

**Black-fronted Dotterel**

Scientific Name: *Elseyornis melanops*  
 Featured bird groups: Shore birds and waders  
 Atlas Number: 144

**Description:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel is a small wader with a distinctive black face-mask and breast-band and prominent chestnut scapulars (shoulder feathers). In juveniles, the breast-band is initially absent but a



photo by Charles Dove Shellharbour Wetland

brown band slowly appears as the bird develops. Legs are pink orange, and the bill is red with a black tip. The dark eye is ringed with red. In flight the wings look broad and the tail short, while the black and white contrast is striking. Flight is slow with almost hesitant wing beats. This species is also called the Black-fronted Plover.

**Similar species:**

The adult and immature Black-fronted Dotterel are unmistakable, though the juvenile could be confused with the juvenile and immature Red-capped Plover.

**Distribution:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel is widespread throughout Australasia.

**Habitat:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel is found in the shallow margins of wetlands, lakes, rivers, sewage farms, storm drains and marshes. It is normally always near freshwater and is not often seen on the coast.

**Seasonal movements:**

Breeding resident.

**Feeding:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel eats small molluscs as well as aquatic and terrestrial insects. When it forages, it keeps its body horizontal while bobbing its head to look for food, often running then stopping suddenly to peck at food items.

**Breeding:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel lays its eggs in a shallow scrape, often on pebbly ground and quite close to water. It may have more than one brood per year. Both parents incubate the eggs and look after the young.

**Living with us:**

The Black-fronted Dotterel is secure in Australia, though destruction of breeding sites may affect numbers.

information courtesy of <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

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**Founded in 1977**

**Club's Aim:**  
 To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the bird life around them.

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 56  
 FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519  
[www.iboc.org.au](http://www.iboc.org.au)

**Club Contacts:**  
**PRESIDENT:** Alan Cousins, T. 02 4283 3197  
[president@iboc.org.au](mailto:president@iboc.org.au)  
**SECRETARY:** Betty Hudson, T 02 4236 0307  
[secretary@iboc.org.au](mailto:secretary@iboc.org.au)  
**TREASURER:** Ken Brown  
[treasurer@iboc.org.au](mailto:treasurer@iboc.org.au)  
**EDITORS:** Charles Dove, M. 0417 422 302  
[newsletter@iboc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@iboc.org.au)

**Club Meeting:****Monday 11<sup>th</sup>**

Our speaker for March will be Lindsay Smith of the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association (SOSSA). Lindsay is well known to most of us and his work in this field and is legendary; those of you who have been on a SOSSA Pelagic trip will know what I mean.

7.30pm at Fairy Meadow Community Hall, Cnr of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow.

*Please bring a plate of 'goodies' and a cup for supper after the meeting.*

**Midweek Walk:****Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>****Audley Weir - Royal National Park**

Leader Charles Dove

**COMBINED PICNIC BBQ WITH CUMBERLAND BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB –  
COME AND JOIN US FOR A GREAT DAY**

Meet at 8.30am at the Audley end of the park in the Wattle Forest Picnic Area. **Coming north** through the park, turn sharp left just before the café, kiosk & carpark (NB this is before you reach the weir). **Coming south** through the park from Loftus cross the weir, and immediately after the café & kiosk fork right. In either case then follow this road right, across a white painted wooden bridge, turn sharp left, following the road for some distance into a large picnic area. Attracts the normal parking fee

Remember your sunscreen and insect repellent.

Contact: Charles Dove 0417 422 302

**Monthly Outing:****Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>****Fitzroy Reservoir & Fitzroy Falls National Park**

leader Betty Hudson

Meet at **9.00am** at the parking area on the Myra Vale Road entry to the reservoir fishing area. From Robertson cross the railway line and continue along the Illawarra Highway towards Moss Vale for approx. 200m beyond the start of the two lanes. Turn left to Wildes Meadow along Pearsons Road. Continue to a stop sign where you turn right on to Myra Vale Road. After approx 3km you will see a bus shelter on the corner of the left turn road marked to "Conference Centre" 50m on the opposite side of the road is the car park. We will check out both the water & forest birds here and enjoy morning tea.

We will then drive approx. 3km to the Fitzroy Falls National Park where we will have lunch followed by a walk before returning to Robertson via Belmore Falls. Be prepared for a cool start to the day. Bring a carry morning tea, and lunch to eat in the park picnic area

At Belmore Falls those who wish may walk to the various lookouts.

Please note that there is a \$3 fee for parking at Fitzroy Falls. You will need to have the correct money for the ticket machines.

Betty Hudson ph. 4236 0307 or mobile 0432 892 945

**Committee Meeting -****Monday 18<sup>th</sup>**

The next committee meeting will be at Alan & Anne Cousin's, 4 Adelaide Place Tarrawanna, ph 4283 3197

*Any members with anything they wish to raise are welcome to attend the meeting.*

**Newsletter –**

Deadline for Articles and Photos in the next IBOC newsletter is **20<sup>th</sup> March 2013**. Email contributions to Charles Dove [newsletter@iboc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@iboc.org.au) or post to 2/39 Purry Burry Avenue, Primbee 2502. Ph: 0417 422 302

**IBOC has pleasure in welcoming all our New Members**



**REPORT FOR CLUB MEETING** 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013 -

*Alan Cousins*

Our presentations for 2013 have kicked off with a bang. We were fortunate enough to secure a presentation on the Conservation and Management of the Black-necked Stork (whom many still wrongly refer to as a Jabiru) by Dr. Greg Clancy an Environmental/Ecological/Consultant Bird Guide.

The real Jabiru is a large stork found in the Americas from Mexico to Argentina except west of the Andes. It is most common in regions of Brazil and in Paraguay. The name Jabiru comes from the Tupi-Guarani language and means 'swollen neck'.

The scope of Dr. Clancy's study was Distribution and Status in New South Wales and included Breeding Biology, Feeding Ecology, Diet, Habitat Utilisation and Management. The distribution in New South Wales has varied from Tweed to Shoalhaven and there is little information breeding biology, observations have been made of feeding ecology e.g. time of day, water depth, etc. The diet consists of various species of fish and especially eels, snakes, tortoises, small waterbirds, frogs and insects.

The management of the species is the need to maintain or recover the population. It is a Schedule 1 Endangered Species in New South Wales, least concern on National Level but near threatened at Global Scale. Reasons for this situation may be drainage or filling of wetlands, vegetation clearance, collision with

power lines, fences, motor vehicles, other man-made objects, disturbance at nest and foraging sites and shooting, there is no evidence of poisoning by Cane Toads.

The breeding season in New South Wales is August, September, November but they do not breed every year possibly due to condition of habitat and time since last breeding. Nests are constructed of sticks and are placed at the top of trees and occasionally low shrubs and swamps. Mating behaviour is by display and clutch size is unknown but claimed to be 2-4 eggs. Not much data regarding young is known but it is said that parents feed their young by regurgitation and also cool them by regurgitating water over them. To assist with keeping track of birds, a number have been banded, many by Dr. Clancy"

Finally the conservation status of the Black-necked Stork has not changed since European settlement although data prior to the 1970's is limited but a few territories south of the Hunter River may no longer be occupied permanently. With positive management of the species and its habitat in New South Wales the species may maintain its current population size of at least 160 birds, this will of course depend on development, protection and restoration of suitable wetlands and the continued monitoring of the species.

The presentation whilst being very interesting and informative gave much cause for thought.

**Midweek Walk** -  
Pelican View Reserve

Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013  
Charles Dove

The welcoming of the 'New Year' with a late afternoon walk at Pelican View Reserve, instead of the usual Windang foreshore proved successful, with 23 members attending; it proved to be another enjoyable day with many members catching up from their holidays. We

went for a wander around Picnic Island, plenty of waders but not as many birds that you do usually see in the bush due to the unwanted vandalism of children or not so young children setting fire to the Island a few weeks earlier.

Bird List for Lake Illawarra, Pelican Reserve Walk 6 <sup>th</sup> February 2013 23 members 36 species			
Black Swan	Striated Heron	Caspian Tern	Australasian Figbird
Chestnut Teal	White-faced Heron	Crested Tern	Grey Butcherbird
Rock Dove	Australian White Ibis	Silver Gull	Willie Wagtail
Spotted Dove	Eastern Osprey	Little Corella	Australian Raven
Little Pied Cormorant	Australian Pied Oystercatcher	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie-lark
Little Black Cormorant	Sooty Oystercatcher	Yellow Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Little Wattlebird	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Australian Pelican	Bar-tailed Godwit	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Eastern Great Egret	Eastern Curlew	Eastern Whipbird	European Goldfinch

## Monthly Outing – Shell Cove Wetlands and Blackbutt Forest

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February  
Jann Gowans

The rain fell harder as we set out to meet in Shellharbour. Ross had checked the weather radar and assured me the rain would stop. We arrived to join the assembled bird watchers in a light rain. Comparing notes revealed several of us had the same plan B in mind: the movies. However, the rain slowly eased and the birds eagerly came out as the group of 17 set out. A Black Swan flew over and a Little Black Cormorant. Joan Z. spotted a Sacred Kingfisher on the fence. A Red-browed Finch carried nesting materials to finalize its home. Bullbul were plentiful and the setting was very nice with well-manicured lawns and footpaths. Numerous other small birds were seen including several different Thornbills, Silvereyes and New Holland Honeyeaters. As we neared the cars after a loop walk, both a Black-shouldered Kite and two Nankeen Kestrels perched for us to have a good look. We had morning tea by the cars as Alan began collecting twenty dollar bills and reappeared with the updated Illawarra Bird Observers Handbook, doing a roaring trade. A short investigation of nearby swamps added several common water birds to the list for a healthy start to our list (see below).

Then we journeyed to the swamp off Boollwarroo Pde. A pair of Black-winged Stilts and a Great Egret stood out and further scrutiny revealed Black-fronted Dotterels, including several fluffy youngsters. Brief glimpses were caught of a female Painted Snipe (identified after discussion) but it disappeared quickly into the reeds. A Red-kneed Dotterel wandered around to eventually give good views of it. Pointing out the birds was difficult at times---see the two tall green tufts with Coots in front, go to the right, no, the OTHER tuft/coot.... Andy sighted a Crake (too far away for definitive ID) over the far side which we tracked until it disappeared, then, we moved along to the next group of birdos. It turns out a Australian Spotted Crake was very co-operative, spotted (!) near the fence by the road giving everyone a good look as it flicked its tail and foraged. Reed-warblers and Little Grassbirds were ducking about from tuft to tuft as well. The Pectoral Sandpiper put in an appearance and just as Betty set the scope up for a better look, it went deeper into the reeds. It was good to see the rarer birds about but the cars zooming closely by were disconcerting at times. We hope the birds will return somewhere to the area next year despite the development currently under way near the site.

Our final stop was at Blackbutt Forest where we first gathered for lunch in the picnic shelter. We had lost a few people by this time and talk of a walk including a steep hill was quickly vetoed. Instead, we took a short walk and saw a few birds including a Sacred Kingfisher which hung around for a while but was hard to spot. Fruit bats were heard screeching in the distance. Numerous and varied nesting boxes were seen but had no obvious signs of occupation. It didn't take long for the group to turn around and head back as it was getting hotter, birds were few and people were tiring! Not many birds were tallied here (list follows). Thanks to Betty and everyone else for a most enjoyable outing with a few new birds for us. It was good to see new members David and Carol again and welcome our overseas visitor, Gerri.

Bird Lists for Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> February Walk			17 People Attended
<b>The Shallows Wetlands:</b>			<b>45 Species Recorded</b>
Black Swan	Eurasian Coot	Brown Thornbill	Australian Raven
Australian Wood Duck	Little Corella	Eastern Spinebill	Magpie-lark
Pacific Black Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet	Lewin's Honeyeater	Eastern Yellow Robin
Spotted Dove	Crimson Rosella	Little Wattlebird	Australian Reed-Warbler
Bar-shouldered Dove	Eastern Koel	New Holland Honeyeater	Silvereye
Little Black Cormorant	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Whipbird	Welcome Swallow
Australian Pelican	Sacred Kingfisher	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Australian White Ibis	Satin Bowerbird	Grey Shrike-thrush	Red-browed Finch
Black-shouldered Kite	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Butcherbird	House Sparrow
Nankeen Kestrel	White-browed Scrubwren	Australian Magpie	
Purple Swamp Hen	Brown Gerygone	Grey Fantail	
Dusky Moorhen	Yellow Thornbill	Willie Wagtail	
<b>Shellharbour Swamp:</b>			<b>31 Species Recorded</b>
Grey Teal	Australian Spotted Crake	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Australian Raven
Pacific Black-duck	Eurasian Coot	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Reed-Warbler
Hardhead	Black-winged Stilt	Brown Thornbill	Little Grassbird
Crested Pigeon	Black-fronted Dotterel	Little Wattlebird	Silvereye
Little Pied Cormorant	Red-kneed Dotterel	Grey Butcherbird	Welcome Swallow
Great Cormorant	Australian Painted Snipe	Pied Currawong	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Little Black Cormorant	Pectoral Sandpiper	Australian Magpie	Common Myna
Great Egret	Silver Gull	Willie Wagtail	
<b>Blackbutt Forest:</b>			<b>11 Species recorded</b>
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow Thornbill	Pied Currawong	Australian Raven
Laughing Kookaburra	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Magpie	Eastern Yellow Robin
Sacred Kingfisher	Grey Butcherbird	Grey Fantail	



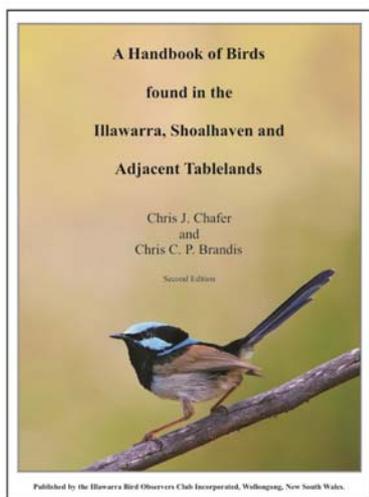
# THE BIRDS IN MY BACKYARD

By

## Be inspired.....

Keep the Stories going..... Send in your story of your own backyard garden and the birds  
PLEASE even a few paragraphs is OK

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



With great pleasure IBOC is proud to publish The Handbook of Birds found in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven & Southern Tablelands Second Edition

now available for  
\$20 members and \$25 for non-members at the  
Club Meeting Night on the second Monday of each Month  
in Fairy Meadow Community Hall,  
Cnr of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow.  
Or contact the president  
Alan Cousins - (02) 4283 3197  
email: [info@iboc.org.au](mailto:info@iboc.org.au)

This latest edition has been updated over recent times  
To give you some of the more up to date data for each species  
by Chris J. Chafer & Chris C. P. Brandis.

Full Colour Pictures of all the Species is another highlight of this very informative second edition. We have many requests already for this publication and they are going fast

Just a short reminder for those who have **not** renewed their memberships,  
They should be paid by 1st June or they will not receive further newsletters  
Thank you

## FLYING FOXES

As you will most likely be aware, there is a large resident camp of grey-headed flying foxes at Figtree which is located within close proximity to residences, businesses and sporting fields. Given the recent extreme heat events, a number of Grey-headed flying foxes have died as they couldn't cope with the heat. Grey-headed flying foxes are known to carry a number of viruses which can cause problems for humans if they become infected. As such, the issue of dealing with dead flying foxes is of concern to a number of people.

In light of these issues, the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH) and NSW Health Department recently released information on the handling of dead flying foxes.

Please see the below websites, fact sheets and media releases for information regarding dealing with any dead or injured flying foxes:

OEH website - <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/flyingfoxes.htm>

NSW Health website - [http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/news/2013/20130111\\_00.html](http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/news/2013/20130111_00.html)

**SHOALHAVEN BIRDWATCHING OUTINGS 2013**

Every third Sunday, meeting at 8.30 am

FEBRUARY 17. Moona Moona Creek, Huskisson Meet picnic area, Moona Moona Creek  
 MARCH 17. Parma Creek Meet Log Cabin Falls creek  
 APRIL 21. Bundywallah Reserve Meet Berry Apex Park  
 \*\*MAY 19. \*\* Weekend Southern Highlands Meet Saturday Bundanoon or Sunday Hoskins Reserve  
 JUNE 16. Grassy gully/ Coolendel Meet Kalander St near Kinghorn St roundabout  
 JULY 21. Bens Walk Meet Showground Lookout  
 AUGUST 18. Killalea SRA Meet Berry Apex Park  
 SEPTEMBER 15. Greenpatch/ Bherwerre Beach Meet Park Entrance Station  
 OCTOBER 20. Bangalee Meet carpark Illaroo Rd at northern end of Shoalhaven bridge  
 \*\*NOVEMBER 2/3\*\* Newcastle weekend Meet Shortland Wetland Centre Saturday, November 2  
 NOVEMBER 17. The Grotto Meet carpark Illaroo Rd at northern end of Shoalhaven bridge  
 DECEMBER 15. Berry Beach Picnic Area \*5pm BYO picnic bbq/drink for after a short walk  
 \*\*Southern Highlands weekend: Stay at Hostel at Bundanoon or camping in the National Park  
 Saturday: May 18; 8.30. Glow Worm Glen carpark; walks in the national park in the afternoon  
 Sunday: May 19; Hoskins Wetland Reserve, Box Vale Track, Mittagong Lake, Wingecarrabie Reservoir, Robertson Rain Forest  
 \*\*Newcastle weekend\*\*  
 Saturday, November 2; 9.00am. Shortland Wetland Centre (entry fee \$10? applies ). Pm, Hunter Regional Botanical Gardens

Sunday, November 3; 8.30: Kooragang/ Ash Island; Blackbutt Reserve (New Lambton)

Contacts; Barry and Susan Virtue 44641389. Peter and Julie Hale 0402076548. Stan and Su Brown 44434828

# ARTICLES OF INTEREST

## Bushwacked seabirds send out SOS - from our Toowoomba friends

These are "bizarre and bitter sweet times" for local bird watchers according to Toowoomba Bird Observers President, Michael Atzeni. "Birds you only expect to see on the high seas have turned up all over the Toowoomba region, following Cyclone Oswald". Unfortunately, they're all lost, exhausted and starving to death. They need help.

We've had: frigatebirds reported at Umbiram: Wedge-tailed Shearwater at Clifford Gardens; White-tailed Tropicbird at Meringandan; a rare Petrel at Oakey. Sooty Terns in the Lockyer. Several have ended up with experienced Murphys Creek wildlife carer Trish LeeHong who is working around the clock to give them another chance. After the recent wild weather she now has around ninety animals and birds in care.

Ms LeeHong said "Injured birds should be placed in a dark box with some bedding to minimise their stress and delivered to her asap. Avoid the temptation to try and feed them or make them drink. I'll give them their best chance for survival before they can be passed on to seabird carers for eventual release at sea."

Mr Atzeni said, "Watching Trish deal with scores of birds and wildlife yesterday was very humbling. Most couldn't do it for pay, let alone voluntarily, yet we expect someone should: Trish does so freely. She relies on public donations and deserves everyone's support."

Trish's number is 4630 5208 or 040702850 or [trish@wildliferesuceeducation.org](mailto:trish@wildliferesuceeducation.org) .

All odd seabird sightings, dead or alive, are of national interest and should be reported to Mr Atzeni on 46881318 or 0458948955 or [matzeni@westnet.com.au](mailto:matzeni@westnet.com.au) . Reports will be posted on the club forum at [www.toowoombabirdobservers.org.au](http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org.au)



Left  
Sooty Tern

Right  
White tailed Tropicbird



ALLAN SEFTON MEMORIAL LECTURE  
FRIDAY 5 APRIL 2013  
5.30PM BUILDING 14.1

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**Securing a future for the Great Barrier Reef.**

Terry Hughes *FAA*, Director, *ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies*,

James Cook University

**ABSTRACT**

The Great Barrier Reef is suffering death by a 1000 cuts. The human population in Queensland has grown by 9-fold since 1900. Land use in the catchment of the Barrier Reef has been transformed, with a 7-fold increase in nitrogen use from fertilizers since 1960. The area of land under sugar cane cultivation increased 5-fold from 1930-1990. The amount of coal mined each year has approximately doubled each decade since the 1960s. The expansion of mining has been accompanied by major rail and port development, unprecedented levels of dredging and shipping, and ever rising carbon dioxide emissions. Fishing has also increased over time, as indicated by a doubling of licenses for recreational boats in Queensland in the past 15 years. The cumulative effect of all of these activities, unsurprisingly, is increased coastal pollution, growing fishing pressure, and rising greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming and ocean acidification. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has almost no capacity to influence two major drivers of change that are increasingly affecting the Reef – activities on land and in Queensland coastal waters that degrade water quality within the GBR World Heritage Area, and global climate change. To address these issues, we need a bold plan for transforming how the Great Barrier Reef catchment is used, and to transition away from unsustainable dependence on fossil fuel industries. It's time to rethink how the Great Barrier Reef should be governed for the future. A good outcome will depend on making substantial improvements to State-Commonwealth management of coal ports and land-use, and finally waking up to the reality of climate change.

**Professor Terry Hughes – Personal Details**

Terry Hughes is an ARC Laureate Fellow and the Director of the *Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies*, headquartered at James Cook University in Townsville. His research mainly focuses on the Great Barrier Reef, the Central and Western Pacific, and the Caribbean. He was awarded a Personal Chair at James Cook University in 2000, and was elected a Fellow of the *Australian Academy of Sciences* in 2001 in recognition of "a career which has significantly advanced the world's store of scientific knowledge". He was awarded the Sherman Eureka Prize for Environmental Research in 2007, and the prestigious Darwin Medal of the *International Society for Coral Reef Studies* in 2008. Terry has published over 100 influential scientific papers so far, based on field studies in many countries around the world, including Australia, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Samoa. A recurrent theme in his studies is the application of new scientific knowledge towards improving management of reefs.



13 February 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

**ALLAN SEFTON MEMORIAL LECTURE – RSVP 22 MARCH 2013**

You are invited to the Allan Sefton Memorial Lecture to be held Friday 5 April 2013 at the University of Wollongong, Building 14 Lecture Theatre 1

The Allan Sefton Memorial Lecture will once again be held in conjunction with the School of Earth & Environmental Sciences Prize Night (which will commence at 6.30pm with light refreshments in Building 41 first floor foyer.)

Could you please advise if you will be attending the following:

Allan Sefton Memorial Lecture	Building 14.1	5.30pm	Yes/No
Light refreshments	Building 41, first floor foyer	6.30pm	Yes/No
School of Earth & Environmental Sciences Prize Night	Building 41, first floor foyer	7.30pm	Yes/No

RSVP by 22 March 2013 by email [sees\\_administration@uow.edu.au](mailto:sees_administration@uow.edu.au), or phone 02 4221 3721.

The following link will give you a campus map of the University of Wollongong <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/campusmap/beta/> Click on the Building numbers 14 and 41. This will give you the location of each building. The closest parking is P7.

I have attached an abstract and a short CV for the speaker, Dr Terry Hughes, FAA Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Weeks  
Administrative Assistant

**School of Earth & Environmental Sciences**  
University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia  
**Telephone** +61 2 4221 3721 **Facsimile** +61 2 4221 4250  
[www.uow.edu.au/science/eesc/](http://www.uow.edu.au/science/eesc/) CRICOS PROVIDER No. 00102E

## Gardening Tips -

When we talk about grass, we are usually talking about the lawn – but there are also a huge variety of native grasses out there that make a great bird-friendly addition to our gardens. Some can be used as a substitute for our traditional lawn whilst others grow in large clumps, providing food (seed-heads), nesting material (leaves can be woven into nests) and shelter for smaller birds (and other wildlife). Talk to your local council to get specific species native to your region but here are a few options to get you started:

\* **Kangaroo grass** (/Themeda australis/Themeda triandra/): Probably one of the most widespread native grasses, found in every state and territory and in almost any habitat. It is a medium height (40 – 90cm) clumping grass with distinctive seed heads that are great for parrots and finches to feed on. It doesn't require a lot of water and can tolerate high temps but doesn't particularly like frost.

\* **Tussock grass** (/Poa labillardieri/): This grass is naturally found in southern and eastern Australia – basically from southern Qld, through coastal NSW and into Vic and Tas. Tussock grass prefers moister, well-drained soils and has soft, delicate leaves in grey or blue-green. It has a much more weeping habit than the Kangaroo grass. Whilst the grass itself only grows to about 40 cm, its fruit spikes (the bits the birds love) can grow to over 1 m. It does grow in full sun but it prefers dappled shade so is perfect for planting under tall trees.

\* **Weeping grass** (/Microlaena stipoides/): Naturally found in the southern states (Vic, Tas and the southern portions of WA and NSW), this grass is one of the best native grass lawn substitutes as it can tolerate being trampled and mowed and it also tolerates a range of soil types, drought and frost. If you are thinking about using fertiliser for your lawn, let patches occasionally go to seed to provide food for birds.

These are only 3 grasses, there are many many more out there. If you live in bushfire prone areas be sure to consider the potential fuel load in your garden and whether dried grasses could cause issues (Lomandra is another grass that is a low-flammable alternative).

[birdsinbackyards@birdlife.org.au](mailto:birdsinbackyards@birdlife.org.au)

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## Owl Mystery Unravalled:

Scientists Explain How Bird Can Rotate Its Head without Cutting off Blood Supply to Brain.

Jan. 31, 2013 — Medical illustrators and neurological imaging experts at Johns Hopkins have figured out how night-hunting owls can almost fully rotate their heads -- by as much as 270 degrees in either direction -- without damaging the delicate blood vessels in their necks and heads, and without cutting off blood supply to their brains.

In what may be the first use of angiography, CT scans and medical illustrations to examine the anatomy of a dozen of the big-eyed birds, the Johns Hopkins team, led by medical illustrator Fabian de Kok-Mercado, M.A., a recent graduate student in the Department of Art as Applied to Medicine, found four major biological adaptations designed to prevent injury from rotational head movements. The variations are all to the strigid animals' bone structure and vascular network needed to support its top-heavy head.

The team's findings are acknowledged in the Feb.1 issue of the journal *Science*, as first-place prize winners in the posters and graphics category of the National Science Foundation's 2012 International Science & Engineering Visualization Challenge.

"Until now, brain imaging specialists like me who deal with human injuries caused by trauma to arteries in the head and neck have always been puzzled as to why rapid, twisting head movements did not leave thousands of owls lying dead on the forest floor from stroke," says study senior investigator and interventional neuroradiologist Philippe Gailloud, M.D. "The carotid and vertebral arteries in the neck of most animals -- including owls and humans -- are very fragile and highly susceptible to even minor tears of the vessel lining," adds Gailloud, an associate professor in the Russell H. Morgan Department of Radiology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Sudden gyrations of the head and neck in humans have been known to stretch and tear blood vessel linings, producing clots that can break off and cause a deadly embolism or stroke. Researchers say these injuries are commonplace, often resulting from whiplashing car accidents, but also after jarring roller coaster rides and chiropractic manipulations gone awry.

To solve the puzzle, the Johns Hopkins team studied the bone structure and complex vasculature in the heads and necks of snowy, barred and great horned owls after their deaths from natural causes.

An injectable contrast dye was used to enhance X-ray imaging of the birds' blood vessels, which were then meticulously dissected, drawn and scanned to allow detailed analysis.

The most striking team finding came after researchers injected dye into the owls' arteries, mimicking blood flow, and manually turned the animals' heads. Blood vessels at the base of the head, just under the jaw bone, kept getting larger and larger, as more of the dye entered, and before the fluid pooled in reservoirs. This contrasted starkly with human anatomical ability, where arteries generally tend to get smaller and smaller, and do not balloon as they branch out.

Researchers say these contractile blood reservoirs act as a trade-off, allowing owls to pool blood to meet the energy needs of their large brains and eyes, while they rotate their heads. The supporting vascular network, with its many interconnections and adaptations, helps minimize any interruption in blood flow.

"Our in-depth study of owl anatomy resolves one of the many interesting neurovascular medical mysteries of how owls have adapted to handle extreme head rotations," says de Kok-Mercado, now a scientific illustrator and animator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Moreover, says Gailloud, "our new study results show precisely what morphological adaptations are needed to handle such head gyrations and why humans are so vulnerable to osteopathic injury from chiropractic therapy. Extreme manipulations of the human head are really dangerous because we lack so many of the vessel-protecting features seen in owls."

The first anatomical variation they discovered was in the owl neck, where one of the major arteries feeding the brain passes through bony holes in the vertebrae. The hollow cavities were approximately 10 times larger in diameter than the vertebral artery traveling through it. The researchers say the extra space in the transverse foraminae, as the holes surrounding the vertebral arteries are known, creates a set of cushioning air pockets that allow the artery to move around when twisted. Twelve of the 14 cervical vertebrae in the owl's neck were found to have this adaptation.

"In humans, the vertebral artery really hugs the hollow cavities in the neck. But this is not the case in owls, whose structures are specially adapted to allow for greater arterial flexibility and movement," says de Kok-Mercado.

The team also found that the owl's vertebral artery enters the neck higher up than in other birds -- going in at the owl's 12th cervical vertebrae instead of the owl's 14th cervical vertebrae -- allowing for more vessel room and slack.



Among de Kok-Mercado and Gailloud's other findings were small vessel connections between the carotid and vertebral arteries -- not usually seen in adult humans -- that allow blood to be exchanged between the two blood vessels. The researchers say these so-called anastomoses, including a vessel connection called a patent trigeminal artery, allow for uninterrupted blood flow to the brain, even if one route is blocked during extreme neck rotation.

Researchers next plan to examine hawk anatomy to see if other bird species possess the same adaptive features for head rotation.

Funding support for this study was provided by The Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Vesalius Trust for Visual Communication in the Health Sciences.

Besides de Kok-Mercado and Gailloud, other Johns Hopkins researchers involved in this research were Michael Habib, Ph.D., Tim Phelps, M.A., and Lydia Gregg, M.A.

*(Credit: Image courtesy of Johns Hopkins Medicine)  
Fabian de Kok-Mercado, M.A., holds a barred owl.*



## A COOL BIRD

In extreme summer temperatures it is not unusual for many people to seek out the cool, air-conditioned sanctuary of a shopping centre. The 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012, with the temperature in the mid thirty's was one such a day. Laurie Williams spent his day at home and I went shopping at Corrimal Court at 5pm; after the heat began to dissipate. As the auto doors opened at the west entrance, to his surprise, out flew a bird; perhaps a Sparrow? No! That was not right, the bird landed on the pavers, revealing itself as a White-Plumed Honeyeater. Collecting it's bearings it then flew off in search of a more natural habitat. It seems it's not only humans that have discovered the air-conditioned Shopping Centres, or was it just foraging in the Christmas tree?

*Wal Emery*

## DUSKY MOORHEN BOTANICS

We were watching three moorhen chicks and a parent on the nest when one scrambled down to demand food from, we presumed, the other parent. It fed the chick. Then another adult approached and gave the parent a worm, which it also fed to the chick. A different adult came and gave the parent a morsel too small to see, which was also fed to the chick. The chick then scrambled back to the nest. Although we know many Australian birds raise their young with the help of previous broods, we always thought moorhens were a nuclear family, just the two parents and chicks and were surprised to find other adults helping in this way.

*Bill and Joan Zealey.*



Colin Markham managed some great shots in a back yard of a home in Mollymook on New Years Day.



Scarlet Honeyeater

I had a tawny frogmouth in my yard and tried to take a pic but too late, the bird landed on the birdbath and so I got a pic of the birdbath after he flew. A very surprised possum was just coming up the stairs and had a nasty fright when it saw me. The Ruddy Turnstones are about again. [Terry Edwell](#)



RUDDY TURNSTONES



SURPRISED POSSUM



SUPERB FAIRY WREN

## MONTHLY SIGHTINGS - February 2013

compiled by Darryl Goldrick

Plumed Whistling-Duck	20	15-Feb-13	Nowra	Sewerage Ponds	Andrew Walker (Birdline)
Sooty Oystercatcher	2	27-Jan-13	Shark Park, Coaldale	Rock Platform	Mike Morphet
Sooty Oystercatcher	3	05-Feb-13	Bellambi	Beach-Rock Platform	COG
Double-banded Plover	2	11-Feb-13	Shoalhaven Heads	Mudflats	Carla/Ian Jackett (Birdline)
Double-banded Plover	4	15-Feb-13	Shoalhaven Heads	Foreshore	Andrew Walker (Birdline)
Australian Painted Snipe	1	11-Feb-13	Shellharbour	Wetland	Nerida Hudspith (Birdline)
Bar-tailed Godwit	11	06-Feb-13	Lake Illawarra	Foreshore	COG
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	05-Jan-13	Bellambi	Beach-Rock Platform	COG
Ruddy Turnstone	17	05-Feb-13	Bellambi	Beach-Rock Platform	COG
Pectoral Sandpiper		11-Feb-13	Shellharbour	Wetland	Nerida Hudspith (Birdline)
Kelp Gull	1A+1Imm	27-Jan-13	Shark Park, Coaldale	Rock Platform	Mike Morphet
Channel-billed Cuckoo	1 Juv	03-Feb-13	Nowra	O'head	Shirley Emery
Superb Lyrebird	1	01-Feb-13	Upper Grotto Walk	Scrub	Shirley Emery
Southern Emu-wren	5	15-Feb-13	Bulli	Woodlands Track	Andrew Walker (Birdline)
Pilotbird	1	15-Feb-13	Bulli	Woodlands Track	Andrew Walker (Birdline)
White-fronted Chat	4	15-Feb-13	Shoalhaven Heads	Carpark environs	Andrew Walker (Birdline)
Rufous Whistler	1 fem	06-Feb-13	Lake Illawarra	Littoral Forest	COG
Grey Butcherbird	1	06-Feb-13	Lake Illawarra	Littoral Forest	COG

Please keep your sightings coming in, everything you consider unusual or interesting.

Thank you all for your postings Darryl Goldrick records office

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#### RECENT BOOKS DONATED TO THE LIBRARY

- Oceans of Birds - Tony Soper
- The Herons Handbook - James Handcock & James Kushlan
- The Bird Man , The story of John Gould - Isabella Tree
- Journey of a Lifetime - Graham Pizzey
- The Bedside Book of Birds - Graeme Gibson
- Birds and Their World (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) - Joseph Forshaw – illustrated by William T. Cooper
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