

LITTLE GRASSBIRD

Scientific Name: *Megalurus gramineus*

Atlas Number: 522

Description:

The Little Grassbird is a small, unobtrusive dark brown-grey bird. It has a grey-brown head with a pale eyebrow, chin and throat and the crown and cheeks are streaked dark grey. The upper body is brown-grey, streaked dark grey, the dark wing



feathers are edged with white and the paler grey underbody is also streaked. Young birds are more uniform grey with finer streaking.

Similar species:

The related Tawny Grassbird, *M. timoriensis*, is similar, but the Little Grassbird is smaller, not as rufous, with a dark-streaked crown and streaked underparts. Another similar bird is the Striated Fieldwren or Calamanthus, *Calamanthus (Sericornis) fuliginosus*, which differs in having more yellowish underparts, and a more distinctive white eyebrow.

Distribution:

The Little Grassbird is found across eastern Australia and Tasmania, inland to central Australia and in south-western Australia. It is also found in New Guinea.

Habitat:

The Little Grassbird is found in swamps and marshes, preferring thick reed beds, and will occur in temporary wetlands after rains.

Seasonal movements:

Nomadic but no regular migration.

Feeding:

The Little Grassbird eats insects and other small arthropods, usually remaining in the dense cover of grasses and swamp vegetation.

Breeding:

The Little Grassbird builds a deep cup nest of reeds and coarse grasses, lined with feathers, hidden in thick reedy vegetation.

Bird species cover text 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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MAY ACTIVITIES

CLUB MEETING:

CANCELLED DUE TO MAY CAMP

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

MIDWEEK WALK

CANCELLED DUE TO MAY CAMP

MONTHLY OUTING

CANCELLED DUE TO MAY CAMP

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING:

TO BE ADVISED

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

NEWSLETTER

DEADLINE 24th May 2018

For all articles & photos in the next IBOC newsletter PLEASE E-mail contributions:
To Charles Dove newsletter@iboc.org.au or post to 3/15 Shepherd Street, Mollymook 2539.

IBOC GIVES A BIG WELCOME TO ALL THE NEW MEMBERS TO OUR CLUB

Illawarra Bird Observers Club Reports

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Presentation at April Meeting Killalea State Park

Nathan Catell who had held the manager's position at Killalea for a number of years and has now advanced to be an area manager in the parks covering the Southern region, spoke at April's meeting. The history of the park was covered back to the indigenous peoples of the area who used the natural resources of the fishing and hunting in the area.

The first lease holder for the park was Edward Killalea who with his wife Maria worked at clearing the site and having twelve children. The area was farmed by the Fraser family from the 1920's until the 1960's and became locally known as the Farm and after a period of time become a state park.

Nathan spoke of the management of the park up to this time and what he would like to see in the future, he personally wants to see the environment managed and improved in this and other parks. Also we as a club have been working with park management on providing bird hides for inclusion on new walking trails to improve public access and amenities in the park. If anyone would like to read more about the history of the area it is available online at the Shellharbour City Museum.

Ross Gowans

MIDWEEK WALK REPORT

Midweek Walk - Minnamurra Billabong 11th April 2018

We had a bright fine morning and the walk along the cycle track was very exposed to the sun. Compared with many days there were relatively few water birds and those that we did record were in low numbers. For example, the large flock of Wood-ducks often here was conspicuous by its absence. Morning tea was taken under the freeway so as to enjoy the shade. Between us we recorded 30 species.

Afterwards having concluded the club walk a number of us went over to Jerrara dam where we got a good sighting of a Rose Robin before retiring to the Jamberoo pub for lunch.

Rupert Jarvis

Minnamurra Billabong Walk 11 th March 2018		30 Species	14 Members attended
Pacific Black Duck	Australian White Ibis	Superb Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail
Chestnut Teal	Royal Spoonbill	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Raven
Australasian Darter	Black-shouldered Kite	Brown Thornbill	Magpie Lark
Little Pied Cormorant	Nankeen Kestrel	Eastern Spinebill	Welcome Swallow
Great Cormorant	Dusky Moorhen	Golden Whistler	Common Myna
Little Black Cormorant	Eurasian Coot	Grey Butcherbird	Mistletoebird
Great Egret	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Magpie	Red -Browed Finch
White-faced Heron	Crimson Rosella		

WEEKEND WALK REPORT

Moreton National Park, Bundanoon Saturday 14th April 2018

14 members met at 9am at Echo Point car park after a longish journey to the Southern Highlands. Some arrived a bit earlier in Bundanoon to discover the coffee shops before the short drive to the car park at Echo Point.

The first walk from the car park was along Lovers Walk towards Bonnie View, it was a bit quiet bird wise but after about 1K the route which had been classified as easy became very steep so 9 members decided to retrace their steps back to the car park and bird watch there whilst the remaining 5 stalwarts decided to carry on to Bonnie View and continue the loop walk back around to the car park. Those that went back, went to Echo Point lookout for the magnificent scenery and several attempted the Mount Carnarvon track which again proved to be too steep and rocky for most of us septuagenarians, so was not completed. The bird life was very sparse probably due to the windy conditions and only 12 were recorded. When the 5 members returned from the circular route we had morning tea in the shelter at Echo Point car park.

After morning tea, we drove back along Echo Point Road to Gambrell's Rest to take the track to the old Erith Coal Mine. This walk was graded at medium but with steep steps so at the point that the route became steep and rocky the ladies decided to stay and rest on a well-positioned seat and the men descended to the old coal mine. It was indeed a very steep climb down but all the steps were in good condition so it was safe enough. The mine has a very interesting history but is fenced off at the entrance as it is dangerous to enter. On the men's return the ladies were at the car park and we were all ready for lunch at Gambrell's Rest. After lunch we tried to find birds and discovered only 14 species so it was decided to call it a day.



The total bird count for the day was pretty small for an IBOC outing with only 20 different species seen but this was probably due to the windy but warm dry day. As this is a beautiful area it was worth the trip and was enjoyed by all who came.

Text and Photos by Alan Cousins



A total of 20 species for the day

Note that it was a very windy but warm & dry day

Bird Lists

Echo Point Walk 14 th March 2018		12 Species	14 Members Attended
Fork-tailed Swift	Brown Thornbill	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail
Australian King-Parrot	Spotted Pardalote	Golden Whistler	Eastern Yellow Robin
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong	Silvereye

Gambells Rest to Erith Mine Site Walk 14 th March 2018		14 Species	14 Members Attended
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Variegated Fairy-wren	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail
Crimson Rosella	Yellow Thornbill	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Laughing Kookaburra	Brown Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	
White-throated Treecreeper	Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong	

NOTICES & ARTICLES OF INTEREST

MISSING DVD'S FROM LIBRARY

2 of the missing DVD's are now accounted for but 2 still missing

1. March of The Penguins
2. Flying Home

NB: *These were not donated to the club but were purchased by IBOC for the Library. Please check your DVD's if you find one or more can they be returned to the Library for others to enjoy*

Bell Miner (*Manorina melanophrys*) and BMAD

I was interested to observe, knowing the reported relationship between Bell Miners and eucalypt die back, that a colony which I had been aware of for over fifteen years in Bermagui, had suddenly disappeared. This had followed extensive poisoning in 2016 by council at the northern end of Bermagui North Lagoon Flora and Fauna Reserve, of Lantana, Catoneaster and other exotic woody weed species. It had left a canopy of seriously bared eucalypts and a native shrub understory of Melaleucas, Bleeding Heart, Brush Muttonwood, Pittosporum and Boobiolla. There did not appear to be any other events having occurred which could explain the colony's disappearance, so I had a look on line to see if there was a relationship here.

I found a comprehensive report funded by the NSW Environment Trust (2017) which may be of interest to you. It is a systematic review of Bell Miner associated dieback (BMAD) prepared by several government agencies and presented in *Knowledge Ecology*. It points to 17 relationships in BMAD affected eucalypt forest, cites 20 case studies and makes recommendations for this form of dieback. It recognises that BMAD is only one form of dieback and a problem from south east Queensland to Victoria. It describes BMAD as "a process where eucalypts enter a cycle of defoliation and regrowth, but if conditions persist large areas of dieback and tree death can occur."



Bell Miner pic by Charles Dove

The main findings are;

1. *Dense Bell Miner colonies facilitate psyllid infestations which lead to dieback'*
2. *The catalyst is superior nesting habitat for Bell Miners with more light through eucalypts to the understory,*
3. *Bell Miners show aggressive intra-specific behaviour,*
4. *Human activity and fire increase understory density of woody weeds favouring Bell Miners,*
5. *From improved habitat Bell Miners have various strategies to rapidly increase their population,*
6. *Management of woody weeds with splatter guns has shown to be effective and cheap treatment for BMAD.*

One of the 20 case studies cited from 2005 was from "Mandeni" Merimbula where on private land a BM colony was culled and the colony removed. After 6-12 months there was no improvement in tree health, but by 2011 there had been a significant improvement. This indicated the need for long term monitoring but also found that removal of BM does not always result in recolonization by other avian species.

I intend to continue surveying the site near Keating Drive in Bermagui with interest. Coincidentally a new colony has appeared around the same time in remnant Spotted Gum forest at the SE end of Parbery Avenue, Bermagui about a kilometre away as the BM flies. The understory here is good for them. I wonder how long it will be before the eucalypts evidence their presence and how the avian species will change?

By Barry Virtue

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.

Conservationists plan a food drop to save migratory shorebirds from starvation

By [Stephanie Smail](#)

Conservationists from around the world are warning huge numbers of migratory shorebirds could starve without human intervention in China, and they're planning a food drop to help. One of the coldest winters in decades in a nature reserve in eastern China has wiped out the clam population, the major food source for the critically endangered Great Knot.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature list the Great Knot as endangered, while the Australian Government considers it to be critically endangered.

A fundraising drive is underway to pay for half a million dollars' worth of farmed shellfish to feed the birds during their long flight north.

For the past few days coastal shorebird ecologist David Melville from the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre has been watching hungry the birds arrive in China from Australia.

He said they were flying in and looking for food that was not there.

"Drastic problems call for drastic measures," he said.

His proposal is to leave supplementary food on the tidal flat for the birds.

"We're trying to put out 500 tonnes of small clams over a period of four to six weeks," Mr Melville said.

He said by their calculations that would provide sufficient food for the Great Knots over the period of time when they need to fatten up for their next stage of migration.

That next stage takes them from Siberia to the alpine mountain tops.

So far fundraising has raised enough money to feed the birds for about three weeks.

But Mr Melville said they needed the equivalent of \$250,000 more to cover the three weeks after that.

'It's time for intervention'

Mr Melville said he hoped to start spreading the shellfish by boat next week.



Photo: The Great Knot is considered by the Australian Government to be critically endangered. (Supplied: Andrew Silcocks)



Photo: Birds like the Eastern Curlew can travel up to 12,000 kilometres in one trip to and from places like Siberia or Alaska. (Supplied: Dan Weller)

"The area is already used for clam farming. So, it's not a pristine natural area, it's an actively managed and farmed tidal flat," he said.

"We're really just doing what the local fishermen do.

"They haven't been able to source commercial clams to put out because the cold weather seems to have had an impact on a large area of the country."

He conceded the scheme was interfering with nature, but he said the Great Knot needed all the help it could get.

"If we didn't put the food out the birds would be out on the mud flats and probably end up starving to death," he said.

Mr Melville said the birds' population was in decline and had already take a big hit in 2006, when a major site in South Korea was destroyed through reclamation.

"We have a choice, yes we could let nature take its course and we could watch a critically endangered species get even more critically endangered," he said.

"Or we could choose to intervene for what hopefully will be a one-off event and put supplementary feed out this year to tide over part of the population so they can migrate and breed successfully."

Bin chickens prefer takeaways – but can't get it on rainy days

Ben Langford – Illawarra Mercury – April 12, 2018

Like Wollongong residents up for a big night in Sydney, the white ibis will often complete its sojourn with a stop for fast food somewhere near Central Station.

Belmore Park, just across Eddy Ave, to be precise, is the spot emerging as a top culinary destination for the ibis – native to wetlands but now probably the city-est of Australia's city birds.



With its heavy pedestrian traffic, large itinerant population and ideal location

between the takeaway restaurant and the train home, Belmore Park is a veritable Hawker's Alley for the bird we call the "bin chicken".

If they're forced to, they'll go paleo with a diet of earthworms. But in a city filled with restaurants that pretend they're foragers, the bin chicken is the real deal. It loves nothing more than gobbling up cold chips – and white bread from the hands of bird lovers.

There are about ten times as many "tip turkeys" in Belmore Park than other parks. But for those with an interest, the mystery remained why they leave Belmore Park on rainy days – while other parks manage to retain their population of "trash vultures".

Now former University of Wollongong honours student Matt Chard is the main author on a paper that has got to the bottom of it.

Worms come to the surface when it rains, giving the ibis a replacement when humans are taking shelter indoors and not feeding them. Like an ibis, Mr Chard foraged for worms.

Building on work by Dr Richard Major of the Australian Museum, Mr Chard used a chlorine solution to draw worms out of the ground, washing them before returning them to softer ground and counting their numbers.

And he found worms were in short supply in Belmore Park – the Domain had six times as many worms. Without a food source to replace humans in wet weather, the ibis have to go elsewhere.

So the presence of so many ibis, drawn by human food scraps, destroys the worm population, leaving ibis without a protein-rich diet ... which in turn makes them more dependent on human-sourced bin produce, but only on dry days.

There must be a lesson there.

"Humans have complex interactions with wildlife and it is accentuated in landscapes where human impacts are high," is how Mr Chard puts it.

Could we say, dear bin chicken, in other words, get out of the city?

Not so easy, says UOW professor Kristine French, one of Mr Chard's supervisors and a co-author of the PLOS ONE paper.

"Ibis have lost much of their habitat in the wetlands in Central NSW and now rely on living in Sydney and other coastal areas," she said.

"Living in cities is important for their conservation and we must learn to live with these animals and understand their needs. Matt's work is a part of that research goal."

Mr Chard said no worms suffered "long-term harm" during his work

Spring 2018 Camp

Ulladulla – Kings Point Retreat 13th - 20th October 2018

The IBOC Spring 2018 Camp will be held at Ulladulla on the NSW Coast south of Wollongong at Kings Point Retreat from Saturday 13th October to Saturday 20th October 2018. Ulladulla is a major tourist centre and regional town situated 140km S of Wollongong. Kings Point Retreat is at the southern end of the town just before Burrill Lake.

Kings Point Retreat **300 Kings Point Drive, Ulladulla 2539. Ph 02 4454 4261.** (Do not book online as Charles has arranged for special rates for IBOC) please phone the caravan park for bookings and mention the Bird Club.

Accommodation

Cabins all ensuite and include kitchen wear (plates, cups, pots, cutlery etc,) and linen.

8x1 Bedroom Cottages,

1 bedroom with Queen Bed. Sleeps 2 \$110 per night for 2

3x2 bedroom cottages

1 bedroom with Queen Bed & 1 with double bed + bunk over \$195per night for 4

11x2 bedroom cottages

2 bedrooms, 1 queen bed and other single bed + bunk Bed \$195 per night for 4

1x3 bedroom cottage

2 bathrooms Queen bed 1 room, bunk bed other 2 dishwasher 2x TV's
\$245 per night for up to 4 adults.

Powered sites **No en-suite** \$38 per night for 2

Powered sites **with en-suite** \$50 per night for 2

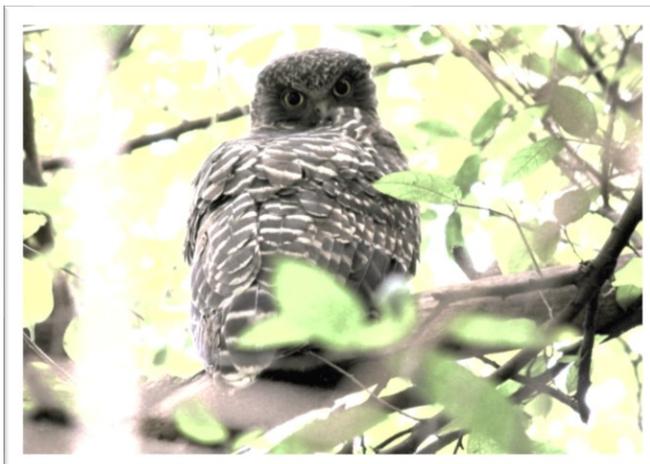
When booking a deposit of 1 night's fee is required as a deposit

It was recommended that members requiring cabins and sites book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment as they can get very busy at certain periods especially weekends

When booking, remember to tell them that you are with the Illawarra Bird Observers Club

Directions: From Wollongong travel via the Princes Hwy to Ulladulla. Continue south through the town and turn right 1.5km south of the second roundabout into Kings Point Road. The entrance to the Retreat is on the left immediately round the corner

Once you have booked please let Betty know as usual, on 4236 0307, by text on mobile 0432 892 945 or by email elizabethjudson@bigpond.com



Powerful Owl by Terry Edwards



Noisy Pitta by Terry Edwell

at Mangerton Rainforest

Making use of an old baking dish

by Mile Morphett

Late afternoon in early autumn two completely different birds made use of the shallow water in our old little baking dish within minutes of each other. The adult grey butcherbird just wanted a few sips and then flew into our Robinia, on the lookout for any prey, I would imagine, before taking off over neighbouring gardens.



Then a young eastern whipbird, which seems to have taken up occupancy of our 'estate' appeared and had a good bathe before scuttling off into the vegetable patch.



Another example of avian intelligence and ingenuity

Mike Morphett

On the morning of April 21 just one millimetre of rain fell in Thirroul after an 18-day drought. During that dry period a variety of bird species of varying sizes made much use of the seven containers of water dotted around our 'estate' to drink and bathe. About an hour after this all-too-brief spot of rain, I heard heavy drops falling on to the tin roof of our back verandah, so I went outside to investigate, expecting the reappearance of rainbow lorikeets in the Robinia. Instead, in the topmost branches, a little wattlebird was shimmying about to shake the water off the leaves and calling out as if in expression of its enjoyment of having a shower. About a quarter of an hour later, by which time sunshine had returned, a grey fantail also had a wash, similarly spreading out its wings, but darting in and out of our dwarf umbrella tree.



My frustration over not being able to capture either ablutionary bird on camera was soon eclipsed by the enjoyment of watching a succession of other birds, ten species in all, very much on the move around our back garden in search of nectar, insects and seed. To quote the movie title: it was 'as good as it gets'.

MONTHLY SIGHTINGS: -March/April 2018

compiled by Darryl

Goldrick

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Black-winged Stilt	50+	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove
Hardhead	4	18/04/2018	Bellambi	Lagoon	Mike Morphet
Bar-shouldered Dove	2-3?	3/04/2018	Bellambi	Dunes	Ian McKinlay
Wonga Pigeon	1	31/03/2018	Top Rixon's Pass Rd	Road kill	Ian McKinlay
Topknot Pigeon	20+	6/04/2018	Balgownie	O'head in rainforest	Terry Edwell
Eastern Great Egret	1	18/04/2018	Bellambi	Lagoon	Mike Morphet
Black-fronted Dotterel	10+	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	4/04/2018	Bellambi	Lagoon	Ian McKinlay
Red-kneed Dotterel	4	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove
Kelp Gull	1	4/04/2018	Bellambi	Beach	Ian McKinlay
Royal Spoonbill	1	18/04/2018	Bellambi	Lagoon	Mike Morphet
Royal Spoonbill	4	4/04/2018	Bellambi	Lagoon	Ian McKinlay
Royal Spoonbill	2	6/04/2018	Fairy Meadow -Thomas Dalton Park	Dry drainage ditch	Ken Guymer
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	9/04/2018	Balgownie	Tree front yard	Terry Edwell
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	22/01/2018	Kiama-Gerringong Headland Walk	O'head	Carol Fowler
Ruddy Turnstone	5	9/04/2018	Woonona Beach	Rock platform	Ross/Jann Gowans
Nankeen Kestrel	1	22/01/2018	Kiama-Gerringong Headland Walk	Post - Perching	Carol Fowler
Buff-banded Rail	3	5/04/2018	Burrill Lake NSW	Marshland	Charles Dove
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	23/04/2018	Balgownie	Yard - bush edge	Terry Edwell
Powerful Owl	1	10/04/2018	Mangerton Park	Rainforest	Terry Edwell
Laughing Kookaburra	1 albino	5/04/2018	Figtree	Yard	Bob/Gillian Alm
Noisy Pitta	1	10/04/2018	Mangerton Park	Rainforest	Terry Edwell
Large-billed Scrubwren	2	5/04/2018	Yadbro	light rainforest	Charles Dove
Yellow Thornbill	15	19/04/2018	Mollymook	Casuarina	Charles Dove
Spotted Pardalote	1	27/03/2018	Bellambi	Dune	Ian McKinlay
Spotted Quail-thrush	3	3/04/2018	Currowan NSW	Dirt Road	Charles Dove
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	4	18/04/2018	Woonona Beach	Dune	Mike Morphet
Golden Whistler	3m1f	2/04/2018	Ulladulla	Native Forest	Charles Dove
Golden Whistler	1m	12/04/2018	Milton	Rainforest	Charles Dove
Rufous Whistler	1	24/03/2018	Ulladulla	Native Forest	Charles Dove
Dusky Woodswallow	12	18/04/2018	Ulladulla	Native Forest	Charles Dove
Grey Butcherbird	2ad+1juv	23/03/2018	Tarrawanna	Backyard	Sue/Ken Brown
Spangled Drongo	1	8/04/2018	Ulladulla	Native Forest	Charles Dove
Golden-headed Cisticola	10+	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove
Golden-headed Cisticola	2	18/04/2018	Bellambi Beach	Dunes	Mike Morphet
Little Grassbird	3	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove
Red-whiskered Bulbul	50	6/04/2018	Tarrawanna	Backyard	Sue/Ken Brown
Bassian Thrush	2	23/04/2018	Balgownie	Yard - bush edge	Terry Edwell
Australasian Pipit	10+	17/08/2018	Milton	Wetland	Charles Dove

Please remember to forward all your sighting that you think would be appropriate and not necessarily a rare sighting to Darryl Goldrick.



<https://www.facebook.com/Illawarra-Bird-Observers-Club-NSW-Australia-223624561002229/>

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