

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

INCLUDING

IBOC NATURE GROUP



Issue No 512

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB INC NEWSLETTER

May 2026

RAINBOW BEE-EATER

Scientific Name: *Merops ornatus*

Bird family: [Bee-eaters](#)

Status: [Least Concern \(LC\)](#)

Identification:



(Charles Dove)

A striking, colourful bird, the Rainbow Bee-eater is medium sized, with a long slim curved bill and a long tail with distinctive tail-streamers. It has a golden crown and a red eye set in a wide black stripe from the base of the bill to the ears, which is edged with a thin blue line. The throat is orange-yellow, with a broad

black band separating it from a green breast. The upperparts are green, with the flight feathers coppery and black tipped. The underwings are bright orange, with a black edge. The lower abdomen is blue. The tail is black, including the long tail streamers, with a blue tinge. Females have shorter, thicker tail streamers than males, but are otherwise similar. Young birds are duller and greener, lacking the black band on the chest and the long tail streamers.

Songs and Calls:

A liquid 'prpp prpp' given in flight.

Location:

The Rainbow Bee-eater is found throughout mainland Australia, as well as eastern Indonesia, New Guinea and, rarely, the Solomon Islands. In Australia it is widespread, except in desert areas, and breeds throughout most of its range, although southern birds move north to overwinter.

Habitat

The Rainbow Bee-eater is most often found in open forests, woodlands and shrublands, and cleared areas, usually near water. It will be found on farmland with remnant vegetation and in orchards and vineyards. It will use disturbed sites such as quarries, cuttings and mines to build its nesting tunnels.

Behaviour

Rainbow Bee-Eaters are a familiar sight in many lightly-timbered parts of mainland Australia, where they often perch on fence-posts or overhead wires, then launch after flying insects, flying swiftly,

sometimes with rapid twists and turns, before snapping the insect in its bill, and returning to the perch to eat it.

Feeding

Rainbow Bee-eaters eat insects, mainly catching bees and wasps, as well as dragonflies, beetles, butterflies and moths. They catch flying insects on the wing and carry them back to a perch to beat them against it before swallowing them. Bees and wasps are rubbed against the perch to remove the stings and venom glands.

Breeding

Rainbow Bee-eaters gather in small flocks before returning to summer breeding areas after over-wintering in the north (apart from the resident northern populations). Both males and females select a suitable nesting site in a sandy bank and dig a long tunnel (average length: 89.4 cm) leading to a nesting chamber, which is often lined with grasses. Both parents incubate the eggs and both feed the young, sometimes with the assistance of auxiliaries (helpers).
Text courtesy: [Rainbow Bee-eater - BirdLife Australia](#)



Founded in 1977

Club's Aim:

To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birds and general nature around them.

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CLUB MEETING

Fairy Meadow Community Hall, cnr Princes Hwy & Cambridge Ave, Fairy Meadow

Monday 11th May 2026, commencing at 7.30pm

"Peregrine Falcons – How fast are they?"

Peter Fackender will introduce a National Geographic video hoping to answer that question. One man's obsession with Birds of Prey and flying aircraft leads to him free falling through the air with a Peregrine Falcon. As he reaches Terminal Velocity, can the Peregrine go faster?

This video answers that question.

Please bring a plate of goodies and a mug for supper after the meeting.



*Peregrine Falcon
(Peter Fackender)*

NO CLUB WALKS IN MAY

Because of the Autumn Camp (16-23 May 2026) there will be no regular walks in May 2026.

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

[Australia's Biggest Morning Tea 2026](#) will again be hosted for IBOC by Anne Cousins, this time at the Autumn Camp on Thursday 21 May 2026.

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea is the Cancer Council's most popular fundraising event, raising vital funds for cancer research, prevention, and support.

More details will be available to 'campers' closer to the event. Mobile donation facilities will be available on the day.

If you won't be joining us on the Camp you can donate online anytime here:

[Australia's Biggest Morning Tea | Cancer Council | Donate](#)



(www.biggestmorningtea.com.au)

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday 15th June 2026 – The next IBOC Committee meeting will be held at Ken & Sue Brown's home, starting at 2pm.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

DEADLINE for the June Newsletter is COB Thursday 28th May 2026

Please send contributions to newsletteriboc@gmail.com or Chris. Cartledge PO Box 8 Keiraville NSW 2500. In your email, please include a caption for each picture submitted. *Feedback on the newsletter welcomed!*

Contributors this month: Pam Hazelwood, Ken Brown, Peter Fackender, Anne Cousins, Andrew Knowlson, Darryl Goldrick, Charles Dove, Mike Morphett and Jann Gowans.

Thanks to all! – Editor

The 2026 BirdLife Australia Photography Awards are now open and will run between 7 April and 13 July!

Thanks to the generous sponsors, each category winner will receive a \$1,000 cash prize – with a whopping \$2,000 up for grabs for the winner of this year's **Portfolio Prize**.

By entering any of nine categories, you'll go in the running to win the Grand Prize – a [Nikon Z 8 camera](#) valued at \$7,449 RRP.

Full details available here: [BirdLife Australia Photography Awards](#)

REPORTS

IBOC Club Meeting – Monday 13th April 2026

"Growing Illawarra Natives" – Dr Emma Rooksby

By Darryl Goldrick



Emma Rooksby

Following a deferment due to ill health in Feb, Emma was finally able to join us for the April meeting. A few years back Emma swapped her Canberra employment to focus on and devote her energies into educating the Illawarra community on her passion - environmental conservation. She is an environmental educator, bush regenerator and qualified Horticulturist. She is also the current Chair of Landcare Illawarra and coordinator of the Growing Illawarra Natives Project.

With over 2500 native vegetation species ranging from groundcovers to tall trees adapted to growing in woodlands, wetlands grasslands and rainforests, it is clear that the ecology of the Illawarra is exceptionally rich in biodiversity with several communities at severe risk of extinction due to the impacts of encroaching urbanization and restrictions on inappropriate land use in these highly sensitive and vulnerable areas.

So how do you go about educating a community on a more sustainable environmental protection ethic and putting this knowledge into practice.

Emma acknowledged that while there was a wealth of published ecological information available, it was stored in a wide range of databases yet not centralized and conveniently accessible. With the help of fellow horticulturist-naturalist Leon Fuller, she coordinated the centralization of this information following consultation with over 400 people with ecological experience and knowledge over a 5-year period into what is now the ['Growing Illawarra Natives'](#) website. The site provides a wealth of information on species identification, where to buy and how to plant natives as well as a Plant Finder Guide and collection section. The website also has information on planned field days and workshops to further educate people on native plants.

Emma showed several photos of native trees and ground covers found in both the natural environment setting as well as those present in streetscapes of residential areas throughout the Wollongong city.

She also urged club members to visit the [Growing Illawarra Natives](#) website for further information.

Thanks, Emma, for a very informative presentation.

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Weekend Walk Sunday 19th April 2026

Mansfield & Cecil Hoskins Reserves

By Ken Brown

*"The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley" – Robert Burns*

Well not according to plan, but we still had a great day! Originally the walk was scheduled to be at Bent's Basin, but a recce showed that some of the tracks were closed so we checked out Richard Miller's suggestion and had a look at Mansfield Reserve east of Bowral. A lovely spot, but no toilets, so we planned to start first with a walk around the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens and use the facilities there before moving on to Mansfield Reserve. Unfortunately, I hadn't checked the Botanic Gardens calendar and 16 of us arrived to find their annual Autumn Gardens Weekend and Plant Fair was in full swing. After being marshalled into the carpark we soon decided that a quiet walk around the gardens was not going to happen, so we decided to move on to Mansfield Reserve straight away. We didn't do a bird list at the Botanic Gardens, but there were a few birds about, including large flocks of Straw-necked Ibis flying over.

Mansfield Reserve is a large area of open woodland with Mittagong Creek flowing through it. There are two main loop walks. The Wombat Track heads east along the southern border of the reserve and then swings back along the bank of the creek. The Wallaby Track crosses the creek and does a loop on the northern side. The tracks are mowed regularly which makes for easy, pleasant walking.



*Crimson Rosella
Mansfield Reserve
(Pam Hazelwood)*

We headed off anticlockwise on the Wombat Track. The Crimson Rosellas seemed to be the most common bird around the track. Along the creek bank a large flock of about 25 flew up from the grass as we approached. A pair of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos flew overhead and there were a number of Kookaburras and Noisy Miners around. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos could be heard and small birds included Spotted Pardalotes and a Brown Thornbill. It was getting late in the morning when we got back to the carpark so we were ready for a relaxed morning tea sitting in the warm autumn sun.



Morning Tea in Mansfield Park including uninvited guest (Peter Fackender)

After morning tea, we felt the Wallaby Track would be "more of the same" so the suggestion was made to move on to the Cecil Hoskins Reserve near Moss Vale for a different habitat and somewhere with facilities for lunch. After the short drive we went through to the carpark at the end of the road and walked up the track on the west bank of the Bong Bong Reservoir. The bench seats high on the bank are a welcome spot to observe the waterbirds in the distance and the bush birds in the trees. Though not in the numbers we may have expected, the water birds on the reservoir included Eurasian Coots, Pacific Black Ducks and Australasian Grebe. There was a White-necked Heron in the reeds on the far side. The bush birds included the Eastern Spinebill, Golden Whistler, Silvereyes and a White-throated Treecreeper. As we made our way back to the carpark a flock of migrating Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flew through. The grassy flat near the carpark was another pleasant spot to get out the chairs and enjoy lunch.

So, not the day we had planned, but a very enjoyable day in beautiful autumn weather and a reasonable number of birds.

Bird List for Mansfield Reserve, East Bowral

19th April 2026 16 Members 19 Species

Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Miner
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird
Little Corella	Spotted Pardalote
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill
Crimson Rosella	Golden Whistler
Eastern Rosella	Grey Butcherbird
Satin Bowerbird	Australian Magpie
White-throated Treecreeper	Pied Currawong
Eastern Spinebill	Grey Fantail
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	

eBird checklist number S324938195

Bird List for Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve

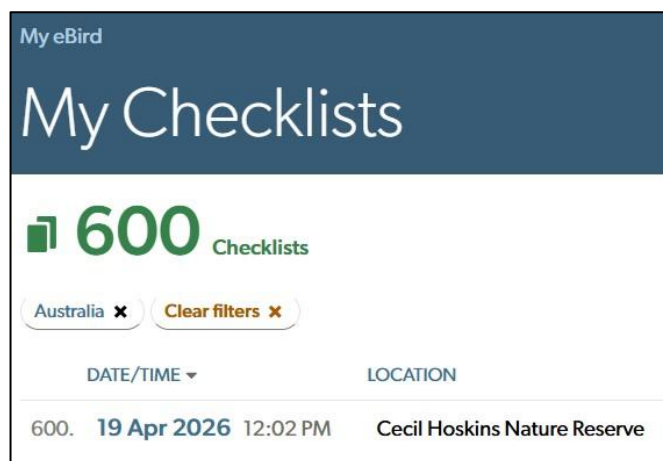
19th April 2026 16 Members 24 Species

Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Spinebill
Eurasian Coot	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Australasian Swamphen	Noisy Miner
Australasian Grebe	White-browed Scrubwren
Australasian Darter	Brown Thornbill
Little Pied Cormorant	Golden Whistler
Australian White Ibis	Dusky Woodswallow
White-necked Heron	Australian Magpie
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Pied Currawong
Crimson Rosella	Grey Fantail
White-throated Treecreeper	Australian Raven
Superb Fairywren	Silvereye

eBird checklist number S324938207

CLUB NEWS

Not a bad milestone...



From Jann Gowans – "I just thought you might want to know that the list from Cecil Hoskins NR represents the 600th bird list for IBOC!!! Not a bad milestone."

Mea Culpa - More from Jann...

Following Robyn Cashman's report (at the April Hall meeting) of 2 Pied Butcherbirds in her garden, I did some digging. I was able to find records of 5 individual birds in the Illawarra area from eBird: Albion Park Rail (May 2025), Roo Theatre (?June 2024), Killalea (April 2023), Sutton Forest (May 2019) and Woronora (August 2003—this one by Chris Chafer).

Apologies to Robyn as there are pied butcherbirds here! When reporting especially rare/unusual sightings, either photos or detailed descriptions can be very helpful.

CLUB NEWS (Cont.)

Well spotted!



Australian King Parrot (Cherry Hardaker)

Member Trish MacHugh and her friend Cherry Hardaker spotted the unusual yellow feathers on the Australian King Parrot (above) at Thirroul in April 2026. Microsoft Copilot (AI) suggests the following:

"Australian King Parrots have very distinctive plumage and yellow is not part of the normal colour pattern for either sex.

"When yellow feathers are seen, they are usually due to abnormal pigmentation, most commonly: Genetic colour mutations (often called dilute or leucistic forms), which reduce or alter normal melanin and structural pigments. In such birds, areas that would normally be red or green can appear yellow to orange – see [Australian king parrot - Wikipedia](#)

"These individuals are rare in the wild, but they are photographed occasionally in eastern Australia, including NSW".

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Scientists rescue the lost song of the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater

"Scientists from The Australian National University (ANU) and the Taronga Conservation Society Australia have successfully restored the lost traditional song of one of Australia's most endangered birds, offering new hope for the survival of the critically endangered regent honeyeater.

"The new study reveals how targeted "song tutoring" at Taronga Zoo in Sydney and Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo has revived a disappearing cultural trait vital to the species' survival.

"Birdsong plays a vital role in mate attraction, territory establishment and social cohesion. Like human language, many bird species learn their songs from experienced 'tutors'.

"Without access to these tutors, young birds can develop incorrect or simplified songs – with serious consequences for breeding success.

"With fewer than 250 individuals remaining in the wild, the regent honeyeater has faced not only population decline but also cultural erosion.

"Everything we know about the function of birdsong suggests that having a cohesive dialect will be critical to the success of the reintroduction program and the survival of the species," lead author Dr Daniel Appleby said.

"[Previous research](#) showed that young wild birds, unable to find older males of their own species, were mistakenly learning the songs of other birds.

"At the same time, zoo-bred regent honeyeaters were singing songs that differed from all known wild variants – potentially reducing their chances of successfully integrating and breeding in the wild after release.

"In response, researchers launched a series of innovative song tutoring experiments within Taronga's conservation breeding program.



Regent Honeyeater (Charles Dove)

Using recordings and direct exposure to just two wild-born male tutors, scientists taught young zoo-bred males the species' traditional wild song – a song that has now been lost from the wild populations and was becoming increasingly simplified as numbers declined.

"The results were striking. In subsequent years, zoo-bred males that had learned the traditional song went on to tutor the next generation.

"After a year of negative results, we could not believe our ears when some small tweaks to our tutoring approach led to the juveniles singing like wild birds," Dr Ross Crates said.

"Today, more than 50 per cent of zoo-bred males sing songs that closely resemble the historic wild song.

"Remarkably, the zoo population is now the only remaining source of the traditional regent honeyeater song."

Read the full story: [Scientists rescue the lost song of the critically endangered regent honeyeater | Australian National University](#)

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ARTICLES OF INTEREST (Cont.)

Shaking all over

By Mike Morphet

A very quiet Easter Sunday late morning in my neighbourhood and I'm reading yesterday's Sydney Morning Herald while seated on my back verandah. From a crossword puzzle I come across a new word for me: 'sisyphian' from Greek mythology, in which birds played an important role (enough material for another article). More later. A Wonga Pigeon that's become a regular visitor arrives silently and vies with a brown cuckoo-dove for any leftover seed. They seem to be an equal match. It then flies up onto the wooden railing and adopts various poses, one of which I'm able to capture on my phone camera before it shakes its feathers, emitting a cloud of dust. When it takes off, I retrieve the photo of its fluffing up, which appeals to my sense of humour: it looks like a male pantomime actor dressed as a female character.



Wonga Pigeon
(Mike Morphet)

I have to go to my computer to do some delving into feather-shaking. I home in on two websites: firstly Bella K. Swan for Birds Wave (December 19, 2023) and then Biology Insights (August 26, 2025). They both indicate this behaviour is normal, if not done to excess, particularly in regard to pet birds: this can indicate health issues; namely, nutritional deficiencies, infections, or an overload of parasites, or stress and anxiety.

On the positive side, it is part of feather maintenance crucial for flight. It improves blood circulation, and the vigorous movements help distribute natural oils produced by the uropygial gland [located at the base of the tail*], ensuring the feathers remain supple and waterproof.

My birdwatching and research diverted me from thoughts of a particular crucifixion and resurrection, Easter eggs, bunnies and bilbies, hot cross buns, and Handel's 'The Messiah'. However, they made me think of how often 'shake' and 'shaking' have featured in the titles and lyrics of past pop songs.

One could say that Sisyphus, King of Ephyra in Greek mythology, was the first, if reluctant, person exposed to rock and roll, as punishment for betraying Zeus, king of the gods. I trust this article hasn't proved to be a sisyphian effort.

*Wikipedia

Postscript: I subsequently found out that there is a term for a bird's behaviour of spreading out its wings and giving them a good shaking and that is 'rousing'. The Charles Sturt University's Falcon Cam Project Glossary website quotes this, as does the Old English Dictionary. Its origin is Middle English circa 1475 pertaining to falconry, which over time was applied to birds in general. It appears to be more in use in North America than in Britain or Australia. 'Rouse' also spread into military terminology in Britain and Canada to refer to the sound of a bugle after reveille to get service people to rise up and get into action.

Australasian Shorebird Conference 2026

The Hunter Bird Observers Club, the University of Newcastle's Centre for Conservation Science, and the Australasian Wader Studies Group are pleased to announce that the 2026 Australasian Shorebird Conference (ASC) will be held in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, 19-21 September 2026.

The ASC is the largest gathering of amateur and professional shorebird enthusiasts from the region. This will be the first in-person event in eight years!

ASC 2026 will offer you the chance to hear from shorebird experts, as well as mingle with like-minded shorebird admirers and enthusiasts. There will be events during and after the conference, including field trips and social events.

Early bird registration is now open.

For more information and to register, please visit <https://www.australasianshorebirds.com/>

We, and our shorebirds, look forward to welcoming you to Newcastle at the ASC 2026.



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LINKS TO ARTICLES OF INTEREST

How Australians interact with birds and wildlife around their homes

Our recent stories about attracting fauna to gardens and the dos and don'ts of feeding wild birds prompted many of you to share your own experiences. [Read the full story \(ABC News\)](#)

Fears for superb fairy-wrens as experts studying Canberra population predict extinction within decades

The researchers said the superb fairy-wren would likely go extinct within 30-40 years unless action was taken to stop greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change. [Read the full story \(ABC News\)](#)

Recordings point to second Queensland population of rare night parrot

Ecologists say thousands of hours of audio recordings have detected night parrot calls in south-west Queensland. [Read the full story \(ABC News\)](#)

Get Birding with Sean Bean



Get Birding is back for a brand new, fortnightly season—hosted by actor and longtime birder Sean Bean. In this opening episode, Sean grabs his binoculars and invites listeners into his garden to slow down, look up, and join the UK's biggest citizen science event, the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. [Watch it on YouTube](#)

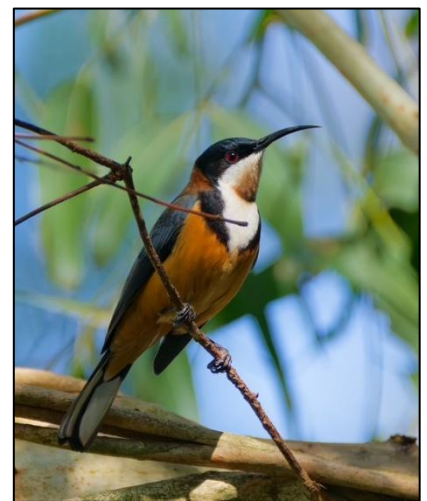
GALLERY *All graphics below were submitted by Pam Hazelwood*



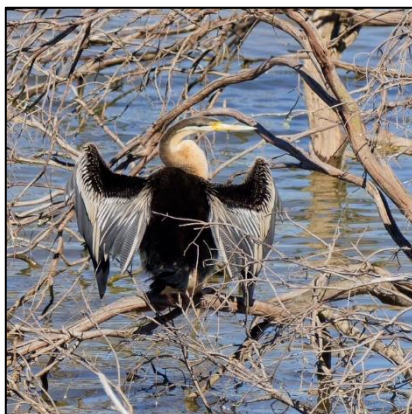
*Hawthorn Bush
(Mansfield Reserve)*




*Kangaroo Apple
(Mansfield Reserve)*



*Eastern Spinebill
(Cec Hoskins Res.)*



*Australasian Darter
(Cec Hoskins R.)*



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(Not yet available in Australia)

Autumn Camp – Nelson Bay Area, 16-23 May 2026*Lyndall Dawson*

Our next camp will be held around the Nelson Bay area in May this year. We will be based at the Ingenia Holidays One Mile Beach campground at Anna Bay.

The details are:

Dates: Check in Saturday 16 May, check out Saturday 23 May 2025. But you can stay longer or shorter if you wish.

Park Name: Ingenia Holidays One Mile Beach

Address: 426 Gan Gan Rd, One Mile (Anna Bay) NSW 2316 [Google Maps](#)

Phone: 4982 1112

Web site: [Ingenia Holidays One Mile Beach](#)

The park has powered van sites and 14 powered ensuite sites as well as family cabins and many cabins that sleep 2-6 people. This is a very popular area so it is recommended that you **BOOK AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE**.

When you book, tell them you are from the Illawarra Bird Observers Club and **quote the booking number #116096**. After you book, please send me an email at lynfount40@gmail.com and tell me what dates and accommodation you have booked.

If you are familiar with the region and would like to help by suggesting activities and helping to organise the daily programme for the camp, please contact me by email or phone 0408 603 259.

Monthly Sightings April 2026*Compiled by Darryl Goldrick*

SPECIES	Nº	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Bar-shouldered Dove	1 heard	24-03-26	Bellambi Dunes	Forest	Ian McKinlay
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	13-04-26	The Links Golf Club	Parkland	Bruce Coyte
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	3	25-04-26	Wyjuck Bay, Mt Warrigal	Feeding at low tide	Darryl Goldrick
Sooty Oystercatcher	2	03-04-26	rock platform	Beach	Joan Zealey
Kelp Gull	1 adult and 1 1st year immature	03-04-26	Bellambi rock pool	On rocky beach	Joan Zealey
Kelp Gull	2	02-04-26	North Thirroul Beach	Resting on beach	Ian McKinlay
Royal Spoonbill	1	19-04-26	Wyjuck Bay, Mt Warrigal	Feeding	Darryl Goldrick
Eastern Osprey	1	03-04-26	Bellambi rock pool	Over beach	Joan Zealey
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2	18-04-26	Above Thirroul	Aerial display & honking	Ian McKinlay
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	19-04-26	Oak Flats Interchange	Soaring and circling high above the adjoining grasslands	Darryl Goldrick
Buff-banded Rail	1	02-04-26	Flanagans Ck, Thirroul Beach	Dune scrub	Ian McKinlay
Yellow Thornbill	1	13-04-26	Shell Cove	Parkland	Bruce Coyte
Bell Miner	1	19-04-26	Lake Illawarra South	Eucalypt (neighbour's yard)	Darryl Goldrick
Golden Whistler	1m	13-04-26	Shell Cove	Parkland	Bruce Coyte
Olive-backed Oriole	1	06-04-26	Woodlands Creek near cycleway, Bulli	Creek line Casuarinas	Ian McKinlay
Grey Butcherbird	1	25-04-26	Lake Illawarra South	Yard powerline	Darryl Goldrick
Red-browed Finch	1	13-04-26	Shell Cove	Parkland	Bruce Coyte

Email all your bird sightings to Darryl Goldrick [click here](#)

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