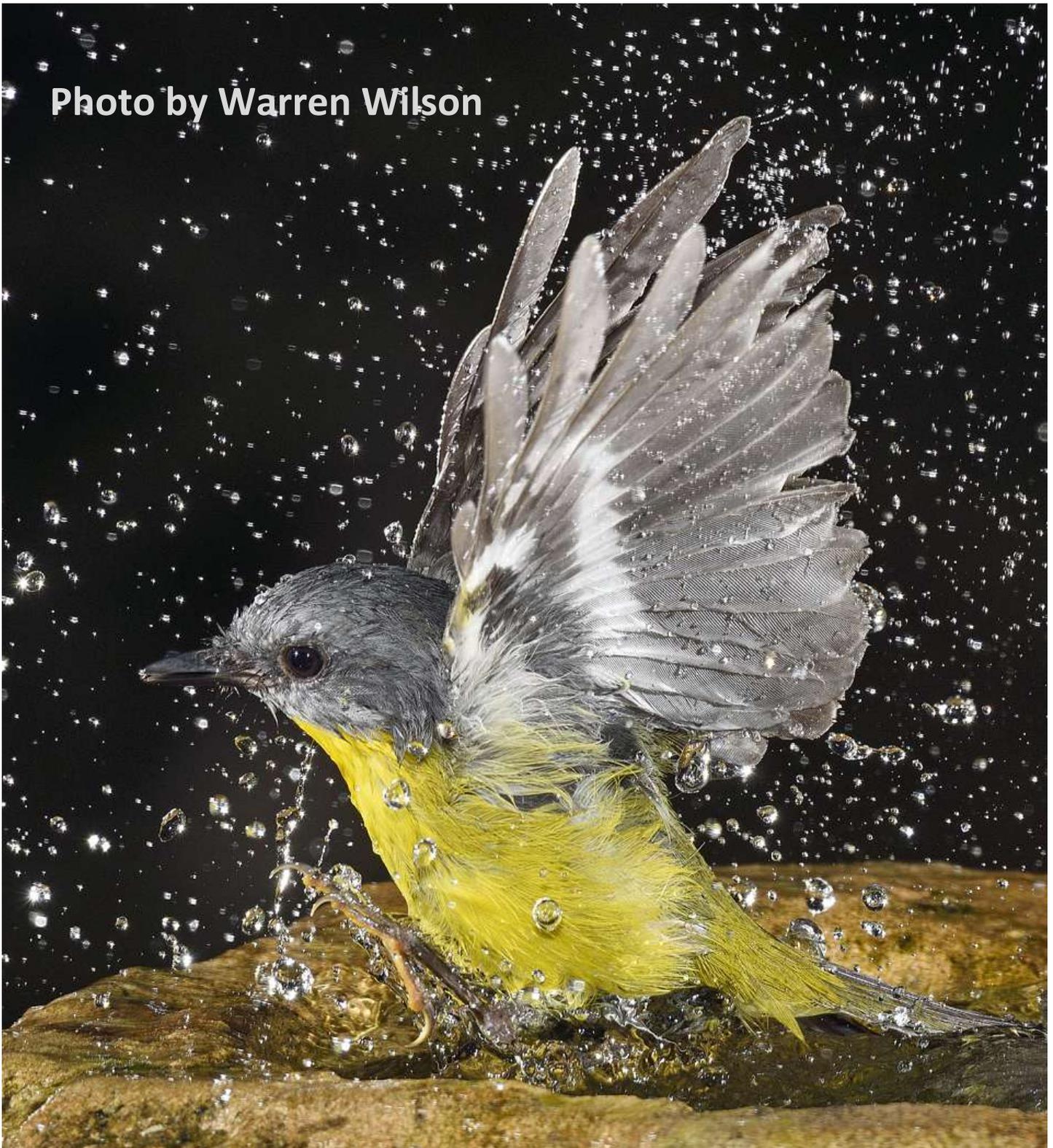


Birdlife Shoalhaven Newsletter



Winter 2017

Photo by Warren Wilson



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Photographer - Warren Wilson (see page 10)



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 them with any related photos, drawings or maps to brett@brettdavis.com.au

In addition, if you have any bird photographs you would like to share, please send them in as well.

Contributions of articles, images, suggestions, criticisms, feedback and corrections are always welcome.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the BirdLife Shoalhaven members and friends who contributed articles and photos for this newsletter. These include - Warren Wilson, Chris Grounds, Yolande Cozijn, Brett Davis and Charles Dove.

In addition, images from the following websites may have been used in this newsletter - the Bitterns in Rice project, Sea-EagleCam.org, BirdLife Australia and all of the websites mentioned in the Web Watch articles.

Apologies to those contributors whose text or images may not have been acknowledged. If you have not been acknowledged please let the editor know, and the error will be rectified in the next newsletter.

General 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 and BirdLife Australia accept no responsibility for any of the errors, inaccuracies or exaggerations that may be contained within articles in this newsletter.

Also, the views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor, individual contributors and branch members. They may not be the views of BirdLife Shoalhaven or BirdLife Australia.

Editorial Disclaimer

The views expressed in any Editorials in this newsletter are **almost certainly not** the views of BirdLife Shoalhaven or BirdLife Australia.

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.

Cover Photo

This season's cover photo of an Eastern Yellow Robin was taken by featured photographer Warren Wilson - see his interview on page 10 - and photos of Warren (left).

President's Report

- by Rob Dunn

Advocacy remains a vital cornerstone of our work. This is invariably reactive and often comes out of the blue. This was the case with the Worroing Heights Precinct Plan issued by Council for comment in late July with what is now the standard four-week deadline (see page 27 for more information). The threat to the native vegetation on this 67ha site, only came to our attention weeks after saving 11ha of land just on the other side of the Vincentia Marketplace roundabout. Fighting for the conservation of birds and native habitat seems to be a constant game of swings and roundabouts for everyone!

What can help to get our voice heard is raising awareness of BirdLife Shoalhaven as a leading player in conservation on the South Coast. Films, talks, events, walks and media are part of this.

In May we helped host the film "Cultivating Murder" about the murder of Glen Turner, who was gunned down near Moree while investigating illegal land clearing. In October we will be involved in bringing "Secrets at Sunrise" to Huskisson which tells the story of work to save the Western Ground Parrot from extinction (see page 8 for more information).



Earlier this month BirdLife Shoalhaven hosted a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) workshop which was attended by a number of our members as well as people from bird clubs in the Southern Highlands, Illawarra, Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley, Central Coast, Canberra and Sydney. What we learnt about the KBA program, bird surveying techniques, the new BirdLife Australia Birddata app, as well as links with new clubs, will certainly help us into the future (see page 23 for more information).

We have not held another evening talk since the one focussed on connectivity conservation in April, given the effort needed to host the KBA workshop. However, we will be picking up on this in November with a presentation by Judy Harrington on the White-bellied Sea-eagle and the EagleCAM project at Sydney Olympic Park (see page 9 for more information).



Attending community events is another way to reach the general public. We had a stall in June at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum World Environment Day. These events do need volunteers to run and if you would like to get involved in the future please let me know. I would stress you do not need to be a top birder to take this on. If I can do it, anyone can! Enthusiasm and a willingness to talk birds is all you need!



Talking about enthusiasm and willingness, Yolande Cozijn has continued to give talks on the Birds in Backyard program to local community groups and has put articles in a local community magazine. We can all assist with the program by promoting the Australian Backyard Bird Count at the end of October. Details appear later in this newsletter on page 31.

A summary of the NPWS Shorebird Recovery Program annual report is in this newsletter. Many of you are involved in this long-term monitoring program and it was great for me to meet some of the volunteers from further south at the annual get-together in Mystery Bay in April.



The work of NPWS's Aimee Harris and Jodie Dunn has been fundamental in the program's success and keep so many volunteers trained, informed and involved. It is vital work that BirdLife Shoalhaven will continue to promote and champion. See page 18 for the NPWS report.

All this work and activities helps keep bird conservation in the front of peoples' minds. But perhaps a most significant move forward in recent times was the production of the new Shoalhaven Bird Walks brochure.



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This started in February when Mike Jefferis, from our Committee, and I met with Council's Tourism team and put the idea to them that the Shoalhaven is a Mecca for birders and it was a missed opportunity if they did not promote birdwatching walks. To have them agree, take our advice on the birds and the walks, come up with a great design and then meet all the costs within only five months took us all by surprise and is an amazing contribution by Shoalhaven Council to bird conservation.

It was really pleasing to hear Mayor Amanda Findley open the KBA Workshop, by reminding us that as well as protecting nature's hotspots, we also need to maintain a focus on more common birds, and she is keen to raise awareness of backyard birds in the Shoalhaven.

The Bundanon Trust's Siteworks annual spring event on 23 September is called THE BIRDS & THE BEES. The event promises to bring scientists, artists and community voices together to share knowledge and ideas for nature conservation. There will be activities for the novice and experienced, young and not so young.

Two of the main speakers are profiled below.

Michelle Hall

Michelle Hall studied at Australian National University (1992), where she completed an Honours project on the function of duetting in Australian magpie-larks. She then moved to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the USA to work on banded wrens in Costa Rica. She currently works at the University of Melbourne studying individual differences in the behaviour of superb fairy-wrens. She has done research on female bird song and lyre birds.



Gráinne Cleary

Gráinne Cleary is a wildlife ecologist with an interest in citizen science to gain the best outcomes for urban wildlife. She is especially interested in how people interact with wildlife in their own back gardens and is leading the Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study.

For more information on what will be on offer at Siteworks, plus details of entry times and entry fees go to <https://bundanon.com.au/whats-on/siteworks-2017/>



Conservation Officer Report

- by Chris Grounds

As we leave the LATE COOL season and with daily sunshine around the critical 10.5 hours it is time again to look forward to the great incoming migrations from various points north.

The transition is early this year as it has been the hottest and sunniest July on record.

The critically endangered Eastern Curlew has already been sighted at Myola Spit but the sole example may have simply "over-wintered".

The next **shorebird nesting season** is close at hand. BLS has prepared and included a summary in this newsletter of the 2016-17 NPWS Report by program coordinator Jodi Dunn. All the program volunteers will have received the full report. As is the case with such matters there is good news and bad news, but it is all interesting - and wouldn't it be great to be able to rid our environment of foxes?

National Parks Challenge

BLS members would be more than aware of the national parks and nature reserves in the Shoalhaven and that the four Key Biodiversity Areas found in the Shoalhaven are all based around such parks and reserves.

Unfortunately, the current state government is in the throes of gutting funding, staffing and administration in an unfortunate restructuring and debasing of the National Parks service - and all this in the year of the 50th Anniversary of NPWS!

Thirteen state NPWS regions and the associated Directors were recently reduced to eight.

Further cuts are being extended to Area Managers, Rangers numbers are being reduced by 25%, and the qualification level for new staff downgraded. Fewer people doing more work over larger areas is the recipe - and the environment will bear the cost.



Comerong Island Nature reserve

All of this will have a major impact on the Parks Service. If we think of the repository of habitat and species that Parks and reserves represent in the Shoalhaven and the link to Key Biodiversity Areas, it becomes a little frightening.

The **Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc.** has a new and impressive website, which was launched recently by Frances Bray. It is very user friendly and interactive - see www.wollumboola.org.au



A New KBA perhaps?

The BLS Committee has adopted a proposal to investigate the possibility of the **Shoalhaven Heads** coastal area being accepted as a **Key Biodiversity Area**. BLS members would be more than aware of what a great birding site this area is, especially the tidal delta and shoals.

The proposal involves an area that includes Seven Mile Beach National Park, which also comprises some of the Coomonderry Swamp, Shoalhaven Heads, the estuary to Pig Island and of course the Comerong Nature Reserve. A discussion paper was prepared for the committee to consider the proposal.



A great deal of research, monitoring, assessment and report writing work has gone into this area from people such as NPWS, CSIRO and environmental consultants, including major shorebird species monitoring.

It would be fair to say that the profiling provided in the discussion paper presented impressive testimony to the biodiversity of this area. The record of threatened species birds alone speaks strongly to the natural biodiversity value of the area with the Australasian Bitterns in Coomonderry Swamp being an exemplar species with Commonwealth "endangered" status.

The criteria for listing as a KBA are extensive, as they should be, but it is also clear from advice BLS has received from the KBA coordinator with BLA that the attempt to list will not be a short and direct path.

BLS will be presenting a talk to the Local Land Services conference at Shoalhaven Heads in September and this should be an excellent chance to raise awareness of the environmental value of this area.

As well, BLS has hosted a major KBA Conference at St Georges Basin in early August - see page 23.

TAFE Land Conserved

The "TAFE Land" (High School block) episode of May has come and gone with the 11.2 ha block next to Vincentia High being acquired by the Office of Environment and Heritage for inclusion in the Jervis Bay National Park.



The land is part of the Jervis Bay Key Biodiversity Area, which was originally declared on the basis of the Eastern Bristlebird as the "trigger species". Our treasurer Karen Davis is the BLA Guardian for this KBA.

The Heritage Estate Community Network was partnered by BLS and the Jervis Bay Regional Alliance in a very concentrated and productive campaign.

The partnership of these three local conservation organizations was able to bring some considerable pressure to bear on Shelley Hancock and the responsible Minister - Gabrielle Upton - and play a quite substantial role in this conservation victory.

It was also very important that through our local organizations we were able to tap into some really high level influence at both a state and national level.

Shoalhaven Council recently signed over 81 lots in the Heritage Estate to the NPWS that they had acquired from unpaid rates. Purchase of the remaining lots by the Foundation NPW continues, with a December sunset clause part of the schedule.

All four available estates east of The Wool Road intersection have now come into tenure which ensures inclusion in JBNP and enhances the biodiversity security of Booderee National Park.

A Threatened Species Sample

The historic Basin View nest of the vulnerable Eastern Osprey has been a twisted story this year. The male of the prior nesting pair was not sighted at all from late April to late June though the hen "Crissy" was at the nest at all times, keeping it refurbished and in good order. Her intentions were clear but thwarted!

An aerial monitoring in late May of the nest by BLS-CO with NPWS and NSW Fisheries revealed an empty nest - see the amazing drone photo on the next page ...

Then the social order was restored with what is believed to be a new male "Nuboy" coming to replace the missing "FiFo", which seemed to agree totally with "Crissy" who had become distressed and agitated in her calling but is now much more settled on the nest. It appears that a very late nesting is proceeding.

The nest has also survived a "gang" attack by nine Australian Ravens. Crissy dealt with this by refusing to leave the nest in the absence of Nuboy and bunkering down. It worked!

An audit of the species data in the Atlas of Living Australia shows 80 recorded Osprey sightings on the Shoalhaven Coast over more than four decades. This includes Birdata (BLA) records, which transfer over to the CSIRO database and are actually a major part of the records for this species.

Only five of these records were for two birds and only one for the successful Basin View nesting.

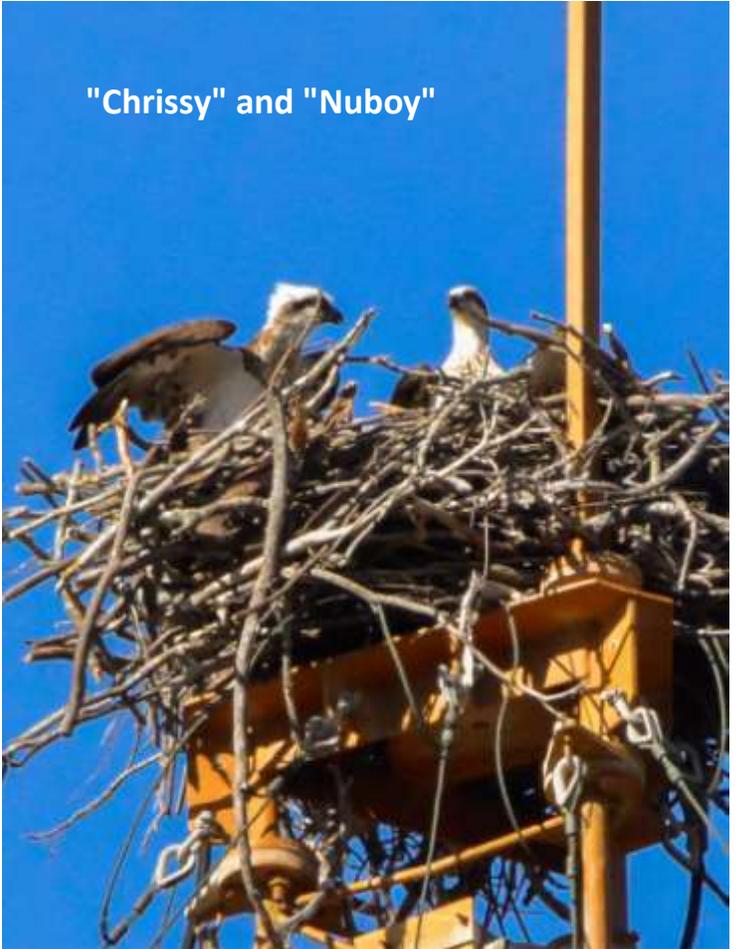
The numbers and nesting records on the south coast suggest the Eastern Osprey is more than just "vulnerable" in this part of NSW.



Drone photo of empty nest



"Nuboy"



"Chrissy" and "Nuboy"



In the far-flung reaches of Western Australia lives an intriguing bird so critically endangered that there are less than 150 estimated remaining in the world. The Western Ground Parrot clings to life in a tiny pocket of one of the most remote and spectacular corners of the globe, and faces many hurdles if it's to survive the next decade.

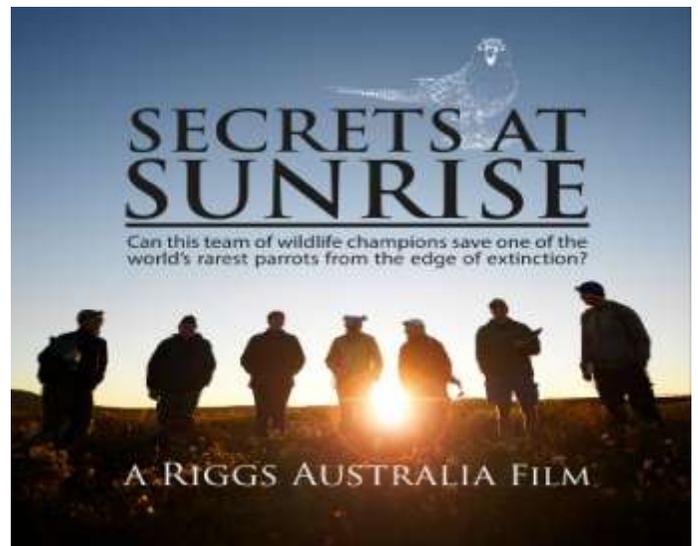
In 2015 devastating wildfires ripped through the bird's last remaining stronghold in the wild, destroying 90% of their habitat. In the aftermath, can anything prevent the extinction of this extraordinary parrot?

There is some hope. Two dynamic teams of dedicated scientists and volunteers are battling to restore the bird's numbers. One team from the Department of Parks and Wildlife are working in the field to protect the wild population, tracking numbers and controlling predation, while the second team at Perth Zoo are trying to establish a captive breeding program using inventive tactics with limited numbers.

Filmed entirely in Western Australia, this documentary tells the story of a team of conservation experts and dedicated volunteers working together to save one of the world's rarest birds - the Western Ground Parrot.

Western Australian filmmaker Jennene Riggs spent three years following the teams from the remote Cape Arid National Park - a near-pristine wilderness where the only known population of the critically endangered parrot was almost wiped out by the fires - to Perth Zoo where attempts are under way to breed the birds in captivity.

The film captures the challenges of working in remote environments trying to save a cryptic bird which wasn't photographed in the wild until 2004; an enigmatic parrot that chooses to live on the ground, generally only making its presence known when it calls at dawn and dusk.



BirdLife Shoalhaven treasurer Karen Davis put the film's producer in touch with **Huskisson Pictures**, resulting in a special screening of the film at **6pm on Thursday, 5th October**.

Jennene Riggs will be present at the screening and there will be a Q&A session after the film. Check out these links to the website and trailer for the film - [Secrets at Sunrise](#) and [3:27 promotional video](#) ...

Judy Harrington and EagleCAM

The next talk night in the ongoing series organized by BirdLife Shoalhaven is "EagleCAM - keeping an eye on our nest" - at the St Georges Basin Community Health Centre at 7:30pm on Monday 13th November.

Established in 2009, EagleCAM is a live remote internet feed operating out of the BirdLife Discovery Centre in the Newington Armory at Sydney Olympic Park close, to the Parramatta River. EagleCAM was started and funded by a small group of BirdLife Australia volunteers, who continue to develop and operate the technology that brings the Sea-Eagles to your screen. The website has now had over 4.5 million "hits".

Our special guest presenter will be Judy Harrington, a committee member of BirdLife NSW who has been watching the Sea-Eagles for many years, both as a volunteer and in her work as a ranger for the Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

The White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* is a fairly common sight along the coasts and inland rivers of Australia, as well as further afield. However, little is in fact known about their complete breeding cycle from nest building to fledging.

The current pair of Parramatta River Sea-Eagles is often seen during the day on their prominent mangrove perch, loafing or feeding on a gull, mullet or other fish from the wetlands. They may also be seen soaring overhead on up-swept wings.

Their nest is hidden high in a Scribbly Gum in the Newington Nature Reserve. Each year their nest has been monitored and valuable observations made.



Several years of watching the Parramatta River White-bellied Sea-Eagles at their nest has given us many insights into their breeding behaviour. Life in the city is hard for birds and there are many hazards facing these beautiful raptors. Watching their intimate behaviour has increased our knowledge, as well as directly involving many enthusiasts from all over the world.

As well as the EagleCAM story, Judy will talk about the Sea-Eagles ecology and its current status as an iconic bird in the Shoalhaven.



Warren Wilson - Photographer

- an interview with BLS

Warren Wilson lives on a semi-rural property in the Shoalhaven, with planted native gardens around his house to attract native birds, but with most of the property left in its natural bush state. Mobility problems have confined the bulk of Warren's photography to images taken around his house from bird hides, and wildlife images mostly taken from safari vehicles in Africa.

Warren has headlined solo exhibitions at venues on the NSW South Coast and in Sydney, and his work has been featured at many art galleries and museums. He has won international and local photographic competitions and his work is held in corporate and private collections in Australia, Asia and Europe. His images have featured in newspapers, magazines, calendars, children's books and at many photographic festivals.

BLS: What motivated you to become a photographer and why the focus on birds?

WW: I have always had an interest in photography, and not being an artist, taking photographs for me was the way to go. And I have always loved wildlife, so my bird photography has become a major part of my wildlife photography. I had a long and very busy career and really didn't start taking a lot of photos until after I retired. And because of my mobility problems I can't walk around in the bush carrying a lot of heavy camera gear, so I have had to have adopt a completely different approach.

BLS: What equipment do you use and why?

WW: I have been taking photos for over 50 years, but when the digital age came along, like a lot of people I went through a stage of denial before ultimately rising above that and buying a digital camera, and I have really never looked back! It has been a very steep learning curve, but I am kind of on top of it now.

I still have the first SLR film camera that I bought in 1969 - a Minolta SRT101 - which was right up there with the best cameras of the day, and it is still in perfect working order - but these days it is just a curiosity. In the day, Nikon was the camera of choice. When I served in the military in Malaysia and Vietnam, any photo journalist that I saw always had a Nikon, so when I bought a digital camera that is what I went for. I still use Nikons, because once you invest in a system you have a lot of money tied up in it, and there is no real need to change to something else because all the top brands these days produce extraordinarily good cameras.

BLS: What is your favorite lens for wildlife photography - the one you use most often?

WW: My favourite lens for wildlife photography used to be a 200-400 Nikon F4 zoom that was too heavy to carry around but it was great for using out of safari vehicle. Then my wife bought me the very latest Nikon 500mm F4 lens which is a superb birding lens. I have attached it to a Nikon D500 camera which has a crop factor of 1.53 which effectively turns the 500mm into a 760mm lens. It is a stunning combination!



BLS: So you don't use a full frame camera?

WW: Yes I do - I have a Nikon D810 full frame camera and I use it for bigger birds that are reasonably close. I have another stunning Nikon lens attached to it - a 300mm F2.8 - which is another wonderful combination. The main advantage of the D500 though, is the frame rate - up to 10 frames per second - and I have added a superfast card to the camera which means the frame rate can be maintained. The D810 frame rate is "only" 5 or 6 frames per second - the D810 feels like a truck, the D500 feels like a sports car!





BLS: How do you get close to the birds?

WW: I don't try to get close to the birds, I try to get the birds close to me. I specialize in sitting with my camera in a portable, pop-up bird hide which I make semi-permanent in my yard, and which I have placed to get the best light. I make use of the native gardens my wife and I have planted, as well as strategically placed bird baths, and I set the bird hide up adjacent to them. The little birds come to the blossoms and the water.

BLS: Do you use flash?

WW: Extensively! I have 4 Nikon flash units, and I use all 4 simultaneously. Most of the time I use them in very low light situations - late in the afternoon - so that I have full control over the light. Flash enables me to catch some of the behaviours of the bird. I use the same setup that is commonly used overseas for hummingbird photography, so I can capture wing movements sharply. It has taken a long time for me to learn this synchronized high-speed flash photography.

I have the master flash mounted on a flash bracket close to the camera, and I set up the other three in the remote environment in different places so I can totally control both the power and the direction of the lighting.

While I am totally incapable of wandering around in the bush with a heavy camera and lens setup, I still manage to occasionally go down to the beach or a wetland area with a small, lightweight fold-up chair which I can sit on while using my camera mounted a monopod, and I sit patiently waiting for birds to come within range.

BLS: What is more important for a bird photographer - the right equipment or a good knowledge of birds?

WW: I think they are of equal importance - you can't have one and not the other. You need the right equipment, you need quality equipment, you need to know how to use it, and you need to know the subject.

For example, if you want to take a photo of a bird taking off, it helps to know that some birds first go through a little procedure - some birds will "vent" immediately before taking off, some will bob their heads, some will bend their legs to get a bit of a spring into the air. Some of the bigger birds like raptors when they take off from a branch will take off into the wind, and they will initially drop down to get some airspeed. Some of their target species will just explode straight up into the air so they can escape, or they have to run across the top of the water before they can take off. Knowing the behaviour of the bird puts me in a better position to get a good photo,

because I can anticipate what the bird or animal is going to do. I can put the bird on one side of the frame for example, because I know that the bird is going to fly into the frame, or drop down into the frame, or fly up into the frame.

BLS: What are your favourite locations for photographing birds?

WW: My favourite location is mainly governed by my condition, so I take a lot of my photos on my property, but I do enjoy going to places like Lake Wollumboola. In fact, I am in the process of designing and building a floating bird hide. I have a dam down the back where I can test the hide, and if it works I can go the Lake and try to get some of those stunning, low-level images that I am not capable of producing at the moment. I have tried crawling around in the mud, but not only is it physically difficult for me, I am also very conscious of the fact that flopping around in the mud with a brand new, \$14,000 dollar lens would not be a very smart thing to do!

My wildlife photography is mostly done on trips to Africa - I have been there ten times now - but most of that is done while sitting in a safari vehicle which is much like sitting in a bird hide - except its mobile!

What I like to capture is not what I like to call "catalogue pictures" of animals - they are a dime a dozen. I like to capture the actions and the behaviour of the animals and birds, not just a portrait. The bird has to be doing something - otherwise it is just a bird on a stick.

BLS: Do you have a "bogey" bird?

WW: I don't really have a bogey bird now, but the Eastern Whipbird was challenging. It was my bogey bird for a long time, but I did manage to get a couple of good photos of the Whipbird, through perseverance. I have managed to take "half-decent" images of all of the birds around here, and I am sure that in a lot of those cases, even though the images were taken on different days or in different seasons, they are of exactly the same bird!



BLS: Is there one special bird you love photographing the most and why?

WW: The one I photograph the most is the Superb Fairy Wren, and the reason is that I have seen the families grow up - and they are almost my little guys.



I have been able to photograph the youngsters from when they were snuggling together on one branch taking comfort from each other, and I have watched them grow up and become more independent, until they have fully grown up and become proper little birds in their own right.



BLS: What kind of tools do you use for post-processing?

WW: I use Adobe Photoshop Elements all the time. I take my photos in RAW, and lately I have tried using a Nikon program called Capture NX-D (a free application from Nikon for high-quality photofinishing of RAW images) because I reckon that nobody would know the structure of the Nikon RAW file better than Nikon themselves.

So I believe that the Nikon RAW converter must be as good as if not better than any other 3rd party product. Lately I've noticed that the Nikon RAW converter seems to do a bit better job of converting to TIFF and JPEG than that done by Photoshop or Adobe Camera RAW. And although I might just be imagining it, I think the sharpening and noise reduction tools in NX-D are marginally better as well.

Having said that, I actually do very little in the way of post-processing. I don't clone out a lot of stuff, or add things that weren't there. I do a little bit of housekeeping stuff, but I don't import things that weren't there into a photo - I am not even capable of doing that! And I don't want to be capable of doing that! Being an old film guy, I subscribe to the theory that it is much better to get the image right "in camera" so you have far less work to do in the darkroom or in Photoshop.

BLS: What do you do with your photos once they have been finalized?

WW: I don't print them unless I am going to make a poster sized image to put on my wall, and then I let the professionals do the job, but I do "share" my work on a couple of websites. One of them is an American site that I post images on regularly. It is not a bird website, but a general photography website and more of a chat site and forum, which is incredibly called "Ugly Hedgehog" (see www.uglyhedgehog.com) and a similar Australian site that I post a lot of my photos on is called "Feathers and Photos" (www.feathersandphotos.com.au). I also post to BirdLife Photography (a special interest group for BirdLife Australia members who are interested in photographing Australia's native birds, currently comprised of over 500 members) at birdlifephotography.org.au. I also sell some photos occasionally and I put some on my website - which is at www.imageupphotography.com.



What I enjoy the most is producing a really nice photo. Once that has been achieved, I tend to tire of that one and go looking for another one.

I like the process of photography, and while I like producing a really nice photo and sharing it around a bit, I quickly move on and try to do better.

BLS: What is the one thing you wish you knew when you started taking photos?

WW: That's a difficult question to answer ... I don't think there is just one thing. As equipment has got better and changed, that has required a continual learning process which I have really enjoyed. For example, the new camera that I have is going to take more learning.

Although I don't really think there is just one thing I wish I knew, I have to say that I wish I knew how much it was going to cost me! But then again, it is what I do, so what it costs it costs, so it doesn't really matter.

BLS: Any final words of advice or encouragement to someone just starting out, or wanting to improve their bird photography?

WW: Yes, I do have some advice ... there is an old saying that says "if you buy cheap - you buy twice" - so buy the very best equipment that you can possibly afford. If you are really keen to do really high quality photography, stick with fixed focal length lenses, because although the best zooms are very, very good, all of the big-time bird photographers just use one or two fixed focal length lenses - and they don't do that for no reason.

I had a 200-400 Nikon zoom and sold it at a great loss, and I also bought a 200-500 Nikon lens, and flogged it off after eight months, because they just did not have the quality. They were good - don't get me wrong - but they were just not good enough. They didn't have the quality and the resolving power to get that fine detail that I am after - in the feathers of little birds for example.

Certainly buy zooms for general photography, but if you are buying for bird photography, or for wildlife photography where fine detail is important, I believe that fixed focal length lenses are the only way to go.

Let me give you an example. I was in Africa not long ago taking photos of meerkats. Now meerkats are furry little animals that come up out of their burrows very first thing

in the morning, and they have very fine fur. And early in the morning when they haven't had time to groom themselves, they get up out of bed with a "bad hair" day, and this is what I wanted to capture in that beautiful early morning light.



I had a 28-300mm lens which is my "walk around" lens, and it was on the D810 full frame 36 megapixel camera, but I also had my 500mm lens on the D500, so I had the chance to compare the resulting images. When I blew them up on my computer screen, I could easily pick that the detail on the meerkat fur was actually better.

Almost invariably, the photographs that I post all come from the D500 with the 500mm fixed focal length lens.







Swiss Osprey

- by Chris Grounds

Yes you did read the title correctly! And yes, Switzerland is a land-locked country!

A friend of mine who is a local supporter of BirdLife Shoalhaven and a dedicated environmentalist picked up on the South Coast Osprey story to share an amazing Osprey story from a friend of his in Switzerland - Dr. Wendy Strahm - who is involved in an Osprey regional recovery program in Switzerland.

Wendy's reply to a subsequent email of enquiry and curiosity produced the following response, which outlines this story. As Wendy says:

"In central, western and southern Europe the Osprey was almost completely exterminated as a breeding species due to persecution and egg collecting. It survived in the more sparsely populated north and today is regarded as a northern species, when actually it was once common throughout Europe. In Switzerland the last breeding pair was recorded in 1914.

"Now that the species is completely protected there is no reason why it couldn't live here as there is still plentiful food and forest. However, as the species is extremely philopatric (tending to return to or remain near a particular site or area), it doesn't re-colonize it's old distribution ground which is why we are translocating chicks from healthy populations to act as a nucleus to restart the old populations. You can learn more about our project at www.ospreys.ch.

"To date we have released 30 birds (6 in 2015 as our "test" year with 4 migrating), 12 in 2016 with 11 migrating, and this year we brought in 12 birds from Germany and Norway.

The goal is to translocate at least 60 birds, as about half of Osprey chicks die, so we hope that the remainder will return to start a new population. This year so far all has gone very well, and our 12 birds are doing well. They now have about a month to imprint themselves on their new home (and not die in some stupid accident) until they migrate to Africa.

"Thanks for your interest in the project and good luck with your (south coast) birds, they are a really important flagship species for wetland and forest conservation."



South Coast Shorebird Recovery

This report has been prepared by BLS as a condensed version of the full South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program (SCSRP) report of 22 pages provided by Jodie Dunn, Coordinator NPWS Shorebird Recovery program. This abbreviated version has been prepared with Jodie's permission for reproduction in our newsletter. The many BLS members who are part of the volunteer group have received the full version.

- Chris Grounds, Conservation Officer

Overview

The SCSRP continues to protect shorebirds along the south coast - from Wollongong to Batemans Bay - with the 80-strong local volunteer base concentrating on the on-ground protection of nests and chicks, while the wider program maintains significant community education and fox control projects.

The program continues to be successful in gaining grants including the state governments **Saving Our Species**, the funding for which is contributing to predator control, education programs, nest protection equipment, volunteer gear and the Hoodie banding project.



This nesting season the breeding success of our critically endangered **Hooded Plovers** was a little down on last season with only 6 chicks fledged from the 13 breeding pairs monitored. The nesting season was very short with pairs nesting less than 3 times each and most only between October and December.

Finding a suitable nest site was difficult, with east coast lows causing significant beach erosion and many favourite nesting areas unsuitable, particularly early in the season.



Greenpatch POC
parent
visitor from
Wilson Prom.
area Victoria

The **Pied Oystercatchers** had great success this season with 21 chicks fledged from the 28 breeding pairs that were monitored around south coast lakes and estuaries. Volunteers are noticing local increases in their Pied Oystercatcher populations, a good sign of recovery for these endangered birds. Plus more volunteers are getting out and about on the lakes and reporting nesting activity.

The **Little Terns** skipped Lake Wollumboola this season but returned to Lake Conjola in good numbers, with 42 breeding pairs fledging at least 61 chicks, but possibly up to 100! A great result for the colony.

Hooded Plovers

Hooded Plover numbers on the south coast are still doing well with around 40 adult birds sighted again this season between Nowra and Batemans Bay. This is a doubling in Hoodie numbers on the south coast in the last 8 years.



Overall during the 2016/17 south coast breeding season thirteen pairs of Hoodies were monitored and incubated 27 nests containing 59 eggs. At least 15 chicks hatched out and 6 of these chicks fledged.

It was a short nesting season for the Hoodies. Overall the Hoodies were very unsettled and really gave us the run around early in the season!

Nesting sites and progress were monitored at Hammerhead on Warrain Beach, the northernmost site, Caves Beach for the second year, Bherwerre Beach, Berrara and Monument Beaches, Inyadda Beach, Conjola Spit, Narrawallee Creek Nature Reserve and Narrawallee Spit, Buckley's Beach, Bommie/Pockets/Rennies Beach, Racecourse Beach, Wairo Beach, Lake Tabourie, Bawley Point, Racecourse-Murramarang Beaches and Dawson's Beach.

Successful nests

Inyadda fledged one chick, Rennies fledged three chicks and at Lake Tabourie and Racecourse one chick fledged.

Factors in nest destruction

These include foxes and ravens - in particular at locations such as Warrain, Caves, Berrara, Monument, Buckley's-Conjola, and Racecourse-Murramarang Beaches. Storm sand (Caves), and vandalism and 4X4s at Wairo north were noted.

Some sites were under particular pressure from summer visitation and dogs, and in a few sites it was not certain what may have been responsible for predation.



The Hooded Plover Banding Project continues with most of the South Coast and many Far South Coast Hoodies now banded with a black leg flag and unique ID code.

Resightings of banded Hoodies in 2016/17, along with estimates of remaining unbanded adult numbers brings the total NSW adult population estimate up to around 80 Hoodies, an increase of 30 adults since the 2007/08 surveys.

Little Terns

Overall, it was a great season at Lake Conjola with 42 Little Tern breeding pairs incubating 55 nests containing 134 eggs. From these nests 109 chicks hatched and at least 61 chicks fledged, but possibly up to 100 fledglings for 2016/17.

The first **Little Terns** were sighted on the south coast in October with small numbers passing through Lake Wollumboola and Lake Conjola. However no birds settled at Lake Wollumboola or Shoalhaven Heads this season.

The first nest in mid-November was on the low dune and within a month there were 24 nests on the beach at the base of the dune area.

A few nests were lost or abandoned due to bad weather but in general the colony progressed well. More Little Terns joined the colony so that by December 11th there were 37 nests containing 91 eggs and the first 3 nests hatched out tiny fluffy chicks. By Christmas time the majority of nests had hatched and there were little chicks all over the nesting area, hiding in rocket bushes and chick shelters. Thanks to the intense fox control in the area the spit remained fox free for the entire Little Tern nesting season and no eggs or chicks were lost to foxes. The first chicks began to fledge in the new year.

Later fledgling counts picked up and at least 61 fledglings were observed by late January. However there was no reason why all 100 chicks did not survive.

Pied Oystercatchers

Overall during the 2016/17 nesting season, 28 pairs of Pied Oystercatchers were monitored on the south coast and incubated 38 nests containing 74 eggs. From these nests, 36 chicks hatched out and 21 fledged.

On the south coast this season a record 28 pairs of Pied Oystercatchers were monitored nesting around our coastal lakes and estuaries and on beaches.



Long standing local shorebird volunteers have reported an increase in the number of Pied Oystercatchers in their areas, hopefully indicating the beginnings of recovery for this endangered shorebird.

Nests were monitored at Gerroa, Shoalhaven Heads, Crookhaven, Beecroft Peninsula, Creswell-Greenpatch, St. Georges Basin islands, Bherwerre Beach, Sussex Inlet, Berrara Creek, Lake Conjola, Narrawallee Inlet, Burrill Lake, Island Beach (Murramarang National Park), North Durras Beach, Durras Lake entrance and Batemans Bay Marina.



Nest sites which produced fledglings were: Gerroa (2) Shoalhaven Heads /Comerong Island (3) from 3 nests, Green Island (2), Oaky Island SGB (1), Sussex Inlet (2), Berrara Creek (1) & (1), Lake Conjola (2) & (1), Narrawallee Inlet (2), Burrill lake (1) & (1) from different nests, Island Beach (1), and Batemans Bay Marina (1).

Predation appeared to be the main factor in loss of any eggs and chicks.



Sooty Oystercatchers

The south coast Sooty Oystercatcher nesting islands were not surveyed this season, due to a lack of resources and funding. However analysis of breeding pair numbers and nest/chick records from previous seasons where all 6 islands (Brush, Belowla, Wasp, Grasshopper, Tollgates and Snapper) were surveyed indicates that the population is relatively stable at around 65-70 pairs, typical of surveys conducted in 2006/07 to 2012/13.

Next season the Sooty surveys will be a priority so that the population can be tracked at least every second year.

The Local Land Services Catchment Action Plan funded a shorebird summer and school education program in 2016/17.

The summer program included shorebird education stalls at local markets, ranger nest wardening (talking to beach goers and dog walkers) and "kids activity" sessions in caravan parks.

The school education program involved shorebird workshops for Stage 3 (Yr 5/6) in south coast schools. The full day workshop involved an endangered wildlife + shorebird presentation, a scientific experiment on nest protection, small group rotations through workshops on lifecycles + food webs, shorebird quiz game and the danger run - a day in the life of a shorebird.

The shorebird recovery program was successful in gaining 3 years of funding to enhance fox control on the south coast through the Local Land Services "Realise the Potential of Wetlands" grants, though 2016/17 was the final year of this grant.

This included improving the baiting program plus extra trapping and shooting nights, and working with private landholders for better landscape scale coverage.

The shorebird recovery program was able to once again undertake a summer holiday shorebird education program, thanks to ongoing sponsorship from the Shoalhaven Holiday Haven Tourist Parks.

Over 8 event days the education team set up morning "shorebird education stalls" at beach reserves near nesting sites along the south coast, then afternoon "kids activity" sessions in the nearby Holiday Haven Parks.



Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)

- by Chris Grounds

The last BLS newsletter explained the background to the concept of KBAs. KBAs are environmental "hot spots".

The origin of these areas lies in the system of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) embraced by BirdLife Australia and its international partners since 2008.



These areas were defined on the basis of "trigger species" though these were not necessarily threatened species.

For example, the Jervis Bay KBA trigger species is the nationally endangered Eastern Bristlebird, whilst for Lake Wollumboola the Black Swan and Chestnut Teal are trigger species based on the global significance of the numbers of these birds at this site.

The IBA system was expanded to KBAs in 2016 with 95% of IBAs included immediately on the basis of the new criteria - with other IBAs to be assessed.

The move to KBAs is a critical conservation strategy for the future for birdlife at international, national and local levels.

Birds have been and will remain a critical element of the KBA identification process, but it is now possible to examine a full range of flora and fauna.

BirdLife Shoalhaven recently advocated - along with local partners - for the inclusion of the "TAFE Block" of land at Vincentia into the Jervis Bay National Park (JBNP) on the basis that it was part of the Jervis Bay KBA, and this status was part of a persuasive argument. That block will now be transferred into the JBNP as a result of these actions.

The "guardian" of the Jervis Bay KBA - Karen Davis - was able to use the same argument when advocating with the Australian Defence Force for BLS regarding the fires on Beecroft Peninsula in 2016, which threatened the Eastern Bristlebird seeded population in that area.

It is also used as one of the arguments when advocating for the conservation of Lake Wollumboola, a KBA in its own right and part of the JBNP.

It cannot escape attention that the KBAs in the Shoalhaven are very strongly associated with the NSW system of National Parks and Nature Reserves.

Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, Budderoo NP and Cambewarra Nature reserve constitute one KBA.



Jervis Bay NP is a major element of the Jervis Bay KBA as is the former Commonwealth national park - Booderee NP - now owned by the Wreck Bay community.

The KBA in the coastal corridor from Ulladulla to Merimbula involves many NPs and NRs, e.g. Meroo, Murramarang, Eurobodalla and Mimosa Rocks.

That might normally elicit a nice warm fuzzy feeling that KBAs are in good hands - but not anymore.

The state government is busily involved in a major restructuring of the National Parks and Wildlife Service which will decimate the capacity of the Service to do what we have all expected over many years.

This restructuring features fewer regions, fewer regional directors, the loss of many local managers and reduction of the number of management areas, a big reduction in the number of rangers, and future employment of "field officers" rather than rangers. Then throw into the mix a shifting of emphasis to tourism and business management away from environment.

This deliberate downgrading is occurring under the radar - and in the interests of conservation it shouldn't happen.

The connection for BirdLife is of course that this threatens the care and management of KBA environments and the capacity for genuine conservation through KBAs.

The degree to which we care about the KBA conservation strategy is inextricably linked to our care and concern for the system of state national parks and reserves and other properties.

There can be no doubt that the National Parks system is under considerable threat.

The threat has other dimensions as well, which impact on birds and their habitats.

In the south coast KBA there are areas at risk by future logging plans and this is being taken up by community conservation groups in the South East Forests alliance.

The loss of the Native Vegetation and Threatened Species legislation, replaced by the new misleadingly named "Biodiversity" legislation, has the capacity for enormous impact on bird species and habitat in all areas of NSW.

Some of the KBAs in rural NSW make our coastal KBAs look decidedly miniature. The jolt provided by the recent ABC 4 Corners program on the Murray-Darling Basin has been severe and widespread with so many KBAs involved in that catchment.

Dr. Richard Kingsford of UNSW has been on the front foot, constantly warning of the impact of misuse and mismanagement of water resources on waterbirds.

The Macquarie Marshes are a classic example. The condition of the Marshes has been compromised for decades now as the catchment has been altered with dams and irrigation development, much of it for cotton and the associated widespread clearing of the box woodlands.

The issue of feral horse damage in the Australian Alps KBA remains unresolved and this includes Kosciusko NP.



Key Biodiversity Area Workshop

The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) program is the successor and extension of BirdLife Australia's Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). KBAs are designed to expand the IBA success story to include all biodiversity, thereby strengthening the level of advocacy for protected areas.

There are 315 KBAs across Australia, containing many of the nation's threatened and vulnerable bird species. It is hoped that eventually each KBA will have a "guardian" who will monitor the condition of the KBA, assess its health, and identify threats such as habitat loss through clearing and development, fires, illegal land use and invasive species.

The guardians may also provide regular ongoing surveys of the birds in their KBA via the Birddata app, which allows easy collection of data on species and bird numbers, and enables trends in population changes to be monitored over time.

A workshop for existing and potential KBA guardians was hosted by BirdLife Shoalhaven over the first weekend in August 2017, with a series of talks describing KBAs and the Birddata app on the Saturday, and a practical morning session in the field at the Booderee Botanic Gardens on the Sunday. The Gardens are part of the Jervis Bay KBA whose key species is the Eastern Bristlebird.

Many BirdLife Shoalhaven members contributed to the success of the weekend - from hall hire, to the setup of tables and chairs, to IT - but a special mention must go to Barbara Liddle and Catherine Campbell for their work in the kitchen, providing sustenance for the 45 attendees at morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea - and cleaning up afterwards!



Pictured above at the KBA Workshop - from left to right - Chris Grounds (BLS Conservation Officer), Rob Dunn (BLS President), Amanda Findley (Shoalhaven Mayor), Golo Maurer (BirdLife Australia Key Biodiversity Area Program Manager), Joy Pegler (Lake Wollumboola KBA Guardian), Karen Davis (Jervis Bay KBA Guardian) and Frances Bray (President of the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association)



Shoalhaven Bird Walks Brochure

A new brochure called Shoalhaven Bird Walks has just been produced by Shoalhaven Council in consultation with BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS).

The walks brochure was launched by Mayor Amanda Findley at the Key Biodiversity Areas workshop in St Georges Basin over the weekend of August 5th and 6th. Amanda also officially opened the workshop.

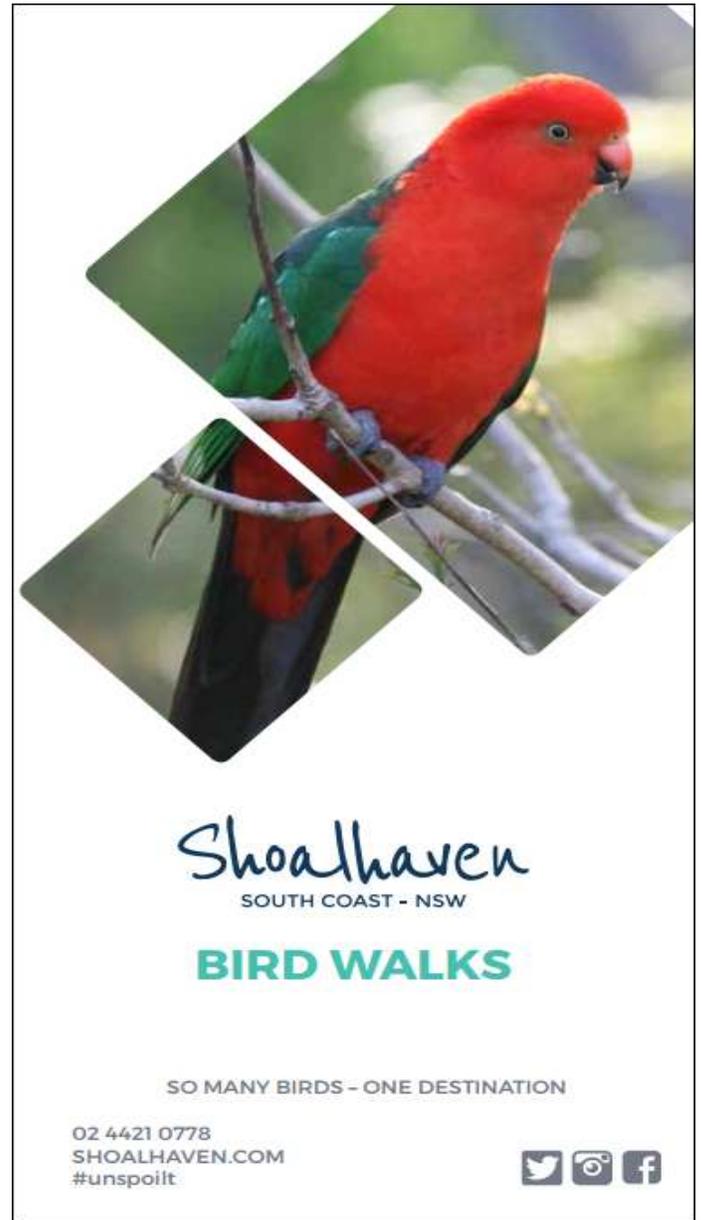
The photo at the bottom of this page shows Amanda with all the workshop participants holding copies of the new bird walks brochure, which can be picked up at the Nowra and Ulladulla Visitor Centres.

The brochure contains 50 images of birds usually found in the Shoalhaven, and details of 12 different walks showing the length of the walk along with a map, as well as birds that can be expected to be seen on the walk.

The walks listed are Bangalee Reserve, Bomaderry Creek, Shoalhaven Heads, Ben's Walk, Lake Wollumboola, Abraham's Bosom, Booderee Botanic Gardens, the Munyunga Waraga Dhugan trail at Murray's Beach, the Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve, Little Forest Plateau, Narrawallee Inlet and Burrill Lake.

BirdLife Shoalhaven played a major role in the production of the brochure by providing most of the content, from the walk descriptions right through to the excellent images - all of which were supplied by BLS member Charles Dove. Charles will be one of our featured photographers in an upcoming newsletter.

A PDF version of the brochure can be downloaded for viewing and printing by clicking the following link - www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/pdfs/shoalhavenbirdwalks.pdf



Bitterns in Rice and Milo



The Bitterns in Rice Project is a fantastic initiative about farming and wildlife conservation working together - see the website at www.bitternsinrice.com.au.

Each year as many as 500 to 1000 Australasian Bitterns visit the NSW Riverina to stay in the rice fields. Estimates of total numbers in the wild in Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia fall between 1500 and 4000.

The Bitterns in Rice project wants to show that food production and wildlife conservation can co-exist by including biodiversity in agriculture. The project has the support of many rice farmers and businesses.

Early this year a young male Australasian Bittern was discovered in a rice crop at Mayrung - a community in the central part of the Riverina about 35 kilometres north-east of Deniliquin.

The bittern was named "MILO" based on the acronym of Murray Irrigation Limited - who bought the naming rights for a bittern during a crowdfunding campaign in 2014. Milo was fitted with a GPS tracker and transmitter to help discover where the birds go after the rice fields have been harvested.

The first few bitterns tracked flew south to wetlands in Victoria, but Milo headed east past Temora and Young and then over the Great Dividing Range to the NSW east coast. He made a beeline to the Shoalhaven and the Coomonderry Swamp - the largest freshwater wetland on the NSW coast - a flight of over 500 kilometres.

Thanks to Milo and the Bitterns in Rice project, the role of coastal wetlands in providing bittern habitat between rice seasons is becoming clearer.

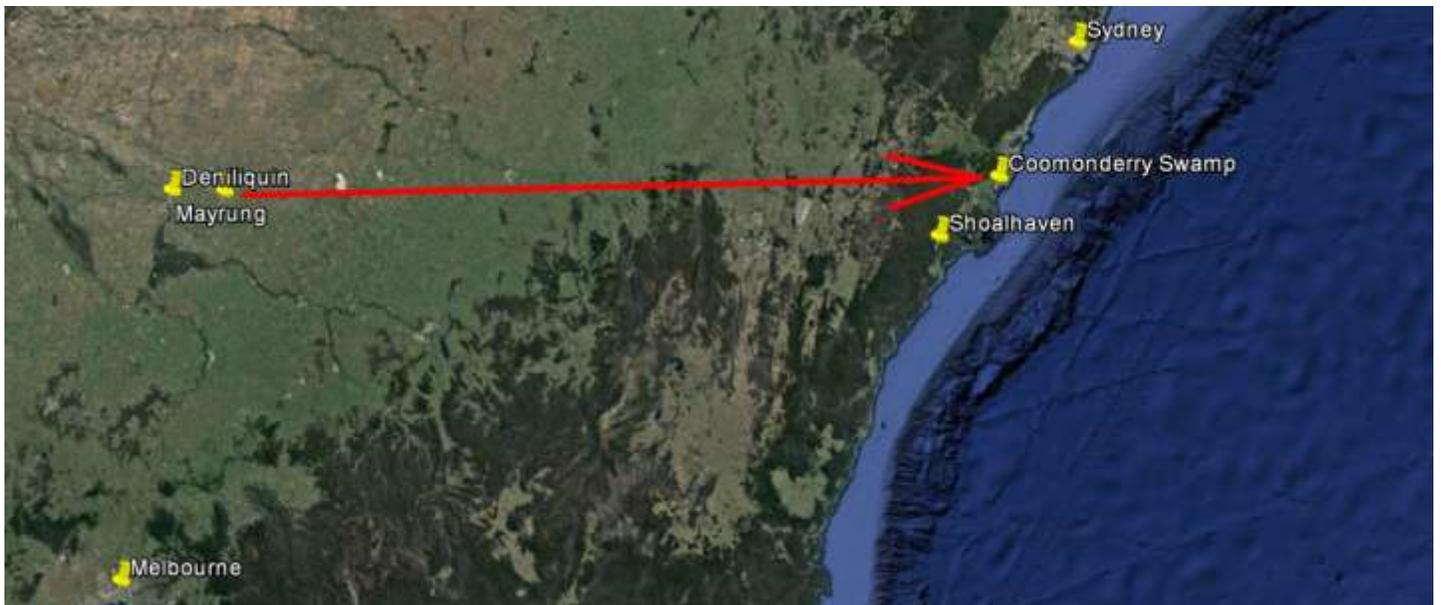




Photo credit: Chris Grounds

Join us in *Celebrating* **50** Years

BIOME Art Exhibition



nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

EXHIBITION OPENING SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2017 5PM – 7PM
OPEN DAILY 10AM – 4PM UNTIL 8 OCTOBER 2017

Biome is an art & photography exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of NPWS in 2017.

You'll see the work of local artists that reflects the diversity of our natural environment. With a special focus on national parks & reserves in the Shoalhaven.

Exhibition location:

Huskisson Gallery & Picture Framing
Shop 3 (above MainDeck Cafe),
70 Owen St, Huskisson
Call 4441 5399

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.NATIONALPARKS.NSW.GOV.AU

FYI - Worrowing Heights Precinct Plan

Council is inviting the community to provide feedback on the Worrowing Heights Precinct Plan which is on exhibition until Friday, 25 August 2017. You can view the details of the plan at <https://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/My-Council/Public-exhibition/Documents-on-exhibition>.

Council recently adopted the draft Worrowing Heights Precinct Plan and Strategic Directions Report for the purposes of community consultation. The draft Plan provides a potential strategic planning framework for the future use within the precinct at Worrowing Heights.

The precinct covers approximately 67 hectares of land to the south of Bayswood Estate and Vincentia Marketplace Shopping Centre on the corner of The Wool Road and Naval College Road, Worrowing Heights.

The Draft Report will be available for public review and comment until Friday 25 August 2017 at Council's Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra during business hours.

Feedback is invited from the community. Submissions should be made in writing to: The General Manager, Shoalhaven City Council, PO Box 42, Nowra, NSW, 2541; or via email to council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au.

Any submissions must be received in writing before 5pm Friday 25 August 2017.

Why is Council doing this?

- Council received a Planning Proposal in April 2016 at 1310 Naval College Road, Worrowing Heights.
- The proposal was to change the zoning of the site from RU2 Rural Landscape to SP3 Tourist, and increase the building height from 11m to 18m.

The increase in building height is necessary as part of the plan is for a **6 storey hotel resort** and serviced apartment buildings.

As can be seen from the map below, any development of the Worrowing Heights precinct (shown as WH on the map) effectively isolates the national parks on the south side of the Wool Road from the rest of the Shoalhaven.

The Vincentia Marketplace Shopping Centre is considered by many people to be a major eyesore and totally out of line with the "unspoilt" image that Shoalhaven Council is so keen on.

Make a submission if you oppose this plan ... or even if you support it !



Web Watch

- by Chris Grounds

The flow of interesting print media articles has continued in recent months and this newsletter presents a range that should interest with both variety and content. There is of course a strong conservation thread but that is what we want. Just copy and paste the web link to your browser to access the full article.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-09/baby-bird-discovered-in-99-million-year-old-amber/8603798?WT.mc_id=newsmail&WT.tsrc=Newsmail

Baby bird discovered in 99-million-year-old amber with feathers, colour intact.



Scientists in Myanmar have discovered what they describe as the "most complete" fossil of a baby bird ever recovered from the Cretaceous period, trapped in 99-million-year-old amber.

The hatchling, complete with feathers, claws, skin and soft tissue around the eyelid and external opening of the ear, is believed to be a species from a group of birds called enantiornitheans that went extinct about 65 million years ago.

<https://theconversation.com/wind-farms-are-hardly-the-bird-slayers-theyre-made-out-to-be-heres-why-79567>

Wind farms are hardly the bird slayers they're made out to be.



The potential to harm local birdlife is often used to oppose wind farm development. But research into how birds die shows wind farms should be the least of our concerns.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/sep/23/terns-migration-alaska>

Terns follow record warm temperatures in "shock" migration to north of Alaska.

Researchers on the north-west coast of Alaska are startled to discover Caspian terns 1,000 miles farther north than species had been previously recorded and they were all very surprised. "We get Arctic terns here but these terns are much bigger, they really stand out. I've been up here 25 years and the amount of change that has occurred in Alaska is shocking. We've been focusing on things such as the temperature and sea ice here but thinking 'oh my God what is going on . . ."



<http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2016-02-03/hot-weather-causes-bird-eggs-to-hatch-earlier-than-normal/7133702>

Hot weather causes Australian zebra finch eggs to hatch earlier than normal



Very hot weather causes the eggs of Australia's desert-dwelling zebra finch to hatch earlier than normal, research has found. This upsets the normal competition between baby birds and means some do not get enough food to survive, researchers say.

<http://theconversation.com/the-bark-side-domestic-dogs-threaten-endangered-species-worldwide-76782>

The bark side: domestic dogs threaten endangered species worldwide



The latest research reveals that the ecological "pawprint" of domestic dogs is much greater than previously realised. It has been found that dogs are implicated in the extinction of at least 11 species, including the Hawaiian Rail and the Tonga Ground Skink. Dogs are also a known or potential threat to 188 threatened species worldwide: 96 mammal, 78 bird, 22 reptile and three amphibian species. This includes 30 critically endangered species, two of which are classed as "possibly extinct".

These numbers place dogs in the number three spot - after cats and rodents - as the world's most damaging invasive mammalian predators.

<https://theconversation.com/land-clearing-isnt-just-about-trees-its-an-animal-welfare-issue-too-80398>

Land clearing isn't just about trees – it's an animal welfare issue too

Tens of millions of wild animals are killed each year by land clearing across Australia, according to research on the harm done to animals when native vegetation is removed for agricultural, urban and industrial development.



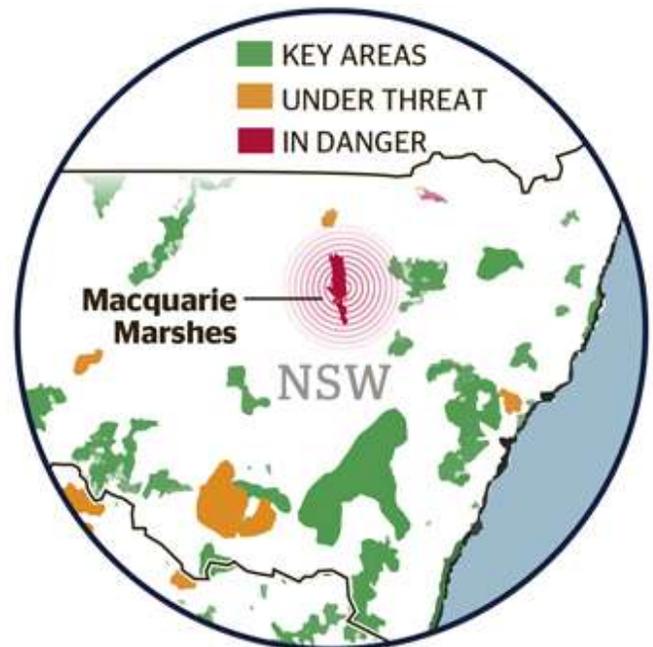
This failure to recognise animal welfare as a significant issue for decision-making about land clearing is troubling, especially given the scale of current land clearing.

In Queensland, for example, an estimated 296,000 hectares of woody vegetation was cleared in 2014-15, nearly all of which was for the purpose of converting native vegetation to pasture.

In our study we estimate that, on the basis of previous studies and current estimates of clearing rates, land clearing in Queensland and New South Wales combined kills more than 50 million birds, mammals and reptiles each year.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/birds-biodiversity-sites-threatened-by-water-diversion-development-report-finds-20170601-gwimgp.html>

Birds: Biodiversity sites threatened by water diversion, development ...



SOURCE: BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA:
THE STATE OF AUSTRALIA'S KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS IN 2017

Some of Australia's richest wildlife regions are at risk – including in national parks – from development, invasive species and disrupted water flows, a study by BirdLife Australia has found.

Of 315 so-called key biodiversity areas around Australia, 19 are listed by BirdLife as "in danger", up from 12 in 2014.

Many include threatened and endangered birds such as the Plains-wanderer. The quail-like ground bird, found in grasslands including the NSW Riverina, is so genetically unique it has its own family.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-05/murray-darling-basin-waterbirds-population-declining/8587720?pfmredir=sm>

Murray-Darling Basin's water birds in dramatic decline, study shows



New research has found a dramatic decline in water birds in the Murray-Darling Basin, with numbers down about 70% in the past three decades. A University of NSW team found the alarming drop after crunching 32 years of data.

Director of the UNSW Centre for Ecosystem Science, Richard Kingsford, who surveys up to 2,000 wetlands around Australia annually, headed up the research. "We survey all water birds from Pelicans to Swans to Sharp-tailed Sandpipers — which are migratory shore birds — as well as egrets and ibis," he said.

"We found more than a 70 per cent decline in waterbird numbers, and there is a big issue here as we compared one river basin with no dams and the other with dams — the Murray-Darling Basin — and most of that decline was in the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands."

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-19/dinosaur-bird-found-in-outback-queensland/8453740?WT.mc_id=newsmail&WT.tsrc=Newsmail

Dinosaur-bird fossil discovery ruffles feathers in outback Queensland



In a dry outback quarry, 500 kilometres from Australia's east coast, a volunteer has unearthed Richmond's first fossil of a dinosaur-bird, a species previously unseen in what was Australia's inland sea.

<https://theconversation.com/it-isnt-easy-being-blue-the-cost-of-colour-in-fairy-wrens-80006>

It isn't easy being blue – the cost of colour in fairy wrens

Male superb fairy-wrens change colour every year, from dull brown to bright blue. But being blue may be risky if you are a tiny bird that is easily spotted by predators. Published today, our new study found that male fairy-wrens adjust their risk-taking behaviour after undergoing colour change, becoming more cautious while they are brightly coloured.



<https://theconversation.com/the-legend-of-pouwa-ancient-myths-of-new-zealands-black-swan-confirmed-by-fossil-dna-81611>

The legend of Poūwa: ancient myths of New Zealand's black swan confirmed by fossil



A tall, bulky and probably near-flightless black swan once roamed New Zealand. But it was hunted to extinction not long after people arrived during the late 13th century, and then replaced by its Australian cousin. Research on ancient DNA and morphology, shows that the NZ species — dubbed Poūwa — was unique and genetically separate from the Australian species.

Podcasts

BBC In Our Time 6 July - Bird Migration

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08wmk5j>

ABC Future Tense 16 July - Animals & Technology

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/animals-and-technology/8421560>

ABC OffTrack 20 May - A Tawny Frogmouth Reveals Itself

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/tawny-frogmouth-ep/8468122>

ABC OffTrack Jun 10 - Vagrant, Immigrant, Stopover, Stay

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/lord-howe-island-birds/8578372>

Earth on downward ecological spiral for 46 years

<http://population.org.au/earth-downward-ecological-spiral-46-years>

This year, 2 August was Earth Overshoot Day, the day we have spent 100 per cent of the year's ecological income. It marks the 46th year in a row where we are using more ecological services than the Earth can provide, according to Sustainable Population Australia (SPA).

SPA National President, Dr James Ward, says every year the day gets earlier and earlier.

"This year, it is 2 August. Last year it was 8 August; in 2015 it was 13 August and in 2014, 19 August. From 1997 to 2004 it was in September," says Dr Ward. "We lived within our ecological means up until 1971 and have been on a downhill spiral ever since."

Want to fight climate change? Have fewer children

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/12/want-to-fight-climate-change-have-fewer-children?utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GU+Today+USA+-+Collections+2017&utm_term=234723&subid=26199&MP=GT_US_collection

The greatest impact individuals can have in fighting climate change is to have one fewer child, according to a new study that identifies the most effective ways people can cut their carbon emissions.

The next best actions are selling your car, avoiding long flights, and eating a vegetarian diet. These reduce emissions many times more than common green activities, such as recycling, using low energy light bulbs or drying washing on a line. However, the high impact actions are rarely mentioned in government advice and school textbooks, researchers found.

Snippets

Name Badges

Finally we have name tag badges available with the artwork set up at Shoalhaven Trophy and Engraving, 1 Stewart place Nowra (in the big car park by the bus station). There are two types of names tags - magnetic and pin. Magnetic name badges cost \$15.50, and pin name badges are \$12.00 each. Why not go in and get one?



Aussie Backyard Bird Count

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count is on from 23-29 October.

See website at www.aussiebirdcount.org.au

BirdLife Australia and the Birds in Backyards team have come together to bring you the Aussie Backyard Bird Count. By taking part in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count, you will be joining thousands of people from across the country who will be heading out into their backyards, local parks or favourite outdoor spaces to take part.

To get involved all you need is 20 minutes, your favourite outdoor space (this doesn't have to be your actual backyard), and some keen eyesight. And it doesn't matter if you're a novice or an expert. Simply record the birds you know and look up those you don't on the "Aussie



Bird Count" app or website. You'll instantly see live statistics and info on how many people are taking part near you and the number of birds and species counted in your neighbourhood, and the whole country!

Not only will you get to know your feathered neighbours, you'll also be contributing to a vital pool of information that will help us see how Australian birds are faring.

So get outdoors and start counting!

Blue - screens August 24



Featuring passionate advocates for ocean preservation, BLUE is a provocative mix of scientific essay, investigative journalism and arresting imagery. Tackling themes of habitat destruction, species loss and pollution, BLUE takes us into the ocean realm where we witness **ocean change** first hand.

An Inconvenient Sequel - Truth to Power (coming soon)



Wikipedia says that "An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power" is a 2017 American documentary film about former United States Vice President Al Gore's continuing mission to battle climate change. The sequel to An Inconvenient Truth (2006), the film addresses the progress made to tackle the problem and Gore's global efforts to persuade governmental leaders to invest in renewable energy, culminating in the landmark signing of 2016's Paris Agreement.

BirdLife Shoalhaven Calendar for 2017

Date	Event / Location / Group*	Details - meeting time and place, leaders etc.
August -----		
Friday 18th	Tabourie (MUD)	Meet 8am at end of Beach St, Tabourie. Leader: Bob Rusk 4455-2169
September -----		
Friday 1st	Conjola (MUD)	Meet 8am at Conjola Fire Station. Leader: Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Sat 9 to Sun 10	BIGnet Meeting	At Urunga on the NSW north coast
Tuesday 12th	Meeting (MUD)	Meet 7:30pm: Harry Higgs Room - includes presentation on Bob Rusk's Simpson Desert adventure
Friday 15th	Bomaderry Ck & Wollumboola (MUD)	Meet: 8am at the back of Harry Higgs Room for car pooling. Leader: Mike Jefferis 0412 480 371
Sunday 17th	Bellawongarah (SB)	Meet 8:30am at the north side of Apex Park, Berry
Saturday 23rd	Siteworks at Bundanon	The Birds and the Bees - bundanon.com.au/whats-on/siteworks-2017/
Friday 29th	Porters Creek Dam (MUD)	Meet 8am: Back of Harry Higgs Room or 8:15am at Pointer Gap Rd intersection on Princes Hwy. Leader: Mike Jefferis 0412 480 371
October -----		
10th - 13th	Southern Highlands trip (SB)	Accommodation details to be advised ...
Sunday 15th	Jerrara Dam / Spring Ck (SB)	Meet 8:30am at the north side of Apex Park, Berry
23rd - 29th	Aussie Backyard Bird Count	
November -----		
Fri 3 to Sun 5	Australasian Bird Fair	At Newington Armory at Sydney Olympic Park
Mon 13th	Talk Night (BLS)	Judy Harrington talking about Sea Eagle and EagleCAM
Sunday 19th	Lake Wollumboola (SB)	Meet 8:30am at the lake entrance at Culburra
December -----		
Sunday 17th	Xmas Party / Greys Beach (SB)	Meet 5pm at the launching ramp at Greys Beach

* The BirdLife Shoalhaven calendar contains activities from the branch (**BLS**) and two associated birdwatching groups - Shoalhaven Birders (**SB**) and the Milton-Ulladulla District Birdwatching Club (**MUD**). Members can attend all activities.

** BirdLife Shoalhaven outings are organised by Karen and Brett Davis - 0487 208 437 and 0497 868 471.

Shoalhaven Birders (SB) meet every third Sunday of the month at 8.30am. There are no leaders on their outings, and it is possible that nobody else will turn up, especially if the weather is bad. Trips away usually go ahead. Contacts: Stan and Su Brown 4443-4828, Peter and Julie Hale 0402 076 548.

MUD Birdwatchers (MUD) have outings every fortnight on Fridays from 8am until about 11am. Membership of the MUD Birdwatchers club is open to all members of the Milton Ulladulla U3A. For information about joining MUD Birdwatchers, phone Marg Hamon 4457-1129 or Chris Shinton 4454-5584 or email mubirdclub@gmail.com.

Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

birdlife.org.au

Add your voice

join us

Enjoy the rewards of membership, making a real difference for our native birds

volunteer

Contributing your time is one of the most effective ways to help

donate

Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats

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