



The Twitcher

October
2021

DATE

ACTIVITIES

Editorial Team: Allan Benson (0457 458 274) Wendy Mitchell (4340 4870) & Robyn Price

Volume 16, No. 10

**Central Coast Council has dictated that we cannot have a meeting until November.
However outings, which will be restricted to a maximum of 30 people, can recommence.
Please register. All members attending club activities will be required to be fully vaccinated.**

DATE	ACTIVITIES	LEADER/SPEAKER
26/10/21	Next Meeting: Birding in Canada and Alaska Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	CANCELLED Greg Miles
30/10/21	Outing: Chain Valley Bay Meet: 8.30 The Gate for the Goat Track. 163 Tall Timber's Rd, Kingfisher Shores	REMEMBER TO REGISTER Meryl Newton 0435 780 380
30/10 - 31/10/21	Twitchathon** See details on Page 2	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
10/11/21	½ day Outing: The Coastal Lagoons Meet: 8.30 am Remembrance Drive, Wamberal	REMEMBER TO REGISTER Frik Gautschi 0404 467 097
23/11/21	Next Meeting: Birding in Canada and Alaska Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	Greg Miles
25/11/21	Swansea Pelagic	Allan Benson 0457 458 274

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 Meeting: CANCELLED

Last Meeting: CANCELLED

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 now reached 700 members which keeps growing steadily each month - great job Malcolm Hill! The Facebook page is a huge success allowing bird-related issues to reach over 600 people on the Central Coast.

Total Fire Ban Days and Outings: Outings may be cancelled on days of total fire bans. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the planned birding site being accessible and the potential risk. This decision will be made by the leader. If the outing is cancelled it will be published on Central Coast Birders Facebook. If in doubt contact the outing leader.

Saving Stamps: Please keep saving used stamps (on paper, trimmed) to pass to Colin Mitchell for donation to charity.

Central Coast Group, Birding NSW - PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2021

Once again the Group will be conducting a Photographic competition. Rules are as follows:

- Each person will be able to submit two photographs in each category.
- The categories are for code 1, code 2 and code 3 birds. The list of birds will be available on our Facebook page and as well as in an email to our members. There will be an award from each category.
- The judge will be Dick Jenkin from the Hunter Bird Observers Club.
- Photographs must be taken in 2021 and within the Central Coast LCA. Please include the date and location with your entry.
- Entries will close on the 30th November 2021
- Winners will be announced at our Members night 25th January 2022
- Email entries to Allan Benson: aejsbenson@bigpond.com

Editor's note- To date there have been zero entries

TWITCHATHON 2021

The Twitchathon window has been extended because of Covid to the of 30th and 31st October and the first two week-ends in November (7th-8th and 14th-15th) The usual categories are available including the 30-hour event, an 8-hour event and a 3-hour event.

Money raised this year will go to Gould's Petrel research.

Donations can be made to The BIGnet bank account which is available for EFT and BPay donations as it was last year. The account details are as follows:

BSB 182 222, account no. 121211833.

The BPay biller code is 20206, ref. 121 211 833

Donations made through a direct transfer to the BIGnet bank account do not attract fees apart from any that your institution may charge. Please make sure that you tell your donors to put the name of your team in the EFT box.

WHAT WAS NEW in September - October and WHAT CAN WE EXPECT in November?

All the Spring migrants have now been recorded with the last being Cicadabird, Brush Cuckoo, Leaden Flycatcher, Dollarbird and White-throated Needle-tail. A Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo has shown well at Yarramalong. There have been some good wader records including Great and Red Knot and a Common Sandpiper at its usual haunt on St Hubert's Island.

Little Terns have started to reappear and Central Coast Council is well ahead of the game with an extensive area of Karagi Point already being fenced. Fingers crossed for another bumper year of fledglings.



Common Cicadabird

There have been some good raptor records in October including an unusually high number of Pacific Baza reports, a Brown Falcon record from Mangrove Mountain and a Little Eagle. Three records of Pacific Emerald Dove are unusual. The Dairy continued to deliver goodies in October with

good number of Latham Snipe being reported. In addition, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterel have been seen regularly. Of even greater interest is a family of six Lewin's Rail and Spotless Crake being recorded.

Of note for the Twitchers: a female Rufous Songlark was seen in Narara. This is a very unusual habitat for this bird but hopefully there will be further records.



Brush Cuckoo



Common Sandpiper

Barn Owls are still moving to the coast because floods and cold weather have caused the mouse plague of the Slopes and Tablelands to collapse! There have been a further two sightings in October.

Carole and John Carpenter had a very interesting observation at their place - a female Glossy Black Cockatoo with an entirely yellow head.

For November we would expect to see flocks of White-throated Needletails so keep an eye out for Pacific Swifts. Breeding will be in full swing so birding should be excellent. Hopefully some western vagrants such as Rufous and Brown Songlark, White-winged Triller and White-browed and Masked Woodswallows will make an appearance.

COMMON MYNAS - "RATS WITH WINGS"?

By: Allan Benson

The popular view of Common Mynas is they are "rats with wings" but the question should be asked - what impact do Common Mynas have on other species and our environment.

Common Myna were introduced from South Asia and released multiple times in various places on the east coast of Australia: for example, in Melbourne in the 1860's and Townsville/Ingham in the 1880's (Menkhorst et al 2017). Common Mynas are now well established in agricultural and urban areas along the eastern seaboard and are spreading inland along the major highways.



There is a common perception that Common Myna have detrimental impact on native wildlife by competing for food resources and nesting sites. However, a study by Lowe et al (2011) conducted around Sydney airport found that "Surveys of frequency of interspecific interactions revealed that the Common Myna did not initiate a significantly greater number of aggressive encounters than did other species. Focal observations of two potential native competitors showed that despite foraging in close proximity, the Common Myna rarely interfered with feeding activity. Assessment of native tree hollow's occupancy found the Common Myna used significantly fewer tree hollows than native species. Analysis of nest site selection indicated that Common Myna choose to nest in more highly modified habitats and in artificial structures rather than vegetation. These findings suggest Common Mynas have little competitive impact on resource use by native bird species in the urban matrix."

In describing the urban matrix on the Central Coast, many areas are akin to open woodland with scattered established trees and suburban gardens. The common species we see are Rainbow Lorikeets, Noisy Miners and Wattlebirds. These species aggressively defend their food and nesting resources. Common Myna are more likely to compete with other ground feeding birds such as Magpie-larks. The rise in number of Common Mynas may have led to a decline in House Sparrows on the Central Coast which now only exist in small numbers in a couple of pockets. House Sparrows are still numerous in inland country towns where Common Mynas are not present or are only present in small numbers. However, the overall picture of the decline of the House Sparrow is more complex. This has been observed as a worldwide phenomenon and has been attributed to a reduction in food resources as we maintain a "tidier" environment.

Common Myna are very intelligent birds and are very adept at finding food in urban environments. One of their food sources is dry dog food which dog owners leave out for their pets. This can result in Mynas becoming a pest by fouling their property. This encourages people to trap Mynas which is done by trapping a single bird to put in a trap which then attracts the flock. Using this method, a whole flock can be eradicated. However, Mynas learn to become wary of traps.

So, are Common Mynas numbers declining on the Central Coast? My impression is they are, particularly in my immediate area in Ourimbah where observations of Mynas are becoming more infrequent. Birddata analysis for 2021 indicates that only 6.4% of surveys contained a record of Common Mynas. However, this has potential to both over- or under- estimate the frequency of sightings. Firstly, we may be under-estimating because there are only a relatively small number of people recording data. As well, our popular birding spots tend to be forested areas which Common Mynas don't inhabit. We may be over-estimating because 19 records are from Waratah Rd, Mangrove Mountain where the same group of Mynas is being repeatedly recorded. Similarly, there 23 records from the Dairy.

The important question if Common Mynas numbers are indeed declining is why? The factors that could impact are food resources, nesting success, predation and possibly human intervention by trapping. It is not obvious why any of the above would have changed over time.

The conclusion that can be reached is that Common Mynas probably have minimal impact on biodiversity, numbers of native species and the “rats with wings” is probably unjustified. On the other hand, aggressive native species particularly Noisy Miners and Rainbow Lorikeets do have a significant impact on the biodiversity in our urban environment while Bell Miners dominate in forested areas where they are present.

References:

Menkhurst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P., Franklin, K. The Australian Bird Guide. CSIRO Publishing. 2017

Lowe, K., Taylor, C, Major, R. Do Common Mynas significantly compete with native birds in urban environments. Journal of Ornithology. March 2011

UNUSUAL GOSFORD-WYONG SIGHTINGS

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2021

Bird names used and the order in which they occur are in accord with the IOC World Birdlist Version 11.1.2021

First Migrant arrival *	Last Migrant departure **	LN = biggest number since January	OW = Over-winter
Brown Quail	2	2/10/2021 Bulls Quarry, Brisbane Water NP	Graham Nelson
Owlet-Nightjar	HC	1-20/9/2021 x3 Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	12/9/2021 Budgewoi	Steve Merrett
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	2	12/9/2021 Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	2	13/9/2021 Norah Head	Shaun Edwards
Pacific Koel * (2 nd record)	1	4/9/2021 Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Pacific Koel *	1	18/9/2021 Wyoming	Barbara Melville
Pacific Koel *	1	18/9/2021 Woy Woy	Lynne Rainford
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	26/9-2/10 Yarramalong	David Scheumaker
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	2-21/9/21 x5 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	12/9/2021 Norah Head	Andrew Robinson
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	30/9-1/10 Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Brush Cuckoo *	HC	12/9/2021 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Pacific Emerald Dove	HC	16/9-10/10 Narara Eco Village/Strickland SF	Richard Cassels
Pacific Emerald Dove	1	21/9/2021 Erina Heights	James Panetta
Pacific Emerald Dove	1	3/10/2021 Forest Of Tranquillity, Ourimbah	John Weigel
Brush Bronzewing	1	20/9/2021 Worthing Rd, Erina Heights	James Panetta
Brush Bronzewing	5	2/10/2021 Bulls Quarry BWNP	Graham Nelson
Topknot Pigeon	18	12/9/2021 Canton Beach	Mel Stretton
Topknot Pigeon	9	22/9/2021 Ourimbah M1 Rest Area	David Schuemaker
Topknot Pigeon	45	10/10/2021 Narara Eco Village	Guy Dutson
Buff-banded Rail	1	12/9/2021 Broadwater Drive, Davistown	Guy Dutson
Buff-banded Rail	2	7/10/2021 Domayne, West Gosford	Darren Earnshaw
Lewin's Rail	HC	11/9-10/10 x5 Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Lewin's Rail	2A+4Y	1/10/2021 Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Russell
Spotless Crane	HC	16/9-10/10 x6 Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Bush Stone-curlew	2	4/10/2021 Davistown Boardwalk	Doug Hocking
Bush Stone-curlew	2	4/10/2021 Henderson Rd, Saratoga	Doug Hocking
Bush Stone-Curlew	HC	3/10/2021 Kincumber Primary School;	Danny O'Brien
Red-necked Avocet	32	4/10/2021 Lake Munmorah	Andrew Robinson
Red-necked Avocet	1	4/10/2021 Ansell's Point, Chittaway	Andrew Robinson
Red-capped Plover	3	15/9/2021 Pelican Pt Norah Head	Christina Port
Black-fronted Dotterel	1	13/9/2021 Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Luke Ullrich
Black-fronted Dotterel	1	25/9/2021 Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Red-kneed Dotterel	1	25/9/2021 Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Latham's Snipe	1	13/9/2021 4 on 17/9 (GN), Dairy Swamp, CCW	David Schuemaker
Bar-tailed Godwit *	23	12/9/2021 Pippi Point, Davistown	Guy Dutson
Bar-tailed Godwit *	51	16-19/9/21 Picnic Pt, The Entrance	Luke Ullrich
Common Greenshank *	1	19/9/2021 Picnic Pt, The Entrance	Andrew Robinson
Common Greenshank	1	10/10/2021 Terilbah Is, North Entrance	Andrew Robinson
Common Sandpiper *	1	4/10/2021 Riley's Island NR	Doug Hocking

Great Knot *	1	19/9/2021	Chittaway Bay, Tuggerah Lake	Andrew Robinson
Red Knot *	2	17/9-5/10	5 on 9/10, Chittaway Bay, Tuggerah Lake	Andrew Robinson
Curllew Sandpiper *	6	9/10/2021	Pelican Pt Norah Head	Andrew Robinson
Red-necked Stint *	52	19/9/2021	Soldiers Point	Andrew Robinson
Red-necked Stint *	71	9/10/2021	Pelican Pt, Norah Head	Andrew Robinson
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	9	12-25/9/21	25 on 25/9, Chittaway Bay	Andrew Robinson
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *	1	20/9/2021	Malvina Pde, Charmhaven	Noel Lonergan
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper*	10	25/9-10/10	Central Coast Wetlands	Andrew Robinson
Whiskered Tern *	1	13/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Mel Stratton
Whiskered Tern *	1	17/9 & 9/10	Chittaway Bay, Tuggerah Lake	Andrew Robinson
Black-necked Stork	1	10/10/2021	Kooinda Waters, Wyong	Ian Dicks
Little Tern	12	5/10/2021	Karagi Pt, The Entrance	per A. Robinson
Black Bittern	1	1/10/2021	Fountains Ck, Wyoming	Darren Earnshaw
Eastern Osprey	2+N	12/9/2021	Harry Moore Oval, Canton Bch, Toukley	Stephen Clark
Eastern Osprey	N+Y	18/9-3/10	The Entrance Channel	Graham Nelson
Eastern Osprey	1+N	2/10/2021	Gosford Stadium	Graham Nelson
Eastern Osprey	N+Y	4/10/2021	Erina Works Depot	Graham Nelson
Black-shouldered Kite	1	12/9-5/10	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Mel Stratton
Black-shouldered Kite	1	4/10/2021	Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Pacific Baza	2	19/9/2021	Forest of Tranquillity	John Weigel
Pacific Baza	2	22/9/2021	Lobster Beach	Wendy Harvey
Pacific Baza	2	26/9/2021	South Kincumber	Laurie Smith
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	3-25/9/21	x10 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	18/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Bucketty	Andrew Robinson
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	19/9/2021	Forest of Tranquillity	John Weigel
Little Eagle	1	1 & 6/10/21	Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Brown Goshawk	1	11/9 & 3/10	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Peter Mortimer
Brown Goshawk	2	19/9/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Brown Goshawk	1	20/9/2021	Avoca Beach	Daniel McKeon
Grey Goshawk	1	11/9/2021	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Grey Goshawk	1	11/9/2021	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Peter Mortimer
Grey Goshawk	1	20/9/2021	Avoca Beach	Daniel McKeon
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	16/9/2021`	Rumbalara Reserve, Gosford	David Scheumaker
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	10/10/2021	Carawah Res, West Gosford	Nikola Markovina
Swamp Harrier	AM	15-22/9/21	Council's Erina Works Depot	Darren Earnshaw
Brahminy Kite	1m	15/9/2021	Pelican Pt, Norah Head	Christina Port
Brahminy Kite	1	26/9/2021	Patonga	Facebook
Square-tailed Kite	1	28/9/2021	South Kincumber	Laurie Smith
Square-tailed Kite	1	28/9 & 2/10	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Square-tailed Kite	1	8/10/2021	Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Australian Boobook	HC	1-24/9/21	X6 nights Ettymalong Ck, Umina	Robert Payne
Australian Boobook	HC	10-18/9/21	Wattletree Rd, Holgate	Eileen Davy
Australian Boobook	HC	18/9/2021	Kendall Cr, Norah Head	Alison Cliff
Australian Boobook	HC	19/9/2021	Wildwood, Kincumber	Diane Warman
Sooty Owl	1	6/10/2021	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Barn Owl	1	28/9/2021	Norahville	Daniel McKeon
Barn Owl	1	2/10/2021	Bateau Bay Rd, Bateau Bay	Sarah Currie
Powerful Owl	HC	8/9-4/10	x5 nights Ettalong Creek, Umina	Robert Payne
Powerful Owl	HC	21/9/2021	Buff Point	Steve Grant
Powerful Owl	HC	1/10/2021	2020 hrs St Norah Head	Michael Price
Azure Kingfisher	1	11/9 & 2/10	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Azure Kingfisher	2	12/9/2021	Jack Gear Oval, Yarramalong	Steven Clark
Azure Kingfisher	1	23/9-5/10	Wyong Dairy Factory	David Schuemaker
Sacred Kingfisher *	2	15/9/2021	Doyalson North	Meryl Newton
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	18/9/2021	Narara Eco Village	Richard Cassels
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	24/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Rainbow Bee-eater *	7	12/9-2/10	Bunning Creek Rd, Yarramalong	Duncan Gibson

Rainbow Bee-eater *	4	13/9/2021	Cedar Brush Creek	David Schuemaker
Rainbow Bee-eater	8	19/9-3/10	Magenta Shores	Meryl Newton
Dollarbird *	1	29/9/2021	Kingfisher Shores & Narara Eco Village	M.Kibby/R.Cassels
Dollarbird *	1	30/9/2021	Mangrove Mtn Church	Kaye Pointer
Dollarbird *	1	1/10/2021	The Ridgeway, Lisarow	Nikola Markovina
Noisy Pitta	2HC	4/9-10/10	x5 Narara Eco Village/Strickland SF	Richard Cassels
Nankeen Kestrel	1	12/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Mel Stratton
Nankeen Kestrel	1	16/9/2021	Woy Woy Tip	Darren Earnshaw
Brown Falcon	2	1/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Peregrine Falcon	1	12/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Mel Stratton
Peregrine Falcon	1	16/9/2021	The Entrance Buildings	Luke Ullrich
Peregrine Falcon	1	21/9/2021	Woy Woy Council Depot	Darren Earnshaw
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	2-17/9/21	x6 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	16/9/2021	Ourimbah Ck Rd ,Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	1/10/2021	Murrumbung HSD Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2	20/9/2021	Billabong St, Woy Woy	Georgie Shaw
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2	6/10/2021	Ettalong	Darren Earnshaw
Little Lorikeet	4	18/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Bucketty	Andrew Robinson
Regent Bowerbird	15	11/9-1/10	Ourimbah Rest Area M1 Motorway	David Schuemaker
Southern Emu-wren	3	23-25/9/21	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Russell
Brown Honeyeater	1	20/9/2021	Magenta Shores	Marj Kibby
Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	24/9/20231	Wyoming	Andrew Robinson
Brown-headed Honeyeater	2	13-17/09/21	x4 Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Brown-headed Honeyeater	5	18/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Bucketty	Andrew Robinson
Striated Pardalote	2	15/9/2021	Thompson Vale Rd, Doyalson	Allan Benson
White-throated Gerygone *	2	15/9/2021	Thompson Vale Rd, Doyalson	Allan Benson
White-throated Gerygone *	2	16/9/2021	Ravensdale Rd, Yarramalong	Allan Benson
White-throated Gerygone*	1	19/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Mangrove Gerygone	2	26/9/2021		Andrew Robinson
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	2	2/10/2021	Central Mangrove	Andrew Robinson
Spotted Quail-thrush	1	16-18/9/21	Settlers Rd Bucketty	Allan Benson
Varied Sittella	4	15/9/2021	Thompson Vale Rd, Doyalson	Allan Benson
Varied Sittella	5	18/9/2021	Settlers Rd Bucketty	Andrew Robinson
Varied Sittella	4	19/9/2021	Ourimbah Ck Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Crested Shrike-tit	2	12/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Crested Shrike-tit	2	1/10/2021	Budgewoi, Lakes Beach Track	Mel Stratton
Crested Shrike-tit	2	2/10/2021	Ourimbah M1 Rest Area	David Scheumaker
Rufous Whistler *	2	15/9/2021	Weonga Place, San Remo	Allan Benson
Rufous Whistler *	4	16/9/2021	Brisbane Water NP, Kariong	Christina Port
Rufous Whistler *	1	24/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Cicadabird*	1	23/9/2021	Mt White	Greg Miles
Cicadabird *	1	10/10/2021	Strickland SF	Guy Dutson
Varied Triller	1	3-10/10/21	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Linda Cuthbert
Dusky Woodswallow	3	11/9/2021	Norah Head	Andrew Robinson
Dusky Woodswallow	2	16-26/9/21	Bucketty Waterhole	Allan Benson
Rufous Fantail *	1	26/9/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Rufous Fantail *	1	28/9/2021	Lakes Beach Bike Track	Stephen Clark
Rufous Fantail *	1	7/10/2021	Wattletree Rd, Holgate	Eileen Davy
Restless Flycatcher	1	13-16/9/21	Putty Beach, Bouddi NP	Tricia Sweet
Black-faced Monarch *	1 *	10/9/2021	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Black-faced Monarch *	1	15/9/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Black-faced Monarch *	1	23/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Black-faced Monarch *	1	25/9/2021	Strickland SF, Narara	Jo Hill
Leaden Flycatcher *	1	10/9/2021	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Leaden Flycatcher *	AM	20/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Leaden Flycatcher *	AM	23/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Russell
Spangled Drongo	2	22-28/9/21	Lakes Beach Bike Track	Shaun Edwards

Leaden Flycatcher *	AM	20/9/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Leaden Flycatcher *	AM	23/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Russell
Spangled Drongo	2	22-28/9/21	Lakes Beach Bike Track	Shaun Edwards
Jacky Winter	5	13-16/9/21	Bunning Creek Rd, Yarramalong	David Schuemaker
Jacky Winter	2	13/9/2021	Ravensdale	David Schuemaker
Rose Robin	1	1/10/2021	Hidden Valley, Jilliby SCA	Andrew Robinson
Rose Robin	1	4-10/10/21	Driftwood Ave, Narara/Narara Eco V.	Guy Dutson
European Blackbird	1	11-23/9/21	x4 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Rufous Songlark	AF	10/10/2021	Narara Eco Village	Guy Dutson
Bassian Thrush	1	5-26/9/21	x2 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Bassian Thrush	1	23/9 & 3/10	Ourimbah Creek RTA	Nikolas Markinova
Bassian Thrush	1	28/9/2021	Somersby	Chantelle Black
Double-barred Finch	23	18/9/2021	Weonga Place, San Remo	Meryl Newton

Breeding and some other records September - October 2021

Wood Duck: 2A+2Y Man. Mtn 13/9, 2+10 Ansells Pt 15/9 (MP), **Pacific Black Duck:** A+8Y Bluehaven Wetlands 18/9 (MNe), A+9 ducklings Ourimbah Creek RTA Res 23/9 (NMa), 2A+19 ducklings Tascott 3/10 (TSh); **Mallard:** F+5Y Ansells Pt 15/9 (KPo), F+7 ducklings Woy Woy 26/9 (TElsey); **Tawny Frogmouth:** A+N Watanobbi 24/9 (DHo); **Channel-billed Cuckoo:** Other arrivals, 1 Budgewoi 16/9 (SMe), 1 Toukley 17/9 (LLe) & Narara Eco Village (RCa), 1 Ettymalong Ck Umina 22/9 (RPa), 1 Mangrove Mtn 29/9 (KPo), A+N Narara Eco Village 10/10 (GDU); **Pacific Koel:** HC Wattletree Rd Holgate 18/9 (EDa) & Kendall Cr Norah Hd (ACI), 1 Tathra Taila HSD 2 Colongra Bay 30/9 (MKi); **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo:** IM hit window Henry Kendall Gardens 28/9 (RMO), 2 Ourimbah M1 Rest Area 2-3/10 (SCI), 2 Driftwood Ave Narara 4/10 1 Narara Eco Village 10/10 (GDU); **Dusky Moorhen:** 2A+3Y Henry Kendall gardens Wyoming 11/9, 2A+4Y on 17/9 (RMO); **Silver Gull:** Nestlings at Koolewong **Eastern Osprey:** 1 Patonga Ck 18/9 (MWhyte), 2 Wyong Ck at Milk Factory 29/9 (DSc), 4 Avoca Lagoon 4/10 (AMu); **Pacific Baza:** 1 Ourimbah Ck Ourimbah 12 & 23/9 (DEa), 2+N Yarramalong 26/9 (ABe), 1 Central Coast Wetlands 3/10 (MSt), 2 Narara Eco Village 8-11/9, 4 on 25/9 (RCa), 1 Murrumbung HSD Mardi 9/10 (JCa); **Brown Goshawk:** 2 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 1-17/9 (MP), 1 Narara Eco Village 4/9 & 1/10 (RCa), 1m Terrigal 26/9 (DEa), 1 Wambina NR 2/10 (NMa), 1 North Wyong 9/10 (ARo); **Grey Goshawk:** 1 Narara Eco Village, 4/9-1/10 (RCa), 1 Ourimbah 1/10 (ARo), 1 Mt Penang Gardens 2/10 (GNe), 1 South Kincumber 6/10 (LSm); **Southern Boobook:** HC Ettymalong Ck Umina 1/9-24/9 on 5 nights (RPa), HC Wildwood, Kincumber 19/9 (DWa), HC Narara Eco Village 28/9-7/10 x3 (RCa), HC Henry Kendall Gardens 1/10 (RMO), Narara 0100 hrs 4/10 (JPe); **Powerful Owl:** HC 0500 hrs Murrumbung HSD Mardi 9/10 (CCa); **Laughing Kookaburra:** N in termite mound Pearl Bch Arboretum 18/9 (CEd), **Azure Kingfisher:** 1 Avoca Lagoon 1/10 (AMu), 1 Ourimbah Ck Ourimbah 5/10 (DEa); **Sacred Kingfisher:** 1 Avoca Lgn 1/10 (Amu); **Peregrine Falcon:** 1 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 18/9 (KP), 1 Narara Ecovillage 5/10 (GDU); **Dollarbird:** 1 Toukley GC 2/10 (LLe), 4 Henry Kendall Gardens Wyoming 3/10 (RMO) & Doyle St Kincumber (LSm), 3 Lake Munmorah 7/10 (FUI); **Rainbow Bee-eater:** 2A+N Magenta 2/10 (AMu); **Eastern Spinebill:** 2+N Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 9/9 (KPo); **Brown Thornbill:** 2A+1J Man. Mtn 15/9, 24/9 (KPo); **Striated Thornbill:** 2A+3DY Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 5/9 (KP); **Varied Sittella:** 4+N Mangrove Mtn 2-23/9 (KP), 4 Erina Works Depot 1/10 (DEa), **White-browed Scrub-wren:** 2A+N Man. Mtn 26/9 (KP); **Yellow-throated Scrub-wren:** 3N Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 5/9 (KP); **Rockwarbler:** 2A+N Koolewong 30/9 (TSw); Other **Leaden Flycatcher** arrivals: 2 Avoca 30/9 (DEa), 2 Budgewoi 1-2/10 (MSt); **Grey Fantail:** 2A+J Ourimbah M1 Rest Area 2/10 (PMo); **Eastern Yellow Robin:** 2+N Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 9-11/9, 2A+J on 17/9 (MPo); **Bassian Thrush:** FDY Holgate 9/10 (WFe), 1 Strickland SF 10/10 (GDU); **Red-browed Finch:** 2+N Man. Mtn 9/9, 17/9 (MP).

Good Birding!

SOUTH WYONG SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS

Regular surveys have been booked for the Wednesday following the club meeting at 9.30 am at the Ibis Road entrance. The July, August and September surveys were cancelled. **This month's survey is also cancelled.**

2021 SWANSEA PELAGICS Thursday 25th November: **TO BE CONFIRMED**

Please note: The boat is taking 18 @ \$120, so regulars get priority.

CENTRAL COAST TWITCH - SEPTEMBER 2021

Andrew Robinson	252	Kaye Pointer	191	Michael Scobie	149
Allan Benson	247	John Carpenter	189	Gabrielle Rees	143
Dean Purcell	235	Noel Lonergan	186	Graeme Catt	142
Christina Port	230	Doug Hocking	186	Robyn Price	142
Graham Nelson	226	Margaret Pointer	181	Judy Clark	140
Nick Carson	201	David Catt	165	Coleen Southall	129
Daniel McKeon	199	Rowena Wallace	153	Archie Brennan	119
Carole Carpenter	195	Diana Hogan	152	Mike Kuhl	104
Krystyna Lonergan	194	Andrew Melville	151		

We are now approaching the home straight and Andrew Robinson has continued to maintain a very solid lead. A total of 260 looks possible which will be an excellent result for 2021 where sea bird records have been scarce as the Pelagics have been limited and western vagrants have yet to appear.

BIRD DATA SURVEYS 2021

Nick Carson	367	Guy Dutson	63	M & K Pointer	22	Robyn Price	18
Allan Benson	305	Andrew Melville	62	Daniel McKeon	20		
Graham Nelson	216	Frik Gautschi	49	Doug Hocking	20		
Rebecca Citroni	85	Michael Scobie	23	Anna Pillich	18		

For September. 137 surveys were recorded with 24 active observers which is a decrease of 18 surveys over the previous month. YTD, we have recorded 1410 surveys with 74 active observers. This could extrapolate to close to 2000 surveys for 2021 which would be a significant improvement on last year.

Bird data is one way, as a birder, you can make a contribution to bird conservation. We will ramp up our efforts on 2021 and have a target of 2000 surveys. We need more observers, putting in more surveys.

The "Alan Morris" Trophy for 2021 will only count surveys done in the Central Coast LGA.

(NB: Mogo is not in this area)

4BBRW THE NEW WORLD RECORD HOLDER

Thanks to Geoff White - a photographer in NSW - who was in the right place at the right time and captured this image of 4BBRW, (which he posted on the Pūkoro Mirinda facebook page), about 5 hours after 4BBRW touched down in Australia on the coast of NSW close to the QLD border. Our best calculations are that 4BBRW flew non-stop from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Alaska to close to the Gold Coast Airport at Coolangatta, before moving a few km to Kingscliff and then a further 12km south to Hastings Point where the photo was taken.

4BBRW has flown into the record books with the longest nonstop flight by a land bird ever recorded. A flight that lasted 239 hours and covered a minimum 13,050km, averaging 55kph land speed for the entire flight.

I'll leave you to get your heads around this extraordinary feat, at least in our minds it is extraordinary. For the godwits it is just what they are so beautifully equipped to do. It is up to us to ensure they can continue to do this well into the future by ensuring the estuaries and harbours are safe, clean and full of food for them.



SWIFT PARROT AND REGENT HONEYEATER UPDATE

By: Beau Meney, Woodland Birds Project Office Birdlife Australia

Despite the Covid-19 setbacks, we continued to receive consistent Swift Parrot sightings from across much of the species' range in Round 2 (July 17 – Aug 29) - albeit seemingly more so from urban areas since August 4 – with sightings

occurring in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT. Victoria continued to be the source of a significant portion of sightings, with more than 80% of total sightings emanating from locations across the state. In contrast, Swift Parrots have not been reported in QLD since early July. In this time, we also continued to see reports of Swift Parrots in reasonably sized flocks at several locations across Victoria and NSW including **(VIC)**; Bundoora, Bailieston, Sunbury, Springvale Botanical Cemetery, St Arnaud, Lysterfield Park and **(NSW)**; Doonside. Although falling outside the Round 2 survey period, we also saw a spike in flock size seen in Kambah, ACT with 35 birds reported on August 30. Many of these locations continue to be a source of records in recent weeks.

Swift Parrots have also begun arriving back in Tasmania in preparation for the upcoming breeding season, signalling the 'tapering-off' of the mainland season which will gradually come to a close over the next few weeks. Although our biannual survey periods have concluded for the year, we still encourage you all to keep an eye/ear out for Swifties and see them off on their journey south to the breeding grounds in Tassie – and to of course report your sightings through to us via our Birddata portal, or via email (woodlandbirds@birdlife.org.au). Where Covid-19 restrictions allow, we also encourage those that are interested to complete 'Swift Parrot Search' surveys at fixed locations near you, which will provide us with important information in regards to food availability and Swift Parrot distribution during this latter part of the season.



In the coming weeks, we will be working to bring you all our final report detailing key updates on both Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters from surveys and sightings in 2021. We will also endeavour to meet one-on-one with each of our regional coordinators to reflect on the first year of *Swift Parrot Search* and receive feedback on how we can better support them and our volunteers in 2022. Regional summary reports providing insights into *Swift Parrot Search* survey progress across 2021 are also expected to be distributed to each of our regional coordinators by year's end, with these reports to be made available via our website soon afterwards.

Big thanks again – to regional coordinators and volunteers alike - for all of your invaluable contributions so far this year. Without your efforts, the implementation of the *Swift Parrot Search* program would simply not be possible.

Regent Honeyeater

Although it continued to be a very quiet (and somewhat worrying) winter for Regent Honeyeaters, it has been a very promising start to the 2021 breeding season. At the time of writing the collaborative monitoring effort by the BirdLife Australia Woodland Birds Team and Australian National University researchers has resulted in up to ten nests being found, some of which have already fledged young. The majority of these nests are in the Upper Hunter region, mostly in the vicinity of Goulburn River National Park. Another nest is active in the Barraba area and there has been one nest thus far in the Capertee Valley, which unfortunately failed. There have also been three pairs of Regent Honeyeaters found in the Lower Hunter region, though none of these birds are breeding as yet. Meanwhile there have been reports of up to five Regent Honeyeaters in Victoria, including a pair comprised of a male bird that successfully raised three chicks at Chiltern last year with the leg band combination 'Orange-Metal/Pink-Pink'. Let's hope he achieves this again!

Birds have been feeding on a variety of blossom sources, but mostly Mugga and Caley's Ironbark, as well as Yellow Box, White Box and Needle-leaf Mistletoe. With a bumper spring-summer expected for Eucalypt blossom across the Regent Honeyeater range, we are hopeful that the 2021 season will be the best breeding season for several years (since 2017 at least).

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR TO THE NSW COASTLINE – a Black-fronted Tern

By: Mick Roderick



On 20 June 2021 Michael Kearns was sea watching from a vantage point at Fort Scratchley, Newcastle. A strong southerly wind was blowing in association with a low-pressure weather system that had been moving up the NSW coast. He was there with the intention of looking for seabirds flying close to shore in association with the weather system. Shortly into his sea watch, a tern that he initially identified as an Arctic-type flew across in front of where he was standing. He posted the observation (without photos) to the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) email chat group – 'Hunterbirding'. Another member of HBOC (Jon Spicer-Bell) happened to read the email and then ventured up to Fort Scratchley. Both Michael and Jon managed to get photos of the bird and Jon subsequently posted to the NSW Rare Birds Facebook page.

Gus Daly suggested that the bird was actually a Black-fronted Tern *Chlidonias albostratus* and he was indeed correct – an adult bird – a truly remarkable record. By this stage, the bird had been watched by Michael and Jon as it foraged over the lawn at Fort Scratchley. It was even photographed taking an earth worm from the grass! This is classic Black-fronted Tern behaviour, but hitherto only ever seen in New Zealand, where the species is a breeding endemic. In fact, this was the first observation ever of a Black-fronted Tern away from New Zealand.

It is a very distinct bird – even for a tern - at any age. It is doubtful that birds have been overlooked by birders in Australia before. One of the world's four 'marsh terns', Black-fronted Terns breed only in the braided rivers of the South Island; a very special habitat that also provides breeding sites for other New Zealand endemics such as Wrybills and Banded Dot-terels. It is however, an extremely dynamic and restricted habitat, prone to the vagaries of weather systems and human disturbance, including impacts from hydroelectricity development. It is also a habitat that used by introduced mammalian predators such as rats, stoats, ferrets, cats and hedgehogs.

Some of its foraging grounds on the South Island are also being lost to viticulture.

It is not surprisingly then, a threatened species, listed as Endangered under IUCN criteria. It is also a rare species, with population estimates varying but centred around 5,000 individuals.

So how did a Black-fronted Tern come to be flying around a lawn on the foreshore of Newcastle? It is not a long-distance migrant, being restricted to New Zealand, but it does make post-breeding dispersals, mostly to the coast of the South Island. Some birds however, disperse (perhaps "migrate"?) to the North Island. The numbers crossing Cook Strait seem to be normally small, best expressed in tens of birds. However, in autumn 2021 there were unusually high counts of them on the North Island, with reports of up to 160 birds at Hawkes Bay. It still doesn't explain how the bird traversed the Tasman Sea and of course we will never know. But perhaps another clue lies in another one of its foraging habits, which is to feed out on the ocean. They have apparently been recorded foraging up to 50 km offshore, so perhaps this bird was foraging a long way offshore from the west coast of the North Island and got caught in the low-pressure system. It is also worth noting that a specimen was possibly collected on Norfolk Island in the late 19th century, though without sufficient detail to be accepted as a record for an Australian territory (McAllan 2000), so perhaps this wasn't the first bird recorded away from New Zealand after all, and that raises the possibility that some of these birds could visit Australia more regularly.

Despite extensive searches by numerous birders on the afternoon of the observation and for several days afterwards, the bird has not been resighted. One can speculate ad infinitum about where the bird could have ended up and just like its arrival, its departure will also remain a mystery. A submission is in preparation for the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) and assuming the record is accepted, it will make the Hunter Estuary the only place in the world where all four species of *Chlidonias* terns have been recorded. And it is also a short distance from where the Aleutian Terns arrive each year (Farquhar Inlet).

THE PROPER USE OF PLAYBACK IN BIRDING

By: David Sibley

With the recent surge in the availability of digital audio devices, the use of playback to attract birds into view has increased exponentially. This has fuelled an ongoing debate among birders about the ethical issues surrounding the use of recorded bird songs in the field. There is no debate that playback (playing a recording of a bird's song) is one of the most powerful tools in a birder's struggle to see birds in the wild. Birds that might otherwise be too shy to come into the open can be lured into view by the sound of a potential rival. Whether this trickery has any significant impact on the birds is not so clear.

Fundamentally, birding disturbs birds. Everything that we do has an impact on birds. A total ban on playback (as some advocate) should equally include a total ban on pishing and mimicking bird calls. In some situations, playback can be less disruptive than other methods of attracting birds, at times even less disruptive than sitting quietly and waiting for a bird to show.

Most of the debate about playback has focused on a polarizing question: Is playback ethical, or not? With no concrete evidence supporting either side it remains unresolved. In this post I assume that it *will* be used, and that it is just one of many birding activities that should be practiced with sensitivity. Below I focus on suggesting some best practices to allow birders to enjoy the birds while minimizing the impact of playback, on birds and on other birders.

To be most effective and to minimize disturbance to the birds:

- have a plan – choose your spot and know your quarry, don't just play sounds
- play snippets of sound – less than 30 seconds at a time, then a long pause before the next snippet (more silence than playback) and after five minutes or so give it a rest (but stay alert).
- be subtle – you are trying to tease the bird into the open, not stir up a fight

To minimize disturbance to other birders:

- No surprises – Announce your intention to play a recording, and hold the device above your shoulder while it plays (to avoid any confusion or false alarms)
- Keep the volume low, and use only occasional snippets of sound. Do not broadcast loud or continuous sound.

How does it work?

Playback works best on territorial species during their nesting season, when the real bird thinks the recording is a rival threatening to encroach on either its territory or its mate. The territorial male will then (ideally) come out to confront the intruder by patrolling the edge of its territory and singing, or it may stay silent and close to its mate to guard against an adulterer. For her part, sometimes the female will approach the recording to assess the “new guy” and may even solicit some attention. Playback will arouse the curiosity of any species at any time of year, but the response is most dramatic from a territorial bird in breeding season, and weakest from non-territorial birds such as migrants.

THE DEBATE

Arguments in favour of playback:

These are speculative and/or subjective. We are bird-watchers, and watching birds almost always involves some form of disturbance. Birding disturbs birds, and there are times when playback might offer a less disruptive way of seeing a bird:

- Playback reduces the need to physically enter the bird’s habitat, and therefore (presumably) reduces damage to the habitat and disturbance to the birds. For example, playing a recording from a roadside so that twenty people can see a bird might be better for the bird than having those twenty people walking or sitting for a long period in that habitat.
- Playback targets a single species, without disturbing other species, which is presumably better than physically walking through a bird’s territory, or using broad-spectrum attractants like pishing, which affect all species.
- It’s possible that in some circumstances playback may increase the social standing of a male bird among its peers
- Playback allows people to enjoy birds more fully (in this way it is analogous to bird feeding). It attracts birds into view that would otherwise be difficult to see well.

Arguments against playback:

Most of these arguments are speculative, only the first one listed is documented by research on one species, and the last three are aesthetic impacts on other birders:

- Aggressive playback (with the real bird coming away as the “loser”) in at least one species can cause a male bird to lose status with rivals and its mate, leading the female to seek extra-pair copulations.
- Playback causes unnatural stress on the bird – the territorial male wastes energy chasing a phantom intruder
- Playback lures birds into the open, exposing them to predators
- Playback distracts birds from other more useful activities, such as foraging.
- Birder’s dislike hearing an electronic recording, as it detracts from the “natural” experience of birding
- Birders experience increased stress from confusion and false alarms when the song of a sought-after species turns out to be a recording.
- Playback is “cheating”, and will create lazy birders who fail to develop good field skills.

RESEARCH

No research has demonstrated a negative impact of playback on birds at the population level. One study has found an impact on the status of individual males (see next paragraph). That doesn’t mean the practice is benign, it just means that no negative effects have ever been documented. Effects that have been documented include raised testosterone levels in males, and increased maternal behaviour (nest-building, etc) in females exposed to playback. These observed effects could have either negative or positive outcomes.

When song is played in a bird’s territory, that bird’s response to the “intruder” is watched attentively by neighbouring males and by females. In one study (Mennill et al 2002) high-ranking male Black-capped Chickadees exposed to aggressive playback lost status as their mates and neighbours apparently perceived them as losers, unable to drive away the phantom intruder. This led to a loss of fitness as their mate went to other males to seek extra-pair copulations. That study found no change in the status of low-ranking males, and no reduction in the overall fledging rate of the nests in the area, just a change in the parentage of some offspring. To speculate, this study suggests another possibility, that males exposed to infrequent playback could potentially *gain* status when they “win” the confrontation and drive away the phantom intruder.

It is important to stress that this is a single study, of a single species, and the results (if typical) may not be applicable to other species. Researchers generally agree that the effects of playback are poorly-known, but are probably (paradoxically) both far-reaching and small.

In contrast, research on Black-capped Vireos found that portable stereo systems broadcasting vireo songs at maximum volume for over six hours a day throughout the breeding season actually *attracted* vireos to previously unoccupied suitable habitat in Texas. The vireos apparently treated the recordings “as if they were birds with very small territories” (Ward and Schlossberg, 2004). Early in the season, males counter sang with the recordings, but as the breeding season progressed, they responded less and less, just as other species are known to habituate to the songs of established neighbours. These nesting pairs, subjected to loud playback for hours each day, established and retained their territories and had very high fledging success from their nests (Schlossberg and Ward, 2004).

What Not to do

Under no circumstances should you play a recording continuously or at very high volume. The epitome of bad playback etiquette is the birder who walks around with a device continuously and loudly broadcasting sound, or the photographer who sets up a device on continuous playback and waits for the bird to fly in. This is ineffective, unnecessary, and is the kind of playback most likely to be harmful to birds and disturbing to other birders.

Respect for the birds - To be really effective, playback requires just as much care and “field-craft” as any other birding technique. You need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the habits and behaviour of the bird you are trying to lure.

Plan carefully and understand your quarry so that you can guess where the bird is, or where it is likely to be. If you have already heard it or seen it, consider those locations when deciding where to play audio. You must be in (or very near) the bird’s territory to get a useful response.

Choose your spot and set the stage – Visualize the scenario of the bird coming into view. How will it approach the recording, and where will it sit so that you can see it? You should play the recording from a location that offers the bird a comfortable approach through its preferred habitat, and also has openings, edges, and/or prominent perches where it will come into view. Many playback efforts are unsuccessful either because the bird will not cross unsuitable habitat, or because dense vegetation allows it to approach closely while remaining hidden.

Begin by playing the recording quietly for just a few seconds – for example just two or three songs, then stop, watch, and listen.

Use short snippets – If there is any response, try very short snippets of song after that, even stopping the recording after half of a normal song, to try to tease the bird into the open without posing a serious challenge to its self-esteem.

Watch for a response – If there is no obvious response after 30-60 seconds, play another 15-30 seconds of sound. Remember that the bird may respond by approaching silently, or by guarding its mate, so a lack of song is not necessarily a lack of response, and you can assume that you are being watched. Watch the vegetation carefully on all sides for an approach, and also watch and listen for a response from neighbouring males.

Remain calm – If you still don’t detect any response, play the recording again, watch and wait, and repeat. But don’t keep this up longer than about five minutes, and resist the urge to finish with a prolonged, loud barrage of song.

Check back later – Many birds will remain silent in the immediate aftermath of the playback, and then begin singing vigorously minutes later. Males in other territories might monitor the playback, and the challenge to their neighbour, and also be stimulated to sing minutes later. If you can wait around, or circle back to check on the area after 10 to 30 minutes, you may find that the desired response to playback is occurring then.

Respect for fellow birders

Be courteous – Before starting, ask your fellow birders if anyone objects to using playback.

Don’t surprise people – Before each burst of playback, announce to the group that you are about to start playback (just quietly saying “playback” will do), and hold the device up above your head during playback so other birders can see at a glance the source of the sound.

Be unobtrusive – Keep the volume low and play only short clips of sound – 30 seconds or less – then pause to watch and listen for a response.

IN CONCLUSION

With playback, you are effectively teasing a bird into the open, just like trying to get a fish to bite a lure. If a fish makes a pass at your lure on one cast, you wouldn’t switch to a bigger, more colourful lure and throw it right on top of the fish over and over. No... you would use the same lure, cast it carefully and gently beyond the fish, and retrieve it with as much finesse as you can muster. In the same way, if you are trying to attract a bird into the open and it shows some interest in what you are doing, your next move should be the same thing again but lighter, with more finesse, trying to pique the bird’s curiosity.

It is up to all of us to encourage our fellow birders to behave responsibly in the field. Field trip leaders who use playback should make an effort to educate their clients about the proper use of playback. If trip participants want their leader to use less or more playback, they should have a calm and reasoned discussion about it. In many cases we will need to educate new birders about the impact they have by playing recordings from the app they just downloaded to their phone. In the face of all this, it is understandable that heavily-visited parks and refuges often choose the easily-enforceable solution of a total ban on playback, and that should be respected.

As in all things related to birds, there is a lot that is unknown about their response to playback. More research on the effects of playback, including varied species with different social systems, would be very helpful. In the meantime, being courteous and respectful to the birds and to fellow birders should avoid most of the potential conflicts and allow us to continue to enjoy birding with minimal impact on the birds.

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) REPORT FOR 2020/21 SEASON

By Mike Tarburton

This season there were 3194 reports sent in, or published where I could find them. This is significantly less than the 4681 reports last season. Unfortunately, the number of reports that did not give a count of the birds was still significant although it was down from 111 to 66 which is an improvement but still not as good as the 30 two years ago. The largest flock reported was an estimate over 2 hours of 6,000 birds. This was seen at Surfside in Southern NSW by Demetrios Bertzeletos on 22nd March. It is 52 years since a flock of that size has been reported, and I am convinced it made up a majority of the total population of WTNTs. This is supported by the small numbers seen subsequently, and presumably after the large flock had departed Australia. Earlier there was one flock of 1,200 at north of Kalang River Bridge in NSW (John Gale). A flock of 800 was seen at Griffin in Qld (Andy Jensen) and 756 were reported from Mt Ida Track, Heathcote Greytown N.P. Vic (Michael Ramsey). A flock of 690 were seen at Lake Purrumbete in Vic by George & Chrissy Appleby.

This season, there were no records for June, one for July (NSW) and none for August. Of the three sightings made in September, two were from Qld and one from NSW, so probably represent new arrivals. There were 105 sightings for October, compared to 301 for last season. The first Victorian sightings were made by Liz Hackett at Wangaratta on 10th Oct. The first ACT sightings were made by Jean Cassburn on 2 Oct. – much earlier than normal for ACT. Daniel Terrington, also saw 80 in Vic on 28 Oct. – a bit earlier than usual. The first & only WA sighting that I have is of 3 birds seen on Cocos Island by Jennifer Spry on 30 Nov.

The first sighting from Tasmania was again of 2 birds and seen on 28th Dec at Mt William N.P. by A.H.H. The first South Australian sighting was made at Ewens Ponds C.P. by Matthew Vinikondih on 26st Jan. Three days later Hugh Possingham saw 4 WTNT at Naracoorte Caves N.P. On the 8th Feb, Edward Smith saw 45 birds at Dry Creek Native Forest Reserve. One WTNT was seen in the N.T. at Daly Waters by Mark Gardner on 19 Dec.

The same Japanese researchers that I mentioned in last year's summary report have also done something that I suggested some years ago would be worth trying – building artificial nest boxes. No one in Siberia has taken up this suggestion and the illegal logging and fires started by the illegal loggers are continuing to reduce the number of natural nest sites this bird needs for breeding. These men had been studying these birds at their nests and realised they preferred large based tree hollows. Another thing that motivated these men to experiment with artificial nest boxes was the fact that the Japanese Government concreted up two of their study hollows, so that they would not have to pay for damages if the tree fell over! In Europe, the Common Swift usually takes 3 or 4 years to get used to a new artificial nest box and start to use it but on Hokkaido the large-based nest boxes were all used in the first year.

A significant sighting this season was a photographic record of one WTNT roosting in the foliage near the top (12m up) of a Eucalypt NE of Toowoomba in Qld. This was made by James Sparshott.

The sources of my data collection this season are listed here in descending order: eBird 1253, Direct e-mail/phone 875, birdata 235, Bellingen Birders via Richard Jordan 84, **per Alan Morris 51**, biocache 41, Eremaea Birdline 28,



FSCB per Barbara Jones 23, via Chris Healey @ BLEG 14, via Dick Cooper 12, waxwingeco 10, my wife on Facebook 10, iNaturalist 5, Gang Gang 4, The New Frogmouth, Cairns 3, via Russ Lamb 3, birdpedia 2, birding-Aus 2, Birdlife SE SA 2, The Twitcher 2, , via Eric Woehler 2 via Martin Butterfield 2, via Michael Dahlem 2, per Bob Semmens 1, via Ashley Carlson 1, CBOC 1. **A big thank you** is due to local bird club officials who have forwarded sightings from their members – very much appreciated.

The average flock size this season was 27. This compares with 28, 26, 32, & 30 for the four previous years. Each of these figures is significantly lower than the mean of 33 for the decade 2010-2020. Without the flock of 6,000 the average flock size this season is 23 – the lowest recorded yet. The average flock size after the sighting of the 6,000 was just 9 (n = 85).

Thanks again to all those who have taken the trouble to send me your sightings. It does not matter whether you sent in 1 report or more than 100, they are all useful in helping determine the WTNT population status and defining other aspects of their behaviour.

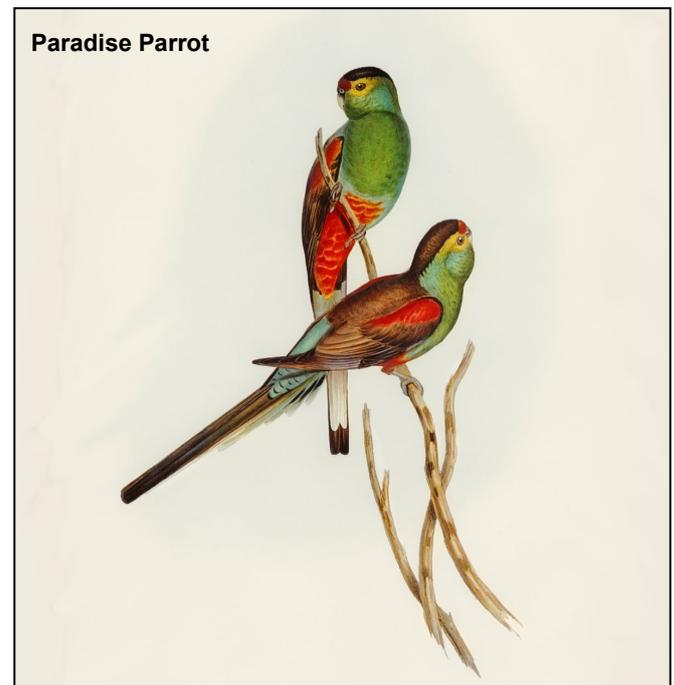
THE STORY OF THE PARADISE PARROT – THE ONLY MAINLAND AUSTRALIAN BIRD MARKED ‘EXTINCT’

By: Paul Daley

Few but the most dedicated ornithologist will know anything about Australia’s Paradise parrot. That is because it has the dubious distinction of being the only mainland Australian bird marked “extinct” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Its premature vanishment almost a century ago, meanwhile, remains prescient today when it comes to how best to protect other threatened Australian avian species.

That the Paradise parrot – *Psephotellus pulcherimus* – was already on the verge of extinction by 1900 in its habitat on the Darling Downs in the Queensland colony speaks volumes about the dramatic environmental impact of colonisation on native grassy woodlands. Indeed, its near disappearance by the beginning of the 20th century happened in a part of the continent where the most extreme frontier violence of the late 1800s and early 1900s occurred. This resulted in the killings of potentially tens of thousands of Indigenous people and the diminution of their land-management practises including fire usage. As James Cook University historian Russell McGregor writes in CSIRO Publishing’s Historical Records of Australian Science series: “... the environmental transformations wrought by colonists, probably including the changed fire regimes consequent on Aboriginal dispossession, were deadly to the Paradise Parrot. By the turn of the 20th century, the species had dwindled to the point that many feared it might not survive. There were no confirmed sightings in the first two decades of that century.”

McGregor’s paper charts the rediscovery of the Paradise Parrot 100 years ago when Cyril Jerrard sighted a pair of the distinctive birds on his property near Gayndah in the Burnett district of Queensland. It also looks at the conservation legacy of Alec Chisholm, a campaigning amateur ornithologist and one of Australia’s most popular pioneering nature writers, who helped rediscover the Paradise Parrot before chronicling its swift demise.



McGregor’s book about Chisholm – *Idling in Green Places: A Life of Alec Chisholm* – was shortlisted for the 2020 National Biography Award:

“I became intrigued by the ways in which he tried to cultivate a conservationist ethos in the public by encouraging an emotional connection with nature, especially birds,” McGregor told Guardian Australia. “In some ways it was like conservation today; in some ways very different. I also became intrigued by the extent to which his fame faded in his old age and after his death.” In 1917 as a 27-year-old Brisbane-based journalist, Chisholm set out to determine if the parrot still lived. He investigated many false sightings. On 11 December 1921, Jerrard told Chisholm he had identified a pair of the birds. Jerrard soon saw the pair again – with perhaps six others he assumed were their chicks. On

18 March 1922, Jerrard sent Chisholm photos of the birds on their termite mound nest. It was the first time the birds had ever been photographed. But portents for their nesting were grim; once they abandoned the nest, Jerrard discovered, their eggs were rotten. The photographs mark another “first”. Never before had a photograph of an Australian bird been accepted as proof of existence. Incredibly, prior to this the existence of even threatened species was confirmed by shooting a specimen and skinning it. “That is still the procedure under certain circumstances today, but in the 1920s, specimen collecting by amateurs was rife and the gun was as normal a birding accoutrement as a pair of field glasses,” McGregor writes.

Nonetheless, the continued collection of rare species was becoming ever more controversial. And Chisholm was among the most vociferous opponents of it.

Several times in the 1920s he clashed with the veteran South Australian ornithologist Edwin Ashby, who maintained that amateur collecting was not only essential for the advancement of science but also an admirable “character-building” exercise. Chisholm, McGregor recounts, wrote that the average private collector “is a relic of barbarism and a perversion of civilisation. He is more; he is a relic of sin, masquerading under the honoured name of science”. Countless Paradise Parrots had already been shot and skinned, part-paving their road to extinction. They were in museum drawers, having been taxidermied into adornments for colonial mantle pieces and collected for science beginning with the bird killed by zoological collector John Gilbert in 1844 (he described it as “multicoloured and superlatively beautiful”) and sent to his ornithologist employer, renowned ornithologist John Gould (of the famed bird drawings). But nobody was shooting at Gayndah Paradise Parrots. That Chisholm was the only one to seek them out and see them during a two-day visit in 1922 probably afforded the birds a little more life. “Even before he sighted the parrots, Chisholm pondered the causes of their precipitous decline,” McGregor writes. “He was not sure of the precise factors, but he knew they resulted from European settlement and included, especially, the excessive and poorly timed burning of grasslands, trapping for the aviary trade and the ravages of feral cats.” Chisholm lamented that the bird’s “fatal gift of beauty” had effectively led to its demise and, as McGregor observes, “he understood that it was human induced – more specifically, European-induced – environmental change that was impelling the Paradise parrot towards extinction”.

Jerrard last reported to Chisholm having seen the parrot in 1927. Jerrard’s neighbours last saw it in 1929. Plausible reports of sightings in the 30s and 40s turned out to reference observances of the birds decades earlier. Capture and relocation of the Paradise Parrot from Gayndah was never apparently considered in the way it was for other threatened species such as the Superb Lyrebird. Neither was a sanctuary considered. Captive breeding and releasing into natural habitat – which is common today – was considered for the Paradise Parrot. Chisholm and Jerrard planned to do so. But that was abandoned when Jerrard found the rotten eggs in 1922. “While national parks were being gazetted across Australia – including in Queensland’s most scenic and pristine country – the Paradise Parrot’s habitat was never going to get a look-in. “The Paradise Parrot was stunningly beautiful but among its misfortunes was the fact that its habitat was not, and failed to meet the aesthetic standards demanded for contemporary national park declarations . . . it was open, grassy woodland of a kind so common that Australians took it for granted,” McGregor writes. “Conservationists could make a case for saving a gorgeous bird, but preserving a prosaic landscape was, in the 1920s and 1930s, a bridge too far.”

Despite extinction the Paradise Parrot has unfortunately failed to evoke Australian imagination in the same way as other threatened or vanished species. Not least, perhaps, the Tasmanian Tiger – *Thylacine* – which has become something of a mythic creature in national imagination amid continued (unverified) reported sightings and occasional competitions and rewards for finding one.

So much of Chisholm’s advocacy for the Paradise Parrot, and the fate of the bird itself, seems prescient to today’s threatened avian species amid the spectre of climate change and the recent spate of related bushfires to native habitat.

In terms of the parrot’s significance, when it comes to saving other avian species today, McGregor says: “I think we need a particular suite of intellectual, social, cultural and economic attributes if we’re going to be successful in that regard. We need scientific knowledge about endangered species – their ecological requirements, habitats, et cetera – but we also need a cultural outlook that puts a premium on the continued existence of other species. “We need scientific understanding of how a species’ survival might best be ensured, but we also need a level of emotional engagement with other species to the extent that their survival matters to us in a personal way. The tragedy of the Paradise Parrot happened because few, if any, of these circumstances pertained in interwar Australia.”