

Minutes of the BirdLife Shoalhaven AGM held on 1st March 2014 at Greenfield's Beach, Vincentia

Prior to the meeting Brett Davis introduced the three members of the Steering Committee who had been responsible for forming the BirdLife Shoalhaven branch before introducing BirdLife Australia board member Rob Dunn who spoke about history of BirdLife Australia from its beginnings as the RAOU and development into Birds Australia, the beginnings of BOCA and its development from a bird observer's club into a bird observation and conservation association, and the amalgamation of the two into BirdLife Australia, an organisation with five areas of focus – advocacy, conservation, education, recreation and science. Rob went on to explain how these five areas were interrelated, and the key role played by a branch in achieving positive outcomes for all five areas.

Meeting opened at: 9:20am

Present: 29 signed attendance sheet

Apologies:

Glenys and Jeff Canning, Stan Brown, Sandra Kelley, Fay Gorddard, Jill and Max Markey, Ian McCausland, Mike and Rose Clear, Peter and Julie Hale

Steering Committee Report:

Brett gave a brief history of the formation of the branch, beginning in January 2013 with enquiries from Karen Davis to Fiona Blandford, BirdLife Australia's Branch Liaison Officer. After much correspondence back and forth, as there was really no manual for the new BirdLife Australia organization to go about the formation of branches, the board of BA finally approved the formation of BirdLife Shoalhaven on November 23rd 2013.

Brett spoke about Barry Virtue and his long involvement with birds, from Gould League Bird Camps in the mid 1970's, to writing the bird chapter in the book Fitzroy Falls and Beyond in the eighties, and his formation of a informal group of Shoalhaven birdwatchers that had been active for over 20 years. He also spoke of Barry's academic qualifications - a Graduate Certificate in Ornithology and his ongoing study of biology subjects in pursuit of a Masters of Applied Science degree with CSU. Barry has also been involved with Birds in Backyards and was also a founding member of IBOC. At Barry's suggestion, the birdwatching program for his birdwatching group has become the official birdwatching program for BirdLife Shoalhaven.

Brett went on to explain that once our application to become a branch was approved, the committee then had to go through the process of setting up the structure of the branch. In accordance with the branch working arrangements Brett emailed all BirdLife Australia members within the Shoalhaven catchment on 17th January to announce the formation of the branch, to call for nominations for the executive committee and to announce the time, date and location for this AGM.

Election of Office Bearers:

Only one nomination was received for each Executive Committee position, so the Executive Committee was elected as nominated.

Karen Davis nominated Barry Virtue for President, and this was seconded by Brett Davis.

Brett Davis nominated Karen Davis for Treasurer, and this was seconded by Rob Dunn

Rob Dunn nominated Brett Davis for Secretary, and this was seconded by Karen Davis.

Brett spoke of his background in IT and website design, which would help with the technical aspects of the Secretary's role, and Karen's background as a qualified accountant for the treasurer role.

President's Report:

Given the newness of the branch, Barry decided that no President's report was necessary.

Treasurer's Report:

Karen reported zero income, zero expenditure and a zero balances in non-existent bank accounts and petty cash. She had submitted a budget to Head Office – for a club banner and for hall hire for two possible future meetings, but had heard nothing back about her budget submission.

Webmaster's Report:

In his role as secretary, Brett had worked with head office to set up the **branch web page** on the BirdLife Australia website. He explained the difficulties associated with the cumbersome content management system used by the BA website that makes the updating and approval process for adding timely information to the web page quite difficult. With this in mind, he had also set up a **Facebook page** for BirdLife Shoalhaven, a **Twitter account**, a **Picasa web albums account**, so that photos and information could be quickly distributed to branch members without the need of bothering head office. Brett explained that the webpage, Facebook page, Twitter feed and web albums not only provide great information for our members, but they also help to publicize the branch to the outside world, hopefully increasing BirdLife Australia membership in our area and therefore helping the cause of Australian birds.

Correspondence In:

Email enquiry from the Berry CWA asking whether we could provide a raptor expert to give a talk about Wedge-tailed Eagles. Brett had replied that we were a very new branch and that he did not know if we had the expertise or willingness within our members to help them out.

Correspondence Out:

5 submissions about bird-related conservation issues in the Shoalhaven had been sent out.

1. One went to the Basin Villages Forum in support of their suggestions for making council-owned flood-prone land in Larmer Avenue, Sanctuary Point a wetland bird sanctuary, complete with walking tracks, signage, and bird hides. This was done prior to Council staff attending a Forum meeting on 16th February.
2. We have also sent a submission direct to council about the proposed use of the Larmer Avenue land, rather than just relying on the Basin Villages Forum to pass on our submission.
3. A related submission was also sent directly to council, in response to its proposal to have the Larmer Avenue land used as a possible skate park location. Of the six locations suggested by council, we placed the Larmer Avenue land last on our list – as our least preferred option.
4. One submission went to Shoalhaven Council re the Round the Bay walking track near Plantation Point at Huskisson, stating our preference for the option that would have the least impact on the environment.
5. We also made a submission to Brad Hazzard, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, urging him to not agree to defer zoning for the protection of Lake Wollumboola and its catchment, and recommending that the lake catchment be zoned E 1 National Park / Nature Reserve in the Shoalhaven Local Environment Plan, hopefully to prevent urban development of the catchment including a proposed golf course

Information about the branch had been sent via email to the four Shoalhaven Visitor Centres – at Nowra, Ulladulla, Booderee National Park, and the Visitor Information Centre at the Lady Denman Maritime Museum in Huskisson, to let them know that we are happy for them to pass on our contact details to any members of the public who have questions about birds, birdwatching, birdwatching groups and bird conservation in the Shoalhaven.

General Business:

Chair, Convenor or President

A discussion was had about the title to be used for the head of the Executive Committee and branch. The Branch Working Arrangements suggest Chair, Convenor or President at the discretion of the branch. Brett suggested that “President” clearly means the head of the branch, where “Chair” or “Convenor” don’t make the significance of the role obvious, and that “President” would have more impact when dealing with members of the public. Brett moved we adopt the title of President, this was seconded by Maureen Webb, decided unanimously by a show of hands.

Where do we go from here:

Brett explained that what the committee has done so far was to go through the nut-and-bolts process of setting up the infrastructure of the branch to make it a going concern. The committee has tried to ensure that the branch causes no negative impact on activities already happening in the Shoalhaven in which many of our members are involved – such as the bird-watching groups, Shorebirds 2020, the Shorebirds Recovery Project with NPWS, the work done at Lake Wollumboola etc. Our aim is to provide a greater profile and awareness of these activities and projects amongst our members and in the wider community.

The three members of committee have set up BirdLife Shoalhaven to do the things that we wanted to accomplish, which is to provide a greater voice in support of birds in the Shoalhaven, and to provide a presence that will hopefully increase BirdLife Australia membership and therefore help the conservation of birds and their habitat, but the committee does not know what the rest of the branch members would like done – if anything. Brett called upon all members to provide feedback to the committee about the future direction of the branch.

Mike Jefferis from the southern Shoalhaven volunteered to be involved in the process as a representative of the southern Shoalhaven (Milton / Ulladulla). Brett asked members to let the committee know about local issues that are particular to the areas in which they live and which might not be widely publicized, and which could be addressed by BirdLife Shoalhaven.

Brett said that the committee would collate all the feedback and report back to the membership via email in a few months time, or perhaps at a meeting where we might also have a guest speaker.

Common Mynas

Christine Rigg brought up the problem of Common Mynas in the Shoalhaven and asked what BirdLife Shoalhaven was thinking of doing about it. Brett replied that the committee would consider the problem along with the rest of the feedback from members that would hopefully be forthcoming in the next few months.

Next Meeting: To be decided by the committee

Meeting closed at: 10:00am

The meeting was followed by a morning tea involving informal discussions and coffee and cake. Brett thanked those who had contributed cakes to the meeting.