

Birdlife Shoalhaven Newsletter

Winter 2014



Fuscous Honeyeater

Telegraph Creek Walk, Booderee NP

20th July 2014

Photo by Christine Rigg



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Contributions

If you have any information about conservation issues, or if you would like to share some of your birding experiences, travel stories or anecdotes with fellow members, please send details to the editor at shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au with any related photos, drawings or maps.

In addition, if you have any bird photographs you would like to share, please send them in as well. This includes photos of unidentified birds that could be used in our "What Bird is This" section.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the BirdLife Shoalhaven members who contributed articles to this newsletter - Frances Bray, Chris Grounds, Bob Ashford, Robyn McTavish and Marg Hamon - and also to those people who supplied images - Christine Rigg, Derek Willcox, Duade Paton, Sue Tolley, Chris Grounds, Chris Shinton and Ian Brown.

I am not sure who took the photos of the "blue" rosella. If you know who it was, please let the editor know so he can acknowledge the photographer in the next newsletter.

Apologies to any contributors whose text or images have not been acknowledged.

The newsletter editor is Brett Davis. If any BirdLife Shoalhaven member would like to become the next newsletter editor, please contact the BirdLife Shoalhaven secretary at shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au

Disclaimer

The information in articles submitted for publication in this newsletter is accepted in good faith and although the editor has endeavoured to verify the accuracy of all information, BirdLife Shoalhaven accepts no responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies or exaggerations that may be contained within articles in this newsletter.

Errors

If you find any errors - typographical or factual - in this newsletter, please let the editor know. The beauty of an electronic newsletter is that it can be amended after publication.

President's Report x 2

by Barry Virtue

1. The Lucky Birding Country

I am recently returned from a three month holiday in eastern Europe where I admit I didn't do too many days of serious birding. I carried my bins, a field guide and had a quite good app on my phone. I explored several Ramsar sites and forest areas and various habitats from arid to alpine in Turkey Greece and Croatia. I soon found that birding was quite different and harder!

We are so lucky in Australia, and in the Shoalhaven particularly. Our birds are so much more colourful, varied, "out there", tamer and with fewer "little brown ones" to work on. We are saved from "warblers". We can also see representatives of so many families within a small area.

As I drive the few kilometres from home to Berry I am guaranteed to see at least four species of our colourful parrots, several honeyeaters, ducks, pigeons, herons, egrets, ibis, probably a raptor and maybe even a rail. There will be the usual black and whites, lapwings, ravens, swallows and a gaggle of finches, wrens and fantails to mention the most common.

Despite driving in a rental through rural areas and various habitats this was not the case in Europe. What I did see was furtive and shy and generally disappeared if they noticed me. Is it a history of hunting?

We are certainly blessed with our avian fauna and it is so good to be able to do something about protecting it and educating through Birdlife Shoalhaven. We are in a position to conserve and regenerate habitat for birds.

Perhaps members of BLS from Europe will disagree with my observations?



A common local bird - photo by Sue Tolley

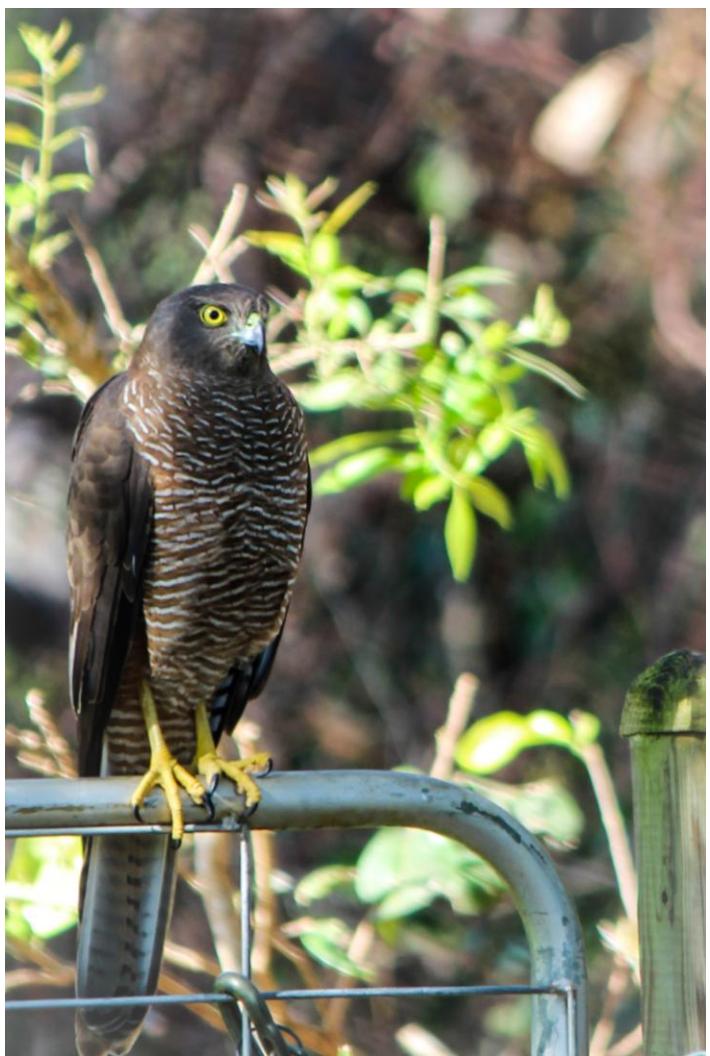
2. Diurnal Bird Surveys on Two Hectare Transects

Recording surveys in a small spiral bound notebook in the field to be entered on line later; here's how I do it and I would be pleased to hear of any alternative suggestions:

At the top of the page I enter, a made up site name, date, start and finish time for a 20 minute survey, GPS readings and relevant notes on weather, habitat, flowering/fruiting trees, disturbances and observers.

Then below on the left a species list in my abbreviations, and on the right, if within the site, the number (recorded as strokes in case more need to be added later). Beside the number I add an "O" for observed, "H" heard, and then either "F", flying over, "G" on the ground, "T" in the trees or shrubs, or "W" if on or by water.

Further to the right, in line with the species, but in a separate column, "OS" and the number recorded if they were "off site" - this is only if not recorded in the survey transect or if the bird is a noteworthy species.



A noteworthy species - photo by Sue Tolley

Sad Farewell to the Beach Stone Curlew

by Frances Bray



Photo by Derek Willcox

On many occasions over the past two years Shoalhaven birdwatchers and residents of Culburra Beach and Orient Point have been intrigued by the presence of a Beach Stone Curlew.

Many people first sighted the solitary bird fossicking for food along the Crookhaven River mudflats. Sometimes it followed a fisherman investigating sand and mud he left behind when using a bait pump. It came to Lake Wollumboola on several occasions. We first saw it during storm conditions picking over clumps of sea weed on the sand bar.

It also came to welcome the participants in Birdlife Shoalhaven's first excursion to Lake Wollumboola on 16th February 2014. Keen photographer Derek Willcox also had a unique encounter with the bird when it came right up to him when he was lying prone in the water and mud at the edge of the lake. He was delighted to take the accompanying photo (above).

On the weekend of 12-13th July, a member of Lake Wollumboola Protection Association was walking along Culburra Beach, at the northern Crookhaven Heads end. She was shocked to find the Beach Stone Curlew with an injured leg and unable to fly. Two Ravens were harassing it but did not seem to be the cause of its injury. She was able to capture the bird and arranged for it to be cared for by Wildlife Rescue volunteers. An examination showed it had a dislocated hip, with some bruising, but no markings or sign of other damage or the cause.

It died of its injuries, whilst in care. I understand that there was no chance of it surviving. At least it was saved from further injury or death from the ravens or a fox.

It will be sadly missed by those who watch over the birds at Lake Wollumboola.

Heritage Estate Update

by Chris Grounds

Progress in 2014 is slow, laborious and frustrating.

The Landowners attempt at compensation concluded in the Federal Court last October but there is still no decision. The program to buy their land stays in place at \$5000 per lot.

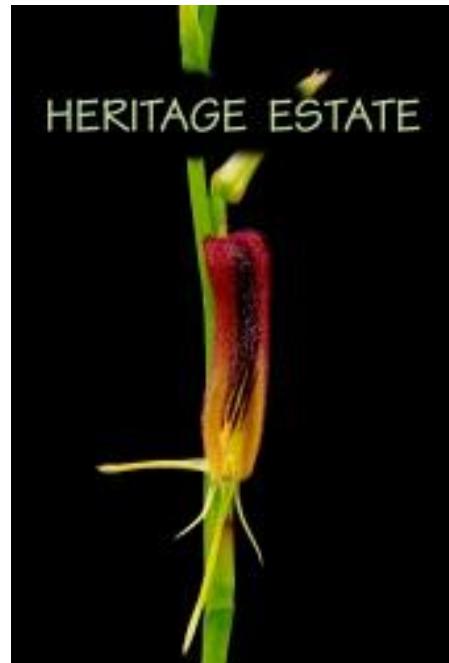
Shoalhaven Council are delaying rezoning to Environmental Conservation of Heritage Estate, citing this court case as the reason. However, Council is also delaying inclusion of their own land in rezoning in a Reserve which contains an Endangered Ecological Community and a riparian Crown Land reserve, approved for handover. Neither have any connection to the Court case.

The balance of Commonwealth funds for purchase of Lots from private owners have been approved to be held over until December.

Foundation of NPW purchases and Council owned lots now comprise about the same number as privately owned lots. This is not a jig-saw for sound environmental management.

Bird life is a little slower this winter in the Estate though the Silveryeye and White-Cheeked Honeyeater are pleasant reminders of the species richness. Whistling Kites have also been paying visits.

The most abundant Eucalypt in the Estate, the Scribbly Gum, *E.Sclerophylla*, is heavy in bud but very slow to flower. The abundant *Banksia ericifolia* is providing the usual winter food load and beautiful orange blooms.



Cormorants

by Bob Ashford

Originally they were called *corvus marinus* - sea ravens, because they looked rather like the hungry black crows and ravens that fed in the fields. These, though, work the rock pools and shallower offshore waters of the world's coastlines and a number are commonly found along rivers and inland waters. They are now known as cormorants, a derivation of their original name. Some are also called a different name entirely.

Of the five species found in Australia the largest is the Great Cormorant, a species with worldwide distribution. It, and two smaller cousins, the Little Pied Cormorant (see photo) and the Little Black Cormorant are regulars around Berry dams and the nearby coast. You can often see them standing on rocks or branches holding out their wings. Their feathers are not very waterproof and need constant drying out.

Over Easter I went to New Zealand with my birding buddy Grant and our wives, Noreen and Sue, to catch up with old friends and to enjoy some birding. I'm not overly fond of NZ as a birding holiday destination. It has a small range of birds most of the original species having been eaten by the early colonizers and their entourage of dogs, cats, rats and pigs. In fact the most abundant land birds we saw were all European - starlings, house sparrows, chaffinches, yellowhammers, dunnocks, redpolls and greenfinches. The next commonest were Australian Magpies. We did see some delightful NZ bush birds but we worked hard for them. Seabirds, however, were a different matter altogether.

We visited the Otago Peninsular, a stunning spot just out of Dunedin. It is the home of the only mainland Albatross breeding colony in the world which, for a country whose native birds largely only survive on offshore islands, is remarkable in itself. The albatrosses are Northern Royals, huge birds with three metre wingspans and close cousins to the Wandering Albatross.

We took a boat trip to the colony because it also offered a chance to see other albatrosses (we saw Black-browed, White-capped and Buller's), great views of basking seals and some sizeable nesting colonies of various cormorants.

The most common cormorant was the Spotted which fished in huge rafts of hundreds of birds. There was also our own Little Pied Cormorant. In Australia the LPC wears the same plumage consistently around the country. In NZ it can be all black (not a surprise, perhaps!), merely white-throated or dressed just like an Aussie with white throat and white belly. Rather confusing when trying to sort out which cormorant is which.

It is also called a Shag. In fact most cormorants in NZ are.

The term Shag derives from the Old Norse *skegg*, or beard, which became Old English *sceaga*, or hair, and refers to the crests many cormorants have.

Shag is also English slang for sex and a word I remember using regularly at boarding school. I reminisced about this to Noreen and Sue explaining the punishment for using it was usually a hefty wallop around the head from a prefect or master but well worth the pain for all the adolescent amusement it caused. Fifty years later not much has changed.

As Grant and I looked out at the small colony of smartly plumaged Stewart Island Shags we couldn't resist it. "Now there's a good looking shag" - (**whack**) - we had been clobbered by our wives.

But the pain and the cormorants were well worth it.



Photo by Duade Paton

(The above article was originally published in 2009 for a series of articles called "Birds Around Berry" that appeared in Berry's "local rag")

Editor's Note: Cormorants have very high metabolic rates which helps to keep them warm despite long amounts of time in the water. They can turn freshly caught fish into cormorant guano in about an hour. There is a theory that the spread wings of cormorants not only dry out their feathers but also help to keep their temperatures down when they are out of the water.

Foreshore Conservation Challenge

Text and Photos Chris Grounds

One of the great natural assets of the Shoalhaven are the coastal lakes and lagoons. Bird watchers know these as special places and perhaps the greatest example is Lake Wollumboola, which is part of the Jervis Bay National Park and an “ICOLL” or Intermittently Closed and Open Lake or Lagoon.



St Georges Basin is the largest coastal lake and is always open to the sea at Sussex Inlet. It was named ‘Bherwherree’ on the first survey plan but is better known as ‘The Basin’ today.

A key element of this natural system is the extensive foreshore or riparian zone. These are the transition zones between aquatic and terrestrial areas.

As such these zones attract a great variety of birds, especially to the shallow offshore adjacent to the foreshore. The seagrass beds, saltmarsh, mangrove and swamp floodplain forests provide an enticing habitat for many species. Blacks Swans, Egrets, Pelican, Chestnut Teal and Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, Masked Lapwings and White-Faced Herons are regulars. Australian Ibis and Southern Boobooks are two recent sightings.

St Georges Basin however has the highest adjacent population concentration of any of the coastal lakes or lagoons with the current 18,000 forecast to rise to 24,900 by 2036. The population pressure is greatest on the northern foreshore. Historically, it is this foreshore that has been subject to the greatest interference and damage.

The foreshore comes under various managements including Booderee National Park and state NPWS with Corramy Conservation Park but these are much less subject to population pressure. The Crown Land Reserves

are managed by Shoalhaven City Council and it is these that bear the brunt of population pressure.

The Shoalhaven City Council’s ‘St Georges Basin Estuary Management Plan’ was exhibited and approved in 2013.

Unfortunately, the riparian vegetation map has failed to record significant areas of saltmarsh and mangrove. This is particularly so on the Sanctuary Point Road Reserve, on the eastern shore of Sanctuary Point and the area of the Tomerong Creek delta [Cockrow Ck.] [see Map 1]

This ecological zone includes the Council owned Larmer Avenue block, which recent resurvey showed to have four rather than one Endangered Ecological Community. The community has proposed to Council that this block be a dedicated wetland-bird sanctuary linked to this foreshore.

This entire zone is a valuable bird area. Accurate environmental information and correct management can improve this status. Indeed,

this area is immediately adjacent to the “Jervis Bay Important Bird Area” identified by Birdlife Australia and actually part of the same local ecological zone.



The value of even limited but correct environmental management is no more in evidence with birdlife than in the Paradise Beach Reserve at Sanctuary Point. In a small area adjacent to a stream-stormwater outlet Council excluded mowing and allowed saltmarsh to recover.

It was after this that Black Swans appeared offshore for the first time in at least eight years. It is now a little micro-haven for birdlife.

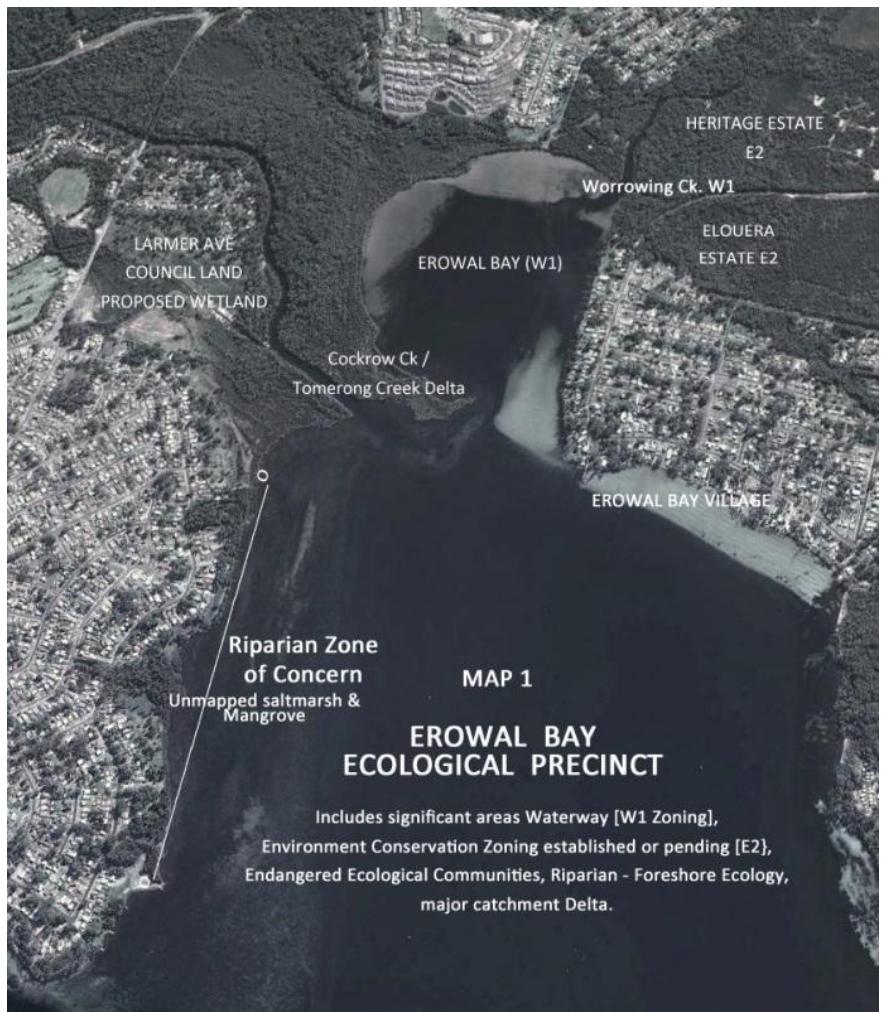


Australian Ibises were seen there recently for the first time and a Rose Robin seen in the adjacent Swamp Oak-Casuarina. White-Faced Heron, Egrets and Chestnut-Teal, Pied Cormorants, Masked Lapwing and Silver Gull are some species now fairly common at the site. It is also the progress in frequency and variety of sightings which bear testimony to management for biodiversity.

One of the concerns about these foreshore areas is that they are Zoned by Council for Recreation rather than Environment Management yet many sections are classified as an "Endangered Ecological Community".

Planning, zoning considerations and management often pay scant heed to birdlife and there is little to be found on the subject of birdlife in the associated documentation.

As with all such matters, serious challenges exist, which require our awareness, support and action.



Duade Paton

Duade Paton is a member of BirdLife Australia and BirdLife Shoalhaven. He is also a bird photographer, and although he has only been taking bird photos for a few years, the quality of his work is superb.



Duade's photo (below) of a Red-capped Plover and Chick - taken at Shoalhaven Heads - won first place in the 2012 BirdLife Australia Photo Competition. Make sure you notice the chick under the adult's wing!

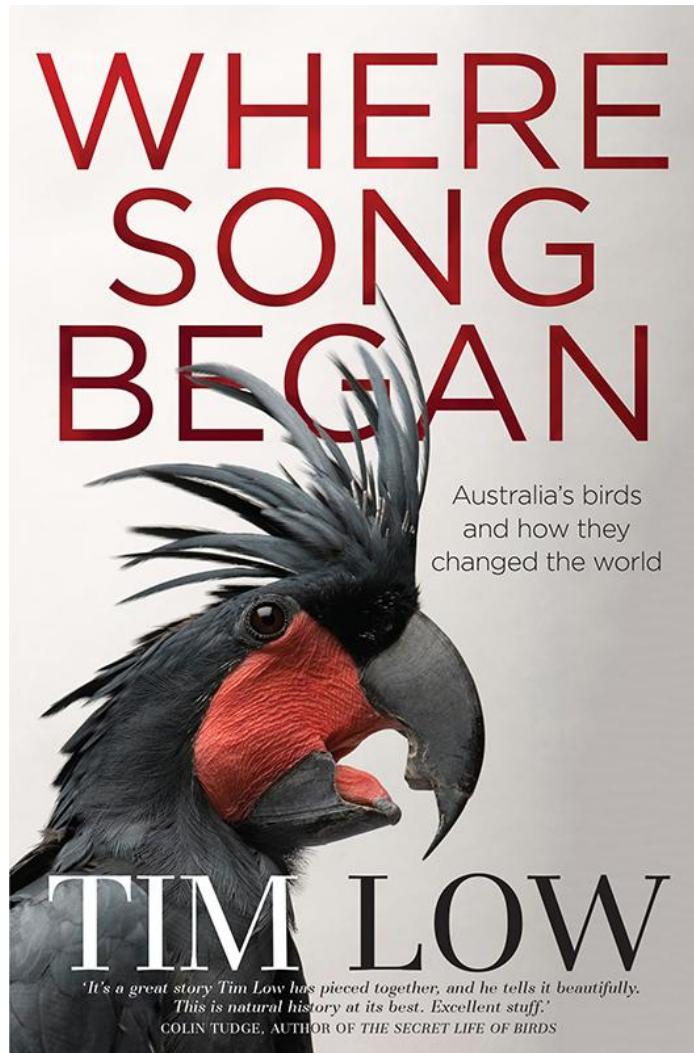
One thing you will notice about Duade's photography is that he is not afraid to get "down and dirty" - many of his images are taken from a very low perspective.

He uses a Canon 7D DSLR with EF400 5.6L telephoto lens. His website can be found at www.duadepaton.com



Where Song Began

review by Chris Grounds



Penguin Books Australia - \$16.99 (online)

Be warned but be rewarded!

This book is an exceptional work, which will make a significant difference to how you think, not just about those birds that so enthrall us but about our country and perception of environment. Tim Low will 'rattle your cage' with this book.

The book has launched to very positive reviews. Spectrum of the Sydney Morning Herald of July 5 had an extensive review.

Tim Low, a biologist and prize-winning author, is a current patron of two conservation organizations and was awarded a Churchill Fellowship.

One of the fundamental propositions of his book is that "*more than half of the world's birds, including all its songbirds and parrots, many pigeons, and even the dodo, can be traced back to Australia. No other continent has been as important for bird evolution.*"

This is not a book for the faint-hearted. There are 318 pages of reading and in smaller print 43 pages of author's notes, a bibliography of 16 pages and a page each of acknowledgements and photo credits. The index is excellent. Thankfully, it is well organized into twelve 'bite size' chapters.

On one level it is an academic, text-like work, which will be arduous for some readers but at another level it is laced with a steady procession of his own down-to-earth, first hand observations and profiles of specific species. These will appeal to birders who share the same type of experiences and reading. The Black Butcherbird and the Magpie shared an ancestor 4 million years ago and the Magpie should really be called "giant ground butcherbird" writes Low.



(Photo by Duade Paton)

If you practice your 'birding' in just a contemporary context and are content to 'list tick', the reading will be a challenge on every level.

Tim Low points to Papua-New Guinea as an essential part of 'bird' Australia, more so than Tasmania, which has been separated from the mainland for much more time.

He steadfastly paints an evolutionary picture with our birds, referencing this to the huge advances that have arrived in research with acceptance of 'continental drift' and DNA.

There is a clear message though that we must realize knowledge exists at a point in time and is not immutable. It too is evolutionary.

Low does not back-off the frailties he detects with Biology and specifically Biogeography. He notes "*how easily biologists succumb to hubris*".

There is critical warning provided about our thinking on burning regimes, including so-called Aboriginal mosaic burning and fire management, which he reports is thought

to be failing in Kakadu and Arnhem Land. It challenges us to think more flexibly.

A 2011 review of studies of charcoal deposits suggests "*no evidence of a continental-scale change in fire at the time of Aboriginal colonisation.*"

There is no doubt from the reading that Low regards conservation as a critical stream to being involved with birds.

The Lyrebird is front and centre of many of the themes in Low's writing. It is the bird with the most ancient lineage of all our birds. The one egg it lays takes eight weeks to hatch. It was extensively hunted, traded and slaughtered prior to World War 1. It is our premier songbird.



(Photo by Duade Paton)

Low reminds us that "*Governments can cut funding for threatened species and shed rhetoric about sustainability without losing elections.*" This reminds us of the recent further cuts of \$24 million and hundreds of more jobs from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and their denigration into an unholy alliance in the portfolio of Planning and Infrastructure.

There are as well some interesting mentions of Birdlife Australia, particularly in the last chapter.

The most apparent weakness in the book is the photography. Bird photography reaches such astonishing standards nowadays and we are spoilt but not so in this book. The cluster of coloured photos in the centre of the book and the washed-out black and white photos throughout the book are simply underwhelming.

This can be forgiven and tolerated as the cost of matching the quality of research, thought and ideas with photography would have made the cost of the book prohibitive and put it beyond the reach of most.

At the on-line price of \$17 it is as "cheap as chips" and, like my copy, would be a wonderful present.

Helpers Required At Shoalhaven Heads

Helpers are required at Shoalhaven Heads this Spring and Summer for Shorebirds 2020 and the Shorebird Recovery Project for Pied Oystercatchers (POCs).

Nicole Ison, volunteer, has offered to be the coordinator of the local Shoalhaven Heads volunteers, taking on the mantle from Rex Worrell after many years. Jodie Dunn is the overall shorebird coordinator (NPWS) in Ulladulla.

There is usually a daily roster of folk to check birds once the birds are nesting. A regular, irregularly timed presence helps considerably to keep domestic dogs and owners away from the area (this whole area is a designated no dog area), aiding the POC breeding and reducing disturbance to feeding migratory birds, once they arrive.

Timing (info from Rex)

Mid August on - watch closely for pair POCs scrapes and activity old river mouth and CINR area. Nest likely 2 weeks after first scrapes. First egg 10 days after mating; second likely the following day. 32 days till hatching, counting from second egg (earliest egg recorded 25th August - last year scrape 25th August - egg 7th September). There may be two pairs in the area breeding. Birds will try three times a season if chicks are lost. 2 chicks but generally the adults only raise one and abandon the other one. One pair of POCs lasted together for 17 years.

Tasks

Watch for activity from mid August. Set up electric fence and outer fence (fox/dog control), signage, within hours (minutes!) of first egg! Assist Nicole, NPWS staff. Test electric fence every second day. Observe from a distance other days with binoculars. Check signage. Look for fox tracks and report. Talk to dog walkers (optional).

Other

Monitor Shoalhaven estuary (boat) for other nesting sites, e.g. Berry's canal, Comerong Bay and break-wall near the beach, both in Comerong Island NR and other locations in estuary system.

Migratory Birds

Monitor arriving birds, counts, daily presence helps limit disturbance. Report signage problems, 'disturbance' issues and assist with monthly counts. Monitor for leg bands etc. There are identified 'count' areas and map can be forwarded of these.

If people can commit one visit a week or so, or fortnight, other, then every little helps.

Interested local volunteers for Shoalhaven Heads should contact Nicole at iceynoodles@tpg.com.au

Birds Seen at Booderee

20th July 2014 – 28 species

Green Patch and Botanical Gardens

Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Grebe
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Rainbow Lorikeet
Crimson Rosella
Satin Bowerbird
Superb Fairy-wren
Brown Gerygone
Brown Thornbill
Spotted Pardalote
Eastern Spinebill
Lewin's Honeyeater
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Fuscous Honeyeater
Little Wattlebird
Red Wattlebird
New Holland Honeyeater
White-cheeked Honeyeater
Eastern Whipbird
Golden Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush
Pied Currawong
Grey Fantail
Eastern Yellow Robin
Silvereye
Bassian Thrush

Trail off Hyams Beach road

White-bellied Sea-Eagle
Eastern Spinebill
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Little Wattlebird
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater



(Bassian Thrush at the Botanic Gardens - photo by Brett Davis)

What Bird is This #1?

This newsletter's "What Bird is This" (WBIT) is shown directly below and was seen in Australia's tropics. Please email your answers to shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au



Not many people attempted to identify our last WBIT (shown below). Was it too difficult? Was the photo not good enough? Did nobody know what it was?

First correct ID came from Chris MacGregor who said it is a juvenile Blackbird.

Does anyone disagree?



Bird Fact?

Young birds are hatchlings if they have natal down; they are juveniles if wearing their first suit of feathers; they are immatures after their first moult (and often look like adult females); and they are adults when sexually mature and fully decked out in adult plumage.

My Intro to Birding and Volunteer Work

by Robyn McTavish

I would never have predicted that my retirement would involve volunteering for the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program and becoming a member of MUDbirders. I certainly didn't imagine I would be scouring the beach in search of Hooded Plover tracks and scrapes, nor did I think I would be taking photographs of birds, most of which I could not identify ... that was until 2012.

One mid November afternoon as I took my usual walk along Murramarang Beach I spotted a pair of Hooded Plovers. I don't recall how I knew they were Hooded Plovers but I was certain I was right so I took off home to get my camera. Fortunately, the birds had decided to stick around, enabling me to spend the next twenty minutes observing them through a camera lens. Knowing this was somehow an important "discovery" I contacted a friend who works for NPWS Ulladulla asking for signs to go up as soon as possible.



(Photo by Duade Paton)

On my return after a weekend away I was pleased to see a rope fence and signs in place. A few days later I returned to the beach for my daily walk and there I met Sybille. She was sitting patiently watching the Hoodies. I could see she was wearing some kind of "uniform" complete with hat which encouraged me to ask about what she was doing and how could I join in. Sybille passed on my enquiry which led to my very own hat, shirt and training as a South Coast Shorebird Recovery Volunteer.

I went from casual bird watcher to a fully fledged volunteer over a period of months. It wasn't long before I

met Robin Berkhout, Marg Hamon, Maggie Mance, Jodie Dunn and an amazing array of people, who had between them an enormous amount of knowledge about birds. I was keen to "pick their brains" in order to get as much information as possible. Soon after volunteering I became a member of the MUDbirders.

I was hooked, excursions to the forest, lake, seaside and farm paddock followed where I listened and watched in awe as people identified a bird from just a call, a silhouette or feather pattern. Amazing, how do they do it - I thought. I'll never be able to do that! Well I can say I have developed bird language, bird watching and listening skills and a bird photography "bug".

Since November 2012 I have acquired new binoculars, a bird app, new and second hand books about birds and a fantastic camera and a "uniform"! I certainly can't brag about my bird knowledge as it is still minimal but I can look back and see how far I have come, thanks to the people I have met. I am fortunate to have met a community of passionate environmentalists, willing to share their knowledge.

I now feel confident to impart what I know to others when volunteering with the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program. What I don't know, I try to find out because I'm a lifelong learner and I never want to stop learning. I know now that I don't have to know everything there is to know about birds I just have to be willing to learn, then follow up by giving some time to the program when and where I can.

Who would have thought I'd be taking photographs of birds and describing the behaviour of Hooded Plovers to young

children and adults visiting the beach? NOT ME! I love it and it makes me feel good too!

Editor's Note:

If you would like to become a volunteer, contact -
Jodie Dunn - Shorebird Recovery Coordinator (Mon-Thurs)
Ph: 4454-9516
Mob: 0427 012 960
Email: jodie.dunn@environment.nsw.gov.au

Osprey Breeding Struggle in the Basin

by Chris Grounds

The Osprey is a listed Threatened Species in NSW. It is regarded as "Vulnerable" because it faces a 'high risk of extinction in the medium term future'.

In 2013 local Birdlife members were generally aware of the Osprey pair developing a nest on the Basin View transmitter tower.

Subsequent to observations and photography in August 2013 when the birds were actively building the nest (see photo below) the Basin experienced two major wind storms with gusts to 100kph plus. This appeared to disintegrate the high perched nest and the Osprey disappeared from the very exposed nest site.

A local landholder who has maintained observations of the Ospreys confirmed that no chicks were raised last year. They may have nested somewhere else last season and perhaps successfully though this is speculation.

The Osprey returned this year (2014) and reconstructed a nest on the transmitter tower again. The nest was observed to be active until early July (see photo) at which point a sequence of severe wind episodes, one with gusts of 100kph, were experienced. One bird was observed working on the nest on the Monday, the first and worst day of the severe wind weather.

However, no birds were sighted in continuing observations and it appears the Osprey attempts to nest at the site in 2014 have suffered the same fate as 2013. Again, local landholder observation confirms that the nest has been abandoned. Osprey research confirms severe wind episodes as a hazard to Osprey nesting.

The other issue which arises for the Osprey is the electromagnetic radiation arising from the transmitter. The birds' nest, as can be seen in the photograph, is right on the transmitter and the aerial at the summit. There are clear warnings – to people at least - about radiation issues with the transmitter.

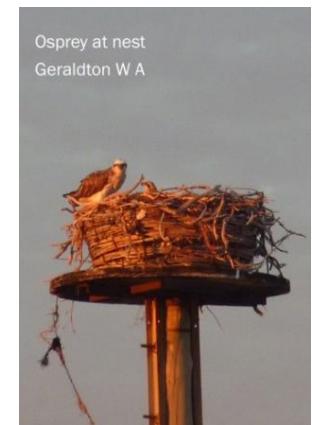
Some research suggests eggs and offspring could be affected to the degree that nesting and reproduction could be unsuccessful.



Two unsuccessful Osprey breeding seasons at a site for a 'Vulnerable' species is not good news.

In other locations around Australia nest site structures for Osprey have been constructed. One of the most interesting is at the rear of Geraldton Beach in W.A. where a pole with a platform with cane basket was happily occupied by Osprey. [See Photo of Sept.2010]

Shoalhaven City Council report they "*operate a number of communication towers throughout the city and Ospreys find these towers an excellent vantage point, sometimes*



nesting on them. In order to ensure the safety of the Ospreys and the technicians working on the towers, [metal] baskets have been provided for the birds to nest in away from antennas and other equipment. One tower in Ulladulla has been fitted with a webcam, providing real-time pictures of one of the baskets and any visiting birds."



Atlassing and Databases

by Marg Hamon

Background

The first Birds Australia Atlas was conducted between 1977 and 1981. It collected data in one degree grids. When it was decided to run another Atlas project nearly 20 years later, BA decided to refine the methodology to better enable a relation between species and habitat to be established, with the use of precise coordinates of latitude and longitude for recording the occurrence of each species. This New Atlas commenced in 1998, and is continuing today. Originally using paper record sheets, today entries can also be made online. The New Atlas Database contains more than 10 million records, supplied by more than 7,000 atlassers.

To support atlassers and the Atlas database, BLA developed birddata.com.au, where atlassers can enter data and gain feedback about their surveys and sites.

Aims of the Atlas Project

- Collect and analyze data on the distribution and relative abundance of Australia's bird species
- Compare the distribution and abundance of bird species to the previous Atlas
- Collect information on rare and threatened species
- Involve the community in the conservation and monitoring of birds
- Establish a foundation set of sites to monitor birds, including Ramsar sites and selected sites in a Directory of Important Wetlands
- Examine regional and seasonal variation in the occurrence of bird species

Types of Atlas search

2-ha Search

- This is the preferred method
- Search a 2 hectare area for 20 minutes.
- BLA likes you to count birds
- Survey your selected area at least once each season for at least a year.

Area Search

- Within 500m or 5km of a central point
- search for at least 20 minutes, but not more than one week.
- list birds - you don't have to count

Incidental Search

- Records of rare, uncommon or unusual species, one-off sightings.
- Specific groups of birds, e.g. waders

Fixed-route monitoring

- Choose a survey route, a repeated series of activities in time and space
- Survey that route with roughly the same effort at least once a month
- Identify site on Birdata as a long-term monitoring route
- Enter information about location, timing and effort that someone else can do the same thing
- Enter some basic habitat data, and make notes on substantive changes to the site, if any

Group Sites

Another innovation is the creation of Group Sites, which aim to create a network of community sites with clear instructions which atlassers can visit and do repeat surveys. For these sites you can use whichever survey method is most applicable, and this will be indicated when you look up the site. You can find these sites by visiting Birdata. Look along the top of the home page to find it. The only group sites near us are at Lake Wollumboola, which has three.

General Comments

Many people avoid atlassing because they worry they might not recognize all the birds. The rule of thumb here is, if you're not sure, don't include it. Working out the 2ha isn't all that difficult either. A typical 2-ha site would be 200m x 100m. You should be able to walk through a 2ha site counting birds comfortably in 20 minutes.

Don't forget that scientifically, if there are no birds at a site, it's just as significant as if there are lots. With the 2ha sites, BLA prefers it to be all the same type of habitat. It doesn't have to be a birding "hotspot" either. An ordinary patch of bush is just fine.

You need to register to become an atlasser, and you'll be given a number to use when logging in. If you decide to do any long-term monitoring of a site BLA like you to fill in a Habitat Form, and do a new one if the site changes (cleared, burnt etc). It's not compulsory though. These days to find the position coordinates there are lots of GPS devices and apps, and if you don't have one you can use Google Earth. It's set to the correct datum, and gives latitude and longitude in degrees minutes and seconds the way the Atlas likes it.

Here are some examples of sites I have been surveying:

Nuggan - 2-ha, eucalypt forest on top of ridge, has remained unchanged - 59 surveys, generally less than 10 species per survey - 57 species in total

Woodburn - 2-ha, pine plantation to cleared wasteland to revegetation site - 57 surveys, also generally less than 10 species per survey - 59 species in total

Evans Lane - farmland with forest-lined creek - 500m Area survey taking ~ 2 hours - 31 surveys, around 16 - 25 species per survey - 89 species in total

Who uses it all?

Data in the form of species records or a species list is available to commercial and government organisations for a fee. Not-for-profit conservation organisations receive it at a reduced rate, or free of charge. It is a great resource for university researchers.

Some of the uses to which the Atlas data is put:

- Monitoring Birds in the Rangelands
- Monitoring Revegetation
- Use by environmental consultants
- Assessing Fragmented Landscapes & Habitat neighbourhood modelling
- Monitoring Birds for Gluepot Reserve
- Important Bird Areas of Australia (IBAs)
- Oil Spill Response Atlas
- Use in Local Government
- Development of Composite Bird Indices

A nest record scheme also runs in conjunction with the New Atlas.

Other Atlas schemes

More recently two other major schemes have been developed. One of them, Eremaea, long known for its Birdline sightings of significant birds, this year joined with eBird, a global database of bird sightings run by Cornell University in the US.

Differences between the BLA Atlas and eBird?

eBird's main focus is on recreational birding, often carried out while travelling. The BLA Atlas is more focused on structured surveys, using prescribed methods, such as the 2-ha survey, and doing repeat surveys at defined sites. All data entered through eBird will be passed on to the Atlas.

Useful websites

General information about BirdLife Australia Atlas project:
www.birdlife.org.au/projects/atlas-and-birdata

Birdata website (for recording surveys)
www.birdata.com.au

Check along the top for "Group Sites" to find out about Lake Wollumboola

Eremaea/eBird
www.ebird.org

Birdline - a site where unusual sightings can be reported.
www.eremaea.com

Nominative Determinism

Nominative Determinism is the theory that a person's name can have a significant role in determining key aspects of their life. The term had its origin in the 'Feedback' column of the British popular science magazine New Scientist in 1994, which reported a number of books whose author's names were particularly apt.

They mentioned "Pole Positions - The Polar Regions and the Future of the Planet" by Daniel Snowman, as well as "London Under London - A Subterranean Guide" by Richard Trench. They also cited an article on incontinence in the British Journal of Urology by Splatt and Weedon!

Carl Jung - the Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist - was a firm believer in nominative determinism, writing in a scientific paper in 1952 about Herr Feist (Mr Stout) who was the food minister, Herr Rosstäscher (Mr Horse Trader) who was a lawyer, and Herr Kalberer (Mr Calver) who was an obstetrician.

So is nominative determinism relevant to birdwatchers? Well, consider this - George Swann is the owner and guide of Kimberley Birding - [Kimberley Birdwatching](#) - and Jan Sparrow once worked at the Broome Bird Observatory.

And how about BirdLife Shoalhaven members - have any of us become birdwatchers because of our names? Stan Brown does not think so, but he swears that heaps of birds were named after him, including Brown Honeyeater, Brown Goshawk, Brown Treecreeper, Brown Gerygone, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Brown Falcon and Brown Songlark!

We have a couple of other Browns in the branch who might disagree!

Similarly, we have members named Black, Gray, Green and Rose! We also have members with names of Bob and Carol, as well as Thorne. For those of you who remember "Two Little Dickybirds Sitting on a Wall", we also have half a dozen Peters and a couple of Pauls.

In addition, we have some Bills, a Jenny or two, and a handful of Robins. And let us not forget Charles Dove!



Brown Thornbill (photo by Sue Tolley)

Birdwatching Outings

BirdLife Shoalhaven members may attend the outings of the Shoalhaven Birders and the Milton Ulladulla District Birdwatchers.

Shoalhaven Birders

Shoalhaven Birders hold regular birdwatching outings, usually on every third Sunday of the month meeting at 8.30am. Upcoming birdwatching events are as follows :

August 17

Fitzroy Falls and East Rim – meet at the Kangaroo Valley Showground

August 29 to September 5

Capertee, Dunn's Swamp and Mudgee – meet on Friday August 29 at Port Macquarie Homestead

Friday August 29 to Sunday August 31 at Port Macquarie Homestead in Capertee Valley, (4 bedrooms, sleeps 14, approximately \$50pp/pn.) Camping available in grounds. Two full days to bird at Dunns Swamp and Glen Davis.

Monday September 1 to Friday September 5 at Mudgee staying at Mudgee Riverside Caravan and Tourist Park (phone 02 6372 2531) - cabins and powered or unpowered sites by the river. We will visit Putta Bucca Wetlands, Avisford N.R. and Munghorn Gap.

October 19

Bangalee - meet in the car park in Illaroo Rd at northern end of Shoalhaven bridge

November 16

Conjola and Yatte Yattah - meet at the Bewong Roadhouse

December 21

Moona Moona Creek at Huskisson at 5pm - BYO picnic bbq / drink to have after a short walk

Contacts:

Barry and Susan Virtue - 4464-1389

Peter and Julie Hale - 0402 076 548

Stan and Su Brown - 4443-4828



Milton Ulladulla District Birdwatchers

BirdLife Shoalhaven members may also attend the Friday birdwatching outings of the MUD Birdwatchers club. Membership of the MUD Birdwatchers club is open to all members of the Milton Ulladulla U3A. For more information about joining MUD Birdwatchers, please email mubirdclub@gmail.com or phone Marg Hamon on 4457-1129 or Chris Shinton on 4454-5584.

Upcoming birdwatching events are :

8 August

Tabourie - meet 8am Lions Park Burrill Lake (by toilets)

Driving: 30km Time: 1 hrs Grade: Easy

Leaders: Bob Rusk 4455-2169

22 August

Warden Head - meet 8am at the lighthouse

Driving: 0 km Time: 0 hr Grade: Easy

Leader: Chris Shinton 4454-5584

5 September

Granite Falls - meet 8am back of Harry Higgs Room

Driving: 40km Time: 2.5 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Marg Hamon & Maggie Mance 4457-1129

9 September

Evening Meeting 7:30 pm at Harry Higgs Room

General Meeting

Activity: Shorebirds

19 September

Fishermans Paradise - meet 8am back of Harry Higgs Room or at 8:15am at Fishermans Paradise Boat Ramp.

Driving: 25km Time: 2.5 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Geoff Andrews 4454-3580

3 October

Day Out and picnic lunch - full day outing to Bomaderry Creek Regional Park, with a picnic lunch stop.

Meet: 8am back of Harry Higgs Room for car pooling.

Driving: 130km (210km) Time: 3 hrs Grade: Medium

Leader: Mike Jefferis 4455-5162

Note:

Driving and Time is approximate car travel from meeting point to destination and return. If any excursion is cancelled because of the weather, we will have a second attempt on the next Friday



(photo by Sue Tolley)

Sightings

Blue Rosella

A totally blue Rosella has been sighted in the Shoalhaven. If anyone knows anything about the bird - what it is, where it is, or why it is - please let us know!



Lewin's Rail

A Lewin's Rail has been sighted many times in the past couple of months near the Lions Park at Burrill Lake on the south-east side of the bridge.

There is also supposed to be one at Bangalee, west of Nowra.



(Photo by Chris Shinton)

What Bird is This #2



Some people think that the bird above is one of the exotic Macaws from South America - possibly the Scarlet Macaw. However, a close study of the image will reveal that it is not a Macaw at all.

It is in fact a naked woman, painstakingly painted and perfectly posed and photographed in order to fool simple birdwatchers like you and me.



Snippets

Binocular Repairers?

Can anyone recommend a good local binocular repairer? Several of our members have bino problems and would love to have the name of someone reliable, professional, and preferably local and inexpensive. If you use someone like that, please email shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au

Thornbills - Striated or Brown

An album of 20 photos of thornbills has been added to our Picasa Web Albums - at [BirdLife Shoalhaven Web Albums](#). Check it out to improve your ID skills, or to let us know if you disagree. Thanks to Sue Tolley for the photos!

Blackbirds

It appears that blackbirds have been sighted all over the Shoalhaven. Marg Hamon reports blackbirds around Milton and Ulladulla, and even Bawley Point, and they are regularly spotted at St Georges Basin and Nowra. Bugger!

Was JFK a birder?

Jacqueline Kennedy commissioned a woodcarver to create a carving of a Killdeer as a gift for her husband, which he displayed in the Oval Office. A Killdeer (shown below) is a shorebird that is named onomatopoeically after its call. Its scientific name is *Charadrius vociferus*, and it is related to the Double-banded Plover - *Charadrius bicinctus* - which breeds in NZ but some of which winter in Australia.



Charleston Dam at Moss Vale

For some time BirdLife Southern Highlands members and members of other birdwatching groups, have had open access to Charleston Dam at Moss Vale. This dam is on private property. Recently, the inconsiderate manner in which unknown members of the public have been accessing the property and the dam, has caused concern to the owners and has resulted in a change of policy. After consultation with Birdlife Southern Highlands, the owner has decided to restrict access to the dam. Only organised outings sanctioned by BirdLife Southern Highlands will be allowed access. If you would like to visit the dam, please contact BirdLife Southern Highlands.

Miracles of Nature

A recent program on SBS was Richard Hammond's "Miracles of Nature" which featured an Azure Kingfisher and how it hunts, dives into water and has special vision and eyes that allow it to do this. The program featured super slow motion, and a shot of nest entry was a feature of the episode. If anyone missed it they could watch it for free - on the SBS On Demand website.

Threatened Species Commissioner

The Federal Government has appointed the nation's first Threatened Species Commissioner - Gregory Andrews. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt said the new Commissioner would need "to consult, to target, and to coordinate" but he would not have any statutory powers.

About the Mission Statement

After a great deal of thought, discussion, correspondence and angst, the BirdLife Shoalhaven Mission Statement has been finalized.

It is basically exactly the same as the BirdLife Australia Mission Statement, but given our limited manpower and resources compared to the national organisation, the over-riding proviso for almost every item in the mission statement is "where possible".

For example, when the Mission Statement says that BirdLife Shoalhaven will "promote an interest and understanding of birds and their conservation in the wider community by arranging and participating in community events" - just add "**where possible**" or "if we have the resources and members have the enthusiasm to do it".

Our Mission Statement (and Vision) and branch working arrangements are shown on the following two pages ...

BirdLife Shoalhaven Mission Statement

Our vision: A bright future for Australian birds



Our mission: To give Australian birds a bright future by finding solutions to the threats they face and by inspiring action to ensure birds and their habitats flourish.

Goal 1
Improve
conservation
outcomes

- provide a local face and voice for BirdLife Australia
- provide a focus on regional and local conservation matters and advocate for the conservation of birds and their habitats
- conduct research and conservation programs and participate in national projects where possible
- support the Important Bird Areas program
- support the Beach Nesting Birds project
- support the Shorebirds 2020 project
- contribute data to the Birds Atlas
- champion local conservation causes

Goal 2
Promote
the appreciation and
understanding of birds

- encourage and support the activities of members who wish to actively participate in BirdLife Australia's programs
- promote and foster recreational bird watching
- organise outings, activities and events of interest to members
- promote an interest and understanding of birds and their conservation in the wider community by arranging and participating in community events

Goal 3
Build
a strong BirdLife Australia
and BirdLife Shoalhaven

- engage and inform all members
- grow the member and supporter base by promoting membership of BirdLife Australia
- build connections with other BirdLife branches and group

HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

- by the increase in the membership of BirdLife Shoalhaven
- by attendance at outings and talks
- by the number of events and activities undertaken

BirdLife Shoalhaven Working Arrangements

1. These working arrangements are based on the BirdLife Australia (BirdLife) Branch Working Arrangements and only cover key issues relevant to BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS).
2. These working arrangements will be reviewed by the Committee and any changes approved by the Members at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or Special General Meeting (SGM).
3. BLS must operate in accordance with the BirdLife Branch Working Arrangements.
4. Under the Constitution of BirdLife, BLS cannot have the status of a separate legal entity.
5. BLS will adopt the following values when conducting its business:
 - We encourage leadership and innovation
 - Our work is based on sound research
 - Our advice and advocacy is frank and independent
 - We are inclusive, tolerant and fair
 - We collaborate and contribute to common goals
6. All BirdLife Members who reside in the Shoalhaven Local Government area will be deemed to be members of BLS, unless they choose to opt out. BirdLife Members who reside outside the area may also register as a member of BLS.
7. No membership fees are payable to become a BLS Member.
8. BLS Members are eligible to participate in the activities of BLS, to receive communications and nominate and vote for the Executive Committee.
9. Visiting members of BirdLife from other Branches shall be eligible to attend meetings or other Branch functions but cannot nominate candidates or vote.
10. The Committee will consist of President, Secretary and Treasurer (at a minimum) and shall be elected annually at the BLS AGM.
11. Meetings of the committee will be held four times a year by whatever means it sees as appropriate.
12. The timing of the BLS AGM will be set by the Committee but not later than the end of February. The AGM will cover reports on activities of the Branch, approval of the financial report for the year ending 31 December, election of the Executive Committee for the coming year, review of the operating plan and working arrangements and any other business.
13. The Secretary shall give notice of the AGM and call for nominations to the Executive Committee at least 40 days before the AGM. Completed nomination forms may be lodged at least 28 days prior to the AGM. The Secretary must distribute the agenda and papers, including names of all Members nominated no less than 21 days prior to the AGM and include procedures for lodging proxy votes.
14. If there are insufficient numbers of nominations, nominations can be taken from any Member present at the meeting. If more than one Member has nominated for the same position, the outcome shall be determined by ballot. All proxies should be in writing and received by the Secretary at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
15. If a Committee member position becomes vacant between AGMs, the Committee may co-opt a Member to fill the vacancy.
16. The Committee shall have the authority to appoint no more than two additional persons to the Committee for a period up to the next AGM for the purpose of providing advice on a specified matter, or to fill newly created committee positions.
17. All Committee Members will hold office from one AGM to another and may be re-elected.
18. The Committee may call a SGM to discuss any urgent matter and shall be bound to upon receiving a written request signed by at least 5% of the Members or by the BirdLife Board. The meeting agenda and papers shall be given to Members no less than 14 days before the meeting.
19. Quorums for meetings shall be ten Members for AGMs and SGMs and three Members for Committee meetings.
20. The Committee will liaise with BirdLife National Office on all operational issues. The Committee must advise the National Office of the receipt of all donations and submission of proposals to fund research, conservation or education projects. A submission for reasonable Branch expenses may be submitted to the National Office. BLS will need the approval of the National Office to set up a bank account. The Treasurer will be responsible for receiving, paying and handling funds and keeping the records of BLS's finances. The annual financial accounts must be approved at the AGM and signed by the President and another Committee member, other than the Treasurer prior to submission to the National Office.
21. No Member shall receive any pecuniary interest from BLS, unless the Committee approves the reimbursement of a Member's expenses incurred in fulfilling BLS's objectives.
22. The Committee, or Members delegated by the Committee, may arrange fundraising, periodic meetings, talks, functions, birdwatching outings and campouts and other activities, for purposes that help achieve the BLS objective's, with all members allowed to attend, plus other persons approved at the discretion of the Committee.
23. All BLS materials must be produced with the BirdLife logo.
24. All correspondence on local conservation causes must be approved by a majority of the Committee.