

July 2019

The Twitcher

CENTRAL COAST GROUP, BIRDING NSW



Editorial Team: Allan Benson (0457 458 274) Wendy Mitchell (4340 4870) & Robyn Price Volume 14, No. 7

DATE	ACTIVITIES	LEADER/SPEAKER
23/7/19	Next Meeting: Update on Status of Regent Honeyeaters Meet: 7pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	Mick Roderick
27/7/19	Full Day Outing: Bucketty, Murrays Run & Wollombi Meet: 8.30am The Letter "A". Corner of George Downs Drive and Walkers Ridge Rd, Bucketty.	John and Carole Carpenter 0490 0450 361
3 rd & 4 th August	Regent Honeyeater Swift Parrot Survey	Nick Carson 0417 488 760
14/8/19	Half Day Outing: Chain Valley Bay Meet 8.30 am Tall Timbers Road Chain Valley Bay South (50 metres past Macquarie Shores Home Village)	Meryl Newton 0435 780 380
11-15/9/19	Camp Out: Coonabarabran Meet: 8.30 am Getaway Tourist Camp, Oxley Highway, Coonabarabran (02-68421773) Birding around Coonabarabran, Warrumbungle's NP, Baradine and Pilliga	Alan Morris 0418 269 482
27/8/19	Next Meeting: Heron & Bass Strait Islands Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	John Carpenter

Note: For all Outings bring your morning tea and lunch. A chair is a good idea.

Tea, coffee, and biscuits will be available at the end of the meeting.
To cover hall hire and refreshments a donation of \$3 would be appreciated.

Tonight's Speaker: Mick Roderick is the Project Coordinator – Woodland Birds for Biodiversity for Birdlife Australia. One of Mick's main projects is the monitoring of the Regent Honeyeater population in NSW where the previous breeding strongholds of Capertee Valley, Goulburn River National Park, Hunter Economic Zone at Kurri Kurri (HEZ) and Burrangang Valley are located. The Regent Honeyeater is critically endangered with an estimated population less than 400 birds. Mick's talk tonight will provide an update on the population as well as the ongoing efforts to prevent its extinction by the captive release program overseen by the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team. Mick's talk will take on particular significance as we were lucky to have 3 or 4 Regent Honeyeaters visit us at Bucketty earlier this year and amazingly four at Blue Haven. Our group makes a significant contribution to the cause by taking part in the biannual surveys.

Last month's meeting: Allan Benson took us on a journey to Penang and the mainland of Malaysia to show a range of both the scenery and cultural aspects of Penang as well as a variety of birds seen on a day's guided trip. Most of the birds seen were common Asian species but unfamiliar to Australian-based birders. Interestingly some of these have been seen in Australia for example Grey Wagtail, Wood Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Cinnamon Bittern, Grey-headed Lapwing and Forest Wagtail. The best birds of the presentation were undoubtedly Mangrove Pitta and Stork-billed Kingfisher. Most of the photos shown were taken by the guide on the day. This was an interesting presentation to whet the appetite for seeing Asian birds.

Welcome to Visitors and New Members: 35 people attended our June meeting. Apologies were received from Wendy and Colin Mitchell. Darren Earnshaw was a very welcome first timer to our meeting but not exactly a stranger to us. People are encouraged to bring their own coffee cups to the meetings to reduce the plastic/polystyrene cups that will be sent to landfill. Congratulations to those people who remember to do this! Thanks to Malcolm Hill's expertise, the collar microphone and pocket box work well and there is now no problem with anyone hearing the speaker or the leader!

Reminder about Parking: When attending the Meetings at the Tuggerah Hall, **parking** is not available in the car parks of the private businesses next door. The donation for attending the meeting is \$3 and covers room hire and printing of the newsletter.

Webpage: Don't forget to check out the Birding NSW Webpage www.birdingnsw.org.au where there is plenty of info about outings, photograph gallery, and general info about the Club. Well worth a visit! Check out Central Coast Birders on Facebook as well! It now has 350 and keeps growing monthly members.

SAVING STAMPS

Please bring your used stamps (on paper, trimmed) for Colin Mitchell to process for donation to charity. 500 grams was recently delivered to the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children at North Rocks on your behalf.

PROTOCOLS FOR OUTINGS AND CAMPOUTS

Leader

- Ensure everybody is registered
- Welcome participants and introduce new participants and visitors
- Brief participants on the day's activities:- destinations, morning tea and lunch stops and where there are toilets, any locked gates etc
- Designate the last car in the convey at each stop
- Warn participants about personal safety

Participants

- Register
- Be responsible for personal safety:- snakes, trip hazards, water etc
- Make your own judgement on personal fitness
- Stay with the group
- Be self-sufficient for morning tea and lunch
- Bring a chair
- Bring water, sunscreen and hat
- In a convey of cars know which car is following and ensure that the car follows at every turn

WHAT WAS NEW June and WHAT CAN WE EXPECT July - August?

Interesting sightings in June/July have been in the winter doldrums: few and far between. Bush birds are not calling, nor responding. The highlight was the Regent Honeyeater sighting at Blue Haven. This is first coastal record for the Central Coast since 2010. Initially, the birds were seen on the 30th June by "non-birders" who reported two adult and two juvenile birds.

Eastern Osprey
David Hill



Unfortunately, no notification came through until the 8th July. On the 10th July, Allan Benson went to check the sighting and was amazed that at least one Regent was still present. Subsequently Central Coast birders have found three.

Central Coast Council have built a platform for the nesting pair of Ospreys at Mariner's stadium. This relieves the OH&S issues that worried Council that debris from the nest could hurt spectators. The photographers have been focusing their efforts on Harry Moore Oval at Toukley where the 6th pair of Osprey for the coast are nesting. There have been some spectacular photos. In late news, another Osprey's nest has been found in a mobile phone tower at San Remo. This makes the 7th pair for the Coast.



Regent Honeyeater
Christina Port

White-fronted Tern
Luke Ullrich



In other news, White-fronted Terns have only returned in the last couple of weeks with sightings at Norah Head, The Entrance and Wamberal. Fairy Prions have been spotted at Norah Head and Soldiers Beach and good numbers of Double-banded Plovers are at Picnic Point. The Restless Flycatcher seen at Mt White on the Sunday outing on 30th June was also a significant record. There have been many reports of Rose Robins as they spend the winter in more coastal environments.

Once again Luke Ullrich found a Pacific Gull, this time at Norah Head. It

was kind enough to hang around and be seen by a number of birders. Darren Earnshaw was lucky to get a good sighting of the very hard to see Sooty Owl, which responded to call back.

We are past the winter solstice and as the daylight period extends, the resident bush birds such as Magpies, Fairy-wren Scrubwrens etc will start to become more active in preparation for breeding. This in turn means that Fantail Cuckoos, who parasite Fairy-wrens and Shining Bronze and Horsfield Cuckoos who parasite Scrubwren, will need to be in place to lay their eggs. Fantail Cuckoos for example are calling strongly in a number of locations.

Pacific Gull
Luke Ullrich



OUTING REPORTS

Full Day Outing Sunday June 30: Mooney Creek, Girrakool and Mount White

Leader: Doug Hocking

On a foggy cold damp morning that turned into a clear calm winter's day, we welcomed 32 birders from both Cumberland BOC and Central Coast. We observed/surveyed forests along Mooney Creek, the sandstone platforms and Pile's Creek headwaters at Girrakool and also the ridge fire trail at Mount White.



Brown Cuckoo-Dove
Graham Nelson

Starting at Karool Road on Mooney Creek, an observant few heard Glossy Black Cockatoos fly over. Our visiting photographers got great



Birders
Robyn Price

close-up views of six Brown Cuckoo-Doves feeding on the track and a Fantail Cuckoo obliged them as well.

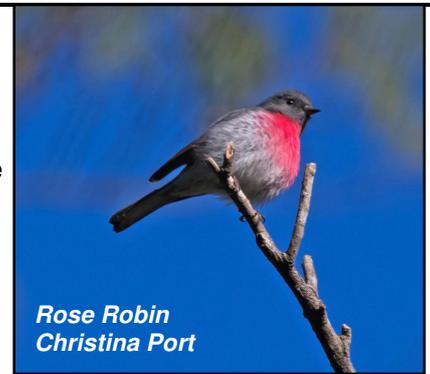
Birds sighted and heard included Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Bell Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Eastern Yellow Robin, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Green Catbird, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Spinebill, Satin Bowerbird, Brown Gerygone, King Parrot, Female Rose Robin, Brown Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb and Variegated Fairy Wrens, Currawong, Silveryeye and Rainbow Lorikeet. We then moved to Girrakool for morning tea and some sunshine. Here we sighted White-cheeked and New Holland Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebird, Yellow Thornbill, Grey Butcherbird. We had excellent views of Spotted Pardalote in full colour. After lunch, we moved to the fire trail at Mount White that is adjacent to Popran National Park. We had an extended wait for our full contingent thanks to your Leader losing a third of the cars. I sincerely apologise for this. This site is a good example of the sandstone ridge mixed vegetation. Whilst it was getting late in the day and the birds were a little shy, a highlight of this site was six Fuscous Honeyeaters. This was in comparison to the day before where I sighted 20. We also saw Red-browed Finch, White-naped Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Mistletoebird, Scarlet Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater and Restless Flycatcher. On the day we also saw several other common birds that brought our total for the day to 57. *Doug Hocking*

Half Day Outing July 10: Narara Ecovillage and Strickland Forest

Leader: Richard Cassels

Despite the forecast morning temperature of 3^oC in Gosford, 19 people turned out for the half-day trip. It turned out to be a beautiful day. As we walked through the Ecovillage construction area (admiring the range of new "eco-homes" being built), the resident Black-shouldered Kite rose to the air to see off a Grey Goshawk. The road to the Arboretum positively

quivered with small birds, including Silvereyes, Superb Fairy Wrens, Red-browed Finches, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, Brown Thornbills and Grey Fantails. Once in the peaceful and beautiful Strickland Forest, sightings included a female Regent Bowerbird, Brown Gerygones, a Green Catbird, and, just before exiting the forest, Crested Shrike-tits. After morning tea in the Ecovillage campsite, we crossed the creek to the "Rural Lots". Everyone had gone past one point when last-in-line John Carpenter suddenly recognised the call of a Rose Robin. The male bird then appeared and challenged the photographers by dashing in and out of the shade for about 5 minutes! We then returned to photograph the Back shouldered Kite. The bird was in the process of eating a rat it had just caught. It tolerated the photographers' posse very well. After lunch we left the Ecovillage and visited an area of flowering Swamp Mahogany in Hanlan Street and enjoyed a cheerful chorus of Yellow-faced, Scarlet and Lewin's Honeyeaters, Noisy Friarbirds and Rainbow Lorikeets. The trip concluded with a visit to Megan Bartley's Narara garden, site of a recent visit by an Emerald Dove. A total of 62 species was seen (at all 4 sites).



Richard Cassels

UNUSUAL GOSFORD-WYONG SIGHTINGS JUNE - JULY 2019

Species List: the names and the order in which they occur are in accordance with the new Birdlife and IOC System, as presented in "The Australian Bird Guide" P. Menkhorst et al 2016.

* = First return of migrants	** = Last birds to depart	LN = biggest number since January	OW = Over-winter	
Freckled Duck	4	9-21/6/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	E.Vella/C.Ward
Australasian Shoveler	2	10-22/6/19	Tuggerah STW	Daniel McKeon
Australasian Shoveler	2	21/6/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	Allan Benson
Pink-eared Duck	2	21/6/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	Allan Benson
Black-browed Albatross	1m bc	14/7/19	dead on Toowoan Bay Beach	Geoff Eager
Black-browed Albatross	1	15/7/19	Wybung Head, Munmorah SCA	Allan Benson
Southern Giant Petrel	1	7/7/19	Wybung Head, Munmorah SCA	Rob Pallazzi
Fairy Prion	2	27-28/6/19	Soldiers Point, Norah head	Daniel McKeon
Black-necked Stork	AM	17/6/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	Carole Carpenter
White-necked Heron	1	11/7/19	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Rob Montgomery
Osprey	2+N	14/6-13/7/19	Harry Moore Oval, Canton Beach	Frank Ullrich
Osprey	2+N	24-29/6/19	Doyles St, Kincumber STW	Laurie Smith
Osprey	1	14/6 & 10/7	The Entrance Channel	David Hill
Osprey	2+N	1/7/19	Gosford Mariners Stadium	Rob Montgomery
Osprey	2+N	14/7/19	Wandewoi Ave & Wills Rd, San Remo	Meryl Newton
Pacific Baza	1	10/6/19	Tuggerah STW	Daniel McKeon
Pacific Baza	1	19/6/19	Forresters Beach	Robin Walker
Pacific Baza	2	11/7/19	Wyong Hospital	Graham Nelson
Black-shouldered Kite	1	12/6/19	Waratah Rd North, Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Black-shouldered Kite	1	10/7/19	Narara Ecovillage	Richard Cassels
Square-tailed Kite	1	22/6/19	Lisarow	Darren Earnshaw
Square-tailed Kite	3	6/7/19	Gorokan near Blue Haven	Rebecca Citroni
Square-tailed Kite	1	10/7/19	M1 Motorway Wyong Creek	Graham Nelson
Square-tailed Kite	1	13/7/19	Marsden Rd, Blue Haven	Daniel McKeon
Whistling Kite	3	12/6/19	Waratah Rd North, Man. Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Brahminy Kite	1	22/6 & 14/7	Fraser Bch, Munmorah SCA	Citroni/F.Ullrich
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	29/6/19	Woy Woy Tip	Philip Bernie
Brown Goshawk	1	13/7/19	Marsden Rd, Blue Haven	Daniel McKeon
Grey Goshawk	1	12/6/19	Mangrove Mtn Store	Kaye Pointer
Grey Goshawk	1	10/7/19	Narara Ecovillage	Christina Port
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	14/7/19	Marsden Rd, Blue Haven	Meryl Newton
Bush Stone-curlew	1	26/6/19	Katherine St, Woy Woy	Michael Dahlstrom
Bush Stone-curlew	2	10/7/19	Henderson Rd, Saratoga	Doug Hocking
Double-banded Plover	10	29/6/19	Pelican Point, Wyrabalong NP	Allan Benson
Pacific Gull	1M	28-29/6/19	Norah Head	Luke Ullrich
White-fronted Tern	3	27/6/19	Soldiers Pt Reef, Norah Head	Daniel McKeon
White-fronted Tern	5	29/6/19	8 on 4/7 Karagi Pt, The Entrance Channel	Luke Ullrich
White-fronted Tern	2	29/6/19	Wamberal Lagoon	Robin Walker
Caspian Tern	14	9/7/19	The Entrance Channel	Laurie Smith
Common Bronzewing	1	12/6/19	Mangrove Ck Bridge, Dubbo Gully	Rex Schmidt
Topknot Pigeon	50	13/6/19	Ourimbah	Andrew Melville
Topknot Pigeon	32	20/6/19	Springfield	Peril Pearl

Nankeen Kestrel	1	15/6-7/7	Harry Moore Oval, Canton Beach	Rebecca Citroni
Australian Hobby	1	10/7/19	Budgewoi Road, Budgewoi	Leeanne Lemke
Peregrine Falcon	1	8/5/19	Mount Pleasant, Saratoga	Graham Nelson
Peregrine Falcon	1	12/6/19	Cromarty Hill, Wyrabalong NP	Elizabeth Noble
Peregrine Falcon	2	29/6/19	Woy Woy Tip	Philip Bernie
Peregrine Falcon	1	12/7/19	Eighth Ave, Toukley	Leeanne Lemke
Azure Kingfisher	2	13-14/7/19	Marsden Rd, Blue Haven	Tricia Sweet
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	150	15/6/19	Mount White	Sue Watts
Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	12/6/19	Mangrove Ck Bridge, Dubbo Gully	Rex Schmidt
Gang Gang Cockatoo	3	14/6/19	Upper Palmdale	Laurie Smith
Swift Parrot	6	8/7/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	Kelly Connor
Barn Owl	1	10/6/19	Watagan Forest Rd, Jilliby	Daniel McKeon
Sooty Owl	1	11/07/19	Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Powerful Owl	1	May	Bombi Heights	Jay Nicholson
Regent Bowerbird	F	7/7/19	Avoca beach	Laurie Smith
Regent Bowerbird	6	9/7/19	Narara Ecovillage	Richard Cassels
Regent Honeyeater	4	30/6-15/7	Marston Rd, Blue Haven	Mr & Mrs McDonald
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	15/6/19	Harry Moore Oval, Canton Beach	Rebecca Citroni
Little Friarbird	4	11-13/7/19	Marsden Rd, Blue Haven	David Russell
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	29/6/19	Mogo Camp, Yengo NP Bucketty	Greg Miles
Crested Shrike-tit	2	12/6/19	Fairview, Dubbo Gully	Margaret Pointer
Crested Shrike-tit	2	29/6/19	Mogo Camp, Yengo NP Bucketty	Darren Earnshaw
Crested Shrike-tit	2	10/7/19	Narara Ecovillage	Richard Cassels
Rufous Whistler	1	16/6/19	Umina Wildlife Corridor	Robert Payne
Restless Flycatcher	1	17/6/19	Umina Wildlife Corridor	Robert Payne
Restless Flycatcher	1	30/6/19	Mt White	Doug Hocking
Spangled Drongo	2	26/6/19	Hargraves Beach, Norahville	Meryl Newton
White-breast Woodswallow	2	12/7/19	Kingfisher Shores, Gwandalan	Marj Kibby
Jacky Winter	2	12/6/19	Waratah Rd North Mangrove Mountain	Margaret Pointer
Jacky Winter	1	11/7/19	Marston Rd, Blue Haven	David Russell
Jacky Winter	2	15/6/19	Bushells Ridge Rd, Wyee	Allan Benson
Rose Robin	AF	12/6/19	Fairview, Dubbo Gully	Margaret Pointer
Rose Robin	AM	12/6/19	Mangrove Ck Bridge, Dubbo Gully	Kaye Pointer
Rose Robin	AM	10/7/19	Marston Rd, Blue Haven	David Russell
Mistletoebird	1	13/7/19	San Remo	Carol Edwards
Tree Martin	4	10/7/19	Marston Rd, Blue Haven	David Russell
Double-barred Finch	10+	21/6-14/7	San Remo	Daniel McKeon
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	10	10/7/19	McPherson Rd Swamp, Tuggerah	David Russell

Comments

Other reports and many breeding records include **Osprey**: 1 South Tacoma 30/6 (RMo); **White-fronted Tern**: 1 Soldiers Pt Norah Head 14/7 (JC), 1 Munmorah SCA 15/7 (DStokes).

Good Birding !

CENTRAL COAST TWITCH 2019

The 2019 race remains tight with the top three participants only a couple of sightings apart. Birding is tough in the winter doldrums but White-fronted Tern, Back-browed Albatross, Pacific Gull and Regent Honeyeater have boosted twitchers lists. They are anxiously awaiting the return of Spring migrants.

Set out below are the totals that were given to Robyn Price on 11/7/2019. Please advise her if these totals are incorrect.

Graham Nelson	224	Alan Morris	180	Robyn Price	161
Allan Benson	222	Margaret Pointer	179	Rowena Wallace	152
Christina Port	222	Noel Lonergan	177	Diana Hogan	150
Carole Carpenter	201	Michael Scobie	174	Judy Clark	130
Daniel McKeon	200	Graeme Catt	173	Steve Merrett	117
John Carpenter	197	Andrew Melville	173	Coleen Southall	121
David Catt	194	Doug Hocking	173	Mike Kuhl	70
Krystyna Lonergan	187	Nick Carson	170		
Kaye Pointer	186	Rex Schmidt	168		

NEW SPECIES FOR THE TWITCHERS

If you have listed the Little Shrike-thrush in the Northern Territory you now have a new tick. There has been a split and this species is now known as the Arafura Shrike-thrush and the species that occur on the East Coast is now the Rufous

Shrike-thrush.

Also split were the Gull-billed Tern from the Asian Gull-billed Tern. What we knew as the Gull-billed Tern is now the Australian Tern and the Asian Gull-billed Tern is now the Gull-billed Tern - very confusing¹. This was noted as a possible split way back in 2007, when Mike Carter pointed out an Asian Gull-billed Tern at Lee Point in Darwin in 2007. Australian (Gull-billed) Tern is an uncommon visitor to the Central Coast. However, there are recent records of the Gull-billed (Asian Gull-billed) Tern in the Hunter. It is best distinguished in juvenile plumage where the black eye patch is both smaller and discrete from the ear coverts.



ALIENS DO WELL AROUND OTHER ALIENS, according to new research that suggests that invasive bird species such as the Common Myna are more likely to thrive if there are other introduced species in the area.

ABC News

Aliens, or introduced species, also do better if the climate is similar to the one, they came from. These are the findings of a large international study, published in the journal *Nature*, that looked at more than 4,000 instances where birds had been introduced around the globe. The researchers studied 700 different bird species including the Common or Indian Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) and another species Australians love to hate: the Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). "Nobody's ever attempted anything of this kind of scale and detail" said co-author Tim Blackburn, an ecologist from University College London. "I never thought it was even going to be possible."

The team looked at a variety of factors in their analysis, from how many birds were introduced on each occasion, where they were being introduced, the size of their clutches, through to the relative brain sizes of different species. "All of these different types of characteristics are important", Professor Blackburn said. But overall, he said, environmental factors played the biggest part. Introduced species did better if the climate was similar to the one, they came from. Introduced birds were more likely to succeed if there were already other types of aliens. not just bird species present at the same location. "That's obviously a worry because what it's suggesting is there's something about the presence of aliens that's facilitating more aliens arriving," Professor Blackburn said. "While the exact cause of this phenomenon is unclear, it can lead to something called an invasion meltdown where essentially the area just becomes an environment of aliens', Professor Blackburn said.

The study has done an amazing job of synthesising a huge amount of data and showing the complexity of the issue, said Australian Museum ornithologist Richard Major, who was not involved in the research. However, the impacts of invasive birds in Australia are trivial, he said. "Invasive birds in Australia are really a very minor problem in terms of biodiversity, compared with habitat loss," Dr Major said.

It's the loss and modification of habitat that is historically what has led to extinctions in Australian fauna, he said, and that trend is likely to continue. That hasn't stopped the Common Myna from getting a bad rap. "People don't like them and this is really because they cohabit so much with people, they live in the places where people do, so we have a lot of contact with them around houses." Dr Major said there's been a big expansion in the range of the Common Mynas in Australia in the past few decades, so while their impact on biodiversity is limited now there is the possibility, they will have more of an effect in the future. However, he said, the Myna's native doppelganger, the Noisy Miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) has a much bigger impact on biodiversity loss within Australian bird communities. This superabundant species has been able to exploit the changes humans have made to the environment. It's also very aggressive and competitive with other native species.

Ironically, this aggression could protect Australia from having even more invasive birds, said conservation scientist Salit Kark from the University of Queensland, and a co-author on the paper. "We think that the aggressiveness of our native species, at least in some areas, helps our native species," she said. "However, there are very specific species that are

native and very aggressive, and those would be the more successful ones." An invading species doesn't have to be from another country to cause problems. "We have our very own species like the kookaburra which are native to Australia, but invade other parts of Australia like Tasmania and they have huge impacts," Dr Kark said. "They are invasive species because they invaded an area that is not part of their native range."

REGENT HONEYEATERS' MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY TO BE TRACKED WITH CUTTING-EDGE TECH

ABC Goulburn Murray

By Erin Somerville

When Leslie Kelly heard an unusual bird call in her western Sydney garden, it was a delightful surprise to find it coming from a critically endangered bird released hundreds of kilometres away. The sighting of a male Regent Honeyeater earlier this month, nestled among backyard grevillea and callistemon at Oxley Park, is another promising sign of recovery for the species being closely watched following a captive release program in north-east Victoria. A photo of the Oxley Park bird capturing banding on its legs shows it had travelled at least 463 kilometres since its 2017 release in the Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park. This bird now boasts the fourth longest movement recorded for the captive release program, of which over 300 birds have been part. But researchers are still unsure of the path these small birds are taking to achieve such long journeys. Conservationists are now hoping to use cutting-edge technology to track the flight of the Regent Honeyeaters as early as this year. The release program currently relies on 'colour banding' to identify the birds when they are spotted in the wild. While it is successful in identifying the length of their journey, BirdLife Australia's National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator, Dean Ingerwesen, said there were still lots of questions that needed to be answered. "At the moment we don't know how they get from point A to point B, [or] whether they travel in a straight line, or have important stops over points along the way there", he said. "One of the issues we've got is we've worked on this species for a couple of decades now as a recovery team and we have a gap every year. One of our concerns is that we are missing really important parts of the landscape we should be looking after or managing to make sure that they're safe".

The species' numbers have been estimated to be as low as 400 in the wild due to the clearing of their woodland habitat, among other threats. But developments in technology now mean conservationists can start following the birds using satellite tracking technology. With it, the birds can be traced as they move through the landscape on a daily basis, allowing researchers to follow them in real time. A satellite transmitter is specially designed using a 3D printed plastic harness which is placed on the bird like a backpack. "So, if you imagine a person wearing a backpack with straps over their shoulders, we do basically the same thing", Mr Ingerwesen said. "The transmitter sits in the middle of the bird's back and the harness goes over the head and across the breast. It's a good centre of gravity when they fly and it doesn't load the wings too much, so it doesn't impact on their ability to fly". The fit has been tested on a model specimen and aviary trials are about to go ahead with live Regent Honeyeaters at Taronga Zoo". Until just two years ago, the smallest transmitter available for tracking birds weighed five grams - too heavy for smaller species like the Regent Honeyeater. The new design has been scaled back to weigh just two grams, and the practice is being controlled by strict ethical procedures. "There's a five per cent limit in which you're not allowed to put something on a bird, so two grams is just under the threshold for a Regent Honeyeater", Mr Ingerwesen said.

"That's why we've had to redesign the harness attachment to create a harness that's as light as possible to get us under that safe figure. Even having done that we will be limited to larger, heavier birds we can find - so predominantly males that we'll get in the landscape". Most of the satellite technology being used for tracking bird movement in Australia currently monitors migratory shore birds such as Eastern Curlews and Oriental Plovers, which are bigger species able to be fitted with larger transmitters. Finding a transmitter to fit Regent Honeyeaters, which weigh between 35 to 50 grams when mature, has taken longer. Conservationists are now hoping their equipment will take flight on a captive release bird this year, with remaining trackers eventually being placed on wild honeyeaters. The team has five transmitters that are manufactured in North America and funded by the Australian Threatened Species Recovery Fund, worth around \$6,000 each.

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

Report for 2018/19 Season

Mike Tarbuton

This year (2018) there were 4092 reports sent in or published where I could find them. This is significantly more than last year. The largest flock reported was again 2,000 birds (from Qld), but there were four reports of 1,000 birds. Three of these came from Victoria and one from NSW. The average flock size this season was 26. This compares with 32, 30 & 35 for the three previous years. Each of these figures are significantly lower than the mean of 52 for the decade 2000-2010. So even though younger birds likely clumped more with experienced birds to beat the drought, the decline is sadly, still evident.

From a Central Coast perspective, the top reporter was Nick Carson with 42 reports followed by Alan Morris with 34. It is not clear if these are Alan's personal sightings or reporting sightings given to him. The majority of these reports were from the Bateau Bay, Terrigal, Killarney Vale area. Does that mean there was a resident flock in this area? The

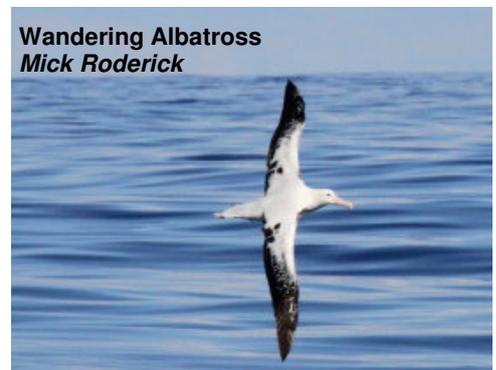
answer is unclear but the flock size was very variable. Mike Tarbuton is only collating sightings given to him directly or in our case via Alan Morris. It is not clear if he is utilizing Birdata or eBird.

TWITCHERS HAVE A TREASURE TROVE OF DATA TO AID SEABIRDS AS NUMBERS DROP

By Peter Hannam, Sydney Morning Herald

When it comes to monitoring bird numbers, a propensity for sea sickness wasn't enough to deter Simon Gorta from taking to the oceans. The University of NSW science honours student, lead author of a report published recently in a global journal, recounts how fellow bird watchers sometimes had to alert him to a Buller's Albatross or Grey-faced Petrel, or some other sought-after sighting. "Fifty per cent of the time I'm lying on the deck", Mr Gorta said. "I'm prone to getting seasick. Fortunately, the detailed records of 17 years of volunteer twitchers heading out from the NSW ports of Sydney, Port Stephens and Wollongong aren't swayed by individual discomfort". They show that, of the 30 most commonly observed seabirds off south-eastern Australia, 13 were in decline over the 2000-16 period, including the Wandering Albatross and the Flesh-footed Shearwater. Five increased and the rest were steady. Warming ocean temperatures driven by climate change are most likely playing a role in the decline by shifting cooler, more productive, waters south, according to the peer-reviewed research published in *Biological Conservation*. "Seabirds are critically important organisms for maintaining the health of marine ecosystems", Mr Gorta said. "A lot of the groups that had a preference for colder-than-average water were declining. The research was novel because it relied on citizen scientists to provide information on seabirds that would otherwise be costly and difficult to accumulate. Since keen birders are active along Australia's coastline and many others around the world, the paper suggests there is much more information out there to be fished".

Richard Kingsford, Professor of Environmental Science at UNSW and another of the report's authors, said pelagic citizen science was a valuable resource to track the environment. "These people are consistently going out at the same time each year and doing the same thing", Professor Kingsford said, adding that the data was particularly useful as most research into seabirds focused on their shore-based breeding colonies. He noted that, while there were many pressures on seabirds from over-fishing of their food sources to plastic pollution, climate change that has caused the East Australian Current to strengthen and push tropical waters further south appears to be playing a role. "There's certainly a decline going on [among common seabirds off south-eastern Australia] but there's probably a redistribution as well", Professor Kingsford said.



SWANSEA PELAGIC UPDATE

Thursday July 25th – This trip is totally fully booked with 7 Reserves. The trip will be rescheduled for 30th July if we can't get out

Tuesday 8th October – fully booked with a couple of reserves. However, still a chance to get on if you are interested. We will back this trip up as well.

Sunday -10th November- Preference will be given to Port Stephens regulars but the balance will be on a first come basis there are still place available You need to email Allan Benson if you are interested Cost is TBA.

WHERE TO GO BIRDING ON THE CENTRAL COAST: Sandra Street Fire Trail- Jilliby

This location turns up a remarkable diversity of birds. It's a mixture of semi-cleared backyards of acreages running up into regenerated Spotted Gum/Ironbark Forest.

Where is it – Sandra St Jilliby. Turn off Hue Hue Rd. It is the first street south of Sparks Road. Drive to the end and park at the gate. Walk up the fire trail. Most of the interesting birds are in the first couple of hundred metres, but there is a network of tracks to explore up the hill.

What to see -. Honeyeaters include Scarlet, Yellow-faced, Little Wattlebird, Eastern Spinebill, Noisy Friarbird. Grey Shrike-Thrush, Eastern Yellow Robin, Spotted Pardalote, Red-browed Finch, Rufous Whistler (summer), Varied Sit-tella, Variegated Wren, Superb Fairy Wren. Wedge-tailed Eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk, Straw-necked Ibis, White-faced Heron, Wood Duck, Musk Lorikeet, Galah, Eastern Rosella, Kookaburra, Grey Fantail. Rainbow Lorikeet, Crested Pigeon, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Pied Butcherbird.

What birders go to see – This a reliable site for White-throated Gerygone in spring as they breed there. It has been a reliable site for both White-winged Chough and Peaceful Dove but they have been harder to find in recent times.

Rarities - Rufous Songlark, White-winged Triller, Yellow-billed Spoonbill.