



The Twitcher

September
2021

CENTRAL COAST GROUP, BIRDING NSW

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

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All Club activities have been suspended until the NSW Government announces that 70% of the adult population is fully vaccinated. The most recent estimated date is 18th October. The announcements from the NSW Government would indicate meetings, campouts and outings will be able to resume with strict conditions. All members attending club activities will be required to be fully vaccinated. Members will be informed by email and our Facebook page when meetings, outings and campouts can resume.

DATE	ACTIVITIES		LEADER/SPEAKER
28/9/21	Next Meeting: Birding in Canada and Alaska Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	CANCELLED	Greg Miles
2/10/21	Outing: Mooney Creek and Girrakool	CANCELLED	Daniel McKeon
13/10/21	½ day Outing: Dooralong Meet: 8.30 am Cemetery Corner of Hue Hue and Dooralong Rds.	REMEMBER TO REGISTER TO BE CONFIRMED (unlikely)	J & C Carpenter 0490 045 361
26/10/21	Next Meeting: Birding in Canada and Alaska Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	TO BE CONFIRMED	Greg Miles

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.

Campouts 2021:

Date	Details	Leader	Notes
15 th -17 th October	Barraba: Barraba Caravan Park 10-12 Bridge St, Barraba Phone: 02 6782 1818	Christina Port 0421 691 317	TO BE CONFIRMED

It is impossible to predict whether the Barraba camp can go ahead. It seems extremely unlikely at this stage. Christina Port will keep you informed if you have registered.

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 683 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

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

Spring has well and truly sprung with many of the spring migrants being recorded. Latham's Snipe, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, White-breasted Woodswallows, Fairy Martins, Rufous Whistlers, White-throated Gerygones, Reed Warblers, Rainbow Bee-eaters and Rufous Fantails have returned more or less on time. Some Sacred Kingfishers and Black-faced Monarchs have returned and are earlier than usual, while Koel and Channel-billed Cuckoos have returned and are definitely earlier than usual.

7 pairs of Ospreys are nesting on the Central Coast. This continues the pattern we have seen in previous years. Other good records on the raptor scene are 10 reports of Square-tailed Kites, 18 reports of Brown Goshawks, 15 reports of Grey Goshawks including one white morph, 14 reports of Pacific Bazas from 6 sites with 2 pairs nesting! The Spotted Harrier recorded at Magenta is the only record this year while the Brown Falcon at Mangrove Mountain is now a rare bird on Somersby Plateau these days, especially as they use to breed there! It is worth noting there are now regular records of Black-shouldered Kites including juveniles, whereas a month or so ago, none were being seen on the coast.



Noisy Pittas have been present all year round. While they are calling regularly at Hidden Valley, they have been hard to track down. The Varied Trillers seem to be resident at the RTA Reserve, 400 km south of their known regular range! They have now been there for 11 months! The immature Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove is still hanging around.

Barn Owls are moving to the coast because floods and cold weather have caused the mouse plague of the Slopes and Tablelands to collapse! They are being found starving and taken into care.

The Yellow-billed Spoonbill is an unusual record this year.

For October, the balance of the spring migrants should appear including Dollarbirds, Brush Cuckoos, Leaden Flycatchers and Cicadabirds. Breeding will be in full swing so birding should be excellent. Hopefully some western vagrants such as Rufous and Brown Songlarks, White-winged Trillers and White-browed and Masked Woodswallows will make an appearance.

CUCKOOS ON THE CENTRAL COAST

By: Allan Benson

The Central Coast is home to a variety of Cuckoos. They generally arrive in spring to coincide with the breeding season of their host species. Identification is relatively straight forward and their calls are diagnostic.

Channel-billed Cuckoo. This large bird is unmistakable, often first detected by its raucous call. It is a fruit eating bird so is often found around native fig trees. It parasites crows, ravens and currawongs. Channel-billed Cuckoos have become more common on the Central Coast because Pied Currawongs are now here all year round because of the abundance of privet.

Eastern Koel. The Eastern Koel is one of the sounds of spring/summer on the Central Coast, with males seemingly calling continuously. The birds are more often heard than seen, in fact they can be tricky to locate as they seem to call from the densest part of the tree. The male is glossy black with a red eye whereas the females are dark brown. The Eastern Koel parasites the nests of hosts with large open nests such as Magpie-larks, Figbirds and large honeyeaters, for example: wattlebirds. Eastern Koels have become more and more common on the Central Coast because our open urban woodland is ideal habit for wattlebirds.



Channel-billed Cuckoo
Daniel McKeon

Fan-tailed Cuckoo. The downward trill of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo can be heard all year round on the coast. Identification can be relatively straight forward with the Fan-tailed Cuckoo having extensive rufous underparts and a yellow eye ring. It is possible to confuse the Fan-tailed with the Pallid and Brush Cuckoos but note the call and features outlined above. It selects hosts that build dome-shaped nests close to the ground such as scrubwrens, fairy-wrens and thornbills,

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. There have been reports and photos of Shining Bronze-Cuckoos every month this year. The call is distinctive: a series of rising whistles. The bird can be confused with the less common Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo with the two main distinguishing field marks being the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo doesn't have an eyebrow and the bars on the chest are continuous. It generally parasites Yellow-rumped and Brown Thornbills as well as gerygones, scrubwrens and fairy-wrens. Yellow-rumped Thornbills are becoming scarce on the coast so it is likely the main hosts are the other species mentioned above.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos are classified as an uncommon breeding summer migrant. In the last 10 years, I've recorded them in 4 of those years. However, they have been present for the past three years. Care must be taken with identification to ensure it is not confused with the much more common Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (see notes above). One key of identification is its call: a penetrating *descending* whistle. Most records for the Central Coast have been in more open areas and heaths such as Munmorah and the Dairy. It mostly parasites fairy-wrens and thornbills.

Brush Cuckoo. Brush Cuckoos are one of the last spring migrants to arrive. Identification is relatively straight forward (see notes on Fan-tailed Cuckoo). It often occurs in the dense canopy and therefore difficult to locate even when calling its plaintive descending whistle. It will respond to call back but does so by flying high above the observer. The Brush Cuckoo parasites open cup nests of species such as Grey Fantail and Leaden Flycatcher.

Pallid Cuckoo. The Pallid Cuckoo is classified as a code 3 bird - rare visitor. I have only recorded it twice in the last 10 years. It is superficially possible to confuse a Pallid Cuckoo with a Fan-tailed Cuckoo but the Pallid is a much bigger bird without the rufous breast. Both Fan-tailed, Pallid and Brush have similar tail patterns. The call is a series of staccato whistles rising in pitch. It selects hosts with open nests such as honeyeaters and robins. Records on the Coast depend on inland conditions and drier years inland are more likely to produce sightings here.

Oriental Cuckoo. This is a very rare visitor to the Central Coast with the last record from Lake Rd, Tuggerah in 2009. It is a large cuckoo – reminiscent of Pallid. It has grey wings and back with distinctive barring on the chest and belly and yellow eye ring. It is a regular visitor to Northern Australia and a common species on Ashmore Reef, for example.

Cuckoo Quiz

Pick the correct Cuckoo – answer at the end of the newsletter.



Cuckoo A



Cuckoo B

UNUSUAL GOSFORD-WYONG SIGHTINGS

AUGUST– SEPTEMBER 2021

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	
Brown Quail	4	29/8-4/9	Magenta Shores	Allan Benson
Musk Duck	4	4/9/2021	Colongra Lake	Andrew Robinson
Australasian Shoveler	1	15/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Australasian Shoveler	2	9/9/20-21	McPherson Rd Swamp	Meryl Newton
Little Penguin	2	17-21/8/21	Avoca Beach in surf	Nick Carson
Black-necked Stork	1	30/8/2021	in flight over Wyong	Anthony Cromack
Black Bittern	1	14/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek, Chittaway	Christina Port
Black Bittern	1m	8/9/2021	Berkeley Creek, Berkeley Vale	Christina Port
Nankeen Night-Heron	1	14/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek, Chittaway	Christina Port
Nankeen Night-Heron	1	22/8-5/9	Heazelett Park, Avoca Beach	Ash Mullahey
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	8/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Allan Benson
Radjah Shelduck	1	15-16/8/21	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Eastern Osprey	2+N	11/8-4/9	The Entrance Channel	Mairin Ireland
Eastern Osprey	N+Y	11-27/8/21	3Y on 27/8, Gosford Stadium	Mairin Ireland
Eastern Osprey	N+E	11-27/8/21	Erina Works Deport	Mairin Ireland
Eastern Osprey	2+N	11-20/8/21	Munmorah Coms Tower	Rick Gatenby
Eastern Osprey	N	14/8/2021	Buff Point Coms Tower	Michael Price
Eastern Osprey	2+N	23-31/8/21	Moore Oval, Canton Beach/Toukley	Christina Port
Eastern Osprey	N+E	26/8/2021	Doyle St, Kincumber	Nikolas Markovina
Pacific Baza	2	10-18/8/21	Koolewong	Tricia Sweet
Pacific Baza	2+N	19/8-6/9	Hidden Valley, Jilliby SCA	David Russell
Pacific Baza	1	20/8/2021	2 on 23/8, Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Shuemaker
Pacific Baza	1	21/8-5/9	x4 Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Black-shouldered Kite	J	13/8-6/9/21	2A+J on 4/9, Dairy Swamp & Lake Rd	Graham Nelson
Black-shouldered Kite	1	17/8/2021	Blackwall Rd, Woy Woy	Darren Earnshaw
Black-shouldered Kite	A+J	4-6/9/2021	Magenta Shores	Daniel McKeon
Square-tailed Kite	1	13/8/2021	Bouddi NP, Killcare	Nikola Markovina
Square-tailed Kite	1	16/8-6/9	x5 Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Square-tailed Kite	1	30/8/2021	Patonga	Carol Edwards
Black Kite	1	16/8/2021	M1 Interchange, Peats Ridge	Christina Port
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	3-31/8/21	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	18/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Graham Nelson
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	27/8/2021	Waratah Rd Nth, Mangrove Mtn	Allan Benson
Little Eagle	1	13/8/2021	Maitland Bay Dve & Wards Hill Rd, Killcare	Nikola Markovina
Brown Goshawk	pr	9-12/8/2021	Brook Ave, Killarney Vale	Daniel McKeon
Brown Goshawk	1	11/8/2021	Narara	Peter Mortimer
Brown Goshawk	1	11/8/2021	Rumbalara Reserve, Gosford	J. Nina Rua
Grey Goshawk	1	11,31/8,2/9	Erina Heights	Darren Earnshaw
Grey Goshawk	1	10/8/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery

Grey Goshawk	1	11/8/2021	Magenta Shores	Meryl Newton
Grey (white morph) Goshawk	1	6/9/2021	Wyoming	Antoinette Walter
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	20/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Nikola Markovina
Spotted Harrier	1	17-18/8/21	seen 29/8 again, North Entrance heath	Luke Ullrich
Buff-banded Rail	1	2/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Russell
Buff-banded Rail	1	8/9/2021	Brickworks Rd, Woy Woy	Carol Edwards
Lewin's Rail	1	13/8/2021`	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Graham Nelson
Painted Button-quail	1	21/8/2021	Ourimbah State Forest	Luke Ullrich
Painted Button-quail	1	1/9/2021	into care at Umina	Louis O'Neill
Painted Button-quail	1	3/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Yengo NP	Andrew Robinson
Bush Stone-curlew	HC	26/8 & 6/9	0230 hrs Kincumber Primary School	Danny O'Brien
Red-necked Avocet	8	21-28/8/21	Ansells Pt & Chittaway Bay	Andrew Robinson
Red-necked Avocet	15	4/9/2021	Colongra Lake	Andrew Robinson
Double-banded Plover **	2	28/8/2021	Blue Bay Reefs	Luke Ullrich
Red-capped Plover	2	27/8/2021	Pelican Pt, Norah Head	Shaun Edwards
Red-capped Plover	3	30/8/2021	Karagi Pt, The Entrance	Andrew Robinson
Red-capped Plover	4	4/9/2021	Lake Munmorah	Andrew Robinson
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	20/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Latham's Snipe *	1	22/8 & 8/9	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *	2	20/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *	2	27/8/2021	Cochrane Lagoon, McMasters Bch	Nikola Markovina
White-fronted Tern **	5	14/8/2021	Soldiers Point Reefs	Allan Benson
Brush Bronzewing	1	19/8-6/9	2 on 29/8, Magenta Shores	Allan Benson
Peaceful Dove	4	20-31/8/21	x5 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove Im		31/8 & 7/9	Umina	Michael Scarrott
Topknot Pigeon	9	4/9/2021	Kangy Angy	David Schuemaker
Topknot Pigeon	2	7/9/2021	Terrigal Lagoon	Peter Brady
Wonga Pigeon	2	27/8/2021	Portsmouth Rd, Erina	Malcolm Hill
Pheasant Coucal	1	6-7/8/2021	Mt Ettalong	Robert Payne
Pheasant Coucal	1	27/8/2021	Waratah Rd Nth, Mangrove Mtn	Allan Benson
Pheasant Coucal	1	6/9/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Graham Nelson
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	11/8/2021	Koolewong	Tricia Sweet
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	24/8/2021	Doyalson North	Meryl Newton
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	28/8/2021	Kariong	Christina Port
Pacific Koel *	1	27/8/2021	Long Jetty	Graham Nelson
Pacific Koel	1	7/9/2021	Berkeley Vale	Daniel McKeon
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	16/8/2021	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	3	26/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Meryl Newton
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	5/9/2021	Ourimbah Ck Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Masked Owl	HC	11/8/2021	North Wyong	Ian Benson
Barn Owl	1	17/8/2021	Magenta Shores Golf Course	per Allan Benson
Barn Owl	1	16/8/2021	into care from Long Jetty	WIRES
Barn Owl	1	23/8/2021	The Entrance	Levi Brown
Southern Boobook	HC	24/7-31/8	Ettalong Ck/Mt Ettalong, Umina	Robert Payne
Southern Boobook	HC	4-20/8/21	x5 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Southern Boobook	HC	5/9/2021	Niagara Park	Julie Peksis
Powerful Owl	HC	21/7, 11 & 27/8	Ettalong Creek, Umina	Robert Payne
Powerful Owl	HC	17/8/2021	0545 hrs Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Powerful Owl	HC	23/8/2021	San Remo Oval area	Melanie Cockbain
Owlet-Nightjar	HC	10-21/8/21	x3 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Owlet Nightjar	1	28/8/2021	Palmgrove NR, Ourimbah	Allan Benson
Azure Kingfisher	2	14/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek, Chittaway	Christina Port
Azure Kingfisher	2	21/8/2021	Ourimbah	Andrew Robinson
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	2/9/2021	Lilli Pilli Loop Tk, Wyrabalong NP	Meryl Newton
Rainbow Bee-eater *	12	4-5/9/2021	Magenta Shores	Daniel McKeon
Noisy Pitta	4HC	10/8/2021	betw. Hidden Vly & Forty Acres, Jilliby SCA	Rex Schmidt
Noisy Pitta	1	20/8/2021	Hidden Valley, Jilliby SCA	Allan Benson
Nankeen Kestrel	2+J	13/8-4/9	2A+J on 6/9, Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Graham Nelson
Nankeen Kestrel	1	29-31/8/21	Budgewoi	Colin Stadler
Nankeen Kestrel	2	5/9/2021	Noraville Heaths	Meryl Newton
Australian Hobby	1	25/8/2021	Wyong	Andrew Robinson
Brown Falcon	1	16/8/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Peregrine Falcon	1	13/8/2021	Bouddi NP, Killcare	Nikola Markovina
Peregrine Falcon	1	2/9/2021	Terrigal	Darren Earnshaw
Yellow-tail Black Cockatoo	80	23-24/8/21	Ourimbah	Christy Woolcock
Yellow-tail Black Cockatoo	50	2/9/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Ann Juan

Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	15-19/8/21	Wildwood, Kincumber	Dianne Warman
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	19/8/2021	Pearl Beach Arboretum	Duncan Gibson
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	5/9/2021	Van Dahls Trail, Brisbane Water NP	Michelle Melville
Gang Gang Cockatoo	2	28/8/2021	Ourimbah Stare Forest, Ourimbah	Luke Ullrich
Southern Emu-wren	2	31/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Schumaeker
Striped Honeyeater	2	12/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Jesse Hewling
Brown Honeyeater	2	13/8 & 7/9	Riverside West, Gosford	Darren Earnshaw
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	30/8/2021	Charmhaven	Anthony Cromack
Striated Pardalote	2+N	19/8/2021	Chain Valley Bay	Marj Kibby
Striated Pardalote	5	31/8/2021	San Remo	Rex Schmidt
White-throated Gerygone *	1	7/9/2021	Erina Heights	Darren Earnshaw
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	5	27/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	2+	27/8/2021	Waratah Rd Nth, Mangrove Mtn	Allan Benson
Large-billed Scrub-wren	1	20/8/2021	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Eastern Whipbird	2+N	19/8/2021	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Crested Shrike-tit	2	21/8/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Rufous Whistler *	1	3/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Mangrove Dam Catchment	Andrew Robinson
Varied Sittella	4+	18-28/8/21	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Varied Sittella	10	19/8/2021	Doyle St, Kincumber	Laurie Smith
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike 1		10/8/2021	Umina Beach	Duncan Gibson
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike 2		6/9/2021	Erina Heights	Darren Earnshaw
Varied Triller	1	8/9/2021	Ourimbah RTA Reserve	David Russell
White-breasted W'Swallow * 2		11/8/2021	Avoca Lagoon	Michael Scobie
White-breasted W'Swallow * 6		12-22/8/21	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Jesse Hewling
White-breasted W'Swallow * 2		14/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek	Christina Port
Dusky Woodswallow *	2	27/8/2021	Noraville Heaths	Shaun Edwards
Dusky Woodswallow *	4	5/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Mangrove Dam Catchment	Andrew Robinson
White-winged Chough	15	1/9/2021	Yarramalong	Tricia Sweet
Black-faced Monarch *	1, 1	8/9/2021	Rumbalara Reserve, Gosford/Ourimbah	Brady/Earnshaw
Spangled Drongo	1	1-11/8/21	Winney Bay, Avoca Beach	Laurie Smith
Spangled Drongo	1	11/8/2021	McPherson Rd Swamp	Laurie Smith
Spangled Drongo	1	14/8/2021	Lakes Beach Bike Track	Allan Benson
Jacky Winter	1	27/8/2021	Ironbark Rd, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Jacky Winter	3	3/9/2021	Settlers Rd, Mangrove Dam Catchment	Andrew Robinson
Jacky Winter	1	6/9/2021	Wye Rd, Doyalson	Meryl Newton
Rose Robin	AM	16/8/2021	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	David Russell
Rose Robin	AM	17 & 5/9	Hidden Valley, Jilliby SCA	Tricia Sweet
Australian Pipit	3	26/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Meryl Newton
Australian Reedwarbler *	1	31/8/2021	Nelmes Rd, Blue Haven	Allan Benson
Fairy Martin *	4	8/8/2021	Dairy Swamp, CCW Tuggerah	Andrew Robinson
Tree Martin	2+	11/8/2021	collecting nest stuff Gosford Waterfront	Rob Montgomery
Mistletoebird	AM	9/8/2021	Norah Head	Meryl Newton
Double-barred Finch	7	15/8-4/9	San Remo	Meryl Newton
Double-barred Finch	3+	15/8/2021	Kulnura	Anna Pillich
European Blackbird	AM	17/8/2021	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Bassian Thrush	1	11-16/8/21	Ourimbah Creek RTA Res	Allan Benson
Bassian Thrush	1	29/8/2021	Strickland SF Rainforest	Julie Peksis
Bassian Thrush	2	28/8/2021	St Barnabas Church, Yarramalong	Allan Benson

Breeding and some other records August - September 2021

Brush Turkey: 1+N Avoca Beach 24/8 (NCa); **Black Swan:** 2A+6Y Avoca Lagoon on 22/8 (FGa), 2A+4Y Colongra Bay 18/8 (MNe), 2A+2Y Budgewoi 4/12 (SGrant), 2A+6, 2A+6, 2A+5, 2A+1 & 2A+3 all Colongra Bay, Lake Munmorah 7/9 (FUI), 2+N McPhersons Rd Swamp 9/9 (MNe); **Wood Duck:** 2A+12 Y Mt Penang 9/9 (MNe); **Mallard:** F+9Y Avoca Lagoon 20/8 (LSm); **Pacific Baza:** 1 Ourimbah 27/8 (ARo), 1 Brooks Hill 6/9 (DEa); **Eastern Osprey:** 1 Soldiers Bch 10/8 (Le), 1 Umina Bch 12/8 (ARo), 2 Terrigal High School 24/8 (SHunt), 1 Central Coast Wetlands 30/8, 1 Narara Ck Gosford 4/9 (ARo); **Black-shouldered Kite:** 1 Magenta 31/8 (MNe); **Square-tailed Kite:** 1 Dairy Swamp CCW 6/9 (GNe), 2+N Terrigal 9/9 (DHo); **Brown Goshawk:** 1 x6 Murrumbung HSD Mardi 12/8-8/92 (JCa), Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn x10 11-31/8 (MP), 1 Noraville Heaths 10/8 (MNe), 1 Erina Heights 10/8, 2-6/9 (DEa), 1 Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming 20/8 (RMO), 1 Tuggerah 22/8, 1 Alison 28/8 (ARo), 1 Doyle St Kincumber 30/8 (LSm), 1 North Avoca 1/9 (ARo), 1 Davistown 2/9 (DMcK), 1 Henry Kendall Gardens Wyoming 9/9 (RMO), 2+N Terrigal 9/9 (DHo); **Grey Goshawk:** 1 (1 WM) x5 Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn; Lakes Bch Track 10/8, 1 Ourimbah 29/8, 1 Ourimbah Straight 30/8 (ARo), 1 Noraville Heaths 5/9 (MNe), 2 Matcham 10/9 (NMa); **Wedge-tailed Eagle:** 1 Settlers Rd Mangrove Dam Catchment; **Barn Owl:** others that have come into care were from Copacobana and Ettalong 17/8 (WIRES); **Southern Boobook:** HC Wyoming 13/8, 2 on 16/8, 1 on 2/9, 1 Ourimbah 27/8 (ARo), HC Niagara Park 9/9 (JPe); **Powerful Owl:** 1 Ourimbah 27/8 (ARo); **Tawny Frog-**

mouths: Pairs were at Lions Pk, BV, Bluebell Pk, Bluebell Pk Jetty, Shannon Pde BV & Seabreeze Pk Kincumber 13/8 (CP), 2+N Koolewong 20/8 (TSw); **Masked Lapwing:** 2A+2Y Terrigal 18/8 (NMa), 2A+3 chicks Springfield Pond 23/8 (GRa), 2A+2Y ? 31/8 (RWood); **Nankeen Kestrel:** 1 Jilliby & Lalke Rd Tuggerah 28/8 (ARo); other **Channel-billed Cuckoos:** Henry Kendall Gardens Wyoming 31/8 (RMO); **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo:** 1 x3 Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn 10-31/8 (KP), 1 Robertson St Killarney Vale 18/8 (GNe); **Glossy Black Cockatoo:** 2A+J Nth Gosford 15/8 (MWiggins), 2 x7 Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn 10-21/8 (MP); **Red-rumped Parrot:** 2A+N Dairy Swp 16/8 (MSt); **Spotted Pardalote:** AM+J Avoca 26/8 (LSm); **Striated Pardalote:** Nesting Doyalson in Scribbly Gum hollow 14/8 (MNe); **White-browed Scrub-wren:** 2A+N on horse-rug Kulnura 10/8 (APil); **Eastern Whipbird:** N+E 21/8 (JC); **Varied Sittella:** 4+N Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn 25-28/8 (KP); **Australian Magpie:** N+Y Gosford 9/9 (DEa); **Grey Butcherbird:** 2A+N Terrigal Lagoon 7/9 (PBr); **Eastern Yellow Robin:** A+N Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn 31/8 (MP); **Bassian Thrush:** 1 Tathra Taila HSD Man.Mtn 26-28/8 (KP). *Good birding!*

CENTRAL COAST TWITCH - AUGUST 2021

Andrew Robinson has continued to maintain a very solid lead and will be difficult/impossible to catch with only four months to go.

Andrew Robinson	249	John Carpenter	189	Graeme Catt	142
Allan Benson	241	Kaye Pointer	188	Robyn Price	141
Christina Port	230	Noel Lonergan	186	Judy Clark	140
Graham Nelson	226	Doug Hocking	177	Rowena Wallace	140
Dean Purcell	221	Margaret Pointer	174	Gabrielle Rees	135
Nick Carson	201	Michael Scobie	170	Coleen Southall	129
Carole Carpenter	195	David Catt	165	Archie Brennan	119
Krystyna Lonergan	194	Diana Hogan	152	Mike Kuhl	104
Daniel McKeon	190	Andrew Melville	144		

BIRDATA SURVEYS 2021

Nick Carson	363	Rebecca Citroni	71	Frik Gautschi	42	Anna Pillich	17
Allan Benson	263	Andrew Melville	62	Daniel McKeon	20	Robyn Price	16
Graham Nelson	189	Guy Dutson	61	Doug Hocking	18	Michael Scobie	13

For August, 155 surveys were recorded with 19 active observers which is an increase of 23 surveys over the previous month. YTD, we have recorded 1391 surveys with 68 active observers. This will extrapolate to over 2000 surveys for 2021 which would be a significant improvement on last year.

Birddata 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)

SONG OF SURVIVAL: REGENT HONEYEATERS LEARN WILD MELODY TO SAVE THE SPECIES

By: Mike Foley

The love song of critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters is the lifeblood of the species, but the population has dwindled so low that young birds are losing the tune to their wild melody. A ray of hope has emerged, however, from a home-schooling program to teach the brilliant black and gold birds to sing their way back from the brink of extinction.

Regents must sing the "right" song to attract a mate. But their warbling, chattering call is heard so rarely now that young birds are picking up the wrong music lessons and singing songs of other birds - reducing their chances of mating to boost the population. Taronga Conservation Society behavioural ecologist Ben Pitcher said the organisation's captive breeding program had released about 300 birds in recent years. With so few left to sing to, the Regent Honeyeater is losing its song. "Birds that are bred in the zoo just don't have the same learning experience that they would have in the wild in their naturally large flocks," Dr Pitcher said.

The regent once ranged in the thousands from Queensland to South Australia, but land clearing has reduced the wild population to about 350 and its habitat to a handful of breeding sites. However, researchers from Australian National University's Difficult Bird Research Group have found there are so few regents they are picking up songs from Noisy Friarbirds, Eastern Rosellas and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. Dr Pitcher said scientists believe there's a crucial developmental window in a young regent's life when they learn the song that will stay with them for life. Initially, Taronga introduced several wild-caught males to their aviaries to sing the "right" song but with dozens of fledglings making a ruckus, there weren't enough adults to get the message across. "We've augmented the wild males by putting microphones in to listen to the wild birds and then we're piping that into other aviaries through speakers," he said. "I was talking to colleagues recently, and they equated it to the current situation with kids and home schooling, where now you either get the face-to-face teaching or your zoom teaching."



Dr Pitcher said money is needed to expand breeding programs and the music lessons, which not only help the birds find a mate, but also to integrate and find protection in flocks. "It really looks like the birds that we were teaching are singing songs closer to what's considered a wild-type song. It seems like we're starting to unravel the code," he said. "We did a review of 300 birds we released into the wild and found those that had been exposed to some tutoring, as we call it, look like they had better survival post-release than birds that hadn't had the song-tutoring."

Editor's note: Initial reports of the Regent Honeyeater breeding season have been positive. There are 6 pairs in Goulburn River National Park with four pairs nesting. There is a pair nesting in the Capertee Valley as well as 6 pairs in the lower Hunter Valley.

ON THE HUNT FOR THE BARKING OWL WITH SOUND RECORDERS, HEAD TORCHES AND A THERMAL CAMERA

By: Anna Salleh

Candice Larkin grew up near the beach on the Gold Coast, but these days spends much of her time alone on the less balmy New England Tablelands. For the best part of every month, she coaxes her Navara ute up remote muddy bush tracks, doing her best not to get bogged, so she can survey for threatened owls and other birdlife in the area. She gets up at 4:00am — at sometimes minus 5 degrees Celsius — and is on the go for 12 to 14 hours. Not only is her workday long, it's very solitary. "I don't really interact with anyone outside of a petrol station," says Ms Larkin, who is doing a PhD at the University of New England.



As part of her work, she has microphones hidden in trees to pick up the sound of owls, which are usually hard to detect because they are only active at night. She's on the hunt for the lesser-known Australian owls like the elusive and under-studied Barking Owl whose calls are often confused with the woofs of a dog — and even the screams of a human.

Ms Larkin is also collecting data on the country's smallest and most widespread owl, the Boobook or "mopoke", and the Barn Owl — which in Australia lives in hollow trees and caves rather than barns.

She hopes to get a handle on how many owls like these are out there, so we can better protect them.

While all owls are hard to find, Barking Owls are particularly tricky because they're thin on the ground, Ms Larkin says.

They don't like coastal or urban areas like the larger and better-known Powerful Owl. Instead, their preferred habitat is remote dry open eucalypt forest and woodland, which can also be home to koalas and quolls. The problem is so much of this habitat has been cleared for agriculture or burnt by bushfires, and concern is mounting for species like

the Barking Owl. "We don't know how many are left," Ms Larkin says. And, unfortunately, to protect a species from going extinct, you have to have firm numbers showing it is actually in serious decline. "We can't protect it better if we don't know what we have."

Why is it called the Barking Owl?

Not surprisingly, the Barking Owl got its name from the short, sharp, double hoot it makes, usually predawn or just after dusk, which can sound like a "woof woof". "It really does sound like a dog," Ms Larkin says. And both male and female barking owl hoots can set dogs off barking, says Steven Debus, Ms Larkin's co-supervisor at the University of New England. But the Barking Owl also, although only rarely, screams — and this has also been known to confuse people. Sometimes it's a wailing sound, but reports have also referred to a "blood-curdling shriek" that people have mistaken for a human and ended up calling the police. "There is a bit of a history or folklore about such things going well back to early last century," Dr Debus says. "It's been called the 'screaming woman owl', which is a bit sexist, I suppose." He says he is yet to come across a recorded example that is as human-sounding as he has heard. "[The recordings are] not the shrill scream ... which I've heard right overhead at 4:00am while camping in a tent in some remote bushland," says Dr Debus, who has written a number of books on birds of prey. "I knew what it was, but my companions didn't."

The Barking Owl's hoots declare their territory, Ms Larkin says, but hooting also plays a courtship role. Male and female owls have different pitched hoots and can sometimes be heard performing an increasingly frantic duet. "You can actually audibly hear the birds get excited when their partner gets close," she says.

Looking in remnant bushland

Ms Larkin is strategically surveying potential Barking Owl habitat that remains in strips of government-owned land called travelling stock reserves. These green corridors that criss-cross otherwise cleared farming land were once used by drovers on horseback, who herded sheep and cattle from one stock watering place to the next. Today in NSW, travelling stock reserves form around 2 million hectares worth of remnant bush habitat. "They're like little Noah's arks floating around," Ms Larkin says. "We're finding a lot of really threatened species using them to move through the landscape."

Ms Larkin put 50 sound recorders out in the field in 2019 and has constantly tended them since. "I need to drive around and change the SD cards and batteries nearly every month." Sometimes she finds the recorders have been damaged. "Often ringtail possums will chew the microphone — they'll rip the foam off them." But perhaps the biggest challenge lately has been the weather. "We've gone from extreme drought and bushfire ... to non-stop rain," she says.

So, Ms Larkin must learn a lot about getting out of tricky situations in the bush by herself. "You're getting bogged on these tracks that nobody uses and you're out on your own, so you've got to get yourself out." Her 4WD ute is kitted out with gear for emergencies, including a winch. Ms Larkin also narrowly escaped losing her equipment in the 2019 bushfires. More recently, the pandemic has caused a few problems too.

She has also been trialling a hand-held thermal imaging camera that picks up the heat of animals in the night, particularly in winter. It turns out the thermal technique works for some species, but not others, because birds with a thicker feather coat are harder to detect. And she's been comparing this technique with other survey methods, including the more traditional way of looking for night creatures, which involves spotlighting with head torches. The torches have a switch that converts their white light to red light, which is less damaging to the birds. "You're typically scanning with white light and then converting to red light when you spot an animal."

In processing her data so far, she only picked up a handful of pairs of Barking Owls, and the evidence suggests they did not reproduce last year. "We couldn't see any confirmation of breeding, and the nest hollows were all inactive," she says. "In five- or 10-years' time, this will be the flagship raptor we're trying to save."

THIS BIRD'S STAMINA IS REMARKABLE:

It flies non-stop for 5 days from Japan to Australia, but now its habitat is under threat

By: Birgita Hansen, Federation University Australia

Imagine having to fly non-stop for five days over thousands of kilometres of ocean for your survival. That's what the Latham's Snipe shorebird does twice a year, for every year of its life. This migratory shorebird, similar in size to a blackbird, completes this gruelling migration to warmer climes, where it prepares itself for its return flight and the next breeding season. A feat of incredible endurance.

Latham's Snipe breeds in northern Japan and parts of eastern Russia during May-July and spends its non-breeding season (September to March) along Australia's eastern coast. Like other migratory shorebirds, it has incredible endurance, undertaking a non-stop, over-ocean flight between its breeding and non-breeding grounds. It arrives at its destination severely malnourished and spends the Australian summer months building up its strength and body fat to complete its long return flight. Unlike many other migratory shorebird species in Australia, you won't find Latham's Snipe in large flocks enjoying picturesque estuaries and bays. Instead, it hides away in thickly vegetated wetlands during the day to avoid local predators.



Their characteristic brown mottled feathers help them hide in wetlands. Large eyes high on their heads allow them to see far and wide. Their exceptional eyesight helps them constantly scan for dangers at night, when they forage for food in open wet and muddy areas. Latham's Snipe is the ultimate sun-seeker. It breeds in the northern hemisphere when the snows have melted and the weather is warm, then returns to the southern hemisphere to take advantage of spring rains, warmer weather and food-rich wetlands. It spends its entire time in Australia feeding, resting and growing new flight feathers in preparation for the long haul back to Japan in autumn.

Unfortunately, their wetland habitat is now being lost to development and other pressures, putting this tough little bird at risk. Latham's Snipe, formerly known as the Japanese Snipe, was once a popular game bird. Hunting and wetland loss during the 20th century have contributed to a decline in Latham's Snipe in south-eastern Australia.

The signing of the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement in 1981 has stopped snipe hunting in both countries. However, their wetland habitat continues to be lost due to land development and drying of wetlands.

Imagine flying for five days straight, arriving at your destination emaciated and exhausted, only to find your habitat has disappeared. No food and nowhere to rest. This is the crisis facing Latham's Snipe and many other migratory shorebird species.

Under the Australian government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, any grouping of 18 or more snipe at a wetland site is considered nationally important. Unfortunately, however, development on snipe habitat still occurs.

In 2014 — triggered by a plan to allow housing construction on an important snipe wetland area — a team of passionate researchers and citizen scientists banded together to initiate a monitoring program of Latham's Snipe in south-west Victoria. After the first year of the monitoring, the Latham's Snipe Project expanded to other parts of the country with help from a large number of dedicated volunteers and professionals. The story from this monitoring is still unfolding but two clear patterns are emerging: Latham's Snipe often congregate in urban wetlands; and the majority of these important wetlands have no formal protection from development or disturbance.

Between 2016 and 2020, the Latham's Snipe Project started tagging snipe with small electronic devices to try and learn about their migratory routes. The team uncovered an amazing migration from a female snipe captured in Port Fairy. She left her breeding grounds in northern Japan and flew directly to south-east Queensland in three days, a non-stop flight of around 7,000km. A trip that might normally take around five days, this incredible individual did in three. This is one of the fastest bird migrations on record and highlights how demanding these over-ocean migrations are. It also shines the spotlight on the critical importance of good quality wetland habitat when the snipe returns to Australia.

Urban development continues to threaten Latham's Snipe habitats. Several snipe sites in eastern Australia are at risk from housing developments and large infrastructure projects. Eco-friendly developments like the Cape Paterson Ecovillage in Victoria provide hope. Here, researchers and citizen scientists have worked with the developer to help design conservation areas within the development to protect and restore wetlands for snipe.

Such progress is heartening, but a critically important next step is to make changes to local planning schemes that explicitly recognise wetlands for Latham's Snipe.

ROADRUNNER BLOCKED BY U.S. BORDER WALL WINS BEST BIRD PHOTO OF 2021

By: Jaron Schneider



The [Bird Photographer of the Year 2021](#) competition has announced its winners, with a roadrunner stopped in its tracks at the United States-Mexico border wall taking the grand prize.

AMERICA'S MOST-LOVED BIRD VERSUS A SCRAPPY AUSSIE SCAVENGER. In a clash that might rival Crocodile Dundee in New York City, here we'll pit two iconic birds of prey against one another: the Wedge-Tailed Eagle and the North American Bald Eagle.

By: Misha Ketchell

As a disclaimer, this exercise is well and truly hypothetical. Wedge-tailed Eagles are native to Australia and would never encounter a Bald Eagle, which has a range covering most of North America. This is probably why they can both exist in the healthy numbers on both continents: their similar niches would likely result in high levels of competition for resources such as food and nesting sites, especially sites close to the ocean. Both species are thankfully doing well in terms of numbers, which is great news for humans because they play important roles. They clean up carrion and keep numbers of rapidly reproducing small mammals in check — think rabbits, mice, rats.

They are both also very important in the culture of Indigenous people on both continents. In Australia, many Aboriginal Dreaming stories include the Wedge-tailed eagle, especially in depictions of Bunjil the creator and some have even associated constellations with it. In native North American cultures, Bald Eagle feathers are highly esteemed, symbolising bravery, strength and holiness. The birds' sheer size means they are easily recognised in their native ranges, making them apt emblems.

Of course, the Bald Eagle has the honour of being the United States' national bird, appearing on its coat of arms. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is an emblem in the Northern Territory and appears on the Royal Australian Air Force badge. Each country also has one professional football team named after the respective birds: The Philadelphia Eagles in the US, and the West Coast Eagles in Australia's AFL. So despite historical conflict with humans blaming the birds for losses to livestock, they both have a pretty strong fan base today.

While both eagles are part of the same family group (Accipitridae), they are not very closely related, belonging to different genera. The Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*) fits in a group sometimes referred to as "true eagles", which also holds some of the most widespread eagles in the world, such as the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), on the other hand, belong in the *Haliaeetus* genus, a group of predominantly fish-eating birds of prey that includes Australia's own White-bellied Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*). Thus, it may seem like the odds are already stacked: what chance would a bird that eats fish as its main meal have against a bird that eats just about anything — alive or dead?

A close match

Well, they are in fact well matched in terms of potential fighting ability.

Both average about four to five kilograms, with almost identical wingspans of between 1.8 and 2.3 metres. Both have large, curved, strong beaks for tearing meat off the bones of their prey. What opponents need to most be wary of, however, are the legs and talons. Both species have strong feet with which to grab prey of the ground (or water) and carry it away to eat in peace. Neither have natural predators. It would indeed be a close match. So, let's say — hypothetically of course — that a Wedge-tailed Eagle and a Bald Eagle are in the same place at the same time, vying for the same prey. It's likely the Bald Eagle would be perched on a nearby cliff top and the Wedgie would be circling in the skies, high above. A poor, unassuming rodent (perhaps of unusual size, making it highly prized) is minding its own business on the ground below. Both predators see the rodent as well as each other with their excellent vision — eagles generally have the best eyesight of all known vertebrates. A speedy downwards dive by both, up to 160 kilometres per hour, would signal the fight has commenced. Before hitting the ground, the rodent, or each other, they'd flap their wings to slow down, revealing their legs and talons. These would reach out towards the opponent and, depending on where each bird grabs, might signify the end for the other. It would likely be quite the grapple and possibly even a trial of endurance.

The verdict?

My money, however, is on the Wedge-tailed Eagle. While Wedge-tailed Eagles are a similar size to Bald Eagles, they're able to kill slightly bigger prey. Bald Eagles tend to feed on fish and small mammals (as well as reptiles, and carrion to an extent), but they rarely target anything bigger than, say, a racoon or beaver. While Wedge-tails regularly eat similarly sized mammals such as rabbits, they will also attack kangaroos, koalas and even goannas. This might make them more accustomed to targeting diverse, large prey.

But the real tests that clinch my decision are odd encounters these birds face in the real world.

RARE BUTTONQUAIL CONFIRMED IN FAR NORTHWEST QUEENSLAND SOLVES CENTURY-OLD SUSPICION

By: Brendan Mounter



Ecologists have discovered a species of bird previously unknown to Queensland in what is the state's first confirmed record of the Chestnut-backed Buttonquail, *Turnix castanotus*. The species is endemic to Australia and widely distributed across the monsoonal tropical woodlands and savannahs of northern Australia but thought to live only in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Patrick Webster, a PhD candidate from the University of Queensland's Research and Recovery of Endangered Species laboratory, and colleague Henry Stoetzel, have proven their hunch that the understudied bird does live in Queensland. "We did some habitat modelling looking at satellite imagery and we

found there was suitable habitat that extended well into Queensland," he said. "We speculated that if there was suitable habitat in Queensland, then potentially the birds should be there as well."

As part of a wider research project into three buttonquail species, the two ecologists conducted site visits in the state's most far north western reaches. Over two visits they observed at least eight birds at Westmoreland Station, a remote cattle station on the Queensland border. "The area that we found them in is extremely remote, there's virtually no public access," Mr Webster said. "That's probably what's kept them hidden is the lack of people getting there, it's the last [pastoral] property before you get into the Northern Territory."

Shyness and camouflage hid buttonquail for 100 years

Prior to the Westmoreland Station discovery, the most eastern, the Chestnut-backed Buttonquail was known to inhabit was around Borroloola, more than 200 kilometres away. Mr Webster said that was a significant eastern range extension for a bird that doesn't migrate. "A lot of Australia's birds are nomadic because of our very climatic conditions they have to travel big distances," he said. "But our research has shown that these birds don't do these big movements so it's most likely they're a resident species in Queensland, it's just that no one has been out to this site to look for them, so they've gone undetected. They're a very well-camouflaged bird and they're very shy and reluctant to show themselves by hiding in grass and running from human observers — so finding them is difficult."

COCKATOOS AND RAINBOW LORIKEETS BATTLE FOR NEST SPACE AS THE BEST OLD TREES DISAPPEAR

By: Gregory Moore

The housing market in most parts of Australia is notoriously competitive. You might be surprised to learn we humans are not the only ones facing such difficulties. With spring rapidly approaching and perhaps a little earlier due to climate change, many birds are currently on the hunt for the best nesting sites. This can be hard enough for birds that construct nests from leaves and twigs in the canopies of shrubs and trees but imagine how hard it must be for species that nest in tree hollows. They are looking for hollows of just the right size, in just the right place. Competition for these prime locations is cut-throat.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos battling for spots

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, *Cacatua galerita*, are relatively large birds, so naturally the hollows they nest in need to be quite large. Unfortunately, large hollows are only found in old trees. It can take 150 years or more before the hollows in the eucalypts that many native parrot species nest in are large enough to accommodate nesting Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Such old trees are becoming rarer as old trees on farms die and old trees in cities are cleared for



urban growth. In late winter, early spring you quite often find Sulphur-crested Cockatoos squabbling among themselves over hollows in trees.

These squabbles can be very loud and raucous. They can last from a few minutes to over an hour, if the site is good one. Once a pair of birds takes possession and begins nesting, they defend their spot and things tend to quieten down. The stakes are high, because Sulphur-crested Cockatoos cannot breed if they don't have a nesting hollow.

Enter the rainbow lorikeets

In parts of south eastern Australia, Rainbow Lorikeets, *Trichoglossus moluccanus* (and/or *Trichoglossus haematodus*), have expanded their range over the past couple of decades. It is not uncommon to see Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in dispute with them over a hollow. The din can be deafening and if you watch you will see both comedy and drama unfold. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos usually win and drive the lorikeets away, but all is not lost for the lorikeets. Sometimes the hollows prove unsuitable — usually if they are too small for the cockatoos — and a few days later the lorikeets have taken up residence. Larger hollows are rarer and so more highly prized.

How hollows form

Many hollows begin at the stubs of branches that have been shed either as part of the tree's growth cycle or after storm damage. The wood at the centre of the branch often lacks protective defences and so begins to decay while the healthy tree continues to grow over and around the hollow. Other hollows develop after damage to the trunk or on a large branch, following lightning damage or insect attack. Parrots will often peck at the hollow to expand it or stop it growing over completely. Just a bit of regular home maintenance. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos can often be seen pecking at the top of large branches on old trees, where the branch meets the trunk. They can do considerable damage. When this area begins to decay, it can provide an ideal hollow for future nesting. Sadly, for the cockatoo, it may take another century or so and the tree might shed the limb in the interim. Cockatoos apparently play a long game and take a very long-term perspective on future nesting sites.

Which trees are best for hollows?

In watching the local battles for parrot nesting sites, some tree species are the scenes of many a conflict. Sugar gums, *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*, were widely planted as wind breaks in southern Australia and they were often lopped to encourage a bushier habit that provided greater shade. Poor pruning often leads to hollows and cavities, which are now proving ideal for nesting — but it also resulted in poor tree structure. Sugar gums are being removed and nesting sites lost in many country towns and peri-urban areas (usually the areas around the edges of suburbs with some remaining natural vegetation, or the areas around waterways).

Old river red gums, (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) growing along our creeks and rivers are also great nesting sites. They are so big they provide ideal sites for even the largest of birds. These, too, are ageing and in many places are declining as riverine ecosystems suffer in general. Even the old elms, *Ulmus*, and London plane trees, *Platanus x acerifolia* — which were once lopped back to major branch stubs each year, leading hollows to develop — are disappearing as they age and old blocks are cleared for townhouses.

Protecting tree hollows

Cavities in trees are not that common. Large cavities are especially valuable assets. They are essential to maintaining biodiversity because it is not just birds, but mammals, reptiles, insects and arachnids that rely on them for nesting and refuge. If you have a tree with a hollow, look after it. And while some trees with hollows might be hazardous, most are not. Every effort must be made to ensure old, hollowing-forming trees are preserved. Just as importantly, we must allow hollow-forming trees to persist for long enough to form hollows. We consider our homes to be our castles. Other species value their homes just as highly, so let's make sure there are plenty of tree hollows in future.

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 August survey was cancelled due to Covid. **This month's survey is cancelled.**

2021 SWANSEA PELAGICS Thursday 21st October: **TO BE CONFIRMED but unlikely**

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

CUCKOO QUIZ ANSWERS

A = Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo
B = Shining Bronze-Cuckoo