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by Peter Noakes



Magpie and Barn Owl  
by Charles Dove

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**... plus lots more!**

**This month's cover photos** - the Raven and Sea-Eagle by Peter Noakes, and the Magpie and Barn Owl by Charles Dove, are perfect illustrations of the interactions that all of us have with birds. These stories are worth sharing with all BirdLife Shoalhaven members and supporters, so **let us know your stories** - see **"What's Your Bird Story"** on **page 24!**

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

## "Get Involved" – is this the right title?

- by Rob Dunn, President of BirdLife Shoalhaven

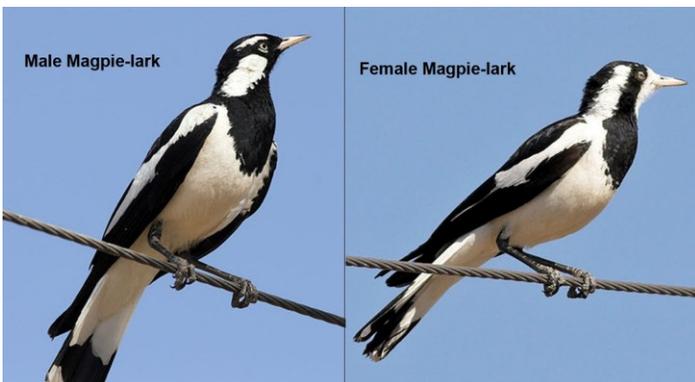
Before I started writing this article, I looked up 'get involved' in the thesaurus in Microsoft Word. I needed different words, as I have used this phrase before, when fulfilling my Presidential duty to find more BLS members, supporters or Committee members.

I found a myriad of options - 'play a part', 'give a hand', 'opt in', 'participate in', 'have a go', 'have a crack' and many more. All are equally relevant to conserving, learning about and enjoying birds.

Of course, I expect everyone reading this article is already involved in BLS in different ways, but the on-going challenge is how we can get more people involved.

Everyone likes birds, so just helping your friends to 'HAVE A GO' and try to learn the names of our common birds is a great first step. (Of course, some people don't like birds, but they are a bit weird, just like anti-vaxxers - so steer clear of them!)

Most people just need a nudge, and it's rewarding, as I discovered recently with Ross & Liz (first names only to respect their privacy.) After they asked me 'What's the smaller black & white bird that is like a Magpie?', I built their interest by asking 'Do you know the difference between a male, female and juvenile Magpie-lark?',



I was impressed when they completed their allotted task, but more so later when they let me know they had seen a Glossy Black-cockatoo. They were then given more homework on how to both sex and age this endangered bird! - see details on next page ...

Ross & Liz are my latest BLS success. My next challenge is to get them to become members of BirdLife Australia!

There are many ways in which people can 'HAVE A HAND IN' taking BLS forward. Here's just some ideas to see where you might be able to 'PLAY A PART':

1. Go for a walk with a pair of binoculars and take a friend. Do not promote it as a bird walk, as you may lose them before you have begun!
2. You have just missed the Guardians 2021 Australian Bird of the Year (the Superb Blue-wren) and this year's Aussie Backyard Bird Count, but let people know next year.
3. Tell people to follow the BLS Facebook page, register as a BLS supporter to get our magazine and other local updates, or even better, become a BirdLife Australia member.
4. Join a BLS bird walk or 'HAVE A GO' at leading one yourself when COVID restrictions allow – contact Anne Reuter, BLS bird walk co-ordinator, on [anne.reuter@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:anne.reuter@hotmail.co.uk).
5. If you play golf and are interested in birds (not just birdies, eagles and albatrosses) then 'PARTICIPATE IN' BLS's new "Birds on Golf Courses" project – contact me on [president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org](mailto:president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org).
6. If you are experienced in doing bird surveys, 'JOIN IN' the BirdLife Shoalhaven Bushfire Research Project - contact Gary Brady, our project co-ordinator on [gary.brady2540@gmail.com](mailto:gary.brady2540@gmail.com)
7. If you are in any way thinking about joining the BirdLife Shoalhaven committee, please contact me on [president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org](mailto:president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org). We are looking for a Conservation Co-ordinator to help keep BLS abreast of bird conservation issues, but if you have other skills or interests do not hesitate in getting in contact.
8. Send me any of your own ideas on how BLS can make more of a difference.
9. **Email us stories about your experiences with birds!**

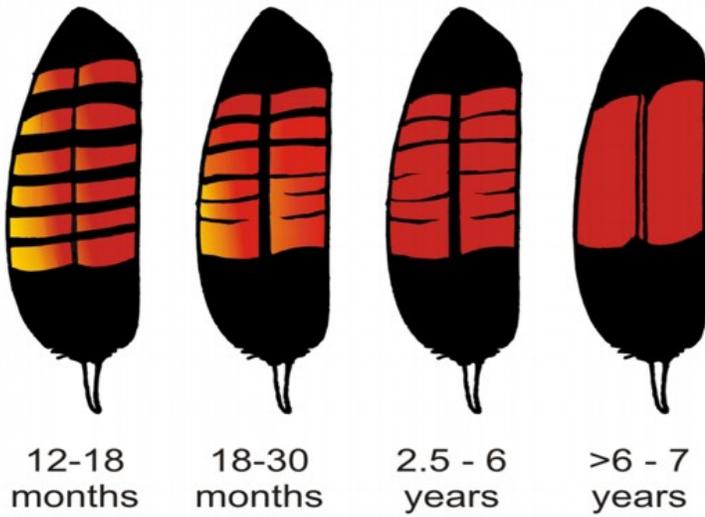
I should probably close with a Presidential message, such as 'Do not ask what BLS can do for you, but what you can do for BLS', but I have used that in a previous magazine!

So I'll leave it by saying, if you are new to birds, just 'HAVE A CRACK', and if you are already a keen birdwatcher, think about 'OPTING IN' and 'GIVE A HAND' to get more people conserving, learning about and enjoying birds!

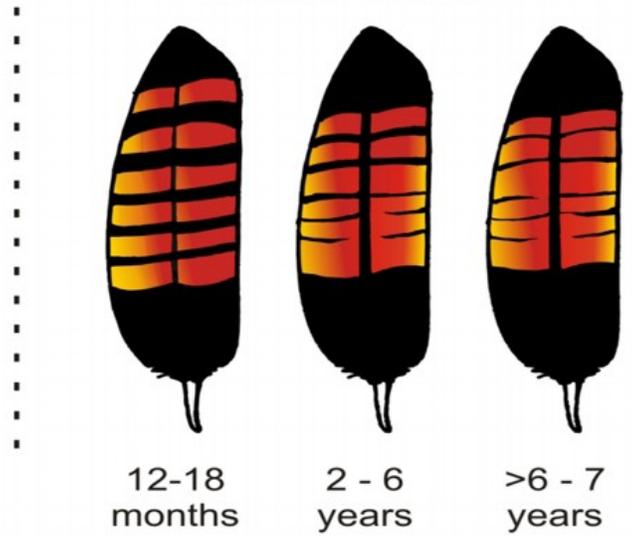
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# Sexing and Aging Glossy Black-cockatoos

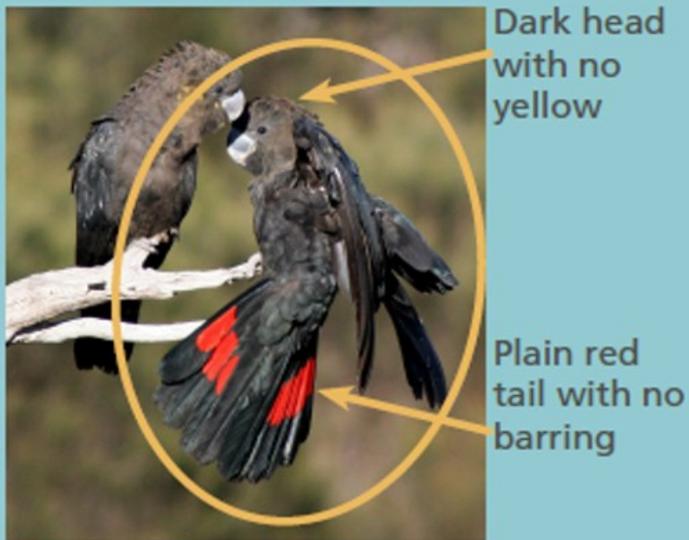
## Male Cockatoo



## Female Cockatoo



### Adult male



### Adult female



### Juvenile male



### Juvenile female



## Bushfire Research Project Update

- by Gary Brady, BRP Coordinator

Our team of 25 volunteers have continued their support of the BLS Bushfire Research Project (BRP) by completing Birdata surveys across a number of sites in the Shoalhaven.

This has allowed us to keep track of changes in species richness and abundance over the seven seasons from the summer 2020 bushfires up to winter this year.

The impacts of COVID have impacted the project this year. This has meant a reduction in the number of surveys at some sites compared to last year, leading to variations in the level of data available for each fire severity - refer tables 1 and 2 below.

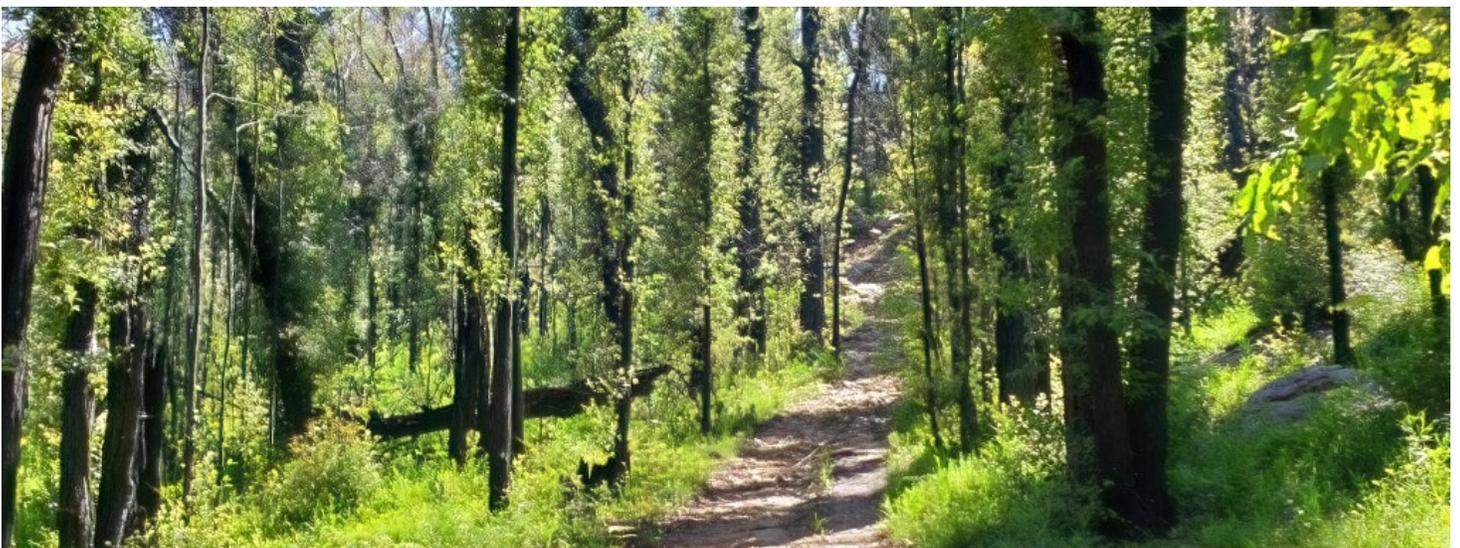
Despite these lower BRP survey numbers in 2021, we continue to see significant numbers of 20 hectare / 20 minute Birdata surveys being completed.

**Table 1 - Number of surveys by season by fire severity**

	High	Medium	Light	Unburnt	Total
<b>2020 – full year</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>282</b>
Summer	14	19	11	12	56
Autumn	31	21	13	15	80
Winter	30	17	7	15	69
Spring	25	23	14	15	77
<b>2021 – 3 seasons</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>122</b>
Summer	7	14	6	5	32
Autumn	10	23	9	8	50
Winter	10	18	8	4	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>404</b>

**Table 2 – Number of survey sites by fire severity**

	High	Medium	Light	Unburnt	Total
Survey sites	38	38	20	28	124

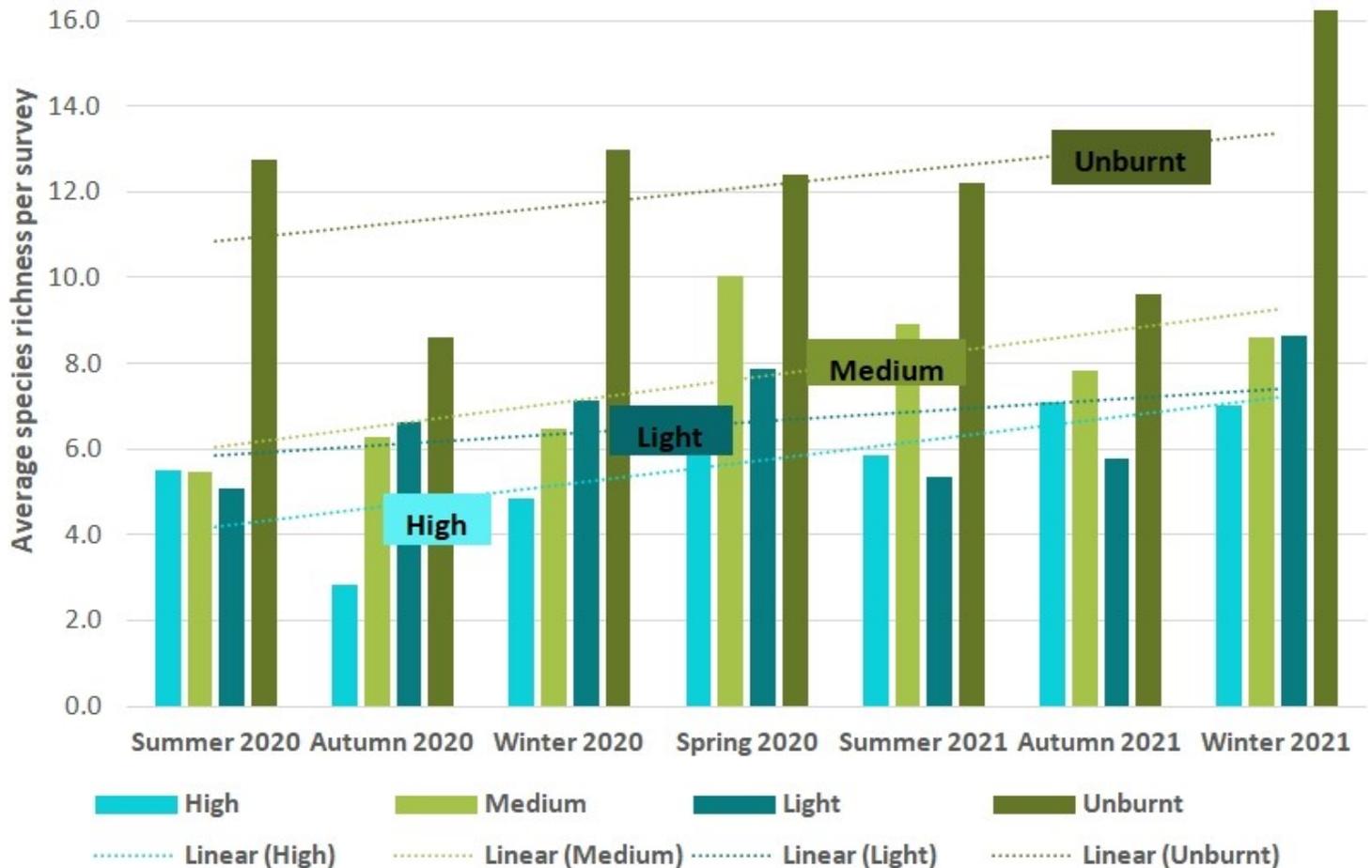


Since 1996 over 2,500 surveys have been submitted in the Shoalhaven. Of these, one third have been completed since the 2020 summer bushfires. It is clear that this project inspired a lot more people to do bird surveys. This has not only benefitted the BRP, but also other BirdLife Australia projects, like the Key Biodiversity Area program and the national State of Australia Birds. A great effort from a lot of birdwatchers in the area!

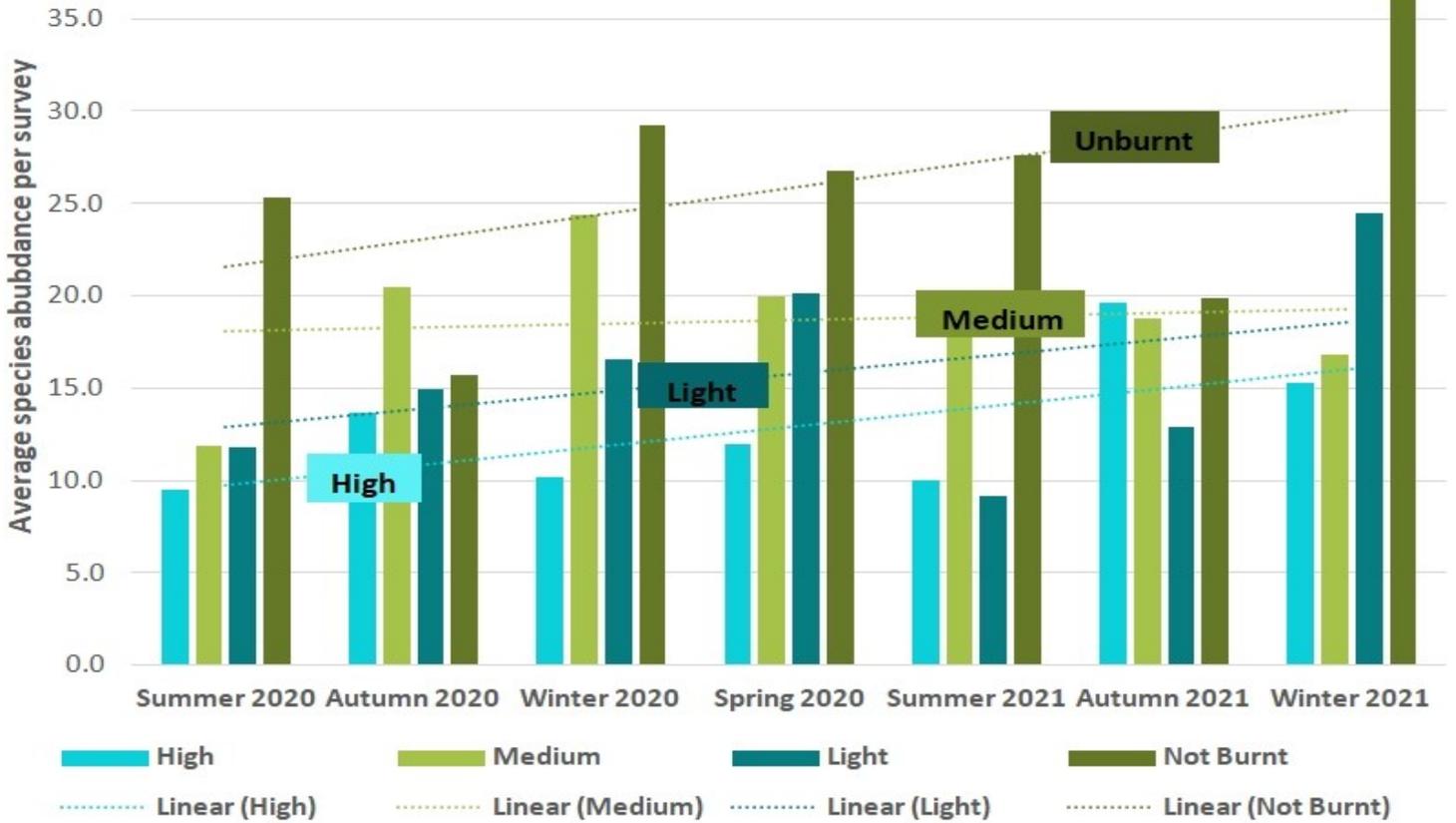
The BRP surveys show that this year species richness and abundance have continued to increase in bushfire impacted sites, regardless of the fire severity - refer graphs 1 and 2 below.

That's good news, but unfortunately, we do not have any prior data from the BRP survey sites to assess when bird numbers will return to pre-bushfire levels.

**Graph 1 - Average species richness per survey by fire severity**



**Graph 2 - Average species abundance per survey by fire severity**



However, the continuing gap between data from burnt and unburnt sites, suggests that full recovery is still some way off, despite the reasonable rainfall this year and last, which has triggered varying levels of regrowth and habitat recovery. The degree of habitat recovery at each site has varied widely over the past year, as shown in the pictures in this article, which were all taken at high fire severity sites.

To add to the depth of the project, BRP volunteers have estimated the level of habitat recovery for each site.

Habitat recovery is based on a rating of nil, minimal, moderate and significant recovery for each site by re-assessing the state of the canopy, mid-story and understory.

While this is simplistic, it will be interesting to look at the results based on habitat recovery combined with the initial fire severity.

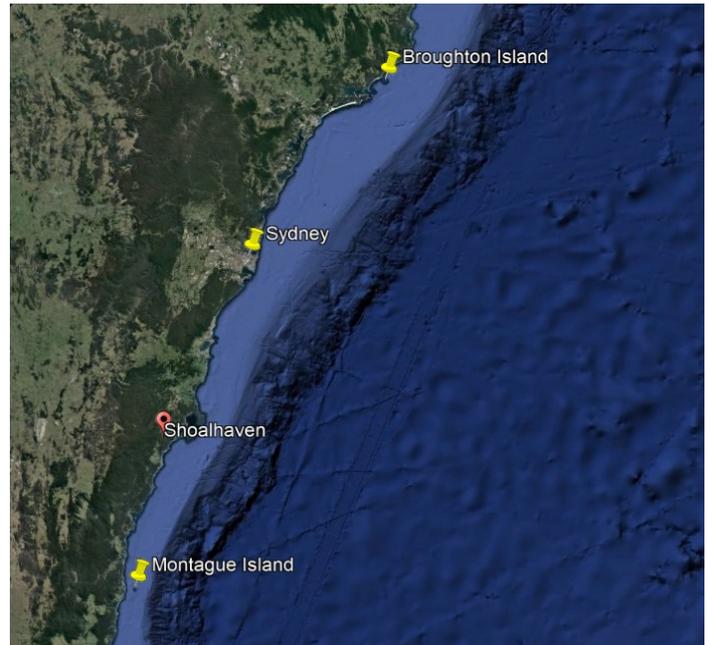
We hope to present this information in our 2021 Annual Report.



## 2021 Twitchathon

### \$20,000 Fund Raising Goal for Gould's Petrel

**Gould's Petrel** was down-listed from Endangered to Vulnerable in NSW in 2008 as a direct consequence of active management of threats on Cabbage Tree Island near Port Stephens - the primary breeding site for the species in Australia - and the establishment of a second breeding population on the neighbouring Boondelbah Island through translocation.



It is possible that the commencement of breeding on Montague Island was in direct response to climate related impacts, predicted to be responsible for the declining population on Cabbage Tree Island. Gathering this evidence of a direct climate re-settlement of Australia's rarest endemic seabird closer to its foraging prey, will strengthen calls for action to protect our endemic and special seabirds in the face of changes in their ocean environments.

In 2012, a population of Gould's Petrel was discovered on **Montague Island** - 435 km south of Cabbage Tree Island off **Narooma NSW**. Ecological restoration of this island included the eradication of rabbits and mice in 2007.

Since then, the Montague Island population has grown to exceed that on Boondelbah Island, with over 70 marked nest sites and up to 50 active nests in some seasons. Since the discovery period on Montague Island, the principal breeding site on Cabbage Tree Island (94% of pairs) has seen nesting pairs, fledging output and breeding success collapse (but some attributes have recovered), but the overall trend is a decline here. Breeding success has not recovered and remains below 40%. On Montague during this time, breeding success has been a healthy 50%.

**Twitchathon funding will be used to look at the status of breeding on Montague in 2022/23.** Tracking Gould's Petrel breeding on Cabbage Tree Island showed that they forage to the east and south of Tasmania and westwards into the Great Australian Bight. Twitchathon funding will allow tracking of the Montague Island breeding colony. It is possible that the higher breeding success of this colony can be attributed to being closer to their prey, saving them approximately 900 km of flying effort for each foraging trip when compared to breeders on the Cabbage Tree Island colony if the tracking confirms the two populations utilise the same foraging areas.



Form your own team for the Twitchathon, or **sponsor the Shoalhaven's Wooden Spoonbills to help funding for the Gould's Petrel project using BIGnet's banking details** for EFT and BPay donations - account no. 121211833, and BSB 182 222. The BPay biller code is 20206, ref. 121 211 833. Please make sure that you put Wooden Spoonbills in the EFT description box!

**Due to Covid travel restrictions, the Twitchathon can be done on one of three weekends, 30/31 October, 6/7 November, and 13/14 November!**

Many thanks for your support from the Wooden Spoonbills Team if you choose to sponsor them!

## Life on the road for a young Masked Lapwing

- by Rob Dunn

Masked Lapwings certainly take their lives into their hands when they raise their young by the side of the road. On a quiet suburban street in Vincentia recently it seemed an adult was getting their chick ready for their life ahead on the streets.

The adult crossed the road and the chick followed only to realise that it could not get up the kerb. The adult just kept calling from the safety of the pavement. For five minutes the chick tried without success to make the leap up the kerb.



But the chick passed the test eventually by finding the easy way - and walked up a house's driveway to re-join the parent. It's a hard life being a Masked Lapwing in the suburbs, but it was good to see that the next generation will be up for the challenge!



## NSW Ambulance Service saves a Galah

- by Rob Dunn

When BirdLife Shoalhaven's Stan Brown found an injured Galah recently, he called Wildlife Rescue South Coast. We know the great work that all of our animal rescue organisations groups provide in the Shoalhaven, but on this occasion Stan was really impressed - though rather surprised - when an ambulance arrived and a paramedic knocked on the door to collect the Galah.

The paramedic explained that he was a Wildlife Rescue volunteer and had received Stan's call on the way to work. Stan last saw the bird being taken into the ambulance and watched it head off, though without the ambulance siren blaring.

This episode caused some concern for Stan's neighbours, who assumed that he was in the ambulance - and not an injured Galah!



## Angela Merkel meets her match

- by Rob Dunn

Angela Merkel has just retired from German politics after 30 years in the Bundestag. In this time, she has been a major force in work politics and faced numerous challenges – their post-reunification recovery, the Eurozone debt and immigration crises, the pandemic, climate change, numerous global issues, like the Russia / Ukraine conflict and the Brexit negotiations, and her memorable meeting with President Trump.



However, with less than a week to go till the election, on a press photo opportunity at a bird park, she met her match - Rainbow Lorikeets!



## Rockwarbler Concern Eases

- by Chris Grounds

One of the bird species noted as of "Concern" in the Shoalhaven following the 2019-20 bushfires was the Rockwarbler.

It is not a threatened species but has a very specific habitat associated with the sandstone escarpment of the Shoalhaven which was battered in the fires.

It is the only bird species endemic to NSW and is not that common a sighting given its habitat.



BLS post-fire site monitoring has revealed a healthy population on the cliff line in Jerrawangala National Park and a jump in numbers seen last year suggested they may have bred successfully post-fire.

A recent monitoring provided another sighting at the Jerrawangala escarpment site but there was quite a difference to other sightings. The bird was moving about on the actual cliff face, which was an intriguing observation in itself and with nesting material in its bill. The impression created was that it and partner were nesting under a small ledge in the cliff face.

This special little bird certainly seems to have survived the horror of the fires on the plateau.

# Jervis Bay National Park Inclusions helping birdlife

- by Chris Grounds

**The first conservation battle concerned thwarting the urban development idea for the Heritage Estate. The second battle was to put in place the various physical and technical protections.**

**Conservation then extended to involve a number of neighbouring properties capable of inclusion in Jervis Bay National Park (JBNP). The Minister's decision and recent JBNP mapping indicates really significant progress. That also means security and protection of the Jervis Bay KBA.**

The debate and campaigning associated with the Heritage Estate adjacent to Erowal Bay at St Georges Basin has been ringing in environmental ears since at least 1990.

It reached a significant milestone in March 2009 when then federal minister Peter Garrett decided in favour of the environment against development for the Estate.

A series of specific campaigns from 2009 to 2020 organized within a community network, the Heritage Estate Community Network or HEST, that many of you know quite well, produced two major steps forward both of which are important to bird habitat.

The first group of campaigns involved a package of improvements including the rezoning to Environment Conservation from Rural, blocking entry at all access points, the exclusion of trail bikes and 4X4s, restoration of soil erosion of Estate roads and tracks and the removal of car bodies and rubbish not to mention letters and submission to politicians.

Alongside these developments came a continuing field study effort and one result has been to extend the numbers of birds by five species including three threatened species, orchids by nine new species and plants by one.



There are now 104 verified bird species in the Heritage Estate. There are 163 bird species in a 1km radius and 281 bird species within a 5 km radius centred on the Heritage Estate in the Atlas of Living Australia database, which includes historic records.

Just out of a more biodiverse interest, the Atlas has records of 706 species of all animals and plants in the 1 km radius zone. Of course, databases are limited to what is recorded!

**A significant recent result has been numerous sightings of the Eastern Bristlebird in the Heritage Estate.** These birds were an integral part of the conservation argument for the Estate but it is clear from monitoring over the last 10 years that their number and extent has grown quite significantly in the last twelve months and this is verified by NPWS.

The Eastern Bristlebird is the “trigger species” to the Jervis Bay KBA and the four properties featured are all part of the JBKBA.

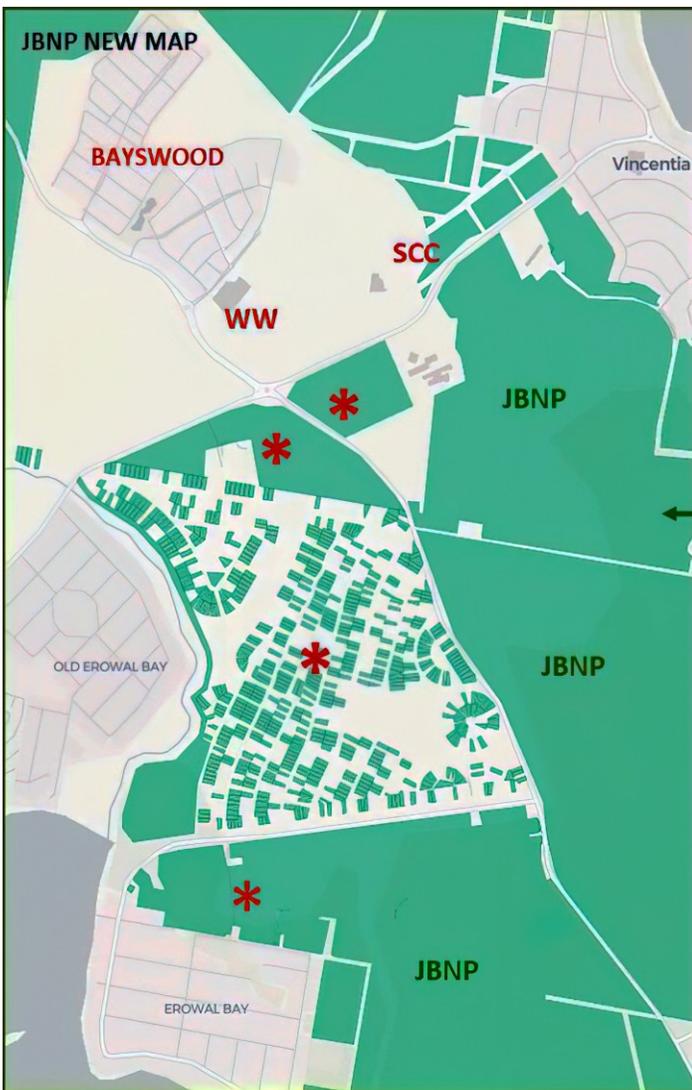
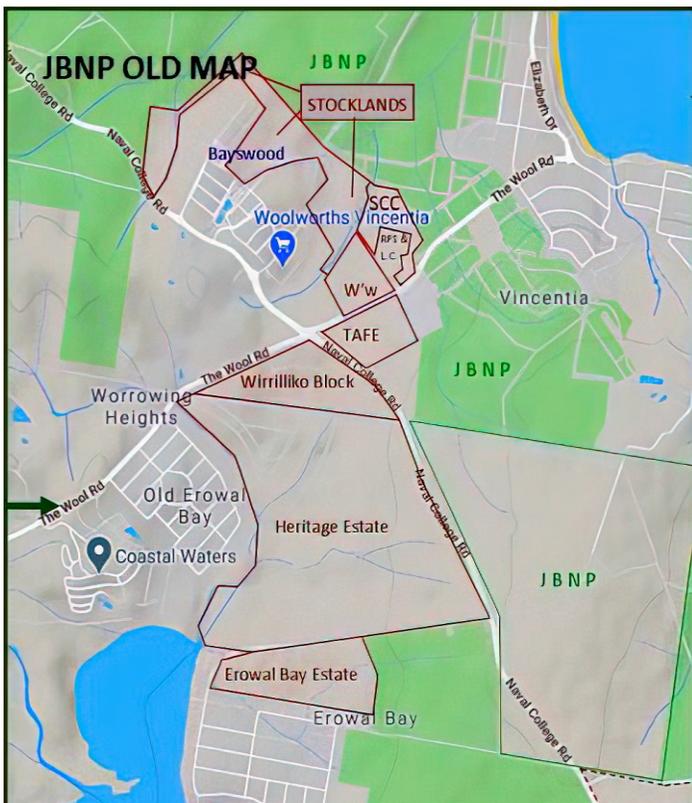


EASTERN BRISTLEBIRDS ARE THRIVING IT SEEMS

**The second major development in the conservation campaigning was the extension of the areas involved in a conservation action of HEST, always with BirdLife Shoalhaven support.**

The Erowal Bay Estate, also part of the historic Pacific City plan and the so-called TAFE Block, both adjacent to Heritage Estate were added to the conservation demand to be included in the JBNP and this has been successful, verified in both the Minister's advice and the most recent JBNP mapping.

The “Coat Hanger” block, which borders the Heritage Estate on The Wool Road had been secured previously with state purchase and has become part of the package.



These inclusions are vital to the habitat, corridor and biodiversity, especially birds of the south section of JBNP, to the Jervis Bay KBA and especially to Booderee National Park, in part because of the damage associated with the Woolworths and Bayswood developments.

“Vincentia Nominees” [aka Woolworth’s] property at the Vincentia Market Place and Shoalhaven Council property at the Leisure Centre should have come across to JBNP as agreed by both parties and this needs to be rectified. A Council report has verified this is in process!

Recent extended monitoring in Heritage and Erowal Bay Estates indicates not just a renewed presence of the Eastern Bristlebird but a pleasing lift in the variety of bush and seasonal species as well. The area may be a refuge from fire-impacted areas to the south and west but the broad improvement of the estates environment is paying dividends in birdlife.

There have been multiple recent sightings of our beloved Glossy Black Cockatoos in both Estates and along the Bherwerre Peninsula. The sightings have involved clear family groupings and juveniles which is a promising sign for these one egg - one chick birds. These have certainly been seen in bigger numbers in such refuge area since the fires but there has been an extension into the Estates.



Again that suggests the protection and improvement of these areas and bringing them into NPWS management is paying dividends for bird habitat and biodiversity of species, especially the threatened species.

If only the off-leash dogs could now be restrained - or should that be the dog owners?

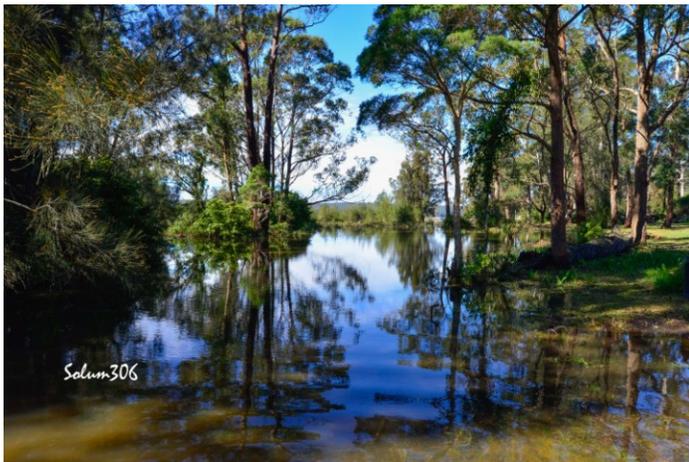
*[Chris has been the Coordinator of the Heritage Estate Community Network since 2008 and a member of the NPWS-Council Committee for the Soil Erosion Project.]*

## Bherwerre Wetland - a birdland success - ALMOST

- by Chris Grounds

The Bherwerre Wetland is now a seven year old project to conserve natural assets and develop passive recreation on community land at Sanctuary Point on the shore of St Georges Basin.

- Council approved a Concept Plan to serve these purposes for the wetland
- The funding issue was solved with a \$950,000 state tourism grant
- A 2021 campaign has resulted in the wetland being transferred to "Community Land"



Wetland remnant Wet Sclerophyll Forest adjacent to St Georges Basin

There has been some recent excellent news after a year of community campaigning with Council concerning the tenure of the Wetland.

**At a recent council meeting a majority of Councillors voted to transfer the wetland from Operational Land to Community Land, with a small allowance for the canal for the purposes of maintenance. This is one of the most significant stages in progressing the status of the site and essentially guarantees its future.**

Council are free to decide the purpose and status of Operational Land so the demanded transfer to Community Land classification will in some key senses, protect the interests of the community.

It would not surprise many of you to know that 2 of the 3 votes against the change to community land were from Ward 2 Clr. Watson and Clr. Pakes despite it being part of the original community agreement. The other was the departing Clr. Guile. Other councillors were supportive.

The concept of retaining the 'wetland' area on Larmer Avenue at Sanctuary Point on St Georges Basin got its 'first legs' in early 2015 with a co-operative effort between

Shoalhaven Council Environment Planning staff and the local Community Consultative Body, the Basin Villages Forum.

There was a little - but not much - known at that point about the specifics of the natural value of the area, which had been impacted by attempted residential development. That very misguided proposal was stopped by the state government of the day, and this placed some limit to the damage to the wetland environment.



A Council-Community Steering Committee was formed and guided the wetland to a new name, Bherwerre Wetland using local Aboriginal input of the Dhurga language and a Concept Plan for conservation and development of the area for passive recreation in a natural setting. The Concept Plan was accepted by the councillor body but finance was the challenge.

An attempt at a system of "Off-set" credits was first developed by council but this did leave community members somewhat nervous as these do remain a controversial strategy. Offsets basically involve saving one area of environment as a compensation for the destruction of what is seen as an equivalent area for some type of development.

**The finance dilemma was solved in 2019 when Council were successful in obtaining a \$950,000 grant under the Destination Tourism banner to develop the passive recreation infrastructure of tracks, bridges, signage, elevated walkway and car parking.**

That is currently still subject to 'Project Management' and hopes for signs of progress in 2021 have faded somewhat though the behind the scenes work has continued apace.

However, Bherwerre Wetland is a site that continues to regenerate of its own accord so in that sense the conservation purpose is being met.

Much of the wetland is composed of Wet Sclerophyll remnant and regenerating forest with Swamp Mahogany [*Eucalyptus robusta*], a winter flowering eucalypt vital in

the seasonal foraging for bush birds and the honeyeaters in particular.



White-naped Honeyeater on Swamp Mahogany

**The diversity of bird groups and species fits the geography of the site.**

BirdLife Shoalhaven members were involved in establishing a catalogue of avian species for the site, which was previously unknown and it is now recognized as a site for 80 verified native bird species.



Scarlet Honeyeaters feature in the Cool Season bushland

The development of this catalogue and associated photography captured most imaginations and gave great impetus to progress with the site.

Bird species from this catalogue feature in the art installation on Larmer Avenue and also in two Sea Change Festival exhibitions.

Despite its relatively small area the site includes Wet Sclerophyll Eucalyptus forest, Casuarina forests, sedgeland, saltmarsh, mangrove and extends to extensive sea grass meadows. It is a very special transect and sample of nature in the middle of bustling St Georges Basin.



A visiting Straw-necked Ibis with friends

Of course, the variety of birds matches the variety of habitat and it can start with the offshore Black Swans and progress to the Egrets, White-faced Herons, all the Cormorants, Eastern Ospreys, Square-tailed Kites to the considerable array of bush birds.



*Chris is our former Conservation Officer [2014-2021] and member of BLS, a Committee member of the Basin Villages Forum, the Bherwerre Wetland Steering Committee and the Central Shoalhaven Coastlands Management Committee. Chris has also produced a Resource Kit on the site for both Council and Sanctuary Point Public School.*

## Caravan Park Brolgas

- by Yolande Cozijn

There are lots of things to love about Longreach in winter - the big blue central Queensland skies, a sunset cruise on the Thompson River, the Qantas Founders Museum or the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame. However, the most surprising experience that Longreach offered us was completely unexpected ... resident Brolgas in the Longreach Tourist Park!

After a lovely mornings drive from Winton we pulled into the caravan park - which I have to say resembled a dusty gravel pit with facilities - but it did have a small billabong that might provide some good opportunities for birding. Armed with binoculars and cameras we set off to check out the billabong.

We were at the water's edge when we both sensed something large near us. We turned around and there was a Brolga standing 3 metres away observing us! Warren had his 500mm lens on his camera and this bird was so close that he couldn't take a shot. Happily I had my point and shoot and managed to capture this regal bird.

Each winter a family of Brolgas fly in and spend 6-7 months living in and around the park. The next morning we discovered why!

The park is dog friendly and most dog owners had food for Fido sitting conveniently outside their vans. The Brolgas spent their mornings wandering around the park eating the dog food! What was particularly amazing is how comfortable the birds were close to people.

I now know that if we ever want to see Brolgas close up again – we'll visit Longreach Caravan Park in winter!



## Look Great, Support Bird Conservation

- by Yolande Cozijn

Your BirdLife Shoalhaven committee thought it was about time that we embraced the daunting task of developing some custom BLS merchandise to help fund our growing conservation efforts.

Anyone that has ever created clothing, hats or other types of merchandise to sell will know that this is a fraught task.

**Where do we get a design from? What will we order? How much do we order? What sizes will we order? What colour should the t-shirts/caps/mugs/phone covers be?**

As I had made some suggestions about how to proceed with this project, the committee immediately decided that I was the best person to make it happen! Fortunately the wonders of 21st century technology have made this process so much easier.

Working with Pete Costello from Yes Creative we developed an illustration to use on our merchandise. The illustration is based on one of the iconic birds of the Shoalhaven - the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo - a fabulous parrot of great significance for the Shoalhaven / Nowra area as "Nowra" is the Aboriginal word for Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, recorded as "nou-woo-ro" in 1861.



With our design ready I found a way to solve the merchandise conundrum, and our design is now available for viewing on Redbubble - a global online marketplace where our BirdLife Shoalhaven illustration can be printed on demand onto a range of 46 different items.

To give you an idea of the choices that are possible, the classic t-shirt is available in 6 sizes, from small to extra extra extra large (3XL) and in 16 colours!

The link below will take you to the classic t-shirt page - [www.redbubble.com/i/t-shirt/Black-Cockatoo-Birdlife-Shoalhaven-by-Yolande](http://www.redbubble.com/i/t-shirt/Black-Cockatoo-Birdlife-Shoalhaven-by-Yolande)



### So what else can you purchase?

There are t-shirts, hoodies, singlets and sweatshirts of every shape, size and colour, caps, coffee mugs, face masks, aprons, stickers, water bottles, note books, phone covers etc – essentially something for everyone - follow this link - [www.redbubble.com/shop/ap/90279792](http://www.redbubble.com/shop/ap/90279792) - and see the following page.

**Aside from all this choice, the great news is that 20% from the sale of each item will go to Birdlife Shoalhaven for our education, conservation and research projects!**

So now every BLS member and supporter can not only look great, they can also help our birds at the same time!



Dad Hat  
A\$35.76



Lightweight Hoodie  
A\$52.10



Active T-Shirt  
A\$40.15



Baseball 3/4 Sleeve T-Shirt  
A\$34.19



Graphic T-Shirt  
A\$42.29



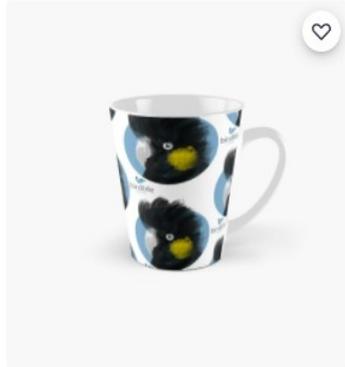
Lightweight Hoodie  
A\$52.10



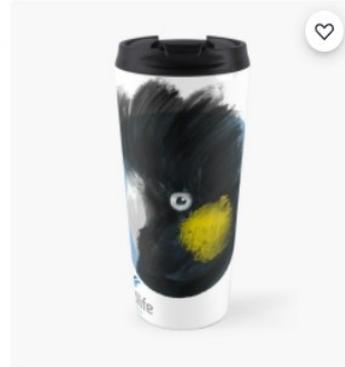
Lightweight Sweatshirt  
A\$42.73



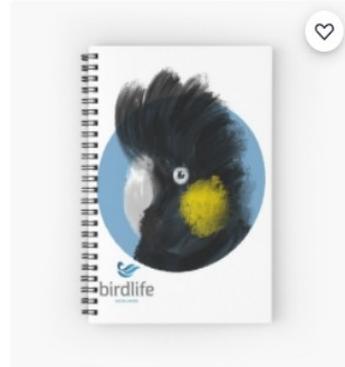
Long Sleeve T-Shirt  
A\$30.99



Tall Mug  
From A\$15.49



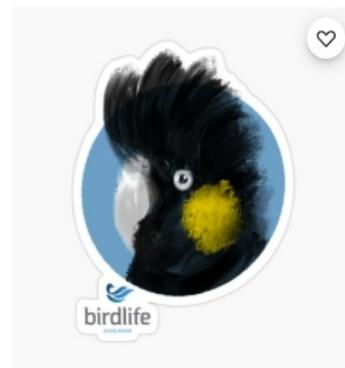
Travel Mug  
A\$34.40



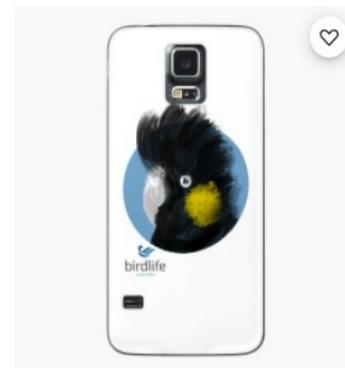
Spiral Notebook  
From A\$14.75



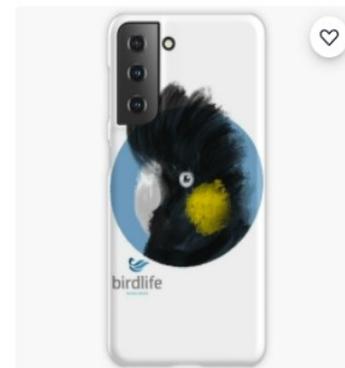
Racerback Tank Top  
A\$31.00



Sticker  
From A\$1.52



Samsung Galaxy Skin  
A\$17.35



Samsung Galaxy Snap Case  
A\$30.99



Pullover Sweatshirt  
A\$52.78

# Seasonal Bird Biodiversity - JBNP Heath

- by Chris Grounds



**The Shoalhaven is a place of some delight for bird watching but linking that with behaviour, habitat and seasonal considerations in an extended time frame really broadens those delights.**

This last Cool Season was an intriguing time to follow these aspects of birds in the Jervis Bay National Park heathland on the Bherwerre Peninsula. This is a relatively large area atop the sandstone ridge behind Chinamans Beach-Greenfields shoreline.

Importantly, the area is part of the Jervis Bay Key Biodiversity Area (KBA).

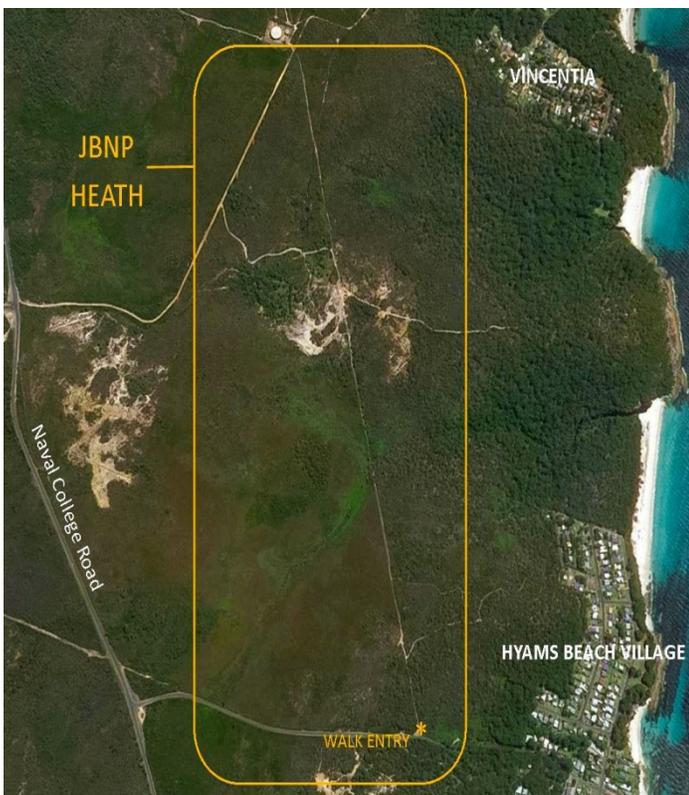
The area is a classic Sydney Bioregion sandstone habitat though the presence of laterite gravels speaks to immensely old residual tropical soils. Like so much of Australia it is really ancient geography.

These elements however are made to order for heathland and the habitat it creates.

An overlaying consideration is of course that this area is vital “refugia”, which escaped the 2019-20 fires and thus of considerable, additional importance.

There is quite a range of plants but one in particular is a big contributor to habitat for the birds in the heath, one of the major vegetation types of the Shoalhaven.

Each March, in the Early Cool Season, the Heath Banksia [*Banksia ericifolia*] starts to flower and continues through the Cool Season to complete in late August-September and it is there in great profusion. The heath is bordered in part by Eucalypt Scribbly Gum-Silvertop Ash woodland.



This year was different not so much for the range of species but the numbers within the suite.

A range of honeyeaters use the heath for winter residence and they were all back to a greater or lesser degree. These include the well-known honeyeaters: the New Holland, White-cheeked, Yellow-faced, Fuscous, Brown-headed, Eastern Spinebill, Little Wattlebird, Red Wattlebird, White-naped, Tawny-crowned, and the more elusive Scarlet and Yellow-tufted.

That is not a bad range in itself but it is entirely seasonal.

A big difference in 2021 though was the very big numbers on the heathland of New Holland and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, and Red Wattlebirds, which migrated in quite substantial flocks. There would be hundreds and hundreds of these species on any given day, more than previously seen in a decade.

Then, as the Heath Banksia finished the five month flowering, the numbers fell sharply in Late Cool of August over a mere couple of days. It was very noticeable over the week, and it changed the heath ambience abruptly. The intense and incessant activity was gone and the heath more placid.

There was one remarkable flowering which provided a singular and intense element to this habitat profile.



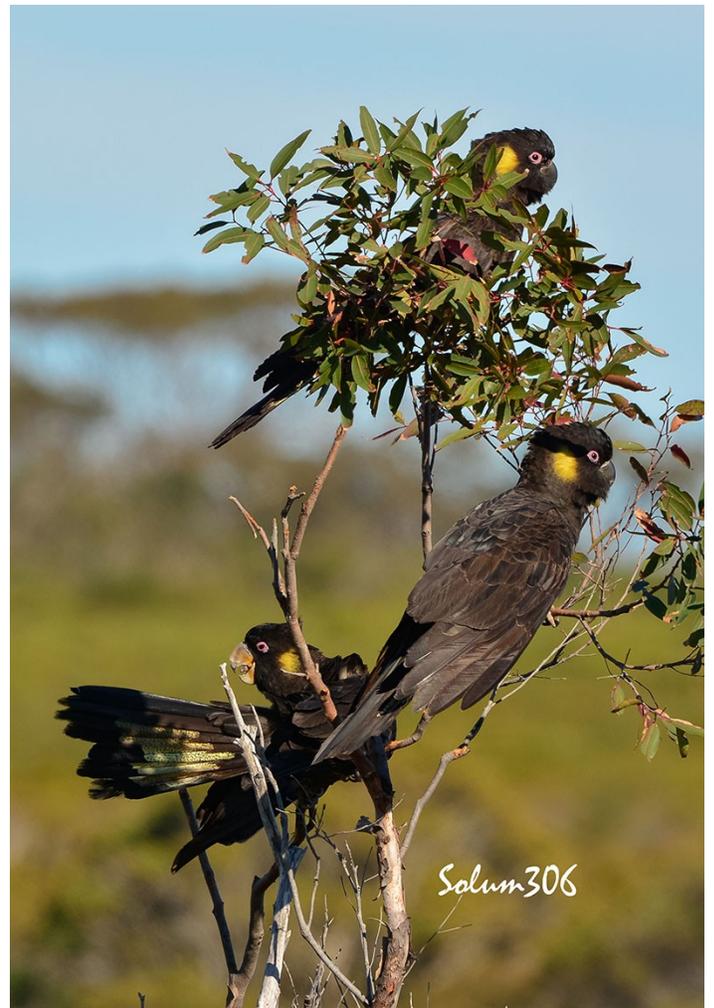
Little Wattlebird on Swamp Mahogany

A small group of Swamp Mahogany [*Euc.robusta*] flowered at the time the species normally does and quite profusely as these trees had done this year on limited sites in the Bay and Basin. They do stand out for their mid-year flowering. The catch is that these are trees of wet, swampy heavy soils not heathland but a few established a presence on a narrow drainage off an elevated area close to a streamline.

The abundant blossom was a magnet to the honeyeaters and a sustained observation usually produced much of the full range on the heath, day after day and again in big numbers.

One staple banksia and a special eucalypt were at the heart of the seasonal habitat.

The other observation which fitted with these was the continuing presence of very large flocks of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.



These were calculated from photographs to be 200 plus strong at times and on the heath and adjacent areas almost day to day for some time.

Persistent observation revealed they were using the Heath Banksia for foraging. They would descend into the heath, disappear with their size and weight taking them

below the shrub line of sight and then some occasions all take to flight at one time. It was truly spectacular for these "Nowra".

Like the honeyeaters, the numbers dwindled and the day by day sighting finished but added to the great eco-profile of the birding on the 2021 heath.

The final 'wing' of the story is that all this was accompanied by another bird spectacle.

The heath area as part of the broader corridor from Booderee to Woollamia featured a continuously large range of raptors including: the very regular Brown Goshawk and Swamp Harrier, Grey Goshawk, Square-tailed Kite, Australian Hobby (picture below with lunch), Peregrine Falcon and very occasional Whistling Kite.



There was good eating on the heath. The sight of a Hobby taking out a Yellow-faced Honeyeater was a testimony to the ecology of the heath and the incredible speed of the Hobby in the air. Naturally, the raptor numbers have now declined to their usual steady lower levels.

An absolute delight is the relative profusion of Eastern Bristlebirds amongst all this other birding. The NPWS have verified the observation that this nationally Endangered threatened species has extended its numbers and range this year not just on the heath but to the neighbouring bushland on both sides of the ridge including the Heritage and Erowal Bay Estates and associated JBNP. They have become an almost common experience to ear and eye.



The other side of the coin is that the Mainland Ground Parrot is not being detected in the numbers of a couple of years back.

Perhaps a compensation has been sightings of the wonderful Southern Emu Wren, which is Endangered federally though 'Secure' in NSW.



This Cool Season story tells of the ecology of such sites, to the ladder of species, interactions, habitat, corridor and ecology enveloped in the protection of National Parks and Nature Reserves and KBAs.

The walking tracks of the area have been a considerable contribution to the well-being of many in these Covid times but it would be nice if they all respected the National Park.

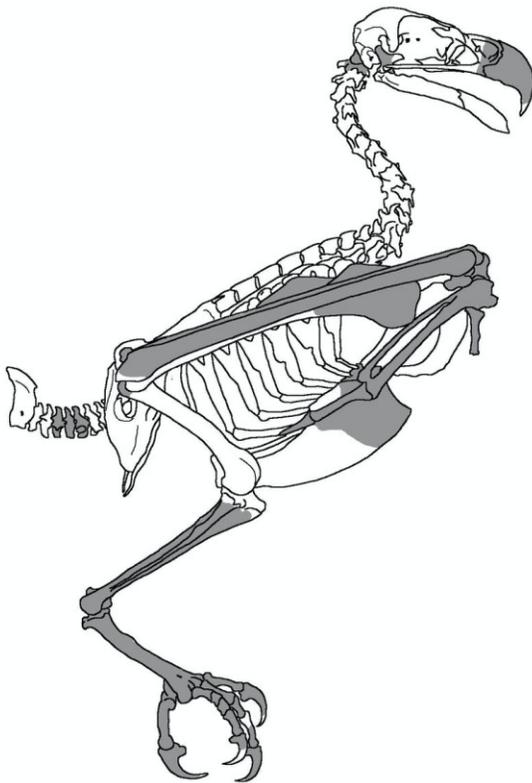
*[BLS Members Chris and Marly Grounds spend a lot of time on the Heath Track]*

## Prehistoric Eagle

- from the Conversation

The parched deserts of the South Australian outback were once a rainforest filled with a rich variety of birds and animals. Now, thanks to a new fossil discovery, we know the apex predator of this lush ecosystem was a newly discovered eagle that lived 25 million years ago.

The fossil, unearthed in 2016 in prehistoric sediments at Lake Pinpa, 400 kilometres north of Adelaide, is one of the most complete raptor fossils from this time period found anywhere in the world. It comprises 63 bones, which is truly exceptional; most fossil birds are named on the basis of just a single bone. The bones found are shown shaded in the image below.



The bird has been named *Archaehierax sylvestris* meaning “ancient hawk belonging to the forest”. It was slightly smaller than a wedge-tailed eagle, with talons spanning 15 centimetres that allowed it to grab prey the size of a koala or possum. And it had short, robust wings adapted to fly within the cluttered confines of a forest, rather than to soar through the skies.

With its relatively short wings and long legs, this eagle was likely an ambush hunter, waiting for unwary prey to approach, rather than a soaring forager. In the forest, it probably preyed on medium-sized marsupials. But from a high perch, it would also have made forays over the lake where it could catch ducks and flamingos.



Since the 1970s, the barren, salt-crusted sediments in South Australia’s arid north have yielded a range of bone fragments, teeth, and other fossils of the animals that lived there — many of which would have been prey for *Archaehierax*.



The fossil dig site

Previously, raptor fossils as ancient as 25 million years old were only known from Europe and North America. *Archaehierax sylvestris* and its smaller contemporary show that Australia was an important geographic location in the early global evolution of raptors.

Australia is already widely understood to be a cradle of evolution of songbirds, and our island continent doubtless played a similar role in the evolution of other types of birds too.

The rainforest where these birds lived is now the arid outback. And there are almost certainly many fossils awaiting discovery there that will tell us more about how Australia’s unique birds evolved.

## A Different King Parrot

- by Chris & Marly Grounds

Birds can always throw something different or unusual at we birders. It is one of the delights of birding.

The King Parrot is one of the most visually spectacular birds and has a cheeky, appealing nature, especially if they expect they will be fed. This species is a regular visitor to our back garden.



It certainly embellished an otherwise handsome chap though that is as good as the news gets.

The Birds in Backyards site indicates this condition can be an early indicator of the "Ptissacine Beak and Feather Disease". This is a condition produced by a virus which is usually fatal.

Sometimes these symptoms are associated with malnutrition from inadequate diet, which can be associated with artificial feeding.

Not good news either way, is it?

## Facebook - what you've missed!

Our Facebook page can be found by following this link - [www.facebook.com/shoalhavenbirdlife](http://www.facebook.com/shoalhavenbirdlife)

If you haven't visited the page in the past few months, you have missed a lot! The list includes Politics at the Pub (Brewery), Scrubwrens nesting in a bike helmet, news about the Gang-gang Nest project with iNaturalist, a good news story about Oscar the Osprey, National Threatened Species Day, public surveys about cats, and an epidemic of escaped Eclectus Parrots in the Nowra area.

There was also a report on the Collins Street Peregrine Falcons, links to a petition to stop Bunnings selling bird-killing poisons, images and videos of Ospreys at Callala, and info on the upcoming Southern Bioblitz, Twitchathon, and Aussie Backyard Bird Count, plus the usual excellent images from Phil Hendry (below).



## Ospreys in the News

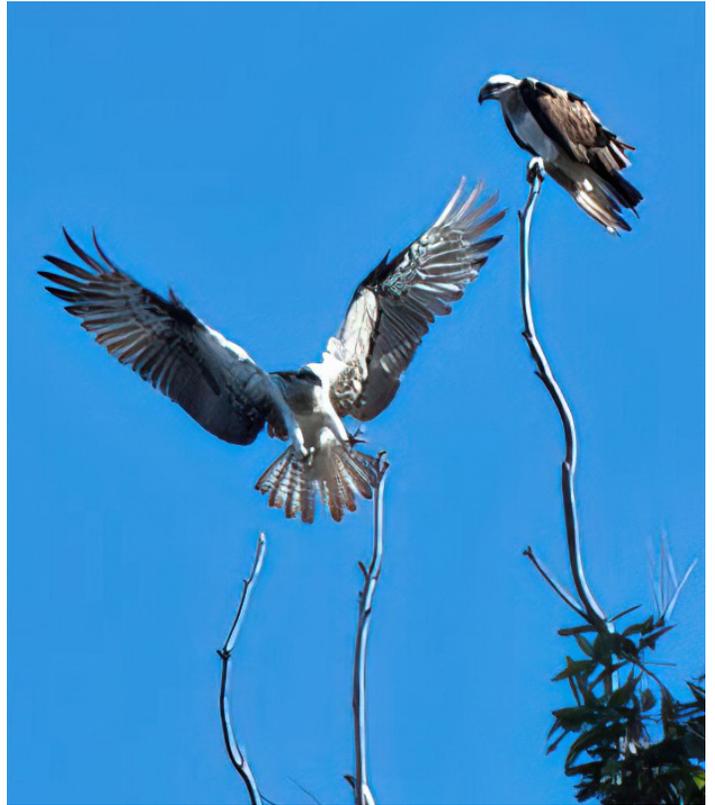
As mentioned on the previous page, Ospreys have been a feature on our Facebook page of late.

An article on Oscar the Osprey appeared in the South Coast Register on August 31st, telling the story of an Osprey that had been found in poor condition in Callala Bay, and rescued by a couple of locals with help from Wildlife Rescue, Australian Seabird Rescue, and a specialist avian vet in Wollongong.

Oscar was successfully released a few days later once he had recovered - see photo below. He was part of the group of Ospreys photographed and videoed by Michelle Stewart in Callala that featured in our shared post on September 20th.



In our Winter magazine last season, freelance contributor Chris Grounds reported on Ospreys attempting to build a nest on a Telstra tower in Sanctuary Point - unsuccessfully - see photo below left.



Aware that Telstra has previously erected platforms on some of their towers specifically for Ospreys to utilize for nesting, BirdLife Shoalhaven Treasurer Karen Davis has initiated contact with Telstra to ask them to consider a nesting platform for the Sanctuary Point Ospreys.



What better way for a company to advertise its green credentials and help the community and the birds at the same time? Let's hope that Telstra comes to the party!

Watch this space!

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## What's Your Bird Story?

- by Brett Davis

Everyone who is a birdwatcher - and that means **YOU** - because nobody but birdwatchers would ever read a magazine that's devoted entirely to birds - has interesting stories to tell about their interactions with birds.

I have shared some of my bird stories with you in the past. In the Summer 2017 magazine I wrote an article called "Magpie Wars and Incest" about the extended family of Magpies that my wife and I have been co-existing with since 2005. I will be updating that story next year.

In the Spring of 2019 my wife Karen was interviewed about her (our) birdwatching life which included the discovery of a new bird for Australia back in 2006. The interview also included details about our volunteering for various conservation groups (Bush Heritage, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, South Coast Shorebird Recovery, BirdLife Australia and BirdLife Shoalhaven) and trips that we have done to Uganda and Namibia for the primary purpose of seeing birds.

Namibian Bird - ID anyone?



But those stories are just a drop in the ocean!

I haven't told you about the Square-tailed Kite that pulled a Little Wattlebird apart in our front yard a few years ago. I haven't mentioned the Buff-banded Rail that lived in our backyard for three weeks. And I don't think I have mentioned the visits to our suburban St Georges Basin home by relative rarities (for suburbia) of Grey Goshawks, an Emerald Dove, a Rose Robin, and a Bassian Thrush!

And have I mentioned our resident Satin Bowerbird who has set up his bower only ten steps from our back door?



Just in the past week we have been serenaded by two Eastern Bristlebirds in the heathland near the Ruined Lighthouse while six Sea-eagles were soaring overhead; we have been entertained by a family of five frolicking Rockwarblers just below a rocky escarpment west of Wandandian; and we watched two Spotted Pardalotes repeatedly visiting a nest hollow only two metres away from us adjacent to a footpad near Jerrawangala Lookout.

Everyone who reads this article will have similar stories, so please share them with us! If you have some images that can accompany your stories, so much the better!

If you don't want to hear me rattle on about all of the wonderful bird experiences that have happened to my wife and I over the years, please do all of our BirdLife Shoalhaven members and supporters a huge favour by sending in YOUR bird stories!

Email me at [communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org](mailto:communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org)



## Bird Walks Calendar

There will be bird walks **for members only** on the dates shown below. Members who would like to attend our bird walks can **email** [communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org](mailto:communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org) for details of the program shown below.

Visit [www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html](http://www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html) for info about becoming a BirdLife Australia member.

### Bird Walk Dates

Friday 22nd October  
Saturday 30th October  
Friday 5th November  
Friday 19th November  
Saturday 20th November  
Friday 3rd December

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Masked Lapwing chick - photo by Phil Hendry

## How You Can Help

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 the new role of Conservation Coordinator, 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, but something that no other BLS members usually do.

Or you could become one of our Facebook editors, send us some photos, or tell us about conservation issues in your neighbourhood! Get in touch!

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## 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](mailto:communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org)

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

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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.

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[birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au)

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