



The Twitcher

October
2024

CENTRAL COAST GROUP, BIRDING NSW

Editorial Team: Allan Benson (0457 458 274) Wendy Mitchell (0423 388 529) & Robyn Price Volume 19, No. 10

DATE	ACTIVITIES	LEADER/SPEAKER
22/10/24	Next Meeting: Safari to the Gulf Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds	Michael Scobie
26/10/24	Outing: Pearl Beach, Warrah Trig and Patonga REMEMBER TO REGISTER Meet: 8.30am Arboretum, Crystal Ave, Pearl Beach	Daniel McKeon 0407 076 118
13/11/24	½ day Outing: Coastal Lagoons REMEMBER TO REGISTER Meet: 8.30am Remembrance Drive, Wamberal	Frik Gautschi 0404 467 097
26/11/24	Next Meeting: My Australian Big Year Meet: 7.30pm Tuggerah Progress Hall, Anzac Rd, Tuggerah, opposite McDonalds Note: For all Outings bring your morning tea and lunch. A chair is a good idea.	Charuka Abhayawickrama



Tea, coffee, and biscuits will be available at the end of the meeting.
To cover hall hire and refreshments a donation of \$4 would be appreciated.

Tonight's Meeting: Michael Scobie is talking about his Safari to the Gulf of Carpentaria. He visited Seven Emu Station and the nearby National Park in one of the most remote and difficult to access places in Australia. This was a real adventure and Michael will tell us about the birdlife and the trip.

Last Month's Meeting: 27 members attended our last meeting to hear Dean Purcell talk about the threatened reptile breeding program at Taronga Park Zoo. Amphibians world-wide have been very severely impacted because of the Chytrid Fungus. The fungus infects the skin of the amphibian impacting on the water/salt balance, eventually causing heart failure. One of the worst impacted species in Australia is the Corroboree Frog which inhabits Kosciusko National Park. Numbers have dwindled to almost zero but the breeding program and captive-release is maintaining the breeding population. The Blue-tailed Skink of Christmas Island is extinct in the wild because of predation by the introduced Wolf Snake. The breeding program released 150 skinks on an island in the Cocos Keeling lagoon. The latest survey counted 4,000 skinks. The Bellingen River Turtles became infected with some strange virus. The breeding program at the Zoo has managed to stabilise the population. A very interesting and informative presentation from Dean.

Birthday Breakfast

*John Wallace will be celebrating a very significant milestone birthday in November.
Join him in celebration at 9am on Monday 11th November at The Waters Edge Café, The Entrance.
Please text Frik Gautschi on 0404 467 097 to confirm numbers. NO presents!*

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 has now reached over 1300 members. A great job Malcolm Hill! The Facebook page is a huge success allowing bird-related issues to reach over 800 people on the Central Coast.

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

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.

Central Coast Group, Birding NSW Photography Competition 2024

Once again, we are running this competition which has been well supported in past years.

Rules are as follows.

- There are three categories- Code 1 (common residents), Code 2 (uncommon residents) and Code 3 and 4 (Vagrants).
- Each photographer is allowed two entries in each category.
- Each photograph must be taken on the Central Coast in 2024. Please supply date and location with your entry.
- Closing date will be Friday 6th December.

Send entries to Allan Benson aejsbenson@bigpond.com

Winners will be announced at the club meeting on the 28th January 2025. All photos will be shown at this meeting.

The judge, as in past years, will be Dick Jenkin from HBOC.

The prizes this year will be Neville Cayley prints of your winning bird, framed by Daniel McKeon.

VALE: ANTOINETTE WALTER

Rowena Wallace

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the sudden passing of our Anne, or Antoinette, but mostly Anne... Walter.

Anne was unique. Passionate, caring, talkative, questioning and most of all, one of our Central Coast birders for many years.

Antoinette was born in England on 11th March 1940. Together with her twin brother Tony, the family moved to Australia in 1948 when she was 8 years old and settled in Ashfield. As a teenager she studied nursing at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, where she met and nursed Dennis when he was admitted for two weeks for surgery. They were married in 1962 and had 3 sons, Steven (Blue Mountains), Phillip (England) and Mathew (Chatswood).

When the PMG transferred Dennis to Gosford in 1963, they made their home in Wyoming, where Anne's love of the garden was enjoyed and they both became involved in the local church. When the children were older, Anne returned to nursing at Gosford Hospital, in aged care and as a community nurse. When both Anne and Dennis retired at the end of 1999, they bought a caravan and travelled extensively in outback Australia and also overseas, visiting both Phillip and Mathew.

She was also very fond of painting and belonged to the Henry Kendall Art Group. Anne was a great reader, continuing with the help of Vision Australia and podcasts when her eyesight failed. She had a very keen enquiring mind and was interested in everything, attending several U3A courses.

Unfortunately for Anne, she suffered very poor health, which handicapped her strong spirit. A survivor of breast cancer, she suffered from chronic breathing problems, failing eyesight, poorly healing broken leg and others, yet through all these she remained positive.

Anne and Dennis joined the Central Coast Bird Group in the early 2000's and Anne was a very keen birder, attending many outings and camps, most recently the camp at Karuah in early September.

We will all miss Anne, such a unique woman who always stood out in a crowd.



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

An amazing record of an Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross was observed on the September Terrigal pelagic. This was a first record for the Central Coast. They just motored out and there it was! That is the 3rd time that individual has been seen on a recent pelagics.



Another great record was a Black-tailed Native Hen on a swamp in Jiliby. This is the first record since November 2012 when one was present at McPherson Road Swamp for several days.



A pair of Regent Honeyeater was spotted in North Gosford. Photographs revealed a zoo-bred male that was part of the last release at Tomalpin. It was paired with a wild female so a very significant sighting. This is the first record of Regents on the Central Coast since 2019.

The Adult Kelp Gull is the second record this year but only the 8th ever for the Coast. Two Spiny-Cheeked Honeyeaters were present at Picnic Point. Up to 25 Whiskered Terns have been recorded at the Dairy and smaller numbers at various places on Tuggerah Lake.



A female White-winged Triller was recorded at the Dairy. It is hoped they will breed here again this year. A Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo was found at Magenta. One and possibly two Painted Buttonquail have been sighted regularly at a private residence at Mt White. Rufous Songlark have been observe at three sites. The waders have returned including a Marsh Sandpiper (first since 2019), Wood Sandpiper, Red Knot as well as Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Bar-tailed Godwit.

In addition, the rest of the spring migrants have started to appear including Dollarbird, Sacred Kingfisher, Leaden Flycatcher etc. November will see more of the same with both the local birds and the spring migrants breeding - so birding should be good.

OUTING REPORTS

Outing: September 28

TERALBA

Leader: Meryl Newton

A small group gathered early under threatening skies to venture to Teralba Bore Hole, on Weir Rd. For the majority, this site was as yet unknown, so enthusiasm was high despite the intermittent drizzle. Weir Rd swamp is fairly reliable for seasonal waders and we were not disappointed. About 50 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were seen at the base of mangroves, as were 2 Red-kneed Dotterel, a couple of Black-fronted Dotterel and 20 or so Pied Stilt. (more will turn up as the season progresses).



2 Latham's Snipe were flushed from the saltmarsh on the eastern side along with sightings of a distant Australian Hobby, Whistling Kite and all the usual suspects.

While retrieving our cars from across the road on the western side, we were given good views of a Rufous Songlark (all taken by surprise so no images captured). A delightful Golden-headed Cisticola entertained us in the thistles. Morning tea was had at Lions Park at Toronto with the obligatory Grey Butcherbird in attendance. From there we drove to Myuna Bay, walking the loop track to the canal outlet. We had great sightings of Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagles and nesting Osprey.

Leeanne was lucky to photograph one of the resident sea turtles. Lunch was at Myuna Bay foreshore then we headed south to yet another canal/outlet, at Dora Creek. This is an interesting area, with easy flat walking tracks either side of the canal, with saltmarsh and mangrove forests on the northern side. There were large numbers of White-faced Herons in the saltmarsh and a Striped Honeyeater was seen and heard in casuarina. Again, a Brahminy Kite was busy fishing backwards and forward, across the canal. Leeanne was fortunate to get nice views of a Nankeen Night-heron flying across. With 83 species seen over all, and rain mostly avoided, an enjoyable day had by all.



Striding Out
Leeanne Lemke

½ Day Outing: October 9 JILLIBY, DOORALONG & LEMON TREE Leaders: Carole & John Carpenter

The weather was cool and damp as we met at the Jilliby Cemetery where most of us donned our raincoats for the day. The usual birds were noted – Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark, Eastern Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Grey Butcherbird, a large flock of Australian White Ibis and a mixed flock of Long-billed and Little Corella. We car-pooled for safety on the busy and narrow road ahead.



Waterproofed Birdats
Robyn Price

Our first stop was the Jilliby Waterhole where the 30+ Masked Lapwing dominated. A pair of Australian Pelican cruised around with the Grey and Chestnut Teal as well as Pacific Black Duck. A pair of Black-fronted Dotterel were on the sandy shore with Straw-necked Ibis and White-faced Heron in the paddock. Some of the bush birds seen or heard were Satin Bowerbird, Eastern Whipbird, Tawny Grassbird and White-throated Gerygone. We then drove along Dunks and Davenport Lanes birding from the cars noting Galah, Grey Fantail and Sacred Kingfisher. The detour along Little Jilliby Road was very quiet and wet where we unexpectedly saw two Emu. A Superb Lyrebird and Scarlet Honeyeater were heard and a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was seen.

Going along to Beaven Lane there was a Plumed Egret along with the usual ducks in the farm dams. Red-browed Finch, Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Gerygone, Eastern Yellow Robin, Yellow Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren and Olive-backed Oriole were noted. Eastern Koel, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Shining-bronze Cuckoo were heard but not seen. Morning tea was had under cover at Dooralong Hall where the locals take great care of the hall facilities and grounds. The usual walk along Dittons Road became a slow drive in the wet and it was good to see another White-necked Heron.

At Lemon Tree we car-pooled again for the private property. The farm dam was busy with the usual ducks, Australasian Grebe, Royal Spoonbill, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorant. John spied a nesting Dusky Moorhen just above the water level in a hollow stump. Black-fronted Dotterel were on the water's edge as well as in the paddock, giving great views. Fine weather enabled us to walk to the newly repaired causeway where Louise found a beautiful Azure Kingfisher, much admired and photographed. The walk into the forest revealed Large-billed Scrubwren, Rufous Whistler and eventually the White-throated Gerygone was seen and there were special views of a beautiful male Variegated Fairy-wren. Back at the cars a Superb Fairy-wren and a pair of Red-whiskered Bulbul were seen and a White-winged Triller was heard. A good total of 49 species this year on the property.



Azure Kingfisher

After lunch back at Dooralong Hall, Graham led us to Dicksons Road dam hoping for a view of the Black-tailed Native Hen seen several days ago. No luck today but we added White-breasted Woodswallow, Fairy Martin and Darter to our list which now totalled 81 species identified on the outing. Many thanks to our group of 19 enthusiastic birders braving the weather and for their help and great company.

SPECIES LIST**SEPTEMBER 2024****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	
Pink-eared Duck	2	20-24/9/24	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Meryl Newton
Brush Bronzewing	1	4/9/2024	Magenta Shores	Steve Bowman
Peaceful Dove	2	7/9/2024	Mangrove Mountain District	Andrew Robinson
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	1/9/2024	Point Clare	David Lamont
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	4/9/2024	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	5/9/2024	Glenn Valley	Pauline Zylstra
Pacific Koel *	1	8/9/2024	Terrigal	Paul Shelley
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	1/9/2024	Reeve Rd, Narara	Guy Dutson
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	19/9/2024	Pelican Pt Carpark, Wyrabalong NP	Rick Gatenby
Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo	1	26-29/9/24	Magenta, The Entrance	Kylie Wilson
Buff-banded Rail	1	20/9/2024	Green Point	Karen Eckford
Painted Button-quail	AF	21-25/9/24	Mount White garden	Sue Watts
Red-capped Plover	1	1/9/2024	Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Andrew Robinson
Latham's Snipe	6	28/9/2024	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Meryl Newton
Bar-tailed Godwit *	26	9/9/2024	Picnic Point, The Entrance	Andrew Robinson
Bar-tailed Godwit	10	10/9/2024	Slade Park, Budgewoi	James Baker
Bar-tailed Godwit *	80	15/9/2024	The Entrance Channel	Andrew Robinson
Red Knot	1	28-29/9/24	Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Kylie Wilson
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *	8	6-30/9/24	Chittaway Point West	John Carpenter
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	30	28-29/9/24	Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Kylie Wilson
Curlew Sandpiper *	1	28-29/9/24	Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Kylie Wilson
Red-necked Stint	12	8/9/2024	Soldiers Point reefs	Andrew Robinson
Red-necked Stint	5	28/9/2024	Tuggerah Bay Saltmarsh	Kylie Wilson
Marsh Sandpiper *	1	13/9/2024	Chittaway Point	Dean Purcell
Wood Sandpiper *	1	22/9/2024	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Kelp Gull	J	8/9/2024	Norah Head	Sue Watts
Whiskered Tern *	12	1-7/9/24	South Tacoma, Tuggerah Lakes	Andrew Robinson
Whiskered Tern	1	10/9/2024	Slade Park Budgewoi	James Baker
Whiskered Tern	1	10/9/2024	Karagi Point, The Entrance	James Baker
Black-browed Albatross	7	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Alb	1	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Indian Yellow-nosed Alb	3	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Buller's Albatross	1	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Southern Giant Petrel	1	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	1	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	240	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Fluttering Shearwater	8	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Australasian Gannet	45	21/9/2024	Terrigal Pelagic	Andrew Robinson
Nankeen Night-Heron	2	11/9/2024	Avoca Lagoon	Graham Nelson
White-necked Heron	1	23-29/9/24	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Pacific Baza	1	19/9/2024	Tumbi Umbi	Mel James
Black-shouldered Kite	1	8/9/2024	Mount Penang Gardens	Andrew Robinson
Square-tailed Kite	1	8/9/2024	Pelican Point Carpark, Wyrabalong NP	Stephen Clark
Square-tailed Kite	1	17/9/2024	Niagara Park	Nerida Carter
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	6/9/2024	Cedar Brush Road, Yarramalong	Jesse Hewling
Little Eagle (dark morph)	1	30/9/2024	Wyoming	Kylie Wilson
Brown Goshawk	2	1/9/2024	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Brown Goshawk	1	4/9/2024	Upper Palmdale	John Carpenter
Brown Goshawk	1	16/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	David Schuemaker
Grey Goshawk	1	1/9/2024	McPherson Rd Swamp	Mike Kilburn
Grey Goshawk	1	5/9/2024	Murrumbung HSD Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Grey Goshawk	1	8/9/2024	Erina Heights	Jill Ashby
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	30/9/2034	Overton St, Kincumber	Danny O'Brien
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	1/9/2024	Reeves Rd, Somersby	Guy Dutson

Sacred Kingfisher *	1	6/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Rainbow Bee-eater *	6	1-4/9/24	Magenta Shores	Andrew Robinson
Rainbow Bee-eater *	12	6/9/2024	Cedar Brush Road, Yarramalong	Trisha Sweet
Dollarbird *	1	29/9/2024	Lees Reserve Chittaway	Nick Carson
Powerful Owl	hc	19/9/2024	2100 HRS Berkeley Creek, Berkley Vale	David Peet
Nankeen Kestrel	2	14/9/2024	Terrigal Skillion	M. Nanscarwen
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	8/9/2024	Wisemans Ferry	Roger MacKetrick
Noisy Pitta	2	6/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Bethany Smith
Southern Boobook	HC	5/9/2024	Point Frederick	Gary Jackson
Southern Boobook	HC	19/9/2024	near Murray St, Bateau Bay	per Daniel McKeon
Powerful Owl	HC	21/9/2024	0230 hrs Oberon St, Kincumber	Danny O'Brien
Superb Lyrebird	1	1 & 17/9	Upper Palmdale	Laurel Fowler
Green Catbird	2	16/9/2024	Ourimbah Rest Area M1 Motorway	David Schuemaker
Brown Honeyeater	1	2/9/2024	Magenta Shores	Nick Carson
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	1	21/9/2024	Picnic Point Reserve, The Entrance	David Hill
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	20/9/2024	Wye	Leonie Loewe
White-throated Gerygone *	2	6/9/2024	Wyong	Leonie Loewe
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	2	7/9/2024	Mangrove Mountain District	Andrew Robinson
Varied Sittella	2	1/9/2024	Reeve Rd, Narara	Guy Dutson
Crested Shrike-tit	2	16/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	David Schuemaker
Rufous Whistler *	3	1/9/2024	Reeve Rd Narara	Guy Dutson
Rufous Whistler *	2	2/9/2024	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Rufous Whistler *	1	4/9/2024	Norah Head	Elizabeth Noble
Cicadabird *	1	29/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
White-winged Triller	AM	4/9/2024	Magenta Shores	Mike Bowman
White-winged Triller	AM	7-17/9/24	Mount Penang Parklands	Andrew Robinson
Varied Triller	AM	16/9/2024	Ourimbah Rest Area M1 Motorway	David Schuemaker
Black-faced Monarch *	1	7/9/2024	Strickland SF	Guy Dutson
Black-faced Monarch *	1	9/9/2024	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Black-faced Monarch *	1	16/9/2024	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	David Schuemaker
Leaden Flycatcher *	2	5/9/2024	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Leaden Flycatcher *	2	10/9/2024	Lakes Beach, Budgewoi	Meryl Newton
White-winged Chough	1	6/9/2024	Springs Rd, Yarramalong	David Russell
Rufous Fantail *	2	7/9/2024	Strickland SF Narara	Guy Dutson
Rose Robin	1	1/9/2024	Reeve Rd, Narara	Guy Dutson
Rose Robin	1	6/9/2024	Cedar Brush Road, Yarramalong	Jesse Hewling
Rufous Songlark	1	2/9/2024	Magenta Shores	Nick Carson
Rufous Songlark	1	2/9/2024	Lakes Beach SLSC	Andrew Robinson
Rufous Songlark	1	8/9/2024	Mount Penang Parklands	Andrew Robinson
Fairy Martin *	20	8/9/2024	Tuggerah STW	Andrew Robinson
Brown Songlark	1	8/9/2024	Mt Penang Parklands, Kariong	Andrew Robinson
Bassian Thrush	2	1 & 17/9	Upper Palmdale	Laurel Fowler
Bassian Thrush	1	8/9/2024	Ourimbah Rest Area M1 Motorway	David Ongley
Bassian Thrush	1	21/9/2024	Wisemans Ferry	Liesel Raines

Breeding and other records - September

Black Swan: 2A+3Y Central Coast Wetlands 28/9 (DSch); **Aust. Wood Duck:** 2A+7Y Saratoga 28/9 (GSh); **Channel-billed Cuckoo arrivals:** 1 Wye 20/9 (LLO), 1 Oberton St Kincumber 21/9 (DOB), 2 Holgate 28/9 (RWO); **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo:** 1 Pelican Pt Carpark, WNP 20/9 (RGa); **Masked Lapwing:** 2A+2Y Wyoming 6/9 (DRi); **Brown Goshawk:** 1 West Erina Heights 23/9 (DEa); **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo:** 2A+J Wye 9/9 (LLO); **Spotted Pardalote:** 2A+N Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming 1/9 (RMO); **Rufous Whistler arrivals:** 1 Upper Palmdale 16/9 (DSc); **Grey-butcherbird:** 2A+N+Y Chittaway Pt West 29/9 (KWi); **Black-faced Monarch:** 2 Winnie Bay 25/9 (KWi); 5 Lakes Beach Bike Track Budgewoi 29/9 (LLe).
Good Birding!

TWITCH LIST September 2024

A new front-runner has emerged. Andrew Robinson has come out of the woodwork with a massive total of 275. Well, done Andy and well deserved as he has found almost every rarity this year. It may be **another** record year. See figures on the next page.

Andrew Robinson	275	Carole Carpenter	189	Leonie Loewe	154
Graham Nelson	229	John Carpenter	187	Gabrielle Rees	153
Nick Carson	222	Chris Jamieson	179	Robyn Price	148
David Schuemaker	221	Kaye Pointer	178	Diana Hogan	147
Allan Benson	214	Julie Peksis	176	Frik Gautschi	134
Christina Port	202	Margaret Pointer	165	Michael Scobie	133
Krystyna Lonergan	195	Rowena Wallace	160	Judy Clark	126
Daniel McKeon	190	Doug Hocking	158	Paul Shelley	120

BIRDATA SURVEYS YTD 2024

Graham Nelson	304	Robyn Price	69	David Schuemaker	21
Allan Benson	271	Frik Gautschi	39	Michael Scobie	21
Nick Carson	260	Guy Dutson	32	Meryl Newton	20
Alan Stuart	255	C Clutterbuck	32	Daniel McKeon	12
Leeanne Lemke	78	Doug Hocking	21	Leonie Loewe	9

For September 2024, 146 surveys were completed compared with 125 in 2023. YTD 2024, 2635 surveys have been completed. This is a significant improvement on 2023 where 2304 surveys were entered. Graham Nelson has taken a solid lead.

We would like to see more birders putting in more surveys. Birddata is one way, as a birder, you can make a contribution to bird conservation.

SOUTH WYONG SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS September Survey

Three observers found the ponds reasonably full. There were about 150 water fowl on the ponds including many juvenile Australasian Grebe as well as Hoary-headed Grebe, Shoveler, Black Duck and Chestnut and Grey Teal. 54 species were recorded with the highlights being 4 Black-fronted Dotterel, Reed-warbler, and 2 Swamp Harriers

The survey takes place the Wednesday after our meeting. Meet at the Ibis Rd entrance at 9.30am.

TWITCHATHON - OCTOBER 26 & 27: RAISING FUNDS TO PROTECT BEACH-NESTING BIRDS

This year we are raising funds for the Eureka Prize-winning sensory conservation team at the University of Sydney to help fund research into new sensory tools to protect beach-nesting birds from introduced predators, such as foxes, using the cutting-edge technology of olfactory misinformation.

Introduced predators, such as foxes, rats and cats, threaten beach-nesting birds, hunting both the eggs and chicks of threatened species such as Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Beach Stone-curlews, Hooded Plovers and Little Terns. A single predator can wipe out entire nesting colonies in a single night or two. Current tools such as fox control and fencing are often not as effective as they need to be to protect nesting birds and chicks, and new tools are urgently needed in Australia and globally.

Researchers have demonstrated that 'hiding' birds from predators using smell can reduce egg predation by up to 70%. By targeting the senses that predators use to find nests, we can now exploit 'sensory misinformation' using odour to trick predators but not interfere with the birds themselves. Developing these new techniques so that shorebird wardens, community groups and land managers can use them could be a game changer for protecting our shorebirds. As well as smell, we also need to know if sound cues betray the location of nestlings and fledglings so that we can expand the effectiveness of these sensory tactics.

The money raised from this year's Twitchathon will help develop new techniques to protect nesting shorebirds. It will directly support research investigating how predators might find nesting colonies using the sounds of calling adults and chicks. And then whether sound (as well as smell) makes chicks vulnerable. Crucially, this information and the technology developed to test these questions, will underpin new approaches for protecting our shorebirds from a range of predators wherever they nest.

Researchers will accompany bird banders and shorebird wardens in the Shoalhaven and on the Mid North Coast to record the soundscapes of nesting colonies that predators may use as a cue.

These sounds (and others) will then be used in experimental tests using a range of mammalian nest predators, from black rats to foxes and cats. These experiments will take place in coastal areas of NSW from the Mid North Coast down to Shoalhaven. Importantly, we hope that the research will result in new techniques that can be used to protect a range of threatened bird species from predators.

Our local team Which-is-it (Mike, Margaret and Kaye) is entering. They would appreciate your support. They always put in a great effort.



Red-capped Plover

Photo by Killarney East

Terrigal Pelagic Trip Report: Saturday 21st September 2024

Andrew Robinson

A trip to remember with a genuine MEGA and perhaps the 'best' bird yet on a Terrigal pelagic. 16 of us departed Terrigal Haven not long after 6am and were soon motoring towards the shelf in pleasant conditions; 10-15 km/h WNW winds, a slight 0.8m swell from the south and with sea temperatures around 20 degrees. An uneventful trip to the shelf ensued with only Gannets, smallish numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and the odd Fluttering Shearwater seen, along with regular but distant Humpback Whale action. Arriving at the shelf slope at 8:45am, we came across a few Albatrosses loafing on the water and the call was made to venture our first drift here rather than heading for deeper water. This proved fortuitous when only minutes in, James, with some urgency, alerted everyone to an interesting 'Yellow-nosed' some 30m away on the water directly in front of the bow. Binoculars were raised and almost immediately we were able to confirm the diagnostic dark eye patch. It was the stuff of pelagic dreams - the fabled Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross! The boat was quickly repositioned to allow all on board better views and some record shots as the bird continued to preen. Wary of flushing it, we kept a respectful distance, but eventually drifted a little too close for its liking and it took to the wing briefly before alighting about 50m away. This provided views in different light making the greyish hood apparent and further confirming what we were looking at.

A truly remarkable record, made even more so by the fact that it was not attracted to the boat / burley, but instead found randomly on the water some 26 nautical miles from land. Equally mind bending, having now compared photos, is that this is almost certainly the same bird seen by the Sydney crew in the vicinity of Brown's Mountain twice in the last 3 weeks and that it is perhaps the only one of its kind on the east coast of Australia currently. We were able to observe the Atlantic for a little longer before it again took off, though this time it kept going into the sun and was lost to view. Celebrations and maybe even some swearing followed, and to be honest we could have headed for shore at that point, but then again it was just after 9am and there was more sea birding to be had.

The remainder of the day saw several more drifts at varying depths, though as the day wore on and the wind lessened, so too did bird activity. That said, an obliging Southern Giant Petrel came into the slick mid-morning and provided excellent prolonged views and photo opportunities, while 2 or 3 Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross kept us on our toes. A few Wilson's and White-faced Storm Petrels were irregularly seen on the slick and we were afforded almost constant Humpback Whale action with well over 20 separate sightings, including some very close. Just as we were getting ready for the return trip, a moderate sized pod of Pygmy Killer Whales made a very welcome appearance, but

despite our best efforts, views were a little frustrating. A Buller's Albatross was a nice addition to the trip list on the return trip.

The Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross was the 47th species seen beyond The Haven on Terrigal pelagic trips (needless to say a new species for the CC), this being the 25th edition, while the Southern Giant Petrel (apparently becoming rarer), was only the third record for a Terrigal Pelagic.

In total 13 species were seen beyond The Haven with 10 of those Tubenoses. As follows:

Black-browed Albatross – 7 (3). Shy Albatross – 8 (2), **ATLANTIC YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS – 1**, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 3 (2), Buller's Albatross – 1, Southern Giant Petrel – 1, Wilson's Storm Petrel – 2 (1), White-faced Storm Petrel – 2 (1), Wedge-tailed Shearwater – 240 (60), Fluttering Shearwater – 8 (4), Greater Crested Tern – 12 (4), Silver Gull – 2, Australasian Gannet – 45 (30).

*Parenthesis denotes the maximum number of that species seen at any one time.

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST NIGHT PARROT POPULATION MAY BE PROTECTED BY DINGOES, BUT MINING IN REMOTE WA HABITAT PLANNED

Peter de Kruijff

The largest known population of Night Parrots, around 50 birds, is believed to live in a remote Indigenous Protected Area in Western Australia. A new study suggests the rare parrots may be protected by dingoes.

Change is coming to the region with the first piece of industrial development in the area, a potash mine and 350-kilometre sealed haul road, seeking environmental approval.

Sitting by a winter campfire in the Great Sandy Desert, Ngururrpa ranger Clifford Sunfly could see something moving on the ground beside his four-wheel drive. First, he thought it was a hopping mouse, but in the glow of the still-switched-on headlights, he found himself looking straight at one of the rarest animals in Australia, a Night Parrot



(*Pezoporus occidentalis*). "It hopped out from the shadow and stepped into a light," he said. "I kept looking at it and saw that colour on his back and chest — greenish on his back and yellowish on his belly." The parrot bounced around the red sand looking for seeds to eat before flying off into the darkness. Mr Sunfly had seen night parrots before, but this instance, just a few weeks ago, was the best view he'd had of the cryptic species, which he and his fellow rangers are trying to save from extinction.

Aboriginal Corporation, published today in Wildlife Research, that night parrot was one of around 50 living in the 29,000-square-kilometre Ngururrpa Indigenous Protected Area in Western Australia. It is the largest-known popula-

tion of the rare bird in Australia, comprising about half of the nation's total known individuals. The study, supported by the National Environmental Science Program, also suggests why this particular night parrot remnant population survived when others perished: the presence of cat-eating dingoes. But maintaining an ecosystem that's allowed the parrots to survive is getting more complex with industrial development set to reach the desert.

Night Parrots were once found in every state and territory except Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. Now there are so few left — likely fewer than 250 all up — the bird is being considered for reclassification from endangered to critically endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Following European colonisation, Night Parrot numbers dwindled as their habitat degraded and foxes and feral cats spread.

How exactly isolated pockets of parrots have persisted is not known, but dingoes, which prey on cats, may play a role in this region of WA. "We think the cats don't want to travel much through here because of all the dingoes," Mr Sunfly said, adding that dingoes aren't likely a Night Parrot predator. Indigenous Desert Alliance ecologist and co-author Rachel Paltridge said cats were avoiding Night Parrot roosting habitat containing dingoes which ate the invasive pest. "On average 15 per cent of dingo scats collected from the Night Parrot sites contained cat remains, and on some trips, it was up to 25 per cent," she said.

The other thing in favour for the parrots and native species found in the desert, which is also one of the last strongholds of the bilby, is the lack of industrialised development or cattle grazing.

James Watson, University of Queensland biogeographer who was not part of the new study, said it was important from a biodiversity point of view to maintain as many ecologically intact places as possible. "It's these large intact places that allow species to adapt to a changing climate, because they've got big, healthy populations that can move through the landscape and they can adapt to the changing climate," he said.

But change may be coming to the desert region, bringing with it community benefits alongside, perhaps, environmental challenges.

Wilkinson, also known as Lake Mackay, is WA's second-largest lake and straddles the border of the state with the Northern Territory. It's found between two remote Aboriginal communities, Balgo and Kiwirrkurra, at the end of hundreds of kilometres of unsealed tracks.

With a growing global demand for food, the salt lake has been staked as source of sulphate of potash, used as fertiliser, by ASX-listed company Agrimin. There are a potential 123 million tonnes of sulphate of potash at the site that could be mined for an estimated 20 years. The mining project is the closest to development in the region with several other companies also exploring the desert's mineral prospectivity. To export the sulphate of potash, Agrimin is proposing to seal a 350km private road to connect the project to the Great Northern Highway and the Wyndham Port. It will also connect Balgo with Kiwirrkurra, which share strong kinship ties, and give both communities better access to service towns such as Halls Creek where there is a hospital.

But it also means going through country containing the threatened Night Parrot, as well as the Bilby and Great Desert Skink. Environmental surveys for the project helped identify night parrots in the region, and the birds have been found foraging 5 to 10km from the proposed road in some areas.

University of Queensland conservation scientist and study co-author Nick Leseberg said it wasn't certain whether the road would pose a problem for the parrots. "We don't know how they [Night Parrots] react to new roads ... we don't know how they would react to more traffic going along the road," he said. "There is the possibility that bringing in roads increases access for humans, and that could increase frequency of fire."

Fire is a major threat to Night Parrots. The birds need old-growth spinifex to create nesting tunnels. A recent lightning-ignited wildfire in December reduced the spinifex extent in one of 51 old-growth patches in the Ngurrpa Indigenous Protected Area from 2,796 hectares to 660ha. Strategic burning of fuel loads on the landscape near the roosting habitat is helping reduce the risk of the parrots being wiped out in a future fire. Mr Sunfly said the rangers also wanted to put up signs in some areas warning people against lighting fires to protect night parrot spinifex.

Agrimin chief executive and managing director Debbie Morrow said research showed fire and feral predators were the two biggest risks to the night parrot. "We're using this information and adapting our plans to minimise any impact on local flora and fauna from our development plans for the sulphate of potash project and transport corridor," she said. Ms Morrow said Agrimin has planned measures such as fire management protocols, a fire response team with support from ranger groups, and a control program for cats and foxes.

Rangers do not want predator control methods in place that could harm the dingoes. But perhaps the most significant operational condition proposed by Agrimin, as it seeks state and federal environmental approvals, is a curfew on haul road activity. No mining vehicles will be allowed to drive on the road at night, outside of emergencies, which is when bilbies and night parrots are active. The company will also emphasise to community members with access to the road the importance of limiting driving to daytime hours. Tourists will not have access to the road. Traditional owners have been concerned there have been tourists in the region that don't get travel permits to be on their land and may be damaging species' habitat.

Aboriginal communities in favour

Both the Parna Ngururpa Aboriginal Corporation from Balgo and the Tjamu Tjamu Aboriginal Corporation, from Kiwirrkurra, the leading organisations in the two communities, are in favour of the potash project and the new road. Ranger groups are also in line for more project funding, with Agrimin proposing a \$5.5 million environmental offset package for the mine. Ms Morrow said the company had already spent \$6 million on environmental surveys, studies and approvals for the project and would put a further \$3 million towards operational environment monitoring and threat abatement.

In a statement, the Tjamu Tjamu Aboriginal Corporation said they wanted to see everyone benefit from the project, including the animals. "We will work together with Agrimin to make sure ninu [bilby], tjalapa [great desert skink] and other animals stay around for our children and our children's children to look after," they said.

RED WATTLEBIRD FEEDING CHICK

Ann Lindsey October 8, 2024

On the hot (32 degrees) Monday afternoon of the long weekend (7 October 2024) I drove to a spot on Hue Hue Road, Jilliby where I had birdwatched the week before with the intention of not doing anything very much. As I sat in the car observing the scene, I became aware of a Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* flying about and I heard a Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata* both of which species I had not noted there on previous visits. What happened next was so interesting as I had inadvertently parked about six metres from a Red Wattlebird chick which I saw when an adult came in with insect food in its bill. In view of this, I kept carefully within the car and made sure I did not accidentally put binoculars outside the window. The observation time was one and a quarter hours.

What follows is a description of behaviour that I noted.

The chick was sitting on the low branch of a Native Cherry *Exocarpus cupressiformis* about two thirds of a metre above the ground. It was plump and fully feathered in mottled brown and white and had a short tail and yellow gape. I did not hear it calling and I did not see any begging behaviour.

At 1415 an adult landed about four to five metres above the chick and made its way down to the chick hopping sideways from branch to branch. It landed beside the chick which opened its bill and the adult pushed the food in. The adult did not stay but made its way back up the tree again hopping from branch to branch before flying off almost immediately. I assume that this method of arrival and departure minimises the chances of the chick being found by a predator. Only on the sixth feeding bout did the adult not fly off immediately but remained perched above the chick until a second adult flew in. As I was not able to discern differences between the adults it is unknown how often each adult fed the chick. Over the next one and a quarter hours, an adult fed the chick seven times at intervals of approximately ten minutes. On one occasion the interval was 15 minutes. As I had observed two adults together I was able to note that a different adult fed the chick on at least the seventh occasion. It is known that both adults provision the young approximately equally (Higgins *et al.* 2001)

As adults approached the chick, very soft two-syllable calls were made ranging between one and seven times. It is known that soft clucking calls may be made when approaching a nest or when about to feed young (Higgins *et al.* 2001). On departure the adult was silent except once when it made a soft rasping note.

It is interesting to note that on arrival the chick was clearly visible to me but after the third feeding bout, it moved along the branch and out of my view. I noted similar behaviour with the adult that remained until the second bird arrived in that it also moved behind a branch so that it was out of my view.

Reference

Higgins, P.J., J.M. Peter & W.K. Steele (Eds) 2001. Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 5: Tyrant-flycatchers to Chats. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.