and Jerrawangala National Park - see map above. On that basis, it is critical.

Recent academic research has pointed to such corridors on private, freehold land as containing the highest intensity of threatened species, so on the assessment of bird biodiversity, that was a "Fail".

The Report also noted that 'three threatened species were recorded during the surveys', the Little Lorikeet (*Parvipsitta pusilla*), Square-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*) and Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*). Records indicate there could be as many as twelve such species. The Gang Gang was to be elevated to national 'Endangered' threat level in early March.



It was also noted that "Numerous habitat bearing trees were recorded with hollows large enough to provide potential" breeding habitat for the likes of Gang-gang Cockatoo, Glossy Black-Cockatoo, Powerful Owl and Masked Owl.

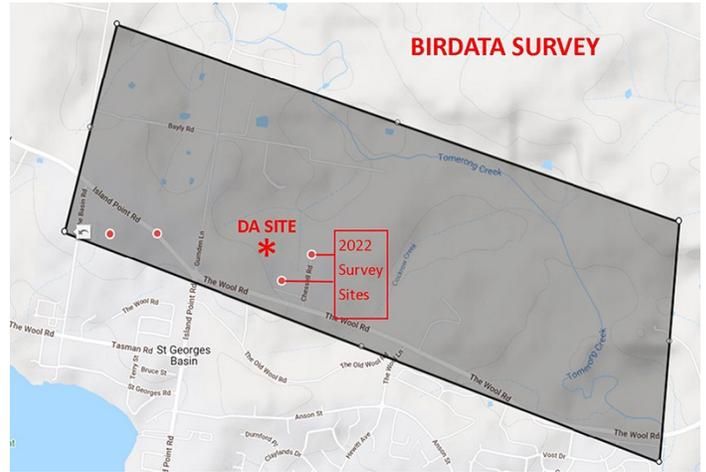
The DA proposed the removal of 125 of the hollow-bearing trees at the site to compensate for nest boxes though non-hollow nesters didn't rate a mention. It should be remembered that the trees at the site usually have more than one - and sometimes as many as four - hollows. Hardly seems like a fair swap does it?

The hideous Offset Credits scheme also gets a nod in the DA proposal. Yes, you know the drill - destroy something natural by buying a credit from a land owner where something equivalent has been conserved.

The Crematoria proponent had an initial offsets credits invoice for an incomplete threatened species list of flora and fauna of \$669,191.31.

In terms of the Offset credit species, 34 potential species of fauna were listed by the Biodiversity Report with 16 related to suitable site habitat. Only 4 of these are bird species and this is considered an under-calculation of the extent and presence of threatened bird species.

A check on the actual site and associated bush environment on this mainly undeveloped area of St Georges Basin and Tomerong with Birdata revealed virtually no survey records except for two Glossy Black Cockatoo singular sightings in the Birdata.



Fortunately, there was time for surveys which revealed 23 more species than the DA identified - including species like the Southern Emu Wren and Tree Martins.

The outcome? The DA was flawed well beyond the bird issues and Council consequently advised the proponent to withdraw the DA. The bad news is that, despite this embarrassing position, the proponent will resubmit a new DA, but that will take until at least next February as threatened species orchid surveys are needed - but we will stick with birds for the moment.

Editor's Note: Chris is a committee member of the Basin Villages Forum, is co-ordinating the campaign for the residents and Forum and was author of the BirdLife Shoalhaven submission on the DA.



Shorebird Volunteering Woes

- by Chris Brandis

I know many BirdLife Shoalhaven members are also Shorebird Volunteers and will go through the highs and lows of shorebird nesting success. This 2021-22 season has been one of the worst for the stretch from Racecourse Creek, Ulladulla, to north Wairo beach for both Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers.

The Hoodies at Racecourse Creek started well but they nested in the wrong spot and just on hatching time the tides and swells washed over a 300 mm sand wall into the nest inside the cage and caused them to abandon the nest.

They nested again and 3 chicks hatched, one disappeared early but 2 were going strong after 2 weeks but then the holiday season started and the chicks disappeared. A few dogs that cannot read the "chicks on beach" signs, and put themselves on the leash, can disturb the parents so that predators like Silver Gulls and Australian Ravens can sneak in, and there are always hungry foxes prowling the beach at night for scraps left behind by the picnickers.



Two pair of Pied Oystercatchers nested about Burrill Lake but both nests appeared to have been predated, then one pair decided to have another go nesting in an old tyre and hatched chicks but they disappeared after about a week.

We can only suspect a fox as last season both the eggs and a parent were taken leaving only a chewed up wing left to tell the story.



The pair of Hooded Plovers at north Wairo beach lost chicks as soon as they hatched and then eggs inside the cage and we suspect the young of a family of Australian Ravens learned how to squeeze into the cage as there were their foot prints inside. They say they are amongst the most clever and adaptable of the bird families.

We may see the Hoodies try again but things are certainly stacked against them as they have had thousands of years to adapt to the peace and quiet of the beaches and then we came along bringing feral animals and feeding up populations of their natural predators. With all their troubles it does lift the spirit when a chick or two fledge and we see pale grey juveniles coming into adult plumage, a survivor.



NPWS conducted an education program at many of the beaches and we hope that it will help as many of the locals are quite interested and even ask visitors to consider the poor little Hoodies trying to survive on the beaches that we also love.



Swan Lake Coastal Planning

- by Chris Grounds

The Shoalhaven Council is currently undertaking a major process to develop and produce a series of mandatory Coastal Management Plans [CMP] and there could be no more critical time for this to happen in the contemporary climate change circumstance. It will not be something to get wrong -the price would be too high.



The Plan revolves around three defined areas of the Shoalhaven, northern, central and southern. The central area embraces Callala Bay and Callala Beach, Myola, Huskisson, Jervis Bay, St Georges Basin [SGB], Sussex Inlet, Swan Lake-Berrara.

The Central Region, like the other two, is a richly biodiverse area for birds but also involves key conservation issues for birds and threatened species.

Recent CMP community workshops at SGB and Sussex Inlet highlighted many of the key issues in the various localities of the workshops and that necessarily included recognition of shorebird presence and breeding, especially as that does involve threatened species birds such as the Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher at sites such as Berrara and Cudmirrah beaches.

One particular, specific issue that was raised in a Sussex workshop was a perceived decline in both species and numbers at Swan Lake over recent years and this makes for an interesting case study.



Both Birddata and the Atlas of Living Australia [ALA] reveal extensive bird biodiversity associated with the lake, which is an ICOLL and thus opens intermittently.

The ALA 1km radius lists 66 species with the most commonly recorded being the Black Swan though the 5km radius check has a record of 218 species. Birddata's chosen lake precinct has 166 species on record with the Black Swan most recorded.

The qualification of Lake Wollumboola as a KBA is closely tied to Black Swan numbers.

The geography of hinterland-catchment, lake, estuary and beach-reef coast provides a rich habitat but one subject to growing pressures.

Both Mike Clear, a BLS member and Shorebird Recovery Project member from that area and Bob Simpson, a well-known local artist with an eye for nature, both of whom participated in the Sussex CMP workshop, believe there has been a decline in birds associated with Swan Lake in recent years. Whilst it would be possible to spend some endless hours researching that, let's take it as a legitimate citizen science point of view.



Bob Simpson Mural at Berrara Beach

Mike and a few locals have commented on a noticeable, generalized absence of key species over recent years.

Swan Lake and its immediate surrounds is a fascinating and significant ecology, and provides habitats for a diverse range of fauna and flora. Mike Clear says "the area between Swan Lake and the Cudmirrah beach is really a last line of defence as sea level rise gives us bigger, more destructive tidal surges. It is also habitat for significant bird populations that we don't see nearly so often, species such as White-bellied Sea Eagles, Nankeen Kestrel, Whistling Kite and Wedged-tailed Eagle."

The 'big number' birds are the "canary in the coalmine" as it were with the Black Swan heading a parade that includes Chestnut Teal, Eurasian Coot and the various cormorant. There are now many less of all these birds on a regular basis.



One question that arises is 'how Coastland Planning might contribute to dealing with this issue?' The answer requires some thinking of what is causing and/or contributing to the decline.

This area is a very dynamic coastline system subject to many natural fluctuations but with local villages at Swanhaven, Cudmirrah and Berrara and growing tourism uses there are certainly additional human pressures.

Bob Simpson believes the decline is related to the increasing pressure of the accumulating use of the lake for various recreations, including fishing. He is not alone in that thinking.

Another consideration is that our own coast has been subject to a series of 'East Coast Lows' [ECL] and 'Bomb Cyclones' since a 2015 ECL produced extensive flooding in parts of the Shoalhaven. A 2016 ECL severely eroded beaches, which in many cases have still not restored to the prior profiles. These were followed by similar events in July-August 2020, an ECL in June 2021, a "Bomb Cyclone" in August 2021 and the three ECLs of March 2022 with the third having a major coastal morphology impact.



Could it be that such a sequence, which fits the warnings about the nature of climate change, is simply too dynamic and disruptive to allow coast and coastal lake bird populations to stabilise and build?

There is a notion that the prior coastal morphology has not restored since the very erosive ECL of 2016.

That view is supported somewhat by the proposition of Mike Clear that the 2019-2020 Bushfires, which so devastated much of Conjola National Park, burnt fiercely to the lake shoreline and thus had a major impact on breeding areas to the west of the lake leaving only a much used and disrupted eastern shore. Mike also points to the debris and ash accumulating in the lake after the fires in local flood events in the next winter.

The 2017-2019 drought, which contributed to the bushfires, also brought so many NSW towns to their knees with water supply, is part of the environmental mosaic and adds to the overwhelmingly picture of instability associated with climate change.



Then of course we are not an island and the very wet and favourable years across rural and western NSW in 2020 and 2021 saw an explosion in bird populations and breeding, perhaps even "our" swans and the flourish in the major inland wetlands.

Of course, there are a number of such sites at risk in the Shoalhaven where the assessment and causes could be tested and perhaps BLS members could test these thoughts in their own patch. It sets out a challenge of just how well we know our own bird patches.

It must be that this would have significant implications for the Coastal Management Planning and represent an important opportunity for an input and contribution by Shoalhaven birders to that planning.

Progress with planning and opportunities for input can be accessed on Council's "Get Involved" page on the Council website.

Editor's Note: Chris is a Community Member of the Shoalhaven Council's Central Shoalhaven Coastlands Management Committee, a BLS member, Conservation Officer 2014-2021, and a Volunteer with the NPWS Shorebird recovery Project.

Act for Birds

- by James Matcott, BLA Community Organiser

Act for Birds Act for Nature

With the 2022 Federal election announced for May 21st, I just wanted to link you all to the 2022 Election Tool that we have put together for members and supporters to be able to see what birds in their electorates are listed as threatened as per the 2020 Action Plan for Australian Birds (APAB), and to then email the candidates in their electorates about strong nature laws.

The election tool can be found on the Act for Birds website at www.actforbirds.org/stopextinctions

Email Candidates for Gilmore



Gilmore
Gilmore

In the electorate of Gilmore, 25 birds are threatened with extinction, including the Swift Parrot.

Contact your local candidates, ask them to deliver stronger nature and conservation laws, to help save the threatened birds in your electorate.

Image Credit: Leigh Pieterse

[Email your local candidates](#)

The email on the page is fully customisable but automatically includes an email with information from APAB 2020, including a flagship species that we picked for its relevance to the electorate and the conservation work being done on them by BLA. The election tool is really easy to use, with the steps described below.:

- Enter your address to find your electorate, and to find out about threatened birds in your area.
- Click Email your local candidates, our tool will then auto-fill the contact details of local candidates in your electorate for you.

- Add your details, and your own personal touch to the email
- Simply press "Send My Email". Easy!

As BirdLife Australia (BLA) is officially a non-partisan organisation, we aren't officially endorsing candidates on behalf of BLA. Our election tool sends a non-partisan, generic email just calling for stronger nature laws in response to species declines / ongoing habitat destruction with a focus on 2020 APAB listed threatened bird species.

For any of you concerned about the political party side of things, you don't have to worry, the same email goes to all candidates in an electorate without any party bias.

The page also contains a link to information about endangered birds including the Eastern Bristlebird, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Hooded Plover and Glossy Black Cockatoo - see www.actforbirds.org/2022-flagship-bird-info



Eastern Bristlebird (Critically Endangered)

These birds were severely impacted by the 2019-20 Bushfires. Already Endangered before the fires, our bushfire recovery is vital.

Eastern Bristlebird by Rob Kernot

EASTERN BRISTLEBIRDS

Migratory Shorebirds Season Wrap

- by Jessica Sharp

I wanted to share with you some great reading - two reports - with the first being the end of season wrap up report on the SoS Migratory Shorebirds project at the Shoalhaven estuary.



This report was written by Nick Agostino and Fin Murphy, two Ecologists based in Wollongong, who were this season's beach wardens at the Shoalhaven Heads and Lake Wollumboola sites. The report can be read at www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/reportmigratoryshorebirds2021-22.pdf

I've also distributed last year's report by Nathan Browne from his and Simon Lee's season which shows an interesting comparison between the last two highly fluctuating seasons, and highlights just how unique the Shoalhaven Estuary is to host such incredible levels of biodiversity, as well as the need for ongoing effort and investment to help protect these vulnerable species - see www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/reporttickleortwitch2020-21.pdf



This year as part of the project I was able to - with the help of key local Area staff and some amazingly talented volunteers - revive the annual shorebird count of the entire Shoalhaven Estuary on what seems to have been the only cracker sunny day we got this summer!

A couple of photos from that day - showing the boat crew and the beach crew - are shown below.



Editor's Note: Jessica Sharpe is the Assistant Project Officer for Threatened Species in the South Coast Branch of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Our Bird Walks

BirdLife Shoalhaven members have access to two different bird walking programs.

The first is the program run by the BirdLife Shoalhaven branch itself. If you are a member and would like to be added to the Bird Walks emailing list to receive information about upcoming walks, email our Bird Walk Coordinator - Sue Mitchell - at smmitch7@gmail.com. You will be given a link to the BirdLife Shoalhaven Bird Walks program page which lists upcoming walks and is updated regularly, as well as receiving reminders of upcoming walks.

Visit www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html for information about becoming a member of BirdLife Australia and BirdLife Shoalhaven.

Upcoming Bird Walks for BirdLife Shoalhaven Members

Friday 22nd April - Booderee Botanic Gardens

Saturday 14th May - Tomerong

Friday 10th June - Moona Moona Creek

Friday 24th June - Murray's Beach Circuit

Saturday 9th July - Yalwal

Numbers are limited on all of our bird walks so they are only open to BirdLife Shoalhaven members, and only those who join our emailing list.

The second bird walking program available to BirdLife Shoalhaven members is the program run by the Milton-Ulladulla District (MUD) Birdwatching Club. This is open to all members of the Milton Ulladulla U3A. They also allow members of BirdLife Shoalhaven on their walks. For more information about MUD Birdwatchers, you can email mubirdclub@gmail.com.

There is no rhyme nor reason for the timing of BirdLife Shoalhaven bird walks - the leaders decide which times suit them best - but the MUD Birdwatchers bird walks are scheduled for every second Friday morning.

Upcoming MUD Birdwatchers Walks

Friday 6th May - Narawallee

Friday 20th May - North Fishermans Paradise

Friday 3rd June - Warden Head

Friday 17th June - Little Forest Nature Track

Friday 1st July - Tabourie



Stone the Crows?

- by Brett Davis

On a recent BirdLife Shoalhaven birdwatching walk I noticed one of our members sneaking away and placing things under bushes and infrastructure near where we were walking.

When I investigated this seemingly strange behaviour, and asked the member what they were doing, my mind was boggled by the answer I was given.



The things being secreted away underneath the bushes were small stones - but not just plain stones. They were actually amazing artworks, with a painting of a bird on each one!

The artist explained that he (or she) hoped that they would be found by curious children - or maybe even adults - who might try to find out what type of bird had been depicted on the stone which could prompt them to become birdwatchers and even protectors of the environments in which the birds live!

I asked the artist how long it took for each painting, and was again astounded by the answer - a couple of hours!

This person was seriously supportive of birds, giving up so much of their time on the off chance that the stones would be found, and that the finder would eventually become a birder!

The art was so good that I selfishly asked for one of the stones for myself - and it was handed over immediately! My wife Karen asked the artist if he (or she) had a stone painting of a Gang-gang and although the answer was "no", the artist said that he (or she) would paint one for her. A few weeks Karen received a preview (below) of the painting which will soon be delivered.



I had to wonder whether the art could be made more accessible to more people, possibly by advertising it in this magazine. My wife and I loved the artworks and would have been happy to pay for the stones, so surely other people would be equally happy to part with their hard-earned cash to compensate the artist for his (or her) time?

But would that simply be "preaching to the converted" - with the art only bought by people who were already bird lovers? Is the possibility of inspiring new people to become birdwatchers more important than making a few dollars and only having the art go to current birders?

Or is there perhaps a better way that the art could be made available for more people to appreciate and still encourage non-birders to "get with the program"?

I'm not sure - what do you think?

THE BIRD HAVEN FESTIVAL IS BACK!!



The Bird Haven Festival was a huge success in 2018 and 2019, bringing hundreds of people together in Shoalhaven Heads to celebrate birds and learn more about their behaviour, habitat and conservation.

We are thrilled to be back again in 2022!

This October BirdLife Shoalhaven will be running three Festival events in three venues to coincide with the Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

Saturday 15 October, 2 to 4pm, at the Ulladulla Civic Centre - *'Birds for Beginners - The weird and wonderful life of birds'*

If you are an aspiring birdwatcher, come to hear about the skills you'll need to identify birds and learn some fun facts along the way. Afterwards you will be able to do your first Aussie Backyard Bird Count, as part of BirdLife Australia's annual bird survey. Admission will be free.

Wednesday 19 October, 3 to 6pm, at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum in Huskisson – *'Guided bird walks to build your bird identification skills in the field'*

If you want to improve your— bird identification skills, this is the perfect opportunity. Experienced birdwatchers will take you on a bird walk in the Museum grounds and surrounding bushland to see what birds you can find. The bird walks will be free.

Saturday 22 October, 11am to 5pm, at the Shoalhaven Heads Bowling Club – *'Bird Haven Festival 2022 Conference'*

This is an ideal opportunity to hear leading ornithologists and researchers speak about their work in bird conservation and the ecology of some of our bird species. A full list of speakers will be released in June when tickets go on sale, initially to members of BirdLife Shoalhaven and other bird groups.

More details will be released soon, but in the meantime please put these dates in your diary.

We are delighted that BirdLife Shoalhaven is organising these events to get the Festival back on the birding calendar.

Meanwhile plans are underway to make the Festival an even bigger celebration of Shoalhaven's birds in 2023.

To keep up-to-date on this year's Festival events go to www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/upcoming.html and also subscribe to the BirdLife Shoalhaven mailing list on www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html.



Aboriginal led Healthy Country Plan for Glossy Black-Cockatoos

Glossy Black-Cockatoo populations in south-eastern Australia were severely impacted by the recent bushfires. Food has been reduced across large areas, and many of the large old trees required for nesting have been destroyed.

A new project will help secure a future for Glossy Black-Cockatoos in the Shoalhaven by empowering local Aboriginal custodians to reconnect with fire impacted landscapes and build on their existing cultural knowledge and values of the species.

By establishing an Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG) and coordinating access to all tenures, the project aims to generate a locally specific understanding of Glossy Country, their fire-impacted habitats and to support the development of Aboriginal led actions to address current and future threats in a Healthy Country Plan (HCP) for Glossy Black-Cockatoo.

The AAG is currently being established with diverse representation from the many Aboriginal communities across the Shoalhaven and looks forward to providing opportunities for the broader community to support their cultural priorities to conserve Glossies into the future.



How You Can Help BLS

If you would like to get involved in bird conservation in the Shoalhaven, either as part of a specific BirdLife Shoalhaven project or by taking on a committee position, please let us know!

There are, however, a lot of other things that you can do. There are posters that need to be distributed. You could write an article (or articles) for this magazine. You could even lead a bird walk in your local area, something that you might do on a regular basis anyhow, but something that no other BLS members usually do.

You could also become one of our Facebook editors, send us some photos, or tell us about conservation issues in your neighbourhood!

Just email communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org

The Fine Print

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 communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org

Requests for **re-publication of articles** must be referred to the Editor for approval.

General Disclaimer - the information in articles in this magazine is accepted in good faith and although the editor has tried to verify the accuracy of all information, BirdLife Shoalhaven and BirdLife Australia accept no responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies or exaggerations in this magazine.

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Apologies - to contributors and sources who have inadvertently not been acknowledged. Let us know of our oversight and we will acknowledgment your contribution in the next magazine.

Opinions - the opinions expressed in articles in this magazine are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of BirdLife Shoalhaven or BirdLife Australia.

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