

### Southern Boobook

Scientific Name: *Ninox novaeseelandiae*

Atlas Number: 242

#### Description:

The Southern Boobook is the smallest and most common owl in Australia. It is identified by its plumage, which is dark chocolate-brown above and rufous-brown below, heavily streaked and spotted with white. The bill is grey with a darker tip, and the feet are grey or yellow. The facial disc is chocolate

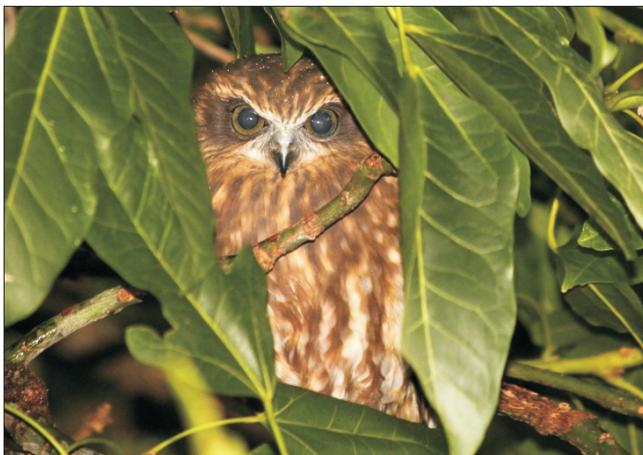


photo by Terry Edwell

brown and the eyes are large and yellowish. Tasmanian birds are smaller and more heavily spotted with white, while birds of the Cape York rainforests are slightly larger and darker. Young Southern Boobooks are almost entirely buff-white below, with conspicuous dark brown facial discs. Like other owl species, the Southern Boobook is nocturnal. Birds are often observed perched on an open branch or tree-top. It is also known as the 'Mopoke'.

#### Similar species:

The similarly plumaged Barking Owl, *N. connivens*, is more grey-brown, and has streaks rather than spots on the underparts. The Barking Owl is also larger, measuring 35 to 45 cm.

#### Distribution:

Southern Boobooks are found throughout mainland Australia and Tasmania, and on some coastal islands. Closely related species are found in New Zealand, New Guinea and Indonesia.

#### Habitat:

Southern Boobooks are seen in a variety of habitats from dense forest to open desert.

#### Feeding:

The Southern Boobook feeds on insects, small mammals (such as the House Mouse, *Mus musculus*) and other small animal species. Feeding takes place mostly at night but some afternoon and morning activity may occur, especially on dull days. Most prey is detected by listening and watching from a suitable tall perch. Once detected, flying prey, such as moths and small bats, are seized in mid-air, while ground-dwelling prey animals are pounced upon.

#### Breeding:

The Southern Boobook's nest is normally a tree hollow, which is usually sparsely lined with wood shavings, leaves and small twigs, but may be left bare. The female alone incubates the eggs, but both sexes, and sometimes a second female helper, feed the young.

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.**

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# MARCH ACTIVITIES

## Club Meeting: **Monday 10<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm at Fairy Meadow Community Hall, Cnr. of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow.  
**Dr. Holly Parsons** who members may remember gave us a great presentation a few years back on the Superb Fairy-wren. Her presentation this time is entitled 'What Birds in Backyards is up

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

## Midweek Walk: **Wednesday 12<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 National Parks parking fee.** Remember your sunscreen and insect repellent.

Contact: *Charles Dove 0417 422 302*

## Weekend Walk: **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>**

Leader **Betty Hudson**

**Bangalee Reserve North Nowra.**

From the north take the Princes Hwy to Bomaderry. Turn right into Illaroo Road, at the traffic lights just before the Shoalhaven Bridge. At the roundabout, veer right. & proceed for approx. another 5km. passing Hockey's Lane and the winery on your right, before turning left into Koloona Drive. (The street sign is on the light pole on the right hand side of Illaroo Rd and also has a small bright blue sign.

Travel along Koloona Drive forking right at the Scout Camp Road & continuing along a narrow winding road for some way crossing a creek in a steep dip. The entrance to the reserve is on the left at the top of a rise with a less than distinct sign. If you reach "Watersleigh" you have gone too far. Be aware that small buses also use the road to access "Watersleigh".

Meet in the car park for the reserve at 8.30am. There are picnic & toilet facilities in the reserve.

There are a wide variety of habitats, some historic ruins and good views of the river. Many interesting birds have been recorded here. Bring your sunscreen and insect repellent. Both leeches & snakes could be active along the riverside section of the walk.

We will carry morning tea, but will be returning to the cars for lunch. We will finish with a short walk after lunch.

This is a 6km walk with varying grades from grassy flat tracks to short rocky scrambles. Members can do parts of the walk, with the easier portion being the early stages from the car park.

**Phone Betty** on 4236 0307 or text on mobile 0432 892 945. (I have changed to Telstra 4G but reception at home is useless for phone calls, text messages do get through.)

**You may also phone Alan Cousins mobile on 0413 869 534.**

Remember mobiles do not always have reception at the places we meet or walk.

If the weather is bad a decision to cancel is made by 7.15am to enable people to travel to the venue. It is your responsibility to contact either myself or Alan after 7.00am to check if the walk is still on.

## Committee Meeting: **Monday 17<sup>th</sup>**

The next IBOC Committee Meeting will be held at 7.30pm at Sylvia & David Garlick's home, 6a Lyne Street, Oak Flats Ph 4257 9750. Any members with anything they wish to raise are welcome to attend the meeting.

## **SPECIAL EVENT :** **INTRODUCTION TO BIRDS FOR THE KIDS**

**Sunday 23th March** from 9.30 to 11.30

**Integral Park Dapto.** (Princes Highway left into West Dapto Rd left into Darkes Rd to Integral Park BBQ Covered Area)

An outdoor activity for little people between 5 to 12 years accompanied by a parent to learn about our local birds with Illawarra Bird Observers Club members, please come to assist.

**Featuring:-** A short bush walk, colouring in sheets and light refreshment will be provided.

Contact Sylvia on for more information.

## Newsletter:

Deadline for Articles and Photos in the next IBOC newsletter is **26<sup>th</sup> MARCH.**

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.



# CLUB REPORTS

**Club Report - Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February**

*Alan Cousins*

What a start to the New Year, our presentation by Peter Fackender made me wonder why I bother taking photographs even with my new 500mm lens. His pictures are the result of hours of patient observation of the birds in all of their elements e.g. flying, nesting, feeding young etc. and catching them in different lighting angles to accentuate their true colours.

Peter spent a while explaining the water situation in the area and the "buy back" of water licences by the Federal Government and the land taken over by the State Government as national parks.

Peter's presentation was a mix of stills and video skillfully put together to give us a splendid look at the birds at Telephone Bank Wetlands – Nimmie-Caira. The list is long but well worth recording in this report: Royal Spoonbill, Australian Pelican, Australian Reed-Warbler, mixed flight of Woodswallows, Glossy

Ibis, Australian White Ibis, Magpie Lark, Great Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Owllet-nightjar, Peregrine Falcon, White-winged Fairy-wren, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Nankeen Night-heron, Australian Wood Duck, Eastern Barn Owl, Southern Boobook, Australian Darter, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Great Crested Grebe, Whistling Kite, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Eurasian Coot, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Crimson Rosella [Yellow form], Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Little Pied Cormorant.

Peter's reputation obviously preceeded him because he attracted 40 members and guests to the first meeting of the year 2014 whose interest was evident by the silence during the presentation and the numerous questions that followed; we look forward to his future presentations of his travels around Australia.

**Midweek Walk - Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February  
Pelican View Birdwalk**

*John Cashman*

The afternoon was overcast and rain hovered - not the best weather, but that didn't dampen the enthusiasm for the first club walk of 2014. A happy crowd gathered around to see old friends again after the Christmas- January break

Some 30 plus members and a couple of potential members arrived at a new location. Instead of meeting on the northeast side of Windang Bridge, we met at Pelican View park on the southwest end of the bridge. But 'a change is as good as a holiday!'

It was great to see Jan Gowans again. She sported a cheeky beanie on her head. Jan is in remission after a grueling time with chemotherapy. She still needs rest, but it lifted our spirits to have Ross and Jan with us again.

Another exciting piece of news was that Joan Wylie had recently seen a Owllet-nightjar, bringing her tally now to 510. Joan had been hoping to see this bird for quite some time. Someone let Charlie know that there was one on a reserve at Wilmott. So the Doves, Wylies, Wheways and Terry Edwell made a quick trip, and lo and behold, there it was! We eventually set off, walking along trails, seeing quite a number of waders and water birds, often in the distance. Sharp eyed observers added land birds to the mounting list. Eventually soft rain began to fall so we returned to the park shelter. This fortunately was large enough to fit us all in, and we enjoyed a light tea together. It was a good start to the year!

Bird List for Lake Illawarra, Pelican Reserve Walk 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2014			
Black Swan	White-faced Heron	Superb Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail
Grey Teal	Little Egret	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Raven
Chestnut Teal	Australian White Ibis	Little Wattlebird	Magpie-lark
Rock Dove	Royal Spoonbill	Red Wattlebird	Silvereye
Spotted Dove	Australian Pied Oystercatcher	New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Crested Pigeon	Masked Lapwing	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common Starling
Great Cormorant	Eastern Curlew	Australasian Figbird	Common Myna
Australian Pelican	Silver Gull	Australian Magpie	House Sparrow
Eastern Great Egret	Little Corella	Grey Fantail	European Goldfinch
Striated Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet		
33 members attended and 38 species were recorded			



# THE BIRDS IN MY BACKYARD

By You

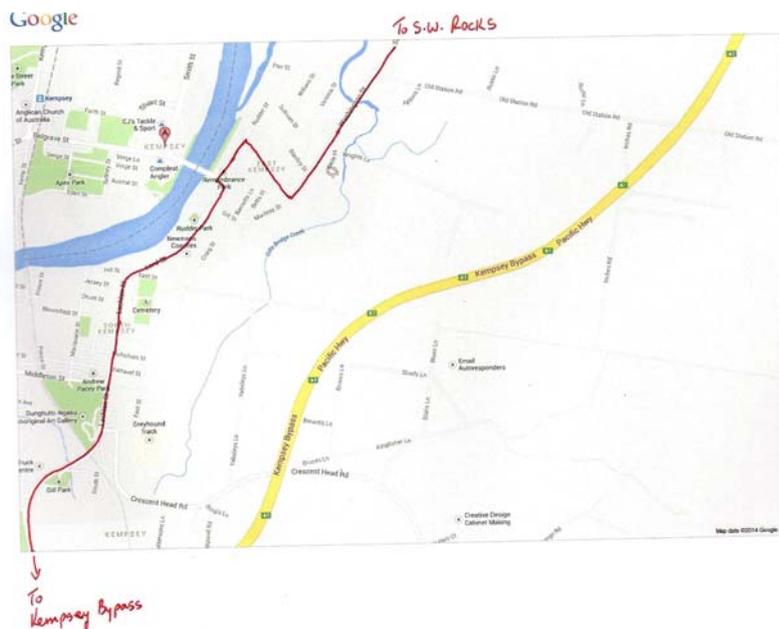
Be Inspired with your own backyard garden PLEASE even a few paragraphs is OK

## IBOC NOTICES

### Final Update for Hat Head Camp 5<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Neil & Tera Wheway called in at Hat Head on their way south from visiting the north coast. They made the following suggestions:

- 1 Sand flies & mossies were very evident. Bring your repellent.
- 2 Neil suggested that access from the Highway at Kempsey to SW Rocks was difficult to find and found the road from Clybucca 20km north of Kempsey to provide an easier route. You still need to head to SW Rocks for the turning to Hat Head at Kinchela.
- 3 To access SW Rocks Road from Kempsey leave the new bypass at the intersection south of the town onto the Macleay Valley Way. Keep going through the town until the road turns a corner to the right, and at the intersection shortly before the bridge turn right into Rudder Road. Then turn right again into Bissell Street. At the T junction turn left into Washington Street which becomes SW Rocks Road. Kinchela is a locality not long after Gladstone. You turn right into Hat Head road. See Map below.
- 4 Hat Head village has no shop or petrol. There is a supermarket in SW Rocks and petrol is also available there. We will be travelling near to or through SW Rocks at least every other day if not more frequently.
- 5 The caravan park has a limited supply of milk & bread.



### Farewell to Wendy Hanks

It is with sadness I tell you of the peaceful passing of former IBOC member Wendy Hanks on the 17th February. Wendy just loved to be out with her IBOC friends and she and her late husband, Ron, were regulars on our many camping trips, I would guess for about 20 years. She had a great love of nature especially birds and especially blue wrens which was evident by the display on her casket.

Wendy was a very special lady; just brilliant with her embroidery, her detailed works were amazing, a legendary quilter and a talented artist with so many of her works including her much loved birds.

Wendy will be remembered with affection by our long term members.

Barbara Hales

**BIRDLIFE SHOALHAVEN OUTINGS 2014.***Every third Sunday, meeting at 8.30 am*

FEBRUARY 16.	Lake Wollumboola Crookhaven Heads	Meet entrance to Lake Wollumboola, Culburra
MARCH 16.	Barren Grounds Nature Reserve	Meet Berry Apex Park
**APRIL** 12-13	Canberra Weekend	Meet Jerrabomberra Wetlands , Saturday April12 at 1200, midday
May 18.	Cudmirrah/ Berrarah	Meet Bewong Roadhouse
JUNE 15.	Jerrara Dam/ Spring Creek	Meet Berry Apex Park
JULY 20.	Greenpatch/ Botanical Gardens	Meet Park Entrance Station
AUGUST 17.	Fitzroy Falls and East Rim	Meet Kangaroo Valley Showground
AUGUST 29-SEPT 5	Capertee/ Dunns Swamp/ Mudgee Trip	Meet Friday August 29 at Port Macquarie Home Stead
OCTOBER 19.	Bangalee	Meet carpark Illaroo Rd at northern end of Shoalhaven bridge
NOVEMBER 16.	Conjola/ Yattah-Yattah	Meet Bewong Roadhouse
DECEMBER 21.	Moona Moona Creek Huskisson <u>5pm</u>	BYO picnic bbq/drink for after a short walk

**\*\*April, 12-13\*\*Canberra Weekend. Camp or cabins at Carotel Caravan Village, Watson. Adjoining Mt.Majura N.R.**

Saturday: April 12; 1100. Jerrabomberra Wetland; walks in the afternoon in Campbell Park, East Mt Ainslie and Mt Majura N.R.

Sunday: April 13; early morning Mt. Majura N.R., Botanical Gardens, Yerrabi Pond and State Park on way home

**\*\*Capertee Valley, Dunns Swamp and Mudgee\*\* Friday, August 29 to Friday, September 5**Friday August 29, to Sunday August 31, at Port Maquarie Homestead in Capertee Valley, (4 bedrooms, sleeps 14. Approxiatly \$50

pp/pn.) Camping available in grounds. Two full days to bird at Dunns Swamp and Glen Davis

Monday, September 1 to Friday, September 5, Mudgee, staying at Mudgee Riverside Caravan and Tourist Park (ph 02 6372 2531)

cabins and powered or unpowered sites by the River. Visit Putta Bucca Wetlands, Avisford N.R. and Munghorn Gap

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

# ARTICLES OF INTEREST

## Darwin & Kakadu National Park - October 2013

*John Barkla*

Not being at all superstitious, I left Melbourne on 13 October and flew to Darwin. I was to guide a friend Raja Gnanam from Sri Lanka, who is enjoying photographing as many bird species as possible. He has visited Australia many times before and on numerous trips throughout the world has already photographed over 2,000 species. I had calculated that there were potentially another 127 species for him to get in the Northern Territory, within easy driving distance of Darwin. My friend was due to arrive on 16 October, so I had a few days for reconnaissance to give him maximum benefit for his time here.

On arrival, I picked up the hire car and confirmed our accommodation for the next 2 weeks. I also established that the trouble we had taken to do the on-line induction to the Leanyer Water Treatment Plant would not be of benefit. The Plant, which was due to re-open shortly before we arrived, was still closed for maintenance/upgrade works and would remain closed during our entire visit.

From the airport to the city, my trip list started with **Magpie Goose**, **Black Kite**, **Red-collared Lorikeet**, **Torresian Imperial Pigeon** and **Bar-shouldered Dove**, all of which were common. After dropping my bag at the Hilton Doubletree Hotel on The Esplanade, my first destination was Howard Springs Nature Reserve. On the way there I spontaneously decided to check the condition of Knuckey Lagoons. The lagoons are often dry before the wet season starts, so I was pleased to see them full of water and brimming with birds. I quickly added **Raja Shelduck**, **Wandering Whistling-Duck**, **Green Pygmy Goose**, **Pied Heron**, **Intermediate Egret**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Royal Spoonbill**, **Brahminy Kite**, **Brolga**, **Common Greenshank**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** and **Oriental Dollarbird** and heard **Eastern Koel**. At Howard Springs my list climbed to 57 species with, amongst many others, **Orange-footed Scrubfowl**, **Little Friarbird**, **Blue-faced**, **White-gaped**, **Brown**, **Rufous-banded** & **Dusky Honeyeaters**, **Shining Flycatcher**, **Northern Fantail**, **Varied Triller**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Australasian Figbird**, **White-breasted Woodswallow**, **Torresian Crow** and **Horsfield's Bushlark**. Tantalisingly, as darkness descended, I heard a **Rainbow Pitta**, but did not see it.



Azure Kingfisher



Red-headed Honeyeater

On Monday 14 October I visited the site on Tiger Brennan Drive where mangroves grow to the edge of the road and where **Chestnut Rail** and other mangrove specialties can be found. I was dismayed to see a road widening underway and a good section of mangroves had gone. Still some remained and I was able to add **Gull-billed Tern**, **Mangrove Gerygone**, **Red-headed Honeyeater**, **Mangrove Robin** and **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**. I heard, but did not see, a **Chestnut Rail**. After trying unsuccessfully to photograph the honeyeater, but doing better with the robin, I left for the nearby Charles Darwin National Park. Here I found **Brush Cuckoo**, **White-throated Honeyeater**, **Lemon-bellied Flyrobin (Flycatcher)** and saw a small group of **Double-barred Finches**, bathing within 5 metres of a couple of picnickers. Fortunately, the people were packing up, so after they left I set myself up beside their table and took some photos. With the afternoon now advancing, I drove to Holmes Jungle Nature Park and found **Forest Kingfisher**, **Spangled Drongo**, & **Crimson Finch**. Despite trying hard, I could not change the **Golden-headed Cisticolas** into **Zitting**, nor find any **Little Curlew** or **Oriental Pratincole** in the grassland north of the reserve. Feeling I had not fully covered Holmes Jungle, I returned the next day and added **Brown Goshawk**, **Rose-crowned Fruit Dove**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, **Red-backed Fairy-wren**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Grey-crowned Babbler**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Paperbark Flycatcher**, **White-winged Triller**, the yellow form of **Green Oriole** (following IOC nomenclature, not **Yellow Oriole** as we are used to) and heard both **Pheasant Coucal** and **Blue-winged Kookaburra**, without seeing either. The highlight, though, was parking the car beside a mixed flock of **Masked** and **Long-tailed Finches** and photographing them through the window.

On 16 October I drove to the Botanic Gardens to ask the gardeners whether they were still seeing **Barking Owls**. I was aware they were no longer seeing **Rufous Owls**, since their nesting tree had been cut down. The staff were very helpful, but sadly told me that they did not know of any current roosts in the gardens for either species of owl. They told me they were not seeing as many of the more common **Barking Owl** since the introduced Cane Toads had arrived: presuming the owls were taking the poisonous toads and dying. I checked some of the trees near the main entrance where **Barking Owls** have been seen in the past, added **Black Butcherbird**, and then left for Lee Point. Birds were scattered all along the beach and I quickly added **Pacific Reef Heron**, **Far Eastern Curlew**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Terek Sandpiper**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Great & Red Knots**, **Sanderling**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Australian Pied Oystercatcher**, **Greater Sand Plover** and **Caspian Tern**. A walk around the lawn areas increased my tally with **Blue-winged Kookaburra**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Green-backed Gerygone**, **Silver-crowned Friarbird**, **Great Bowerbird**, **Chestnut-breasted Mannikin**, **Tree Martin** and **Yellow White-eye**. I then returned to the Darwin airport to meet my friend's four o'clock flight from Singapore. After picking Raja up, we drove straight to the hotel and checked in.

On Thursday we set out for Mary River Wilderness Lodge, stopping at the mangroves on Tiger Brennan Drive and at Fogg Dam on the way. Raja had plenty of photographic opportunities and the better birds we recorded were **Black-necked Stork**, **Chestnut Rail** (again heard but not seen), **Australian Pratincole**, **Red-winged Parrot**, **Weebill** (the rather beautiful yellow northern form), **Helmeted Friarbird** and **Bar-breasted Honeyeater**. We arrived at Mary River quite late in the day and met the new owners, Bronwyn and Rogan Bayard. Bronwyn directed us to their best poolside rooms beside the pool (which I thoroughly recommend) and also gave us directions to a **Rufous Owl** for the next day.

On Friday we were up early to walk to the **Rufous Owl** site, but Raja had pain in one eye and was contemplating whether he needed medical attention. He asked if we could walk around the Lodge grounds to assess whether the eye might improve. Shortly after we set out I heard a **Barking Owl** call, so we dashed in that direction. With a little searching in likely trees, I soon located the bird, but it was too high for a great photograph. A **Brush Cuckoo**, distracted by the caterpillars it was devouring, gave us more photographic opportunities, and a **Pheasant Coucal** scurried away without doing so. Raja then decided he needed to see a doctor. After contemplating a return to Darwin, Bronwyn Bayard called the nearest doctor in Jabiru, which was on our route to Kakadu National Park. We set off immediately and drove non-stop to Jabiru, passing up the river crossing spots for **Mangrove Golden Whistler** and other specialties. Once Raja had been seen by the doctor, some eye drops brought almost immediate relief, so we continued into Kakadu. A few **Black-tailed Treecreepers** flew from beside the road, but we were heading for our home for the next few days, Gagudju Lodge, Cooida. On previous trips I had always camped in Kakadu, so I found the Lodge to be wonderful. The food in the restaurant was also very good, if a little limited in its range. The staff were fantastic.

Over breakfast on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup>, we discussed our photographic options given the temperature was expected to be well over 30°C. Climbing the escarpment with our heavy cameras to look for



Mangrove Robin



Australian Pratincole



Blue-winged Kookaburra



Crimson Finch



Hooded Parrot



Rainbow Pitta



Masked Finch



Double-barred Finch



Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon



Common Koel

were calling, they were not difficult to relocate and then photograph. We visited a number of sites in the afternoon and added **Pacific Baza**, **Spotted Harrier** and **Northern Rosella**. We also took lots of photos of the more common species, such as **Intermediate Egret**, **Crimson Finch**, **Rufous-banded Honeyeater**, **Dusky Honeyeater**, **Shining Flycatcher**, **Northern Fantail** and **Green Oriole**.

On Wednesday 23 October we did some early morning photography before we left Kakadu to return to Darwin. Raja spotted a **Pacific Baza** sitting quietly in a low limb of a tall tree and we were able to get almost full frame shots before our approach caused it to fly. As the temperature climbed we were disinclined to do any more walking so we set off for Darwin. Our first stop was the loop track beside the old hotel on the Arnhem Highway (from memory, now called the Aurora Kakadu Hotel),

**White-throated Grasswrens** was ruled out. We also made plans for our eventual return to Darwin, deciding not to go via Pine Creek, but to travel the same route as we had come, to give us another chance for **Mangrove Golden Whistler** and **Broad-billed Flycatcher** at the South Alligator and Adelaide Rivers. However, not returning via Pine Creek meant we could potentially miss one of the trip's special targets, **Hooded Parrots**. This gave us the perfect excuse for a long drive to Pine Creek that day, with the air conditioner on! On the way we stopped at a few creek crossings and added **White-necked Heron**, **Nankeen Night Heron**, **Collared Sparrowhawk**, **Australian Hobby** (sitting very obligingly for Raja to photograph) and **Varied Lorikeet**. On arrival in Pine Creek, we had lunch in the only café and asked if any locals had seen **Hooded Parrots** recently. No-one had, so we drove to the lookout and the other sites where they have been seen in the past. Over a few hours we saw maybe 32, with 21 birds seen in an area set aside on the edge of the town for the collection of garden waste. We also added **Crested Pigeon** (the only ones we saw for the trip), **Cockatiel**, **Red-backed Kingfisher** and **Rufous-throated Honeyeater**. On the way back to Cooinda we stopped at the same creek crossings and found **Banded Honeyeater** and **Buff-sided Robin** and just before reaching our accommodation, a **Tawny Frogmouth**. During the night a **Large-tailed nightjar** was calling outside my room.

On Sunday we decided to walk into Majuk, the new name for the site I knew as Barramundi Creek. In the past this has been a very reliable site for **Rainbow Pitta**. We set out before dawn and drove as far as the gate, after which the track becomes sandy and suitable only for four wheel drives. We left the small hire car and set out on what I recalled was about a 3 kilometre walk. An hour later with the temperature climbing, we realised it was closer to six kilometres. When we eventually got to the end of the track I heard a Pitta call from dense vegetation on the opposite side of the creek. We met two groups of non-birders who asked us to identify the little black bird they had seen with bright blue on the wings: "a gorgeous little bird". Obviously our **Rainbow Pitta**, but in a few hours of searching we heard it a few times, but always on the other side of the creek. With heat exhaustion threatening, we started the walk back. Miraculously, we met some very kind birders who recognised our distress and offered to drive us back to our car. They proudly told us a **Rainbow Pitta** was hopping along the walking track an hour before we arrived! Our modest consolation for missing the Pitta was to photograph **Varied Lorikeet** and add **Brown Quail** and **Little Shrike Thrush**.

I had booked to go on the famous Yellow Waters cruise on Monday 21 September, to avoid the weekend crowds. Raja was concerned about maneuvering our big lenses on a boat with the capacity to carry up to 60 people, so I asked the boatman whether we had other options more conducive to nature photography. He told me we could hire a smaller boat for a fishing charter, provided we paid for four fishermen. This proved totally ideal as the fishing boat had a flat deck on which we could stand our tripods, we were offered a four hour trip not one, and we had complete freedom where we went. As a bonus, the fishing charter boatman was a keen, but inexperienced birder. He knew where to find most of the birds and I helped him identify the migratory waders he was not sure about. When our four hours were up the boatman was keen to keep going and we got an extra hour! In all we saw many hundreds (1,000+?) of birds of 82 species and photographed 19. The highlights were **Great-billed Heron**, **Black-breasted Buzzard**, **Sarus Crane**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Red-kneed Dotterel**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **Little Kingfisher**, **Broad-billed Flycatcher** and **Arafura Fantail**. Following a tip from our boatman, in the afternoon we drove to the East Alligator River and found and photographed **Rainbow Pitta**, that we had missed the day before.

We spent Tuesday morning trying to get photos of the sandstone specialties at Gubara, not far from Nourlangie Rock. It was extremely hot, so I went off scouting on my own, finding **Sandstone Shrike-thrush** and **White-lined Honeyeater**. When I returned an hour or so later, Raja told me he had a pair of **Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeons** feeding on the ground not far from the car and two **Sandstone Shrike-thruses** nearby. It was not long before both of these birds were relocated and photographed. We then set out for a fairly long walk to where I had found the Honeyeaters. As they

where we tried to creep close to a calling **Rainbow Pitta**. We saw two pittas, but failed to get photographs. We had more luck with a pair of **Grey Whistlers**. We also stopped at the crossing of the South Alligator River, for our main target of **Mangrove Golden Whistler**. It was approaching the middle of the day and the heat was extreme. We put in some effort but left unsuccessful. Photos of **Red-headed Honeyeaters** in the mangroves and another **Black-breasted Buzzard** over the open grasslands were small compensation. We continued to Fogg Dam, where we took photos of a variety of species we had already seen elsewhere, and then on to Darwin. That night Alison met us at the hotel, having flown from the Gold Coast where she was a guest speaker at a medical conference.

My routine is to write my trip diary and download my photos each night so that I start each day with a clean card. On Thursday morning I noticed all of my photos from the day before were still on my camera. I instinctively deleted them before I realised that I had not downloaded them to my hard drive the night before. Disaster!! All I could think about were my **Pacific Baza** shots which had now been lost. I have never done that before. I bounced back fairly quickly when I reminded myself of the 60,000 other photos I have on the computer at home and the future opportunities I will undoubtedly have to photograph **Pacific Baza**. I put it out of my mind and now with Ali as well as Raja, headed off to Lee Point to look for waders and terns.

At Lee Point, the only new wader for our list was **Lesser Sand Plover**, but we added **Greater Crested, Common, Little and White-winged Black** to our **Tern** tally. With **Gull-billed** and **Caspian** there were six tern species together on the beach, but sadly no **Lesser Crested**, which would have been a new bird for Ali. We then drove around the coast to the mouth of Buffalo Creek. After coating ourselves with repellent, we headed off into the mangroves. Our first new bird was a **Striated Heron**, which flew along the creek. Whilst trying to photograph **Mangrove Gerygone**, two **Chestnut Rails** started calling to each other very, very close to us. We set up our cameras hoping they would cross the track. They did, but far too quickly for a photograph. A **Whimbrel** on the edge of the creek and two **Large-billed Gerygones** in an open clearing were the only other new birds. Late in the afternoon we revisited Charles Darwin National Park, but it was extremely hot and few birds were active.

Friday 25 October was Raja's last day and we spent it at Holmes Jungle Nature Park and Howard Springs Nature Reserve, mostly trying to photograph things he still needed. We photographed 18 species and filled some gaps. I was pleased to get some more half reasonable shots of **Rainbow Pitta**. We returned to the hotel early so Raja could prepare for his 2.55am flight to Singapore the next morning.

Saturday, Sunday and Monday were our last days in Darwin, so we concentrated on finding Alison some new birds. We increased her tally to 45 new birds in 10 days, which was most acceptable given she did not join us in Kakadu. We made return visits to Fogg Dam, Knuckey Lagoons, the mangroves on Tiger Brennan Drive, Buffalo Creek, Lee Point and the Adelaide River crossing on the Arnhem Highway. The only new birds for the trip were **Pink-eared Duck, White-browed Crake** (which we heard but could not see), **Black-tailed Godwit, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-capped Plover, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Little Bronze-Cuckoo**. Disappointingly, as Raja had missed it, we also saw three **Mangrove Golden Whistlers** beside the hotel at the Adelaide River crossing. At 6.15pm on Monday, we boarded our return flight home.

I will get back to Kakadu as soon as I can, but the south-west of Western Australia is now beckoning.

John

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## ***Found! The proverbial needle: a bittern nest in a rice crop***

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*Posted on:* January 27th, 2014 *by* matthew [9 Comments](#)

### **Bitterns in Rice Project Update by Matt Herring**

It's with great joy that I share this news. Any niggling doubts I've had about the likelihood of widespread breeding in rice crops have evaporated. There it was – a glowing beacon of bittern reproduction: three chicks and two eggs. After so much effort, I was beginning to worry that someone would find that I'd 'bittern the dust' out in a rice paddock somewhere without having found a single nest!

Since last season, we've known that very significant numbers of the endangered Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) use rice crops in the NSW Riverina. Many things have pointed toward there being widespread breeding, but until now the [Bitterns in Rice Project](#) had been unable to find an active nest or other conclusive evidence of breeding in rice crops.

The landholders are delighted. Like many rice farmers, they're familiar with this special bird and have a real soft spot for them. There is plenty of time for the chicks to fledge (approx. 55 days) before their crop is harvested. And in a bizarre coincidence, the property is called 'Tarkoori', an Aboriginal word for Australasian Bittern. I presume the 'Tar' is the male sucking air in and the 'kooori' is the boom. Go on, try it.

Sure, it's only one nest, but more are bound to follow, and the site is just one of many randomly selected rice farms (with aerially-sown or dry-sown crops) in the Coleambally region where bitterns have been recorded. As of yesterday, across the NSW Riverina rice-growing regions, we passed the 50-individual mark for bitterns confirmed in rice crops this season.

It's clearer than ever that birds don't arrive in the crops until the rice is about 30 cm and in mid-December that meant a smaller proportion of sites supported them because of the late season. From where they came once the crops were tall enough, we can only speculate. It's intriguing. There are already a few sites that now have rice

above 80cm and if last season is any indication, the males will quieten by about mid-February, so we only have a couple of weeks of the main survey window remaining.



Stay tuned, as we interrogate the data, comparing bittern and non-bittern sites, so we can continue to develop our bittern-friendly rice-growing tips for interested growers. This really is a wonderful example of how Australian farms can simultaneously produce food and support endangered species.

All rice farmers are asked to keep their ears and eyes out for bitterns, especially on dawn and dusk. Sightings can be reported online via the Birdlife Australia website ([birdlife.org.au/projects/bittern-project/bitterns-in-rice-project](http://birdlife.org.au/projects/bittern-project/bitterns-in-rice-project)), or by contacting Neil Bull (0428 603 557 [nbull@rga.org.au](mailto:nbull@rga.org.au)), Andrew Silcocks ([andrew.silcocks@birdlife.org.au](mailto:andrew.silcocks@birdlife.org.au), 03 9347 0757), or Mark Robb of Coleambally Irrigation ([mrobb@colyirr.com.au](mailto:mrobb@colyirr.com.au), 02 6950 2850).

*The Bitterns in Rice Project is a collaboration between the Rice Growers' Association of Australia and Birdlife Australia, with key support from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation; the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation; the Murrumbidgee and Murray Catchment Management Authorities; Coleambally, Murrumbidgee and Murray Irrigation; Coleambally and Murrumbidgee Landcare; the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists club; and the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service*



Andy an Anna Knowlson enjoying an afternoon rest on the back porch being serenaded by not often seen or heard Cicada Bird, both the male and female present.



Terry Edwell finally tracked down the Southern Boobook after it arrived in her backyard, Terry has been hearing the Boobook calling for some weeks now but until now was unable to find it.



Gippsland water dragon from Canberra Gardens

By Terry Edwell



A few feathers on the roadside asked the question what species of bird was this. This question is regularly brought up. So if you are not sure we might be able to solve the question. Take a Picture if you come across some feathers or deceased bird & send it to the editor at [iboc.org.au](mailto:iboc.org.au)

### Channel-billed Cuckoo

pic by Barry Virtue



No appearance of the Brown Cuckoo-dove since our return from New Zealand until yesterday. This morning, while waiting for the rainbow lorikeets to move away from our verandah seed dish, this bird took advantage of the sunshine to take in another form of nourishment.  
Mike Morphet

### With the Eagle

by: *Edward Robeson Taylor (1838-1923)*

His eye  
Sweeps all the sky,  
As hard he grips the rock.  
Storm's ice-clad brood that round him flock  
But blow the fires of his undaunted breast,  
And forth he fares in ecstasy of quest.  
Still up he goes, to proudly fling  
His own against the thunder's wing.  
O Eagle of the mighty heart,  
Give me of what thou art:  
Breed in my soul thy lofty air,  
That it may nobly dare,  
And with unconquerable will  
Face every darkest ill.

## BirdLife Australia

Your committee has decided that it is in the best interests of birds and their conservation for the Illawarra Bird Observers Club to affiliate with the national body, BirdLife Australia [BLA]. To this end we have signed an official “Head Cooperative Agreement” with BLA and look forward to working with them in the future. Members may be aware that BLA has a Discovery Centre in the grounds of Newington Armoury which is now part of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. The centre is open to the public between 10.00am and 4.00pm at weekends and is manned by volunteers. My wife and I have been to the centre and it is well worth a visit – entry FREE.

Alan Cousins [President]

**MONTHLY SIGHTINGS: January - February 2014**

compiled by Darryl Goldrick

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Bar-shouldered Dove	2	1/01/2014	Primbee	Garden	Walter Boles
Tawny Frogmouth	2	23/01/2014	North Nowra	Garden	Sheila Emery
Little Black Cormorant	250+	12/02/2014	Primbee	Lake	Charles Dove
White-necked Heron	50+	8/02/2014	Bombaderry	Paddock	Charles Dove
Striated Heron	5	6/02/2014	William Beach Park	Shoreline	Charles Dove
Australian White Ibis	68	26/01/2014	Primbee	Lake Shoreline	Charles Dove
Square-tailed Kite	2	14/02/2014	Farmborough Heights	O'head	Craig Schumi
Square-tailed Kite	1	12/01/2014	Towradgi	Overhead	Jack Baker
Square-tailed Kite	1	24/01/2014	Balgownie	Overhead	Jack Baker
Whistling Kite	1	1/02/2014	Tarrawanna	Sports Field(o'head)	Anne Cousins
Brown Goshawk	1(immat)	17/02/2014	Thirroul	Backyard	Mike Morphett
Australian Hobby	2	28/01/2014	Primbee	Overhead	Charles Dove
Pomarine Jaeger	1	15/01/2014	Austinmer	Offshore	Tom Wylie
Eastern Rosella	2	27/01/2014	Primbee	Ground	Charles Dove
Red-rumped Parrot	1	4/02/2014	Fairy Meadow	Suburban Roadside	Ken Brown
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	3/02/2014	Primbee	Casuarina	Charles Dove
Powerful Owl	1(heard)	30/01/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Powerful Owl	1(heard)	19/02/2014	Thirroul	Excelsior forest	Mike Morphett
Sacred Kingfisher	2	5/02/2014	Primbee	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Dollarbird	2	26/01/2014	Primbee	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Green Catbird	1	10/02/2014	Thirroul	Backyard	Mike Morphett
Superb Fairy-Wren	6	30/01/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Large-billed Scrubwren	1	7/02/2014	Thirroul	Backyard	Mike Morphett
Cicadabird	2 (pair)	2/02/2014	Marshall Mount	Euc/rainforest	A and A Knowlson
Crested Shrike-tit	1	2/01/2014	Marshall Mount	Euc/rainforest	A and A Knowlson
Rufous Fantail	1	15/02/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Australian Raven	16	11/02/2014	Bellambi	O'head	Mike Morphett
Black-faced Monarch	3	2/02/2014	Marshall Mount	Euc/rainforest	A and A Knowlson
Common Blackbird	Pair	14/02/2014	Jamberoo	Garden	Betty Hudson
Common Blackbird	2	10/02/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Ian McKinlay

*I would encourage members to avail themselves of the Club's web site to log in their sightings as this is the main medium that I have at my disposal to be able to produce this page of the newsletter- to date there is only a 'handful' of members using this facility. Spring is not far off and bird activity will be on the increase - I look forward to your postings.*

Hi if travelling down the Coast can you please assist if you come across any Hooded Plovers and note their status Banded 'with' or unbanded

We now have a total of 37 banded Hooded Plovers in the south coast region between Jervis Bay and Durras. This project began a year and a half ago. I am endeavouring to get all NSW Hoodies banded (including far south coast) by June this year when I need to report on the project. But I need your help.....

1. Please report any unbanded Hooded Plover sightings as soon as possible
2. Most volunteers know the flag codes of their local pair, but please report any unusual activity such as new birds in your area or especially unbanded fledglings. We need to get all birds banded as we are looking at home range and territories, fledgling and adult survival rates, and breeding biology.
3. If you would like to help with the project but cannot read the flags with your bino's, please call/email me as I have better binoculars available for loan for Hoodie flag readers
4. Missing birds – there is a special prize for anyone who sights any of these flag codes – D3, N1, J9, K2 or stumpy (our one footed Hoodie from Rennies Beach). I have not seen any of these birds since last season.

Please let me know if you would like to help with recording sighting or trapping days.

Jodie Dunn PS. Any flag codes starting with P to Z are from the Far South Coast

Shorebird Recovery Coordinator (Mon-Thurs)

National Parks & Wildlife Service

Office of Environment & Heritage

Department of Premier & Cabinet

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# Illawarra Bird Observers Club Inc.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Please print this form, complete and post together with your cheque or Money Order to:

I.B.O.C. P.O. Box 56 FAIRY MEADOW NSW 2519

Title	Applicant's Family Name	Applicant's Other Name

For family memberships please include all names to be included in the membership.

*Please NOTE: Family Membership carries an entitlement to one (1) vote each by up to two (2) members of the family over the age of eighteen (18) years and recorded in the membership register.*

Street Address	Town	Postcode

Telephone Number	E-mail Address

I would like my I.B.O.C. Newsletter delivered by E-mail (Yes/No)

I hereby apply to become an ordinary family, single or junior member of the above named incorporated Association (circle applicable membership category). In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the association.

Annual membership fees are due 1<sup>st</sup> January each year and from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 are as follows:

Family \$35, Single \$30 or Junior \$10

Signature of Applicant	Date

For new members only: How did you hear about the Club?

Enclosed is a cheque or Money Order for: \$35 Family  \$30 Single  \$10 Junior