



## Central Coast Group, Birding NSW Photography Competition 2025

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

Rules are as follows.

- There are three categories-
  1. Any bird photographed on a Central Coast Group outing or camp in the last 3 years  
Prize \$50, donated by Central Coast Group.
  2. Any bird photographed at Central Coast Wetlands/Pioneer Dairy in the last 3 years  
Prize \$50, donated by Central Coast Wetlands Trust.
  3. Any bird photographed on the Central Coast in 2025  
Prize \$50, donated by Central Coast Group.
- Each photographer is allowed two entries in each category.
- Please supply date and location with your entry.

Closing date will be Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025. Send entries to Allan Benson [aejsbenson@bigpond.com](mailto:aejsbenson@bigpond.com)

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

Winners will be announced at the club meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025. All photos will be shown at this meeting.

## Birthday Breakfast on 13 October 2025

Frik Gautschi

One of Central Coast Birders' founder members, John Carpenter, celebrated a very significant milestone-birthday last month, duly celebrated with 35 birders at Waterfall Café, Mt Penang Gardens. Those in attendance included four fellow founder members: Carole Carpenter, Margaret and Kaye Pointer and Lorraine Johnstone.

The Café had set aside an area for our group out of the fresh morning breeze and did us proud with a pleasing variety of dishes and prompt service.

Michael Scobie said a few words, reminding all of John's (and Carole's) enormous contribution to our group, their warm hospitality, wide knowledge of birds and their habits and calls, always generous in sharing snippets of birds' peculiarities with fellow members. John is furthermore one of the rare few who can sit in a spot and make a complete list of birds in the vicinity by listening to their calls alone. In reply John admitted that, as a boy, he'd been less interested in birds than in their eggs, but this anomaly was soon reversed and he's never looked back. He said that Carole became an avid birder in the space of one outing; as it stands, they have exact equal numbers of "lifers", however each has seen just that one bird that the other hasn't!

By the end of the meal and formalities the weather had warmed to perfect conditions for a stroll around the gardens and ponds, attended by some fifteen birders. Dusky Moorhens, Mallard/Black Duck Hybrids and various Cormorants were seen in the pond behind the Café, and many Welcome Swallows were urgently feeding around us. A Black-shouldered Kite (perhaps the highlight of the walk) was spotted on the outer fringes of the park. Other sightings were Little Wattlebirds, a family of Wood Ducks and a lone Australasian Grebe. Finally, a Sacred Kingfisher was a reminder that Summer is upon us.





Breakfast Birders  
Nerida Carter

Thanks to all who were able to attend this joyful occasion, and happy birthday again, John!

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

There has been a number of significant sightings. The most exciting was a photograph of a Letter-winged Kite at Norah Head. This is an amazing record, being the first for the Central Coast. The second amazing record was a Singing Honeyeater at North Entrance being the first record. Satin Flycatcher and Spectacled Monarch are excellent records at the Ecovillage. Both are likely to be on passage further south.

The Dairy continues to deliver good sightings with a Rufous Songlark and multiple White-winged Trillers seen there. There is a good chance the Trillers will breed. Speaking of Trillers, the Varied Triller at the RTA has been calling and multiple sightings made. There is some concern there is only a single male there now. The Cook's Petrel seen on the recent Terrigal Pelagic is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> record for the Coast. The Little Terns have returned and Central Coast Council has been preparing Karagi Point in anticipation of the breeding season.

All the spring migrants have now arrived with the final species, Cicadabird, being seen at the RTA reserve.

For November, breeding will be in full swing for all species, so we can look forward to some good birding and interesting records.



Letter-winged Kite  
Shaun Harris



White-winged Triller  
Kelly Nash

### OUTING REPORTS

Outing: September 27

GLENOLA FARM & YARRAMOLONG

Leaders: Kaye and Margaret Pointer

An overcast mild spring day dawned for our meeting at St Barnabas Church carpark where birds were active. Early sightings of White-headed Pigeon, Satin Bowerbird, male Regent Bowerbird and Straw-necked Ibis were fleeting. Several Lewin's Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill fought over a few flowers on a nearby coral tree. Entering the church yard Grey Fantails and Welcome Swallow were observed flitting after insects. An Eastern Yellow Robin watched for food and the procession of people and Brush Turkey strutted by. Bird calls catching our attention at the cemetery were Black-faced Monarch, Green Catbird, Crested Shrike-tit and a White-throated Gerygone, which responded to calls and landed directly above.



**Black-faced Monarch**  
*Liz Noble*

**Glenola Group**  
*Liz Noble*



After parking at 'Glenola Farm' a passenger in the last car reported an Azure Kingfisher at the pond. We had time for a walk back past the pond and along the creek before morning tea. No Azure Kingfisher to be seen, however we had good views of White-browed and Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Sacred Kingfisher, Black-faced Monarch, 4 Rainbow Bee-eaters and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

During our time at the shelter a Pied Butcherbird family kept watch from the fence. The walk around the main water-hole after morning tea was not as busy as hoped, although Brown Goshawk, Black-shouldered Kite, Shining Bronze Cuckoo and Tawny Grassbird were listed.

We finished the outing with a walk around Jack Gear Oval, where Bar-shouldered Dove, King Parrot, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and White-throated Treecreeper were new additions for the day. A reasonable total of 65 species was recorded. Thank you to the 15 participants for their patience, assistance and companionship. Thank you to Central Coast Council for permitting us access to Glenola Farm, and their continuing plantings improving riparian habitat.

**½ Day Outing: October 8**

**JILLIBY, DOORALONG, LEMON TREE**

**Leaders: Carole & John Carpenter**

The weather forecast of 30° meant a really hot day but with plenty of cloud cover all morning we enjoyed a very pleasant outing. Numbering 17, our group, including some first-timers on a Club Outing, met at the Jilliby Cemetery where we car-pooled for the day. Two White-necked Heron were seen on our way to the Jilliby waterhole where the usual water birds were seen. A Golden-headed Cisticola was heard and then posed for all to see and photograph – a *Bird of the Day* for many.



**Golden-headed Cisticola**  
*Nerida Carter*

We drove to Dunks Lane. Birding from the cars we noted Grey & Pied Butcherbirds, Dollarbird, Golden Whistler, Cattle Egret, Olive-backed Oriole and White-faced Heron. On to Little Jilliby where Fan-tailed, Brush & Shining Bronze-Cuckoo were heard. Also from the creek bush area a Noisy Pitta called and across the road, up the hill in the forested area, 1 or possibly 2 Noisy Pittas called. White-throated Gerygone, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Whipbird and Wonga Pigeon were also heard. Some birders were surprised to see the 2 Emus.

Beaven Lane was next with Satin Bowerbird, Brown Gerygone, Leaden Flycatcher, Variegated & Superb Fairy-wrens, 2 Brown Goshawks soaring above and great views of the Shining Bronze Cuckoo. Back on the main road a Buff-banded Rail ran for cover and a Swamp Harrier was seen.

Dooralong Hall area for morning tea where we were thrilled to see and listen to the White-throated Gerygone (later seen with nesting material), Black-faced Monarch and 3 very noisy Channel-billed Cuckoo. A Pheasant Coucal called loudly but would not show.

On to Lemon Tree private property where there were not as many waterfowl as last year but 2 Black-fronted Dotterel and a nesting Purple Swamphen. Jacky Winter was sharing the big dead tree with Little Corellas and a nesting



Common Myna, while a Wedge-tailed Eagle soared high above. At the head of the dam a pair of Azure Kingfisher delighted the group and up the forest trail both male and female Leaden Flycatchers were the highlight. Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Brown Gerygone, Eastern Yellow Robin and White-throated Tree-creeper were amongst the 41 species identified on the property. 6 different species were added to the property list for the owners.

Lunch was back at Dooralong Hall, followed by a walk along Dittons Road where we added White-browed Scrubwren to our list of 84 species for the outing. Spring was certainly in the air with the return of the spring/summer migrants as evident with the species identified along with newly hatched Grey Teal, Masked Lapwing, Magpie in nest and nesting Purple Swamphen.

**Outing: October 14**

**NARARA ECOVILLAGE**

Allan Benson

The Ecovillage is a birding hotspot because of great habitat and resident expert birder, Guy Dutson. Guy had recorded 110 species on the property which became 111 on this outing when a Hardhead was seen in the dam. Guy had found a Satin Flycatcher and a Spectacled Monarch here and was kind enough to offer to show these to Central Coast Birders. Both species are regarded rarities on the coast.

4 people turned up. The Satin Flycatcher was relatively easy as it was feeding in trees adjacent to the dam, providing distant but reasonable views. The Spectacled Monarch was a different story. Guy led us along the side of the dam, on steep and rough country. There was no track and the leaf litter made it a difficult and arduous the journey. Two people gave up but the remaining two were rewarded with good views of the Monarch.

In all 50 species were recorded including a flyby by a Glossy Black Cockatoo.

**SPECIES LIST**

**SEPTEMBER 2025**

**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

Bold – Threatened and or rare species

Australasian Shoveler	2	6/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Bos Vesterby
Pink-eared Duck	2	2/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	John Davis
Brown Quail	5	2 & 9/25	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	John Davis
Tawny Frogmouth	2	11/9/2025	Long Jetty	Elizabeth Noble
Owlet-Nightjar	1	15/9/2025	one in hollow, Chain Valley Bay	Meryl Newton
Owlet-Nightjar	HC	30/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
White-throated Needletail *	2	26/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Christina Port
Pheasant Coucal	HC	13/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Pheasant Coucal	1	19/9/2025	Doyalson North	Meryl Newton
Pheasant Coucal	1	27/9/2025	Wye	Leonie Loewe
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1HC	13/9/2025	Mount White	Sue Watts
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1HC	19/9/2025	Umina	Ken Janson

Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1HC	21/9/2025	Oberton St, Kincumber	Danny O'Brien
Channel-billed Cuckoo *	1	22/9/2025	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Pacific Koel *	1HC	14/9/2025	Wyee	Leonie Loewe
Pacific Koel *	1HC	15/9/2025	Wyoming	Jill Nelson
Pacific Koel *	1HC	17/9/2025	Terrigal CBD	Paul Shelley
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	1/9/2025	Upper Palmdale Road, Palmdale	Bruce Ward-Smith
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	6/9/2025	Pelican Bch carpark, Wyrabalong NP	Lee Emery
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	14/9/2025	Ourimbah Rest Area M1 Motorway	Tricia Sweet
Brush Cuckoo *	1	26/9/2025	Lake Rd, Tuggerah	Dean Purcell
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	2	21/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Julie Peksis
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	7/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Emily Jenkins
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	18/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Margaret Pointer
Peaceful Dove	2	2 & 15-18/9	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Topknot Pigeon	5	26/9/2025	Toukley Ave, Toukley	Leeanne Lemke
Buff-banded Rail	1	6/9/2025	Beaufort Pde, St Huberts Island	Greg Shaw
Buff-banded Rail	1	11/9/2025	Long Jetty	Elizabeth Noble
Red-capped Plover	2	14/9/2025	Karagi Point The Entrance	Tricia Sweet
Latham's Snipe	1	7/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *	4	16-17/9/25	Rocky Point, North Tacoma	Steve Davies
Wedge-tailed Shearwater *	2	6/9/2025	Soldiers Point, Norah Head	Alan Morris
Great Cormorant	150	3/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Carole Carpenter
Great Cormorant	120	15/9/2025	Mount White	Sue Watts
Black-necked Stork	AM	7/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Osprey	2A+J	2/9/2025	in nest San Remo Coms Tower	Meryl Newton
Osprey	J	2/9/2025	Terrigal Haven	Tony Nicholls
Osprey	1	6/9/2025	Soldiers Point, Norah Head	Alan Morris
Pacific Baza	1	1/9/2025	Paperbark Close, Wyoming	James Burn
Pacific Baza	1	3/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Julie Peksis
Black-shouldered Kite	1	2/9/2025	South Tacoma	Kyle Bonnan
Black-shouldered Kite	1	7/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	David Schuemaker
Black-shouldered Kite	2	7/9/2025	Kulnura	Gina McFarlane
Square-tailed Kite	1	7/9/2025	Pacific Hwy, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Square-tailed Kite	1	12/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Black Kite	1	29/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2A+N	2/9/2025	Chain Valley Bay	Meryl Newton
Brown Goshawk	1	15/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Brown Goshawk	1	25/9/2025	Woy Woy Tip	Darren Earnshaw
Brown Goshawk	2+N	1/10/2025	Erina Heights	Darren Earnshaw
Grey Goshawk	1	1-25/9/25	x4 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Grey Goshawk	1	2/9/2025	George Downs Drive, Kulnura	Tyler Monachino
Grey Goshawk	1	7/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Ashley Reynolds
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	7/9/2025	Tacoma South, Wyong River	Bors Vesterby
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	1-27/9/25	x11 Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Margaret Pointer
Little Eagle	1	6/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Straw-necked Ibis	29	2/9/2025	flyover Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Margaret Pointer
Azure Kingfisher	1	3/9/2025	Glenworth Valley	Tom Wilson
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	12/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Peter Brown
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	16/9/2025	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Sacred Kingfisher *	1	18/9/2025	Dillons Firetrail, Brisbane Water NP	Jason Brown
Dollarbird *	2	12/9/2025	Lisarow	Sue Watts
Dollarbird *	1	29/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Rainbow Bee-eater *	4	4-25/9/25	Pelican Bch carpark, Wyrabalong NP	Bruce Ward-Smith
Sooty Owl	HC	3/9/2025	2100 hrs Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Ann Juan
Australian Boobook	1	1/9/2025	Rumbalara Reserve, Gosford	Nick Carson
Peregrine Falcon	1	15/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Peregrine Falcon	1	23/9/2025	Forresters Beach	Lee Emery
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	1/9/2025	4 on 23/9, Mount White	Sue Watts

Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	8/9/2025	Doyalson North	Mark Smith
Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	15/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Little Lorikeet	2	6/9/2025	Cedar Brush Creek	Noah Sunderland
Superb Lyrebird	1	6/9/2025	Maidens Brush Rd ,Wyoming	Bors Vesterby
Superb Lyrebird	1	10-14/9/25	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	Carole Carpenter
Noisy Pitta	1	1/9/2025	Paperbark Close, Wyoming	James Burn
Noisy Pitta	1	21/9/2025	Upper Palmdale Rd, Palmdale	Chris Rehberg
Noisy Pitta	1	27/9/2025	Strickland SF, Narara	Sarah Salisbury
Brown-headed Honeyeater	2	7 & 20/9/25	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Fuscous Honeyeater	2	7/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Brown Honeyeater	2	6/9/2025	Beaufort Pde, St Huberts Island	Greg Shaw
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2	7/9/2025	Lake Munmorah foreshore, Budgewoi	Craig Marshall
Scarlet Myzomela	6	12/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Meryl Newton
Yellow-throated Scrub-wren	2	11/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Chestnut-rump Heathwren	4	4/9/2025	Warrah Trig, Brisbane Water NP	James Bennett
Buff-rumped Thornbill	2	7/9/2025	Kulnura	Gina McFarlane
Buff-rumped Thornbill	4	18/9/2025	Berecry Rd, Mangrove Mountain	Allan Benson
Varied Sittella	2	4/9/2025	Wye	Leonie Loewe
Varied Sittella	2A+J	15/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
White-throated Gerygone *	2	4-16/9/25	Wye	Leonie Loewe
White-throated Gerygone *	2	13 & 15/9	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
White-throated Gerygone *	2,2	19/9/2025	Dooralong Hall & Lemon Tree	Carole Carpenter
Crested Shrike-tit	1	15/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Margaret Pointer
Rufous Whistler *	AM	9/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
White-winged Triller *	AM	16/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Kelly Nash
White-breast Woodswallow *	9	12/9/2025	Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah	Peter Brown
Olive-backed Oriole *	1	23/9/2025	Murrumbung HSD, Mardi	John Carpenter
Olive-backed Oriole *	1	4/9/2025	Wye	Leonie Loewe
Olive-backed Oriole *	1	6/9/2025	Pelican Bch carpark, Wyrabalong NP	Lee Emery
Black-faced Monarch *	1	14/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek RTA Reserve	Luke Shelley
Black-faced Monarch *	1	15/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
Black-faced Monarch *	1	16/9/2025	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery
Leaden Flycatcher *	1	17/9/2025	Lake Rd, Tuggerah	Kelly Nash
Leaden Flycatcher *	2	23/9/2025	Doyalson North	Meryl Newton
Leaden Flycatcher *	HC	24/9/2025	bushland, Avoca Drive, Green Point	Darren Earnshaw
Leaden Flycatcher	AM	29/9/2025	Little Beach, Bouddi	Guy Dutson
Rufous Fantail *	1	16/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Rufous Fantail *	1	23/9/2025	Ourimbah Creek Rd, Ourimbah	Darren Earnshaw
Jacky Winter	1,2	30/8/2025	Dubbo Gully & Waratah Rd North	Kaye Pointer
Jacky Winter	2	4/9/2025	Wye	Leonie Loewe
Jacky Winter	2	19/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD ,Mangrove Mountain	Kaye Pointer
Rose Robin	1	6/9/2025	McEvoy Oval, Umina Beach	Greg Shaw
Double-barred Finch	5	10/9/2025	Weonga Place, San Remo	Peter Mortimer
Bassian Thrush	1	1/9/2025	Upper Palmdale Road, Palmdale	Bruce Ward-Smith
Bassian Thrush	1	2/9/2025	Strickland State Forest, Narara	Andrew Haigh
Bassian Thrush	2	4-6/9/2025	A+J on 28/9, Tathra Taila HSD, Man. Mtn	Kaye Pointer
European Blackbird	AM	9/9/2025	Tathra Taila HSD, Mangrove Mtn	Kaye Pointer
European Blackbird	AM	17/9/2025	Henry Kendall Gardens, Wyoming	Rob Montgomery

### Breeding and other records: September 2025

**Wood Duck:** 5 ducklings; **Koel** Arrivals: 1 Umina 26/9 (KJa); **Masked Lapwing:** 2A+3 chicks Central Coast Wetlands 11/9 (ENo); **Osprey:** 1 Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah 14/9 (TSw), 1 Wyong CBD 24/9 (?); **Black-shouldered Kite:** 1 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 8 & 24-26/9 (KPo); **Brown Goshawk:** x10 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 3-25/9 (KPo); **Wedge-tailed Eagle:** 2 Kulnura 8/9/ (KPo); **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo:** 2A+J Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 4/9 (MPo); **Glossy Black Cockatoo:** 2 Murrumbung HSD Mardi 12/9 (JCa), 1 Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 23/9 (MPo); **White-throated Tree-creeper:** with nesting material Tathra Taila HSD Man. Mtn 19/9 (KPo); **Variagated Fairy-wren:** A+ nesting material



surface, enjoying a free feed. The call went out that there was a white bird coming in and most people got onto it as a Cook's Petrel headed directly towards us then veered off. It followed the often-typical behaviour of a Cook's Petrel, in that it did a swift flyby and wasn't seen again.

There were many birds on the horizon and some Shearwaters looping around but nothing was coming in to the boat. By 9:30am there were two Wilson's Storm-

Petrel, which increased to 6, flitting around the slick amongst the shearwaters that occasionally landed at a distance. Of note was the number of insects, moths and butterflies that were flying around out there. We entertained ourselves by photographing as many as possible and my final count was 11 identifiable species on or around the boat. We motored back up the slick to see what birds were in the distance and ended up with 10 Wilson's Storm-Petrels that had been hiding out there.

With little happening we headed back to The Kink for a second drift, initially with no reward as the birds continued to feed from both our slick and most likely on the abundance of bait fish that was around. A Short-tailed Shearwater broke the monotony and finally some of the Shearwaters and Stormies started approaching the boat more closely. We had had a few albatross flying past and looping around the boat but again none came in to feed at the boat.

The group's energy lifted when a Jaeger swooped in, grabbing floating burley and landing heavily among the Shearwaters. Then, around 1 pm, the call went out that a large "Wandering-type" was approaching, an Antipodean Albatross (Gibson's) which gave prolonged views as it circled and inspected our offerings before moving on.

We left The Kink at 1:30pm and headed back with nothing further to see until almost back to the Haven where a bobbing white head caught our attention and our first Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross was added to the days list. We returned to The Haven close to 3pm, greeted by our friendly pelicans and rays, a happy crowd.

Thanks to everyone onboard for the great company and laughs and as always, a massive thank you to Paul, our intrepid Captain. In total 15 bird species were seen beyond The Haven, as follows:

Crested Tern - 1 (1), Fluttering Shearwater - 2 (2), Fluttering-type Shearwater - 20 (55), Hutton's Shearwater - 4 (4), Australasian Gannet - 1 (7), Silver Gull - 1 (1), Cook's Petrel - 1 (1), Shy Albatross - 3 (3), Black-browed Albatross - 1 (2), Antipodean Albatross (Gibson's) - 1 (1), Wilson's Storm-Petrel - 6 (10), Wedge-tailed Shearwater - 110 (35), Flesh-footed Shearwater - 5 (33), Short-tailed Shearwater - 1 (1), Long-tailed Jaeger 1 (1), Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross - 1 (1).

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

## COAST STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has released a draft plan to support the Central Coast's urban growth and environment, the Central Coast Strategic Conservation Plan. This is a 30-year plan covering 3,069 hectares of land within the Central Coast local government area. The plan will enable development on certified urban capable land while protecting the region's unique native plants and animals. It identifies proposed areas that can be developed without further biodiversity approvals and land that is not suitable for more intensive development.

The two general areas impacted are the Somersby/ Kariong Area and the northern end of the coast - Warnervale, Munmorah etc. 60% of the land has been deemed suitable for development and 40% is earmarked for conservation.

**Cook's Petrel**  
**Steph Owen**



Developers will still need to put in a DA to deal with a range of issues but the expensive part of a DA is the biodiversity impact which has now been done.

Our concern is the impact of the plan on Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrots and the loss of breeding hollows for forest owls and foraging trees for Glossy Black Cockatoo.

The Somersby area plan has minimal impact on the above species but there are some concerns for the northern part of the coast.

Submissions can be made to <https://www.planningportal.nsw/draftplans/exhibition/have-your-say-drafr-central-coast-urban-growth-and-environment>. Submissions close of 11<sup>th</sup> November

Michael Scobie will present some ideas for submissions at the meeting.

## **‘A MYTHICAL PLACE:’ HOW A MELBOURNE SEWAGE FARM BECAME A HAVEN FOR 300 SPECIES OF BIRDS**

### **Stephanie Convery**

In a gully between the dirt road and a field of softly waving grass, a brolga stands, straightens its elegant grey neck and gazes at the two four-wheel-drives crawling to a halt a short distance away. In the centre of a lagoon on the other side of the road, a second brolga sits atop a tiny island, its orange head bowed.

Brolgas are common in northern Australia but are endangered in Victoria. One of the most reliable places to see them, though, is here: in the wide grassy plains, ponds and marshlands of Melbourne’s largest sewage farm, the Western Treatment Plant.

It may seem an unlikely bird haven, but the abundance of birdlife at the Western Treatment Plant famously rivals Kakadu. South of Werribee, at the edge of Port Phillip Bay, nearly 200 man-made lagoons and natural wetlands sit side-by-side across the 105 sq km site. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded here, including many threatened species. Due to the constant supply of wastewater, the area is protected from drought, and in dry years has become a refuge for half of Victoria’s waterfowl. It was formally listed under the Ramsar convention in 1983 as an internationally significant wetland.

It was the brolgas that first brought Michael Livingston – or “Bird Michael from the internet”, as he is affectionately known to many – out here a decade ago. He had been birding for a few years by then (“I saw a woodpecker in Sweden and got carried away”) but had never made the trip to the treatment plant.

“It was like a mythical place – Melbourne’s hottest birdwatching spot. And I didn’t drive or have a car, so it was always kind of out of range for me,” Livingston says.

“Then my friend [nature writer] Harry [Sadler] and I heard about the brolgas down here, and we schlepped our bikes on the train and rode down. I’d never seen brolgas before and had pictured them as being Northern Territory birds. I was shocked they were even in Victoria, and we saw them quite close up and they were just stunning.”

They weren’t able to see much of the place, having only their bicycles, but the day left a vivid impression.

“It was a beautiful, sunny, crisp morning and we were just overwhelmed by the number of birds of prey – coming down Point Wilson Road and seeing brown falcons and black kites in all the trees,” Livingston says. “From that day on I would just cajole my various friends to drive me down and tour me around.”

Birds of prey are out in force the day Guardian Australia heads out there with Livingston as our guide. A whistling kite loops overhead before we’ve even opened the gate. Livingston points out its paddle-shaped tail, distinguishing it in flight from the V-shaped tail of a black kite. Within minutes we’re able to compare them directly, as a black kite lands on a nearby fence. A short time later, a nankeen kestrel perches atop some foliage, and two swamp harriers emerge from the reeds beside a pond. As we head towards the bird hide on the edge of the bay, a white-bellied sea-eagle crosses low above us, pursued by a raven.

It being an active industrial site, access to the Western Treatment Plant requires a gate key. Birdwatchers can apply online to borrow one for a day, or for those who are really keen, two years. (Livingston, naturally, has one.)

The site has been critical to Melbourne's waste management since it opened as the Werribee Sewage Farm in 1892. The waste was used initially to irrigate crops, paddocks flooded with sewage that evaporated or sank into the earth. Livestock grazed on the paddocks to keep the grass low, becoming so well-fed and healthy they won agricultural prizes.

In the centre of the site stands the heritage-listed remnants of the township of Cocoroc, established to house the sewage farm's workers. The last residents left in the 1970s, but some structures are still standing, including a swimming pool and a striking 682,000-litre water tank, erected elsewhere in 1854 as part of the first public water supply system in Victoria, and moved to Cocoroc in 1892.

Now, more than 200bn litres of sewage each year flow through the plant, pumped slowly through a series of huge lagoons designed to encourage and discourage growth of different kinds of bacteria. Anaerobic lagoons – ponds covered in huge lids to keep out oxygen – speed up decomposition of organic material and trap gases like methane (the gas is used generate the electricity that powers the plant), while the uncovered oxygenated aerobic ponds help reduce the level of nitrogen in the water. It takes about 35 days for wastewater to reach the final lagoon, where it can be recycled further or pumped into Port Phillip Bay.

The abundant birdlife is a direct result of this process, says Cody McCormack, conservation and land officer with Melbourne Water.

"The water that goes out into the bay at the end result of the sewage treatment process does still have a lot of nutrients in it," he says. It's class C recycled water at that point, suitable for livestock grazing and for use on some human food crops.

A certain amount of gunk in the water is necessary to maintain the biodiversity of the site, a fact that became apparent after a well-meaning clean-up effort about 20 years ago saw pure recycled water running into the bay – and birdlife at the plant declining sharply.

"We have to meet certain guidelines to protect the bay, so there's not too much nutrient going out causing algal blooms. But that nutrient goes out on to the sand and feeds a lot of the organisms that exist in that area. And that provides food for the migratory shorebirds," says McCormack.



McCormack is responsible for managing biodiversity and habitat on the site. Along with pest control and monitoring wildlife health, much of his job, especially in summer, involves carefully calibrating the water level of the 32 conservation lagoons in the complex to create the right balance of mud, water and vegetation.

"The nutrient in the water provides the food for the insects and for the vegetation to grow as well," says McCormack. "It's one of the most annoying things in my role, where I'm lowering these ponds to create these beautiful mudflats for shorebirds, but as soon as you expose the mud, there's so much nutrient in the water that all the vegetation grows up, which the shorebirds don't like. They want mud." He laughs.

McCormack is a birder, too. "I think that's what kind of got me this job, to be honest," he says. "I love the migratory shorebirds that come in in spring. They are just the most incredible animals. This tiny little thing that fits in the palm of your hand and it's travelled, like, 12,000km to get here."

And of course, there are the orange-bellied parrots. Small, extremely rare and critically endangered, OBPs breed in Tasmania over summer and migrate to the Victorian coast in autumn, wintering in coastal saltmarsh areas. There are fewer than 100 left in the wild, and the Western Treatment Plant is one of a handful of places they can be seen in winter.

“We have seen 13 this year so far,” says McCormack. It’s the highest number for some years.

Livingston has also seen orange-bellied parrots here – just once – a sight that moved him and his companion to tears. “It was a really lovely moment, really special,” he says.

McCormack takes us to the place the parrots have been spotted recently. We peer at the saltbush through our binoculars, cross our fingers and wait, but none appear. It’s disappointing, but the most important attributes for a good birder, says Livingston, are patience and “resilience to failure”.

“The number of trips I’ve gone on trying to see some particular bird, where you go home having seen lots of other great birds but not the one you’re looking for – you have to be OK with that,” he says.

“But mostly it’s just putting yourself in the right place, being still and paying attention. And once you get into it, you find yourself always paying attention. One track of my brain is always listening for bird calls. I don’t even realise I’m doing it ... I think it changes your relationship with the broader world.”

## **VALE:**

### **BARRY DEAN**

Sadly, one of our long-time members, Barry Dean passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025 after a year of ill health & hospitalisation. Barry was 91 and had been married to Diana for just short of 65 years.

Barry lived on the Northern Beaches before he and Diana moved to the Central Coast around 1995, when they joined our Bird Group. Barry was a food technologist and lectured at T.A.F.E. after gaining his Dip. Ed. He also joined both Rotary and Probus on coming to the Central Coast.

They attended several of our early camps and very regularly came to meetings and outings, where Diana, a botanist, was frequently consulted for plant identification. In the early years of the club Barry led a club outing at their lovely bushland property.

Unfortunately, Diana’s failing eyesight has in recent years prevented them from participating in bird club activities.

Barry is survived by Diana and their two sons, Rowan and Murray. Our condolences go out to them.

May he rest in peace.

