

# Birdlife Shoalhaven Newsletter

Spring 2015



**New Osprey father Fifo providing  
fish to his family at Basin View  
(see article inside)  
- photo by Chris Grounds**



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## Contributions

If you have any information about conservation issues, or if you would like to share some of your birding experiences, travel stories or anecdotes with fellow members, please send details to the editor at [shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au](mailto:shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au) with any related photos, drawings or maps.

In addition, if you have any bird photographs you would like to share, please send them in as well. This includes photos of unidentified birds that could be used in our "What Bird is This" section.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the BirdLife Shoalhaven members who contributed articles to this newsletter, and also to those people who supplied images. These include - Christine Rigg, Duade Paton, Frances Bray, Jacky Lawes, Tom Kaar, Marg Hamon, Chris Grounds and Sue Tolley.

Apologies to those contributors whose text or images may not have been acknowledged. If you have not been acknowledged please let the editor know.

## Disclaimer

The information in articles submitted for publication in this newsletter is accepted in good faith and although the editor has endeavoured to verify the accuracy of all information, BirdLife Shoalhaven accepts no responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies or exaggerations that may be contained within articles in this newsletter.

Also, the views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor, contributors or branch members. They may not be the views of BirdLife Australia.

## Errors

If you find any errors - typographical or factual - in this newsletter, please let the editor know. The beauty of an electronic newsletter is that it can be amended after publication.

## Editorial

- Brett Davis

According to the website "forecast.id" the Shoalhaven City population is currently around 98,000 and is forecast to grow to 119,467 by 2036 - a growth rate of about 1% per year - see the data [here](#).

A growth rate of only 1% per year does not seem like very much, does it? We should be able to accommodate such a small percentage increase easily and sustainably - right? There is no need for us to worry about habitat loss for our birds and animals, or environmental degradation, or about loss of quality of life, when we have such a small growth rate - is there?

Well, what does a minuscule rate of population growth of only 1% really mean? Let us do the arithmetic ...

Because growth is exponential, it means that our population will increase by 100% (double) in only 70 years rather than 100 years. By the time a child born today in the Shoalhaven reaches old age, there will be twice as many people in the Shoalhaven as when that child was born. This means that by 2085 there will be about 200,000 people in the Shoalhaven.

To house all these extra people the towns and villages in the Shoalhaven will either have to double in size, or we will have to have double the amount of towns and villages that we have now.

Assuming that the same rate of growth of "only" 1% continues, by the middle of next century the Shoalhaven will have about 400,000 people. Sometime around 2250 - about 235 years from now - the population of the Shoalhaven will pass one million people. That is over ten times the current population. Sustainable?

Of course, the population of the Shoalhaven is actually increasing at a slower rate than the national rate, which is about 1.6%.

Australia's population in 2014 was 23,490,700. If the growth rate of 1.6% is continued, the population of Australia will double in 42 years - by 2057. Prior to the end of this century it will have doubled again, to over 90 million people. It will pass 100 million people in 2106 - about 90 years from now.

By 2250, when the Shoalhaven's population reaches one million, Australia's population will be almost one billion!

So in 2250 when there will be 10 times as many people in the Shoalhaven as there are today, there will be over 40 times as many people in Australia.

Obviously, Australia's population growth will stop one day. Will there be any birds around on that day?

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## What Bird is This?

- photos by Christine Rigg

This season's bird (below) is tricky ...



Please email your opinion about the identification of the bird below to [shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au](mailto:shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au). As usual, there are no prizes, but correct IDers will be acknowledged in the next newsletter and will therefore receive incredible fame and legendary birding cred.

Since these newsletters were begun - a year and a half ago - only one person has attempted an ID of our "What Bird is This?" bird. Is it because they are too hard?

Anyway, last season's bird (shown below) was an immature male White-winged Triller - our best guess ...



## Lake Wollumboola Report

- by Tom Kaar

Sometimes scanning the flocks of Eurasian Coot on Lake Wollumboola reveals other species seeking safety in their numbers. In early August I counted 35 Hardheads and 40 Pink-eared Ducks present amongst the Coot. 4 Australasian Grebe were also sighted, plus the more common Hoary-headed Grebe.

Lake Wollumboola was found to be opened up to the sea on the morning of 26th August. It is probable that on this occasion the breach occurred naturally due to the rough seas and the high water level of the Lake. The channel formed a little bit further north to where it occurred previously – and the raised central sand dune, that has been such a good vantage point, disappeared completely. Fortunately the event wasn't associated with a massive fish kill – but the numbers of pelicans, cormorants, terns and gulls in the area increased substantially. The Lake closed again at the end of September, unexpectedly.

About a fortnight after the opening, the large colony of Eurasian Coot finally departed after a continuous presence since May 2014 – but the first few Black-winged Stilts reappeared at the end of September.



In early October Frances Bray spotted 3 Banded Lapwings on the vegetated area SW of the customary bird nesting area – and to our knowledge this species has never been seen around the Lake previously. Unfortunately it appears that they only stayed here for 3 or 4 days. When I saw them they were a little alarmed by the presence of a Swamp Harrier flying above – but perhaps they just have left for more suitable habitat.



Generally speaking, the lower water level of the Lake since the closure has not been attracting great numbers of waders – the new foreshore still seems somewhat sterile. However some Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots have been sighted regularly and recently about a dozen Red-necked Avocets arrived.



In late July I saw a light morph of a Brown Falcon perched on wires alongside Pyree Lane. The "double teardrop" was clearly visible, as were the reddish brown "trousers".

The variably wet area just East of Jindy Andy Lane often yields interesting birdlife. In late September I saw a pair of Yellow-billed Spoonbill that had been absent since December last year. At the beginning of October a single Black-fronted Dotterel made an appearance.

Frances Bray has also reported an unusual sighting on 4th October - 2 Kelp Gulls and their fledgling - plus almost daily sightings of 2 and sometimes 3 Pied Oystercatchers, likely to be the pair that nested last year at Lake Wollumboola and the fledgling they raised last season.

- all photos on this page by Sue Tolley

**Note:** Little Terns returned to Lake Wollumboola in late October with Tom sighting 12 on Sunday 25th and Frances sighting 9 in breeding flights on Monday 26th.

## Lake Cargelligo Report

- by Brett Davis

20 Shoalhaven Birders and BirdLife Shoalhaven members visited the Lake Cargelligo region for four days of birding in early October.

We were based in the town of Lake Cargelligo in its caravan park, with some people in tents, most others in campers and caravans, and a handful sharing a cabin. We visited a number of excellent birding sites nearby, on the lake and to the north and west.

Our first destination was the Round Hill Nature Reserve, an area of mallee about 45 kilometres NNW of the town. Gilbert's Whistler was present, and we had good sightings of Shy Heathwrens, Splendid Fairy Wrens, Red-capped Robins, Black Honeyeaters and a variety of cuckoos including Black-eared, Pallid and Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoos.



Juvenile Pallid Cuckoo

There were a number of parrot species in the reserve as well, including Blue Bonnets, Mallee Ringnecks and Mulga Parrots. Other interesting species were Crested Bellbirds and White-browed Babblers.

Temperatures climbed to the mid 30's and the bush flies were extremely friendly, making the birding experience a bit uncomfortable, but the birds made it worthwhile.

In the evening we visited the Sewerage Treatment Plant just south of the town. The birds there were amazing - a great variety and in large numbers. The wetlands were amazing too, as they were without odour and open to the public at all times. They even had a bird hide! It is a pity that the Shoalhaven City Council does not have a similar policy at its many facilities ...



Black-eared Cuckoo

Birds at the wetlands included Black-winged Stilts, Red-necked Avocets, Whiskered Terns, Red-kneed Dotterels, Red-capped Plovers, White-winged Fairy Wrens, all three species of Ibis, Clamorous Reed Warblers, Baillons Crake, Australian Shelduck, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Latham's Snipe.



Black-winged Stilt (above) and Red-kneed Dotterel (below)  
- photos by Sue Tolley





Latham's Snipe

The wetlands were so good that some of us visited them once every day - sometimes twice!



Baillons Crake - photo by Sue Tolley

On the second day we went to a variety of locations around the lake, seeing most of the usual waterbirds but in addition there were some more unusual sightings, including Australian Shovellers, nesting White-bellied Sea-eagles and a Great Crested Grebe.

We headed west on the third day - to the Lachlan River and Lake Brewster, but at least one of us just used the



Shoalhaven Birders

day as a fill-in - something to while away the time until they could head back to the wetlands near town! The highlight bird was the Yellow Rosella.

Our numbers had been steadily declining in dribs and drabs, with some people having arrived early and left early, while others had their own agendas.



On the fourth day one group went to the Gum Swamp near Forbes and saw Pink-eared Ducks and Freckled Ducks, with others heading back to Round Hill to camp nearby for the night so that they could be there just after dawn for the best birding.



Pink-eared and Freckled Duck - photo by Sue Tolley

My wife and I headed for Cocoparra NP near Griffith and were rewarded with a lifer we had been seeking for a very long time - the Painted Honeyeater - a great finish to a great week of birding!

(photos by Brett Davis unless otherwise captioned)

## Christmas Island Bird 'n' Nature Week

- by Frances Bray,

President Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc

While the August 2015 East Coast Low deluged the Shoalhaven I took off from Perth over the Indian Ocean to visit Christmas and Cocos Islands. I travelled with Jacky Lawes, also a member of Lake Wollumboola Protection Association to participate in the Christmas Island "Bird 'n' Nature Week" and to spend a week visiting Cocos Island. It takes 1-½ hours to fly between the islands.



The experience of both islands was special in different ways. I will focus on the Christmas Island visit to share "Bird n Nature Week" particularly our engagement with our scientist hosts and experience with some of the seabird species that nest on Christmas Island.

Whilst both islands have a shared geological history of volcanic sea mount formations with surrounding coral reefs, they are very different. Christmas Island is small, only 135 square kms. It is a towering rocky island rising straight from the ocean bed 5,000 m below. The coral limestone cap and terraces formed at different sea level heights. This limestone is what the now Christmas Island Phosphate Company continues to mine. The main vegetation of the island is tropical rainforest, 25% of which has been cleared for mining. Much of the remainder is National Park managed by Parks Australia.

By comparison Cocos and Keeling islands are coral atolls, with the highest point no more than 10 m above sea level. They are covered by coconut palms, introduced by the Clunies Ross family. Keeling Pulu is also National Park.

Both islands support unique ecosystems, characterised by seabirds, including vagrant and migratory species from Asia and Australia.

Wildlife has evolved in isolation, with no defence against human contact and introduced pest species as both

islands were uninhabited by humans. Cocos Island was inhabited from the 1820's with Christmas Island later in the 1890's.

Since then human impacts have been harsh. All 7 endemic bird species on Christmas Island are Commonwealth Threatened Species, with 5 Endangered and 2 Vulnerable, with species collapse starting immediately with the introduction of the Black Rat.

The endemic **endangered** bird species are; Abbott's Booby, Golden Bosun Bird, Emerald Dove, Christmas Island Thrush, and Christmas Island Goshawk.

The endemic **vulnerable** bird species are; the Christmas Island Frigate Bird, and the Christmas Island Hawk-Owl.



Abbott's Booby female fledgling at Parks Australia nursery

We learned about "Bird n Nature" Week through the Birdlife Australia Magazine. The 2015 week was the 10th Anniversary.

We were motivated to experience Christmas Island, by a group of researchers who share a long term passion for this isolated island's unique ecology, particularly its birdlife who were our guides. They hope to promote Christmas Island as a nature tourism destination both to assist in its protection as well as to explore economic alternatives to phosphate mining, and Australian Government strategic objectives, including the so-called Immigration Detention Centre (Prison).

The Christmas Island sojourn was an intensive, well-organised and exciting experience. Christmas resident Lisa Preston of Island Explorer Holidays, in association with Christmas Island Tourist Association, was an extraordinarily generous, talented host and commentator on Christmas Island life.

The 32 visitors were divided into 4 groups. Each day we went on an excursion with a different researcher who involved us in their research. Most evenings one of the researchers presented their work, prior to us all enjoying

dinner at a different Malay or Chinese restaurant, sometimes with a further night excursion to view the Christmas Island Hawk Owl. Lisa also organised dinner at the high school where the hospitality students planned and presented the most delicious dinner.



Frances with juvenile Red-tailed Tropic Bird

The experiences that I found the most fascinating, and likely to be of interest to Birdlife Shoalhaven members included the following;

#### **Abbott's Booby excursion with Dr Janos Hennike**

Christmas Island is the only place where Abbott's Boobies nest, with about 2,500 pairs. They are large sea birds growing to 80 cm with long graceful wings. They raise one chick every two years in nests of twigs on the crowns of *Syzygium* trees, which grow to 40 m. Chicks are dependent for more than a year and vulnerable to wind turbulence, as they can fall from their nest or roost. Many nesting trees and young birds were lost when the

forest was cleared for mining and also during a recent cyclone.

We assisted Janos and her student team to locate roosting Abbott's Boobies. We identified one tree that supported 3 nests and saw a pair change over on the nest. Janos has developed a pulley system to reach the nests. We watched in trepidation as he hauled himself up to a nest, gently pulled the bird towards him and then lowered it in a sack. The students measured and banded the bird, took samples for genetic testing, and placed tracking devices on its tail and replaced it in the sack for return to its nest.

Janos is a seabird ecologist based at the Department of Ecology and Conservation at the University of Hamburg who has studied Christmas Island seabirds since 2004. He explained his research into the foraging ecology of frigatebirds, boobies and tropic birds using micro-electronic transmitters and data loggers.

#### **Red-Tailed Tropic Bird excursion with Dr Nic Dunlop**

About 1,400 breeding pairs of Red-Tailed Tropic Birds nest on Christmas Island. They nest on ledges and in crevices of rocky cliffs. As seabirds they can scarcely walk. Their chicks are vulnerable to cats and other predators as they are left alone while their parents fish. They are abandoned when they are 6 weeks old until hunger drives them to fly. Their spectacular flight over the ocean with their red tail streamers is easily visible from the cliffs around the settlement. We were spellbound also by the flight of the White-tailed tropic bird, particularly the Golden Bosun Bird (a variety of White-tailed Tropicbird endemic only to Christmas Island) that we watched from the southern cliffs at Flying Fish Cove.

Us visitors helped Nic and his assistant researcher Kady, to locate birds on their nests. Jacky and I assisted with recording measurements, banding and genetic sampling of the birds, with some volunteers also releasing them or returning them to their nests. We also visited Propeller trees, the nest and roosting trees of the Red-footed Booby and watched Greater Frigate Birds line up to skim over a fresh water pond to drink.

Nic is a seabird ecologist and conservationist with a long term engagement in research into tropical seabirds. As the first professional Environmental Officer for the mine he has an intimate knowledge of the island's ecology and society and generously shared his insights not only into the island's birds and ecology but also the impacts on the island of ever-changing Australian Government policies.

He is now a researcher with the Conservation Council of WA and has undertaken research into Fairy Terns. He sent me his Fairy Tern Management Plan to assist with Little Tern conservation at Lake Wollumboola.



Mother and Baby White-tailed Tropicbird

### Excursion to the Dales with Tim Low

The Dales are part of the National Park and are listed as a Ramsar Wetland. Christmas Island has very high rainfall, which percolates through the limestone and recharges underground aquifers. The Dales area has formed where the aquifers follow the boundary of the limestone cap and terraces with the underlying basalt and emerge on the surface as creeks and waterfalls. This water supply is critical to the island's ecology and its human population.

Tim Low took us walking into the Tahitian Chestnut Tree groves and explained the complexities of the ecology and the threats posed by the introduced pest species the Yellow Crazy Ants, which have formed "super colonies." These huge buttressed trees provide habitat and food for amazing Crab species - particularly Robber Crabs, Blue Crabs and the Christmas Island Red Crab.



Kady and Jacky with Robber Crab

The Crabs take fallen leaves into their burrows, leaving the ground bare, an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. The Yellow Crazy Ants have invaded many parts of the island causing loss of crab and other species, including young

birds. Large areas with leaf litter indicate the ants' path of destruction.

Tim is the well known biologist and author of seven important books including the most recent "Where Song Began: Australia's Birds and How they Changed the World." A fascinating read! I caught up with Tim again in the Shoalhaven at Bundanon's Site Works and managed to trigger his interest in Lake Wollumboola.

### Other Excursions

We also experienced a great time bumping along in Mark Holdsworth's ute, which dragged a rat-like lure along the rainforest roads to attract the Christmas Island Goshawk. This activity is part of his long term monitoring program. Mark and Sue are employed by the Tasmanian Conservation Agency, with Mark a specialist in wildlife monitoring especially raptors and Sue an expert in the island's crabs.

As Bush Care participants Jacky and I were also interested to see Parks Australia's efforts to regenerate old mining areas within the National Park and to visit their research centre which is working to recover Critically Endangered Skinks and Geckoes and find a deterrent to the Crazy Ants. We also visited the nursery for young sea birds that had fallen from their nests, where we saw a young female Abbott's Booby and Brown and Red-Footed Booby chicks.



Brown Booby and Chick

I shall never forget the almost constant seabird display offshore with the Boobies and Tropicbirds flying and fishing and the Frigatebirds chasing them. They force the birds that are returning to the island to feed their chicks to disgorge their food, which the Frigatebirds then catch and eat!

To my surprise, I found unexpected links between the Shoalhaven and Christmas Island, through the Parks Australia staff. We met up with Booderee National Park Ranger Matt Hudson and his wife Louise Bargwanna, and

with Chris McGregor who also works at Booderee and ANU.

I trust that this article represents a fitting tribute to the passionate group of scientists and Christmas Island residents who have made "Bird 'n' Nature Week" such a great experience and encourages others to support their efforts as well as those of Parks Australia staff, in conserving and protecting this stunning environment.



Flying Fish Cove



Golden Bosun Bird at Flying Fish Cove



10th Anniversary celebration - Nic Dunlop, Tim Low, Lisa Preston, Sue, Mark Hawkesworth, Janos Hennike



Frances with Tim Low



Seabird watching with Nic Dunlop



Red-footed Boobies

**References :** Elizabeth Rippey and Nic Dunlop "Christmas Island Animals, Plants and Island Ecology." May 2015, and Island Explorer Holidays. "Christmas and Cocos Keeling Islands Birding Guide."

## Larmer Wetland Project Report

- text and photos by Chris Grounds, Conservation Officer

A major development with this project is the formation of a local Steering Committee under the auspices of the Bay and Basin Community Resources [BBCR] based at Sanctuary Point. The committee met for the first time on Tuesday October 20th.

**One of the key developments was the adoption of a name for the wetland.**

A number of community meetings and workshops have provided a strong recommendation that the name "Larmer Avenue" was not suitable and that a local Aboriginal language name would be excellent.

**Liaison with the local Aboriginal community indicated that they had always called the area "Bherwerre wetland".**

The name cannot be official just yet but it will be the new reference and a vastly superior tag.

The word Bherwerre is the Aboriginal name for St Georges Basin and is recorded on the very first survey map of the basin as "St Georges Basin or Bherwerree", which explains the contemporary pronunciation.



The committee is comprised of representatives from various community organizations and Deborah Butler [BBCR manager] is the facilitator for this committee.

Council's role is co-ordinated by Environmental Planner, Elizabeth Dixon.

The basic purpose of the committee is to provide a formal means for community input on how the project develops.

A birdlife interest rather than our branch will be represented on the Committee by Chris Grounds, our conservation officer, who is formally on the committee as a representative for the Basin Villages Forum.

The conundrum for our local branch is that the wetland project is aligned to bio-banking funding and the national BirdLife policy does not support offsets and the purchase of offsets is the basis of bio-banking.

Offsets remain a very controversial planning concept and were considered in discussion at a recent workshop conducted by the BBCR, which involved councilors and a site inspection for participants.

Our committee consider that given that the project is proceeding and has a biodiversity-conservation basis, it still remains important that there is a recognized input in the interest of birdlife.



It is anticipated that bird observation facilities will be a key part of the passive recreation developed at the site.



BirdLife Shoalhaven provided Council and the Basin Villages Forum with a list of 68 species seen at the site over 12 months in 2014-15 and the number is increasing. This has been highly valued and helped to extend the known biodiversity value of the site and provide a stimulus to progress with the project.

Anticipate more good news from Bherwerre Wetland!

## South Coast Shorebird Recovery

- by Simon Tedder

In typical fashion, September was a month of highs and lows for beach nesting birds on the south coast.

Pied Oystercatcher pairs at Comerong Island, Berrara, Beecroft Peninsula, Narrawallee, Burrill Lake, Murramarang NP and Lake Durras (pictured) added clutches of eggs to the list this month. Interestingly, pairs have formed new territories at Crooked River Spit, Gerroa and near Bundeena, in the Port Hacking River.



Unfortunately, the impact of the August East Coast Low (ECL) on beach morphology was finally felt as Pied Oystercatchers at Comerong Island and Berrara lost their low lying nests to tides on 23/09/15. Special thanks to the committed Shorebird Recovery Volunteers (pictured) at Berrara for sandbagging the nest.



Unfortunately, the ECL had resulted in a much reduced habitat in the creek and waves easily washed the nest away. In the same week, Pied Oystercatcher eggs at Conjola disappeared from the dunes with rain squalls erasing any trace of the culprit.

South coast Hoodies have had a better September, with nesting at Berrara, Narrawallee, Bommie and North Wairo. The Hoodies at Bommie have a great spot this year – inside the dune fencing away from the surf and beach traffic: we expect the eggs to hatch within the next week! Unfortunately the North Wairo nest disappeared quickly - with fox tracks indicating the guilty party.

Along with Ulladulla High Marine Science students, we appreciated our Hoodies on September 16 and were featured on the NPWS Facebook page.

This month we look forward to welcoming more nests and possibly chicks onto our beaches. We may even receive the first arrivals of Little Terns!

October will also see the continuation of our predator control programs (post holidays) and the commencement of our Community Education and Primary Schools book project, funded by the NSW Environmental Trust.

We're also reaching out to the surf community to be responsible coastal ambassadors and raise awareness through our *Shred 4 Shorebirds* initiative on October 11.



For those interested, results of the 2014 biennial Hooded Plover count have been published and can be found [here](#).

### Editor's Note:

Simon Tedder is the Shorebird Recovery Coordinator for the National Parks & Wildlife Service. If you would like to become involved with Shorebird Recovery, contact Simon at [simon.tedder@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:simon.tedder@environment.nsw.gov.au) or via mobile phone on 0427 012 960.

## Canaries in the Coalmine

- text and photos by Chris Grounds

**This hardly seems an appropriate metaphor for the state of Shoalhaven birds - but we Shoalhaven miners know that not all is well with the canary.**

BirdLife Australia has recently released its "State of Australian Birds" report containing regional details of the status of many Australian species from data collected over the last decade.

The data extends concerns beyond the threatened species listings.

**The Shoalhaven's emblem, the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo is one of a number of district birds identified as in decline on Australia's east coast by a just released BirdLife Australia report.**



In the wet eucalypt forests the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo data shows a significant decline on the east coast as does the data on other well-known local species, the White-cheeked Honeyeater and Laughing Kookaburra.

The east coast dry eucalypt woodlands and forests have witnessed decline in similarly well-known species numbers such as the beautiful Variegated Fairy-wren, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Mistletoebird and migratory Dollarbird.



This is a matter of serious concern for these familiar species in the Shoalhaven but the catch is that these are not listed threatened species.

Some species such as the Golden Whistler, Striated Thornbill and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters however have increased in numbers so it is a mixed though worrying picture.

**The Threatened Species profile for the Shoalhaven is even more sobering.**

The Jervis Catchment Management Area, which embraces most of the Shoalhaven, has 47 bird species listed as threatened by the Office of Environment and Heritage under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 with 4 listed as at "extremely high risk of extinction in the immediate future". The four are the Beach-stone Curlew, Orange-bellied Parrot, Hooded Parrot and Regent Honeyeater.

There has also been critical and telling revision of the status of a number of key species in recent months.

The Hooded Plover, previously critically threatened in NSW has recently been included as critically threatened on the Commonwealth list under the EPBC Act. This bird, a familiar species on the Shoalhaven coast, is now in danger of extinction in the immediate future at a national level.

The peril of this species is very familiar to the small army of Shoalhaven volunteers working up and down the coast in the National Parks Shorebird Recovery Project.



The Commonwealth critically endangered status has now been extended to include the Regent Honeyeater, of which there are only 400 remaining in NSW.

The same change of status now applies to Eastern Curlew and Curlew Sandpiper which are summer migrants from the northern hemisphere.

These two species together with the threatened Little Tern, are of immense importance in the environments of Lake Wollumboola and Shoalhaven-Crookhaven Estuary, areas which are both listed in international treaties for their importance as bird habitats.

BirdLife International lists Lake Wollumboola and the Jervis Bay area ["Jervis"] in an international network of "Important Bird Areas" and both are part of the Jervis Bay National Park.

The state government has initiated and funded a "Save Our Species" program covering all plant and animal species listed as "threatened" in NSW, which of course includes key coastal bird species.

On an international level the global seabird populations are being described as in "catastrophic decline".

A major cause of the threat to migratory birds is the damage to habitat along the flyways or migration routes, especially in south-east Asia.

Nationally, regionally and within the Shoalhaven, habitat intrusion, damage and destruction are key high risk factors.

So much of the population pressure, both residential and tourist, has been and is concentrated on the coast, its beaches and immediate hinterland involving the lakes, lagoons, estuaries, coastal delta, floodplains, wetlands and forests all of which are prime bird habitat.

The development demands in areas such as the Lake Wollumboola catchment continue to threaten the unique status that birds have brought to such places.

The burgeoning demand for off-leash dog areas consistently fails to recognize beach systems as bird habitat, often for nesting of critically endangered species such as the Hooded Plover.

It is somewhat worse than this already with many dog owners prepared to openly flout the regulations in declared dog-prohibited zones which usually associate with resting and nesting bird areas.

The petitions that some Shoalhaven Councillors seem all too ready to uncritically accept and respond to invariably fail to provide any recognition of birds, their status or habitat.

Even the professional advice taken by Council in environmental reports can fail the standards test. The dredging project environmental review at Currumbene Creek is one recent example.

The environmentally beautiful and precious Shoalhaven, touted as a tourist Mecca for the grand natural environment will not remain so without a better understanding of what makes this environment so precious and the recognition of how fragile the balance really is.

In July a new report released by BirdLife Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environmental Justice Australia, revealed that recovery plans designed to prevent Australia's most endangered species from extinction are failing to protect habitat.

**Editor's Note:** On a related topic, please check out this Guardian article entitled [Threatened Australian Wildlife at Grave Risk from Habitat Loss - study finds](#) - duh!



Is there a future for this little guy? - photo by Sue Tolley

## Crabby Birds!

- by Lani Imhof

(Editor's Note: Some of you may have noticed a photo in the latest BirdLife Australia magazine showing a crab on a Pacific Gull. The photo was attributed to Michael Smith - BirdLife Shoalhaven member - but it was actually taken by his wife Lani. Here is her story about the photo ...)

I took the photo in Wilsons Prom in 2010 when I'd gone off alone - and I witnessed this amazing thing that I photographed. For years I've been wanting to do something with the photos, and I did actually send one in to Birds Australia some years ago - but never heard back. When I was looking through one of the magazines recently and saw they had a section on members photos, I submitted it again.

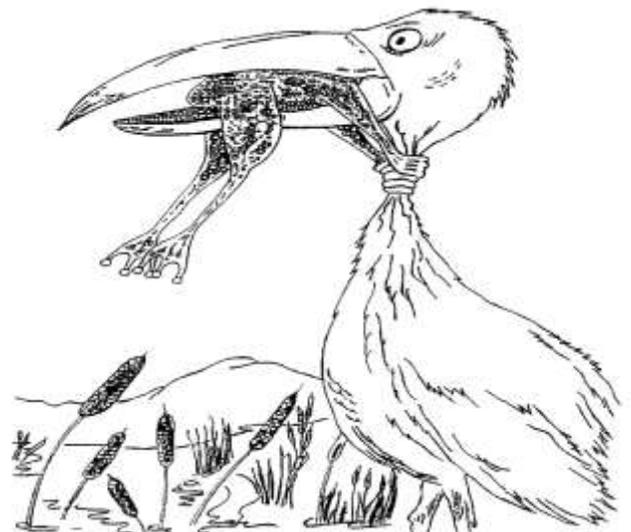
The gull tried all sorts of manoeuvres to release the crab, but the crab held firm. The bird's partner tried to intervene, but to no avail. After about ten minutes and many attempts, the crab eventually released the grip of one claw and the gull was able to pull it off completely.

The gull immediately began eating the crab, and it was only then that I realized how the crab must have got there in the first place.



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Editor's Note: A real life version of "Never Ever Give Up ..."



## The Basin View Osprey Saga Concludes

- report and photos Chris Grounds

The Eastern Osprey [*Pandion cristatus*] nesting report in our Winter newsletter noted the danger of counting your Osprey chicks before they are hatched.

At that time there was definitely something happening at the nest but it was impossible to determine exactly what, especially given the 110 metre height of the nest.



Some of the excitement centred around this possibly being the first successful nesting on the south coast of NSW of the threatened species Eastern Osprey.

Well, all is good and the chicks counted.

**Eggs were laid, chicks were hatched and two fledglings seen off from the nest at Basin View.**

**Checks and double-checks with the literature and researchers verified that this is the first documented successful nesting of the Eastern Osprey on the south coast of NSW.**

Indeed, the number of unsuccessful nestings, particularly in the Shoalhaven, has been the Osprey story. Even the Basin View pair had been unsuccessful in both 2013 and 2014 at the same site.

The nesting has been recorded in both the Birddata Atlas and the Atlas of Living Australia and a full report provided to BirdLife, National Parks and key researchers.

The male-father came to be known to us as Fifo given his habit of direct "fly in fly out" with the nest itself. Female-Mum was named "Cristy" after the species name "cristatus" - it was much easier to say and communicate using these names during the many hours of observations.



The key moment came on a fine mid-August morning during a three hour observation. Fifo was seen off the nest in adjacent forest prior to a bird leaving the nest and joining him in a fly-around involving an exchange of much whistling. They then headed south toward the Basin.

Then a third bird stood and left the nest and flew after the first two. Three birds – can't all be parents! When this third bird had flown south as well, a check of the nest revealed another bird. So two fledglings!

It took two more weeks and over an hour of posturing on the rim of the nest before a whining, anxious and reluctant second fledgling finally left the nest in the semi-darkness of the evening and into some bad weather. Cristy stayed with and around the second fledgling and nest right through this time but on her own.

Dad had gone fishing!!!



**Editor's Note:** Chris has produced a comprehensive report that covers the successful nesting of the Basin View Ospreys from nest building to fledging, with additional photos. The full report can be downloaded at [www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/pdfs/ospreyessay.pdf](http://www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/pdfs/ospreyessay.pdf)

## Report from BIGnet

- by Marg Hamon

The BIGnet meeting in this report was hosted by the Birding NSW Central Coast Group on the weekend of 5-6 September, 2015.

There were presentations on various projects which BLA (BirdLife Australia) is running. Here is a brief summary:

**Powerful Owl Project** - this is going well in researching the lives of Powerful Owls in the Sydney region but there are many more questions to be answered. It will be the recipient of this year's Twitchathon funding.



**Bush Stone-curlew Project** - BSCs are more prevalent north of Ballina. There has been a big decline in the Riverina. They are quite prolific breeders, but when the juveniles disperse they can't find juvenile flocks to join. Many then disperse to inappropriate places where they are more subject to predators and other threats. Eleven birds were released at Mulligan's Flat last year, of which 2 males and 1 female survived. Ten more are to be released this year.

**Regent Honeyeater Project** - these appear to be suffering a big decline. They have been listed as critically endangered and face a real possibility of extinction, especially if the Government's plan to clear the Tomalpin woodlands for the Hunter Economic Zone go ahead, as this is such an important area for them. Habitat loss and fragmentation and competition from other honeyeaters are all thought to be causes. The food trees they need are sporadic flowerers, so they need a large area, but other honeyeaters face the same problem and have not declined as much. It is not known yet why Regents seem to be particularly vulnerable.

**Swift Parrot Project** - also declining, and in addition to habitat problems they are also being predated in the nest by introduced sugar gliders. Forest logging by the Tasmanian Government is a threat as they need extensive old-growth forests.



### Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)

There are more than 12,000 IBAs globally. They are assessed for nomination by standardized scientific criteria. Being declared an IBA however doesn't guarantee formal protection, and IBAs rely on volunteers and community support. BLA aims to have a "champion" for each IBA, a local person to whom matters can be referred. There was discussion about difficulties with the reporting form, and with the problems of enticing people out to survey sites where no target birds, or sometimes no birds at all, may be seen. OEH (Office of Environment and Heritage) people in particular are not keen on the forms, especially as they are so overworked and stretched thinly on the ground.

Within the Shoalhaven we have three IBAs:

Jervis Bay (Eastern Bristlebird)

Lake Wollumboola (Black Swan and Chestnut Teal)

Ulladulla to Merimbula (Swift Parrot)

### Address by Paul Sullivan, CEO of BLA

BLA is aiming to increase membership, from ~ 12,000 to 20,000. The "targets" are professional ornithologists, keen birders, and nature campaigners. There is a trial being carried out to have "Australian Birdlife" (the BLA quarterly magazine) made available to the general public.

Financing conservation - programs previously funded by government are now increasingly being funded by philanthropy. Paul sees this as more stable, and less affected by the whims of government.

Birddata Portal - the development of the portal was financed by last year's twitchathon. An app is being developed to allow entry of data in the field. This can also be used offline, but without access to maps. Launch of the app is planned for March next year, but they want to make sure it works properly first.

## Coast Birds Dogged by "Off-Leash"

- by Chris Grounds, Conservation Officer

There are a number of significant forces working against healthy and stable bird habitat on our coast and hinterland.

Cats work by stealth as very effective diurnal hunters and there are simply too many - and too many on the loose. Foxes too can be quite damaging to ground nesting birds.

Dogs can be very intrusive and generally speaking, dog owners are simply not tuned in to the potential impact of their dogs on birdlife on beaches.

Too many residents, holiday home-owners and tourists totally flout dog restrictions, as well-signed as they may be, and let their dogs off-leash in sensitive areas.



Same owners, same dogs, same place, different day

BirdLife Shoalhaven made a submission to Shoalhaven Council in early August concerning a request for an off-leash dog area in the Cudmirrah Beach area.

This request originated in - a petition !!! This was presented to Council with approximately [sic] 363 signatures by a local councilor. As always the issues of source, perspective, authenticity and validity are involved but not addressed. How many who signed are actually local dog owners? How many registered dogs are covered by the signatures? How many of these are in permanent residences? How many of these dogs are on the "Dangerous Dogs" list? How aware of threatened species beach habitat are these owners? Have the alternatives such as a "dog park" been investigated? To what degree are the current regulations on the site flouted by dog owners? Are council rangers active at the site and what is their experience with animals at that site?



Dog owners ignoring leash-only zone at Myola Spit

There can be no doubt that there are more dogs than ever on our coast and beaches.

It seems as if we have arrived at the days where so many people have to have two dogs and we won't even venture into the vexed area of breeds and behavior.

Then of course there is the twisting of councilors' arms with the dreaded petition, fraught as they can be in terms of source, perspective, authenticity and validity – the petitions that is!

Petitions are very much the "wedge-of-the-age" and these would be well known among readers on so many websites, including conservation organizations.



To add fuel to the fire, the Visit NSW Tourism site for the Shoalhaven is promoting the Shoalhaven as "Pet Friendly" with the open invitation to bring your cat, dog, horse, whatever, to enjoy the destination.

This site and promotion is way over the margin of sensible promotion of the coast we have in the Shoalhaven. As the site, which is to be updated, says:

"On top of the wide selection of outdoor offerings in the region, the Shoalhaven offers access to exercise and play areas well suited to four-legged family members. With the advent of these pet-friendly areas all members of the family, including the furry variety, can enjoy the Shoalhaven's pristine beaches and parklands."

"Dogs, cats and even horses can enjoy the facilities that make the South Coast one of New South Wales' leading pet-friendly destinations."

Would it not be a reasonable argument that the Shoalhaven's beaches cease to be pristine with a growing population of pets using them. Is this pristine-pet friendly concept not oxymoronic?

BirdLife Shoalhaven wrote to the tourism manager at Council seeking to address these concerns. The response was very timely and indicated that:

"In promotion of our new Pet Guide we have taken time to consult with BirdLife Australia and NPWS Shorebird recovery to include information about responsible pet behaviour and sharing the shore. We have also dedicated a page to restrictions and complying to guidelines."

There is one page, just one, in the 36 page on-line document, warning of the adverse impacts of dogs on nesting, threatened species shorebirds. This page says nothing of the impact of cats. The document is worth looking at and can be accessed through the following link - [Pets-on-Holiday-2015.pdf](#)

There isn't a BirdLife member who doesn't share a concern about the impact of cats and dogs, especially the latter, on coastal habitat.

Our return email has pointed out that the work of Council rangers in particular will be critical if the guidelines provided through the tourism site are to be meaningful in reality.

So what is next? An off-leash cat area you say!



## Sharing the Shore

**Did you know that beach nesting birds are some of the most threatened in the world? By simply following a few guidelines with your pet you can have a huge impact on their survival. You and your pet can help by:**

- Sharing the shoreline by respecting 'Dog Prohibited' beach zones. These areas are designated as prohibited because vulnerable shorebirds nest here between August and April each year.
- Making use of Council's numerous Dog Off Leash beaches, specially designated for off leash fun!
- Keeping your dog on a leash on permitted beaches. Beach nesting birds & chicks perceive unleashed dogs as a great threat. Even if your dog isn't the type to chase, the birds don't know that!
- Look out for temporary signs that alert you to the presence of nesting birds or chicks
- If you see little birds running swiftly along the beach or hear the larger oystercatchers calling out, please give these birds space. If it is spring or summer, chances are they have a nest or chicks nearby
- Disturbance to these birds can be lethal, the perceived threat of unleashed dogs causing them to leave the eggs or hiding the chicks for dangerously long periods.

**Our Lucky lives the sand, and every afternoon we played on the beach and watched the sun set. It was divine!**




For more information contact the NPWS Shorebird Recovery Coordinator on (02) 4459900

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**Editor's Note:** The image above is the single page in the "Pets on Holiday" guide that refers to "Sharing the Shore" with our vulnerable and endangered shorebirds. The page asks "Did you know that beach nesting birds are some of the most threatened in the world?" and urges dog owners to respect council regulations regarding dogs, **despite showing an un-supervised dog alone on a beach with no leash ...**

## Birders, Lifers and Bogey Birds

-by Brett Davis

I am not sure that the evolution into birdwatchers of my wife Karen and myself was typical, but from our own experience; talks with fellow birdwatchers; and by watching some of our friends become birders, there appears to be a number of common stages in the process, which can be loosely described as follows -

1. Non-birder
2. Semi-birder
3. Birder
4. Tragic

Unless we were very lucky and had parents who brought us up to be birdwatchers, most of us started out as non-birders. When I was young, my best friend's father was a birdwatcher - and I thought he was really weird!

Even non-birders know about seagulls, kookaburras, crows (ravens) and magpies, but my friend introduced me to all types of arcane species. When we were fishing once, I pointed to a strange and largish bird across the water and asked my friend what kind of bird it was.

"White-faced Heron" was the reply. And then he added "It is probably the most common heron in Australia ... "

It is almost certain that I had seen a White-faced Heron before, but I had never really taken any notice of any birds, because that is what non-birders do.

I became a semi-birder when my friend finally managed to educate me to the differences between a Rainbow Lorikeet and an Eastern Rosella. The biggest stumbling block to my identification was my belief that the Eastern Rosella is much more colourful and therefore it should be described as "Rainbow"!

Then one day, at the back of the local hardware store's carpark, I saw what I considered at the time to be the most beautiful bird I had ever seen. A search of my friend's father's field guides (while he was not there) yielded the bird's name - the New Holland Honeyeater!

As a semi-birder I was aware of birds, and might even occasionally spot something different and look it up - like a Red Wattlebird - but I was mostly quite comfortable just knowing the birds around my home.

A few years later I was married, and a bushwalker. My wife and I decided that we needed something "more" to do while we were bushwalking, and we decided to get to know either birds or plants. I can remember finding out that there were about 1100 species of Eucalypts alone, many of which were difficult to tell apart unless they were flowering, and the flowers were often hard to see. Stuff that - we decided to become birders.

We bought binoculars. We bought field guides. We started keeping a life list. We would compete against each other to see and identify birds first. Our list grew to about 130 birds in a couple of years.

Then we started a long bike tour of Australia in 1995, and during the next three years we identified close to 350 different species. We were birders!

It was a magic time! I remember stopping at the Gregory River in northern Queensland on the way to Lawn Hill National Park. An hour by the water yielded 7 lifers! How good was that!

Alas, those days are gone. New birds for the life list are relatively rare, and now we have to actively go searching for them!

When you start doing trips with the specific purpose of seeing new birds, you stop being just a birder, and become a tragic.

A year or two ago my wife and I travelled 20,000 kilometres through Australia in three months, driving the Oodnadatta Track and the Tanami Track to the Kimberley and the Gibb River Road, then across the Northern Territory to the Gulf, and then up Cape York, all so we could find new birds.

Was it worth it? Of course it was - we added 32 birds to our life lists and have almost reached 600!

We have also been on birding trips to Uganda (in 2012) and Namibia (in 2015) - and in between the two trips we formed the BirdLife Shoalhaven branch. We are looking at bumping up our life lists with trips to Christmas Island and to the Cocos / Keeling Islands too. And Karen is even considering venturing out on pelagic trips as well, despite her almost overwhelming fear of sea-sickness. So yes, we are birding tragics!

And what are our bogey birds - birds that despite our best efforts we have failed to see?

The Malleefowl caused us some pain, and after that - and for a long, long time - it was the Speckled Warbler, but both have now been ticked off. For 20 years our only Black Honeyeater had been a dead bird found in a gutter on the side of the road, but the recent Lake Cargelligo trip saw that ticked off as well. And the Painted Honeyeater eluded us for many years, but was recently picked up at Cocoparra NP near Griffith.

At the moment the Red-lored Whistler is our bogey bird.

And there are half a dozen species of Grasswren that Karen and I have not seen either, but they are not really bogey birds - because they DON'T EXIST !!!

## Mysterious Avian Disease

Charles Dove recently received an email from a WIRES carer in the Sutherland Shire who had received the following message from the South branch of WIRES.

Please find below details of an avian disease which has been identified in a cluster of deaths in the Illawarra:

Mortality events involving Magpies, Currawongs, Ravens and Magpie Larks have been seen in recent years.

These have been characterised by neurological and gastrointestinal signs in birds in good body condition. Birds present with bilateral or unilateral leg paresis, proprioceptive deficits, abnormal perch reflexes and feet clenching, ataxia and inability to fly.

Birds may have diarrhoea with or without haemorrhage. Some birds are seen bleeding from the oral cavity before death.

A small proportion of birds may recover with fluid therapy and supportive treatment.

Post mortem examination reveals haemorrhage throughout the gastrointestinal tract in some birds.

"The cause of this disease is uncertain, but thought to be infectious or parasitic. Extensive bacterial and viral culture and chlamydial PCR from tissues taken during mass mortality events have been unrewarding" - Dr Karrie Rose, Australian Wildlife disease Registry.

If you find any suspected cases, can you please contact Corinne Archer at [wiresouthbranch@gmail.com](mailto:wiresouthbranch@gmail.com)



Editor's Note: The photo above of the Magpie was taken by Duade Paton. For more of his fantastic images visit his website at [www.duadepaton.com](http://www.duadepaton.com)

## Shoalhaven Birders Outings

**November 15** - Lake Wollumboola - meet at lake at Culburra, 8:30am.

**December 20** - Bomaderry Creek 5pm Xmas party - meet picnic area, Narang Rd. BYO picnic / bbq.

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## MUD District Birdwatchers Outings

Membership of the MUD Birdwatchers club is open to all members of the Milton Ulladulla U3A. For information about joining MUD Birdwatchers, phone Marg Hamon on 4457-1129 or Chris Shinton on 4454-5584, or you can email [mubirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:mubirdclub@gmail.com)

Upcoming birdwatching events are as follows :

### **30 October : Excursion – Fishermans Paradise**

Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room, or at 8:15 am: Fishermans Paradise Boat Ramp.

Driving: 25km Time: 1 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Chris Shinton 4454 5584

### **10 November : Evening Meeting**

Meet: 7:30 pm: Harry Higgs Room

General Meeting

### **13 November : Eurobodalla Day Out and picnic lunch**

A full day outing to a number of locations in and around Moruya and Bateman's Bay, with a picnic lunch stop.

Meet: 8 am: Lions Park Burrill Lake for car pooling.

Driving: 155km Time: 2.5 hrs Grade: Easy

Leaders: Mike Jefferis 4455 5162, Bob Rusk 4455 2169

### **27 November : Excursion – Lake Conjola**

Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room, or

8:15am: boat ramp at end of Lake Conjola Rd

Driving: 30km Time: 1 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Geoff Andrews 4454 3580

### **11 December : Xmas Picnic – Burrill Lake**

Bring binoculars, a plate and an appetite.

Meet: 8 am: Lions Park Burrill Lake (by toilets).

Driving: 0 Time: 0 Grade: Easy

Leader: Chris Shinton 4454 5584

### **8 January : Excursion – Wilfords Lane Wetlands**

Meet: 8am: Back of Harry Higgs Room or 8:15 at Cupitts Winery

Driving: 5km Time: 30 min Grade: Easy

Leader: Bob Rusk 4455 2169

### **22 January : Excursion – ANU Kioloa Campus**

Meet: 8 am: ANU Campus. Drive almost to Kioloa, watch for ANU sign on right.

Driving: 75km Time: 3 hrs Grade: Medium

Leaders: Marg Hamon and Maggie Mance 4457 1129

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## Some Images



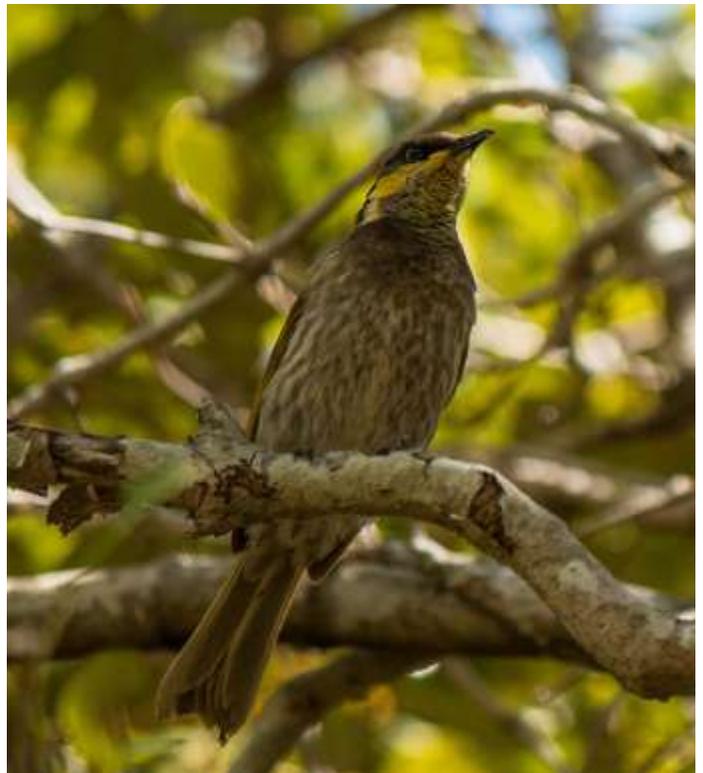
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill - photo by Sue Tolley



White-winged Fairy Wren - photo by Sue Tolley



The amazingly beautiful and much under-appreciated  
Common Bronzewing  
- photo by Christine Rigg



Mangrove Honeyeater - photo by Sue Tolley

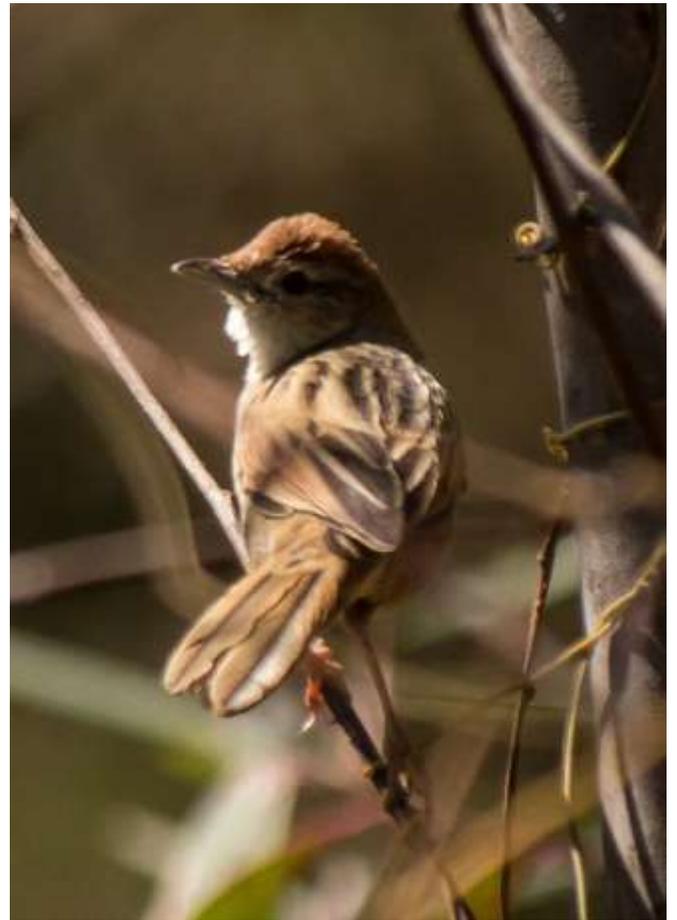


Glossy Ibis - photo by Sue Tolley

## Some More Images



Clamorous Reed Warbler (now Australian Reed Warbler)  
- photo by Sue Tolley



Tawny Grassbird - photo by Sue Tolley

The Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, White-winged Fairy Wren, Glossy Ibis and Clamorous Reed Warbler were photographed on the Shoalhaven Birders Lake Cargelligo trip.

The Tawny Grassbird and Mangrove Honeyeater were photographed on Moreton Island - just off Brisbane.

The Common Bronzewing is a local.

**Contributions to this page are always welcome!!!**

**Australia's voice for birds since 1901**

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

[birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au)

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