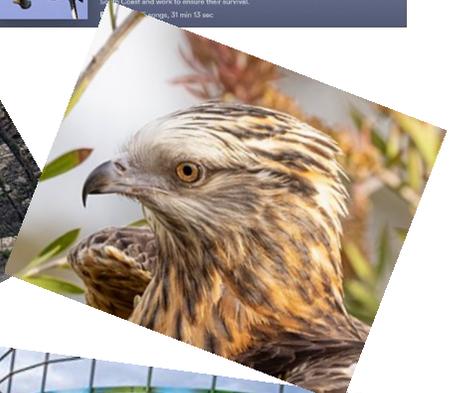
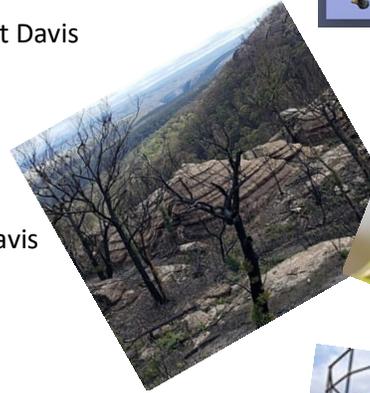


BirdLife Shoalhaven Magazine Summer 2023



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Contributions

There is quite a lot of content from the Editor in this season's e-magazine. If you want to see less of his work you will have to contribute some articles yourself! If the Editor can do it - it can't be very hard! Any article about birds is most welcome ...

Cover Image:

This season's cover image was taken by Brett Davis at the Eyre Byrd Observatory (EBO) in Western Australia. A report on the EBO is included in this magazine on page 14.

Acknowledgment: BirdLife Shoalhaven acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the Shoalhaven, their care of country, birds and habitat, and pays respects to all Elders.

Just more of the same

- by Rob Dunn, President of BirdLife Shoalhaven

You would think that any report by an organisation's President, looking back on the achievements of the past 12 months, would have an inspiring, up-beat title. However, my title for this overview of 2022 appears to be bucking this trend. This is simply a trick to have you fully appreciate that BirdLife Shoalhaven continues to punch above its weight for bird conservation, as has been the case for several years now.

(At this point, I should acknowledge that I have copied some sections from my 2021 annual report. And why not, because over the past year we have continued to use most of the same tried and proven methods.)

Rather than taking the lead on bird conservation issues, we still prefer to support other groups who are on the front-line. These include the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc, Manyana Matters, Bherwerre Wetlands in St Georges Basin, Heritage Estate in Vincentia, Our Future Shoalhaven and Keep Jervis Bay Unspoilt, Shoalhaven Landcare, Shoalhaven City Council Bushcare and the NSW NPWS South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program.



Basin Villages Forum
Representing the St Georges
Basin Villages Community

These campaigns and projects vary in scope, size, habitat, species impacted and the number of people and hours involved. They include fighting developments, advocating for extension of national parks and reserves and carrying out hands-on bush regeneration. Some of these groups have been active for decades, and while others are much newer, they are likely to still have a long way to go. BLS looks to support these projects through our magazine and submissions, utilising the 'power' of the BirdLife brand.

The BLS Bushfire Recovery Project has continued to receive amazing support from our members through 2022. Our surveyors have been submitting quarterly surveys for three years now at sites affected by the 2019-20 bushfires. In June we released the two-year 2020 & 2021 Annual Report for the project.



**BIRDLIFE SHOALHAVEN BUSHFIRE RECOVERY
PROJECT**
2020 & 2021 REPORT
June 2022



We are now working on the final report, which will effectively bring the project to an end. This is partly due to the effort it takes to prepare the report, but also the results are being increasingly impacted by the marked variations in habitat recovery between sites.

To continue to draw valid conclusions on the recovery of birds, we would need to capture additional information on habitat recovery for each site. This would involve a lot of additional work and is something we consider is beyond the scope of the original project.

We hope to complete the final project report by March and afterwards present the results at some of the places most impacted by the bushfires.

Last year, following the Shoalhaven LGA election I wrote "With eight new Councillors and a shift in the party representation, there is an opportunity to reset the compass on bird conservation." Since then we have certainly seen the environment get a better hearing on the floor of the Council chamber.

Hopefully this can continue through to the next LGA elections in September 2024 and beyond. This resetting of the compass is now also being progressed at the Federal level under the new Albanese Government. The release of the *Threatened Species Action Plan: Towards Zero Extinctions* in September set a new goal of no new extinctions and 30% of land and ocean being fully protected by 2030.

The plan includes some bird species found in the Shoalhaven, like the Hooded Plover and the migratory Eastern Curlew and Swift Parrot. Also, with the Gang-gang Cockatoo and Glossy Black-Cockatoo now recently added to the EPBC Act, there is the potential for Federal legislation to have an even greater role in protecting birds in the Shoalhaven. We now look forward to the outcome of the NSW Government election. Watch this space!

The BLS Magazine continues as the cornerstone of our communications to our expanding membership and supporters. This quarterly publication about the local bird scene, combined with the BLS Facebook page and a user-friendly web-site, has been vital in maintaining BLS's voice to conserve Shoalhaven birds.

Each of these platforms is a mix of both the serious and the fun sides of birds, as can be seen with the release last year of [our Spotify playlists](#).

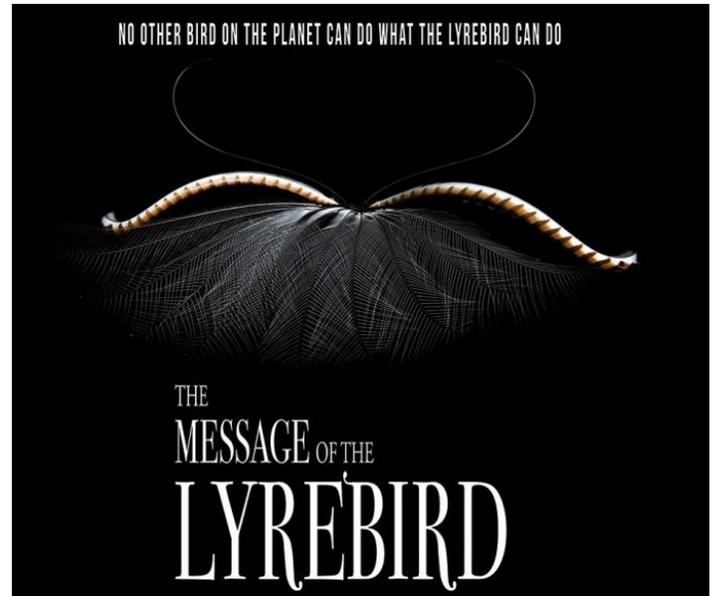


We get many compliments about the Magazine, which is all down to the Editor (*who relies on his contributors - Ed*) - though I am taking some of the credit for the playlists! We are always keen to get new contributions, so please

make contact if you have something important or funny or just plain interesting to say about birds.

With the easing of Covid restrictions, we held our first event for a while in February in Shoalhaven Heads with an excellent talk by Nicholas Carlile on the eradication of rodents on Lord Howe Island.

With about 80 people attending, this gave us the confidence to put events back onto the BLS calendar. The next event we organised was a screening of the award-winning film *The Message of the Lyrebird*. The Huskisson cinema was filled with 130 people, and was followed by a second screening in Kangaroo Valley.



While both these events were very well received, this was surpassed by the 2023 Bird Haven Festival, which involved three events in three venues in one week - two for beginners with a talk in Ulladulla and a bird walk in Huskisson and an all-day conference with ten speakers in Shoalhaven Heads.



The events drew about 250 people, who came from Sydney, Canberra, Victoria and just down the road. At the conference there were people from 11 different bird clubs and interest groups, university students, members of nature conservation groups and staff from Government agencies, and at the event in Ulladulla we had whole families come along.



We have received a lot of positive feedback on all three Festival events, recognising the quality of all the speakers' presentations and the efforts of BLS Festival volunteers. We also need to acknowledge the support we received from BirdLife Southern NSW and the NSW South-East Biodiversity and Conservation Division.

The original aim of the founders of the Bird Haven Festival - Perrie Croshaw and Cathy Law - when they set it up in 2018, was to get people thinking more about nature and birds. We were delighted that we were able to continue to build on their vision by playing our part in organising the third Bird Haven Festival.

Our new initiative in 2022 was the launch of the BLS Student Research Grant program. We will be providing a grant of up to \$4,000 to fund research by a student currently enrolled in a higher degree course at a NSW or ACT university. The grant will support a research project in 2023 that will improve bird conservation and a better understanding of birds in the Shoalhaven.



While it is not a requirement, projects focused on threatened species or with field work carried out within the Shoalhaven will be highly regarded. The successful applicant will be required to give a presentation at a BLS event and submit an article in a future BLS Magazine.

The deadline for applications is 31st March 2023 and the form and guidelines can be downloaded by clicking the following links -

[BLS Student Research Grant Guidelines for Applicants](#)

[BLS Student Research Grant Application Form](#)

BLS has benefited greatly from a collegiate and committed Committee since it was set up in 2014. I would like to thank all the Committee members for the time they put in through 2022 and I am delighted that they are all willing to continue this year. The date for the AGM and finalising our guest speaker is still being organized, so there is still time if you want to join the Committee. Just contact me at president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org and I will give you an idea about what this involves.

Alternatively have a look at our 2023 Action Plan on <http://birdlifeshoalhaven.org/whoware.html> to get an idea of the Committee's plans for this year's activities.

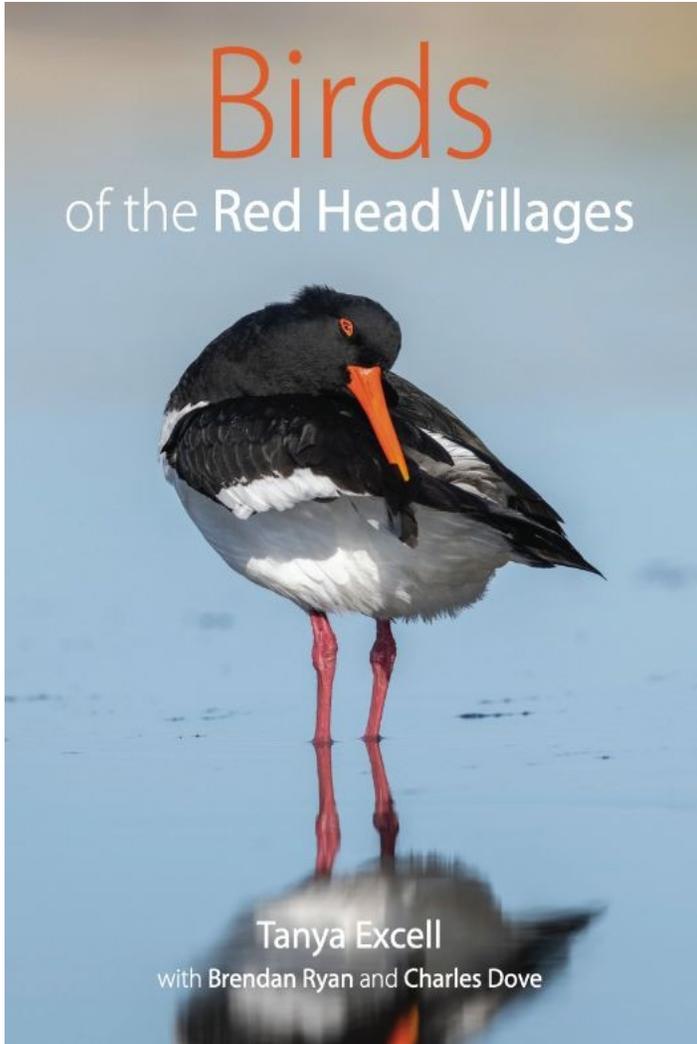
If you want to get involved in what we have planned, come along to one of our bird walks, which is a great way to share your ideas with other BLS members.



Many thanks for everyone's support in helping us to conserve, appreciate and teach others about birds in 2022. We look forward to continue working together to do "just more of the same" in 2023.

Birds of the Red Head Villages

- Bird Book by Locals



Manyana Matters' beautiful book "Birds of the Red Head Villages" is here! This informative and entertaining book is authored by Tanya Excell, with Brendan Ryan and Charles Dove.

Regular readers of this e-magazine will be very familiar with the work of bird photographer Charles Dove whose photos have appeared in the magazine and graced the cover on many occasions.

As can be seen in the map (below left) the Red Head villages are North Bendalong, Bendalong, Manyana, Cunjurong Point and Berringer Lake.

The book was launched on Friday 13th January at Manyana by journalist Liv Casben who also facilitated a Q&A session at the launch.

Although the Red Head villages occupy a relatively small and limited geographical area, much of the data in the book is relevant for all Shoalhaven coastal areas.



Book numbers are limited so act now to secure your copy!

Here's how to order your copy of the book:

1. Transfer \$35 per book into the Manyana Matters account: BSB 062646 and Account number 10330188.
2. Add \$10 to your bank transfer if you need the order posted to you somewhere outside of the Red Head Villages. The \$10 flat fee applies no matter how many copies you order! All purchases will be sent by regular post.
3. Label your bank transfer with the reference BOOK + Your Surname
4. Once the payment is made, email your payment receipt to jorj.lowrey@hotmail.com, and make sure you include your phone number and delivery address - free for anywhere in the Red Head villages. Also let us know if you prefer us to hold it until your next visit.

BLS Presentation for Manyana Matters

- by Chris Grounds

[Chris spoke by invitation at the launch of BIRDS OF THE RED HEAD VILLAGES on behalf of BirdLife Shoalhaven. Here is the transcript of that talk on January 13. As Conservation Officer, Chris organized bird surveys and Land and Environment Court depositions and reports for Manyana Matters in their conservation action in 2020.]



Chris Grounds speaking at the book launch

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for the invitation to speak this afternoon for BirdLife Shoalhaven at the launch of Tanya Excell's "Birds of the Red Head Villages".

What a great occasion it is to gather at this special and distinctive part of the Shoalhaven south coast environment hosted by the local village communities who are organized and active in defence of that environment, which now includes a specialist bird book devoted to the area and community. What a high point this is.



Jorj Lowrey, Tanya Excell and Brendan Ryan

I would say "**Waalawani Mudgigal**" or "**Greetings Friends**" in use of the Dhurga language of the south coast Yuin Nation and in the acknowledgement of their care of country and with respect to all Elders.

The Red Head Villages country is, as much of the Shoalhaven, a paradox of both natural beauty, some of it vested in birds and also chronic threat to environment.

A way to all of this may well be through birds, the beautiful, amazingly varied, enchanting, engrossing and varied suite of natural life forms. They are arguably the most easily experienced but still a litmus test of our circumstance.



Tanya Excell

A paradox is involved in one positive characterisation. Within a 1km radius of this community hall 615 species are recorded, 169 of them birds. Within a 5km radius there are 1727 species recorded of which 261 are birds.

That is a truly encouraging biodiversity figure and BIODIVERSITY is a keystone concept to conservation, after all the Federal legislation is called the EPBC Act - with BC standing for Biodiversity Conservation.

The paradox at another point is that the Shoalhaven has a core catalogue of around 360 species of birds, an amazing array of species including a diverse migratory element from many different areas of the globe.

Of this exact double of the local Red Head population here are 60 plus Threatened Species. As you will detect, one in every six species of birds is THREATENED. With what? With Extinction - to some extent of time and degree.

One of the most threatened species and a local for you is the shorebird, the EASTERN HOODED PLOVER, which is listed as critically endangered in NSW legislation.

On the entire coast from Gerroa to Batemans Bay there have been only 3 successful nests this warm season, North Bendalong is one of these. There is one of your treasures.

Typical Red Head Villages coastal scenery - and Hooded Plover habitat



The northern-most point of distribution of recent years of this shorebird has been Cave Beach and I have monitored only two successful nests in my seven season period as a Shorebird Recovery volunteer.

In June 2022, 5 birds were sighted on Bherwerre Beach and since then only 2 on either Cave or Bherwerre beaches. These 2, a breeding pair new to Cave Beach, lost their one nest and haven't returned.

The new Federal government recently released "ACTION PLANS" for select fauna species groups and sites. The Action Plan for Birds lists 22 species for urgent attention of which 5 are in the Shoalhaven and the one resident species is the EASTERN HOODED PLOVER.

This has an element of collapse about it hasn't it and as well challenges for genetic diversity of the 'Hoody' population and for the extent of its distribution in S E Australia?

This speaks to a likely further development from Tanya's book, which is very promising. As people, especially the younger ones, attach to birds through the book, they will realize the importance of recording sightings and then the great value of recording them on databases. Then their presence becomes a major weapon in advocacy against development, particularly if there are threatened species involved.

Of course, habitat intrusion, damage, loss and outright destruction are inextricably linked to this broad picture of both biodiversity and threat, which does include the impositions of climate change.

It is somewhat ironic that what might be seen as natural factors contributing to changes in behaviour and threats to birds is actually people driven - or anthropomorphic - in its origins. The continuing impact of East Coast Lows, intensified weather patterns, drought and bushfire are no longer simply natural.

In all this, the "Birds of Red Head Villages" through Tanya and her collaborators gives us an enormously positive reference point for our attachment to birds and our homes.

It can take us further in our connection to nature and our home, our country and in building our appreciation of the circumstance and context for the Birds of Red Head and beyond.

We have all moved a significant step forward in conservation through birds thanks to TANYA'S book. Congratulations to Tanya and to Brendan and Charles. It is a good thing you have done.



A Wonderful Distraction

- by Brian Bird (November 2022)

In what has quickly become an all too common story, the pandemic prompted my wife and I to slow down and re-evaluate our lifestyle. Our daughter had since relocated interstate and our son had decided to make a life for himself in Japan, so the only thing anchoring us to our current lifestyle was our jobs.

Coming to the conclusion that the hustle and bustle of daily life in suburban Sydney and the 3 1/2 hour daily commute for work was no longer for us, we sold up and headed for the idyllic South Coast town of Ulladulla. I was fortunate that the company I worked with established that I would be able to continue to work remotely and from home.

The spare room that I selected for my home office overlooks a spacious front yard and cul-de-sac filled with a variety of native plants and trees which attract a wide variety of local birds.

My morning routine soon consisted of making a coffee, booting up the work PC and pulling back the blinds to get a view of any bird that decides to present itself, binoculars and camera always at the ready.



I have been presented with a wonderful array of species on a regular basis including Wattlebirds, Crimson Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets, Galahs, Eastern Spinebills, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Brown Thornbills, Kookaburras, Corellas and a pair of Blackbirds.

We also get the occasional visit from a Rufous Whistler, and Pacific Koels and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes. There is also the regular fly-over of the Black Cockatoos, which always gets me to bounce out of the chair to determine if they are Yellow-tailed or Glossy Blacks.

Most birders would understand that moment of excitement when you hear a call that you recognise but weren't quite expecting.

Of course, those moments always prompt me to spring into action and I've been rewarded with images of a one-off visit from a pair of Gang-gang Cockatoos and a lovely little juvenile Rose Robin that sat outside my window serenading me for a couple of days.

In the past couple of weeks there has been a new, unexpected visitor to the front yard, a small juvenile hare, which pops out to enjoy a bit of sunshine and a nibble on the grass.

I am not the only one the hare has caught the attention of - there is a local Square-tailed Kite that has also noticed the appearance of our new friend. As a result this beautiful Kite has returned on multiple occasions, circling and hovering closely over the lawn in hope of seeing the little hare.

On one occasion, as I was finishing up a bit of gardening, the Kite appeared and was flying quite low over the bottle-brush in the garden, obviously in hopes of finding our little friend.

My wife joined me in the garden to enjoy this wonderful encounter just as the Kite decided to land in one of our bottle-brushes.

Of course, this sent me scurrying into the house to grab the camera and I was rewarded with some images of this magic moment - see next page.

The Kite has returned to the garden on a few occasions, but it has now been more than a week since the hare or the Kite has made an appearance. I can only wonder if the Kite was eventually successful in its quest for a feed.

The pandemic has shown us there are plenty of birding experiences to be had in our own gardens. One only has to slow down, look closely and enjoy the moment.

But for now, it is time for me to boot up the work PC, open the blinds and look forward to my next, wonderful distraction.

Square-tailed Kite



Square-tailed Kite

The Husky Gang-Gangs

- by Brett Davis (and Sue Tolley)

4 Murdoch Street in Huskisson has long been an environmental hotspot. Adjacent to Jervis Bay National Park, the land was once filled with a variety of trees including Blackbutts endowed with at least 67 hollow - perfect habitat trees for native fauna.



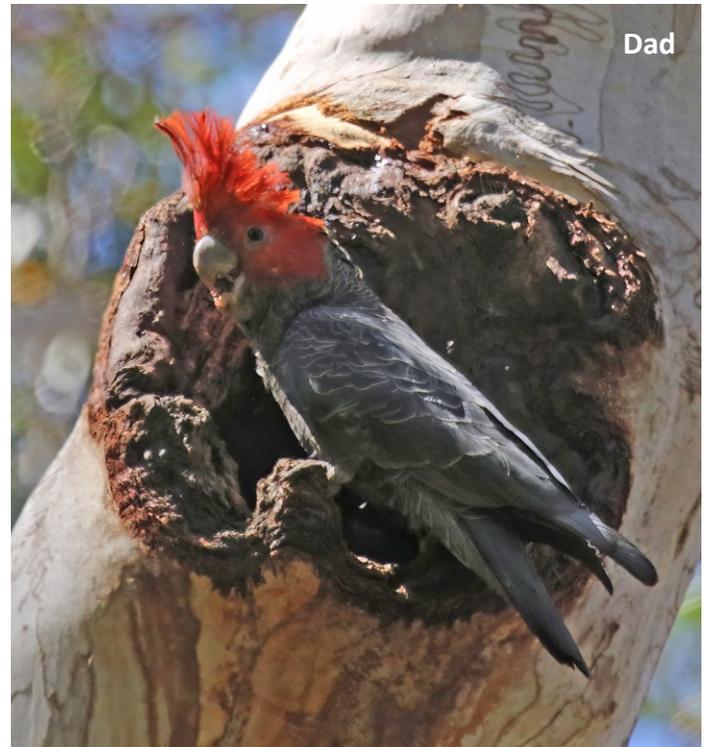
(Bridge over Moona Moona Creek bottom left)

Unfortunately for nature, 4 Murdoch Street had been zoned Mixed Use (B4) and in 2011 a Development Application (DA) was granted for a multi-building, multi-storey apartment complex. Although the land went untouched until well after the DA expiry date in 2016, the developers claimed that substantial work had already begun on-site to initiate building and Council agreed - although no visible physical work had been done.



When a fence was erected and clearing of the site began in Spring 2021, concerned locals who had opposed the development sprang into action and contacted a senior council environmental officer who was able to ring the tree clearing operator and demand the work stop until he could get to the site in person. The locals created an informal group with members drawn from local community organisations including Our Future Shoalhaven, Keep Jervis Bay Unspoilt and BirdLife Shoalhaven.

The presence of many species of hollow-nesting birds had been recorded at the site, including Crimson Rosellas, King Parrots, Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets, Kookaburras, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Dollar Birds, but the critical bird present was the Gang-gang Cockatoo which was listed as Vulnerable on the NSW Endangered Species List.



A pair of Gang-gangs were on the block and during the clearing they had repeatedly made very loud distressed calls, especially when a tree climber neared their nesting hollow. After 20 minutes the birds had flown away - defeated - and they did not return to their hollow.

The end result of this incident in 2021 was that no further clearing of trees was allowed until the end of that breeding season (Feb 2022) and that further clearing on the site should be confined to Autumn / mid Winter.

By April 2022 Gang-gang Cockatoos had been added to the Commonwealth list as an Endangered species. Gang-gang numbers had been reduced by 67% during the previous nine years - with most of the loss occurring since 2019 - principally because of habitat loss due to bushfires,

but also as a result of the usual ongoing land clearing for urban and rural developments.

Jervis Bay escaped the 2019 / 2020 fires and had become a refuge for many birds. A careful watch of 4 Murdoch Street was undertaken by the concerned locals and no further clearing occurred for almost a year. On the 9th August tree-loppers and a pair of Gang Gangs all arrived at the block within an hour of each other. Luckily, the locals heard the Gang-Gang calls and immediately rang the council officer who was flabbergasted that he once again needed to intervene.

The resolution of the situation was a much more drawn out process this time, with the developer arguing there was no proof of nesting. However, regular observation sessions during the whole of October 2021 had demonstrated the Gang-gangs pattern of increased visitation to one particular hollow, and the chewing of the bark around the rim indicated the hollow was to be the nest.

Observations also showed the length of time spent inside the hollow by the two birds separately and together was increasing, with the pair swapping shifts without ever leaving the hollow unattended - an indicator of eggs having being laid.

All levels of Government were involved, and eventually a determination to stop work until after the breeding season of 2022 / 23 was agreed upon on the 24th October, mainly due to the daily observation records and photographic evidence of the Gang-gang presence and behaviour.

The tree hollow chosen by the Gang-gangs was about 25 metres up, so direct observation into the hollow was not possible. Judging from their behaviour, it is believed that the pair laid their eggs sometime around mid October. A WhatsApp group was set up amongst the locals at this time to aid in organizing the monitoring of the hollow - calling itself the Gang-gang Gang!

The incubation period for Gang-gangs is thought to be between 24 and 30 days, so it is likely that the eggs hatched in mid November.

Experts have different opinions about how long the period before fledging takes - with estimates varying from 6 weeks after hatching to 10 weeks - so fledging was likely to take place from as early as the end of December to as late as mid January. However, given the uncertainty of when the eggs were laid, intense monitoring of the hollow began in mid December.

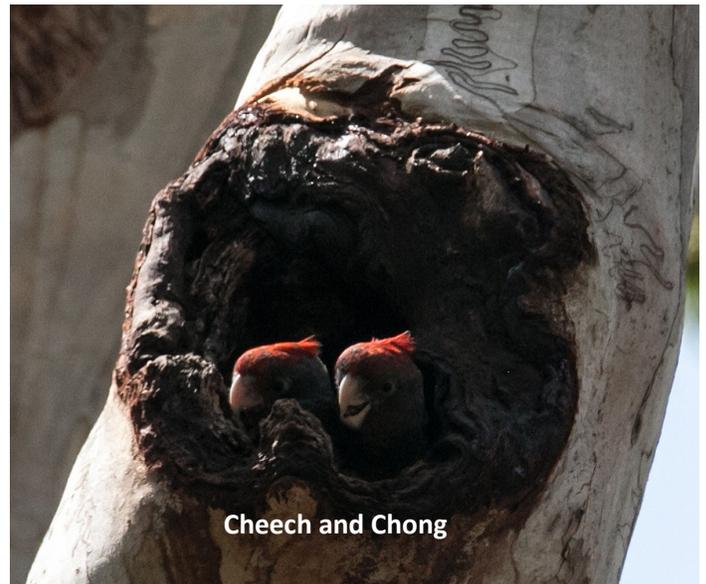
Both parents came in to feed their young during the day, leaning down from the rim into the hollow and regurgitating food into mouths of the waiting chicks. All that observers could see was the tail of the Gang-gang

poking up out of the hollow and violent up-and-down movements as the food was delivered.

Recent research suggests that Gang-gang chicks fledge between 3-10 days after they can be seen at the entrance of the hollow. The chicks were heard around December 15th which indicated they were active, but the first confirmed sighting of a chick at the entrance did not happen until 19th December, leading to the expectation of fledging sometime between December 22nd and 29th.

Sadly, the female parent was last sighted on December 22nd and never seen again. A Square-tailed kite and a Peregrine Falcon were observed on the site just prior to her disappearance, and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos - which have been known to attack other Cockatoos - were nesting on the block as well, but her fate remains unknown.

With Mum gone, all the feeding was now being done by the male - a heroic effort! By December 27th it became apparent that there were two chicks in the hollow, and because of their red crowns, both chicks were obviously males. One chick had a reddish tinge to its cheeks (and was christened "Cheech" by one observer) while the other had uniformly grey cheeks ("Chong").



There were sixteen volunteers in the Gang-gang Gang, all expecting the chicks to fledge by December 29th, but that date passed. New Year's Day came and went too, with still no signs of fledging. Day after day Dad continued his three or four visits to the hollow per day to feed his chicks.

Another week passed!

Speculation began about the effect of having only parent feeding the chicks. Were they malnourished? Was their development delayed because of lack of nutrition? Would they ever be strong enough to fledge or were they fading away?

Feeding time with Dad



Feet cleaning - classic pre-fledging behaviour

6.04 faint call, chick visible
6.07 both chicks, male arrived or chick flew??
Chick in nearby tree
Adult calling"

The first fledgling's flight had been so quick it went unnoticed! The two chicks had been at the hollow. Dad flew in and landed nearby. While the observer was looking at Dad, one of the chicks flew!

For the next two days Dad fed Cheech as he moved around in the trees but stayed close to the nesting hollow. He also fed Chong who was still in the hollow. By the evening of the second day Chong had still not fledged, but he was looking a bit "toey" and ready to go.

Penny was first on site early the next day ... "2nd chick left hollow at 10 to 6 this morning! One chick still on site, dad flown off following the other chick."

Success! The good news story was the successful fledging of two chicks. The bad news is the unknown fate of the female parent, and the fact that the inappropriate development of the block can now proceed.

Although the tree with the nesting hollow will remain on the site, it is unlikely that it will be re-used by the Gang-gang male (if he ever succeeds in finding a new partner) because Gang-gangs don't necessarily use the same nesting hollow in subsequent seasons.

However, they usually nest nearby, but given that most of the trees have been removed from the block, further nesting in the area is problematic.

After hundreds of hours of observation and reporting, the 16 members of the Gang-gang Gang sincerely hope that all three males - Dad, Cheech and Chong - can live long lives, find partners and help continue the survival of the Gang-gang species ...

Finally, early in the morning of January 11th - 22 days after the first chick was sighted at the entrance to the hollow - we had some action.

Here is the WhatsApp report from observer Penny ...

"11th Jan, very light spitting (rain)
Arrived 5.36am - too dark to see hollow properly, assume chicks inside
5.48 all quiet
5.55 all quiet

The Eyre Bird Observatory

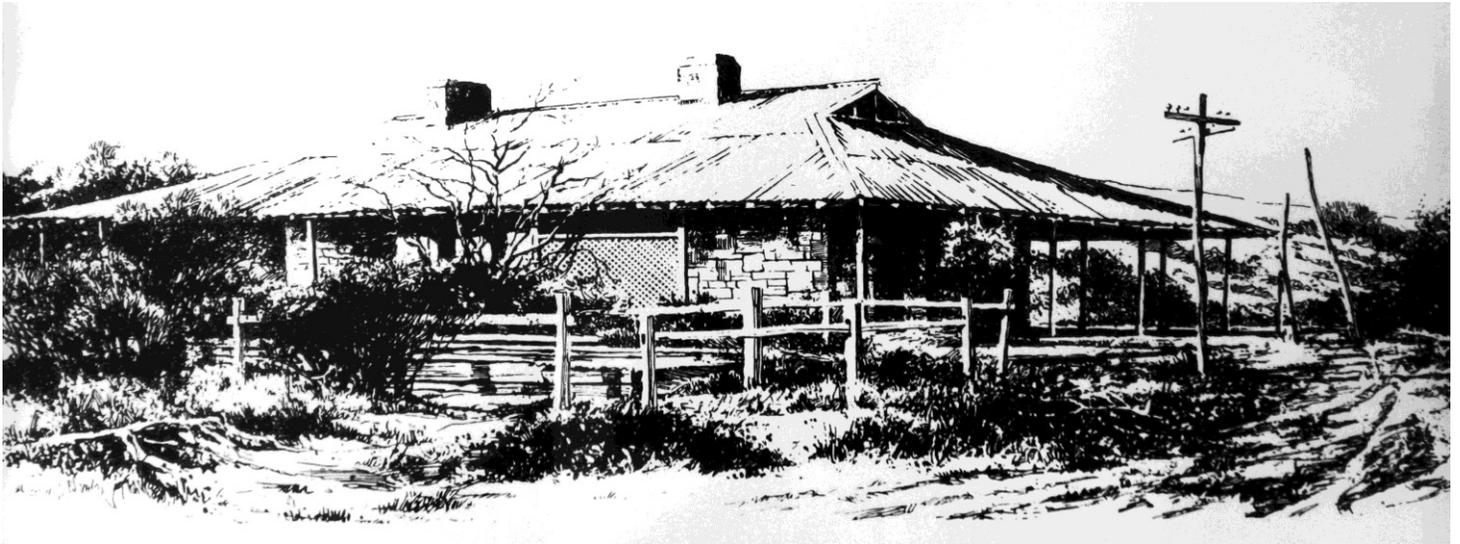
- by Brett Davis

Established in 1977, the Eyre Bird Observatory (EBO) was Australia's first bird observatory, providing a base for the study and enjoyment of the birds of the area.

Nestled between the arid Nullarbor Plain to the north and the coastal waters of the Great Australian Bight to the south, the Observatory is located in one of the least populated areas on the continent. It is home to over 240 species of birds - many of them rare and endangered.

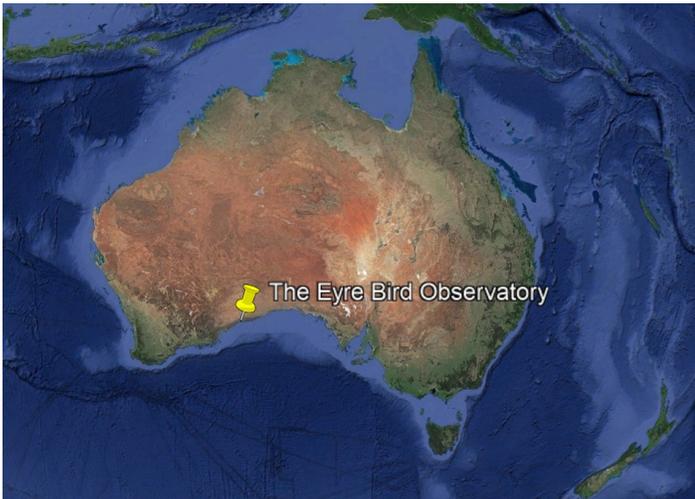
Fifty years later - in 1977 - the limestone building was restored by volunteers with the support of the Post Office Historical Society and the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union (now BirdLife Australia) using materials supplied by the WA Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. It now functions as a permanent bird observatory and weather station, with the building now housing a museum and accommodation for visitors.

It is maintained by volunteers, including two caretakers who live on site for three months at a time.



The Observatory is located near the site where explorer Edward John Eyre found water during his epic overland explorations from Adelaide to Albany in 1841.

My wife Karen and I had wanted to visit the Observatory for many years, and had even chosen our car partially based on whether it could handle the Observatory's sandy access road. High clearance 4WD is recommended, along with reduced tyre pressures. We used 20 psi.



During construction of the Intercolonial Telegraph Line from South Australia to Western Australia between 1875 and 1877, a telegraph station was built at that site.

Twenty years later, in 1897, the station moved into a newly constructed limestone and corrugated iron building nearby, but in 1927 the telegraph line moved 150 kms north to follow the Trans-Australian Railway, and the building was abandoned.



Accommodation is excellent (shared facilities / bring your own linen) and must be booked and paid for in advance - at \$90 per person per night including all meals.

So what is there to do at a very remote location - 2,700km from the Shoalhaven, 1200km from Perth, and 46km from the Cocklebiddy Roadhouse on the Nullarbor Plain?

Birdwatching is the most obvious thing to do at the EBO, with the most spectacular bird resident being the Pink Cockatoo, but there are both desert birds and shorebirds to be found as well.



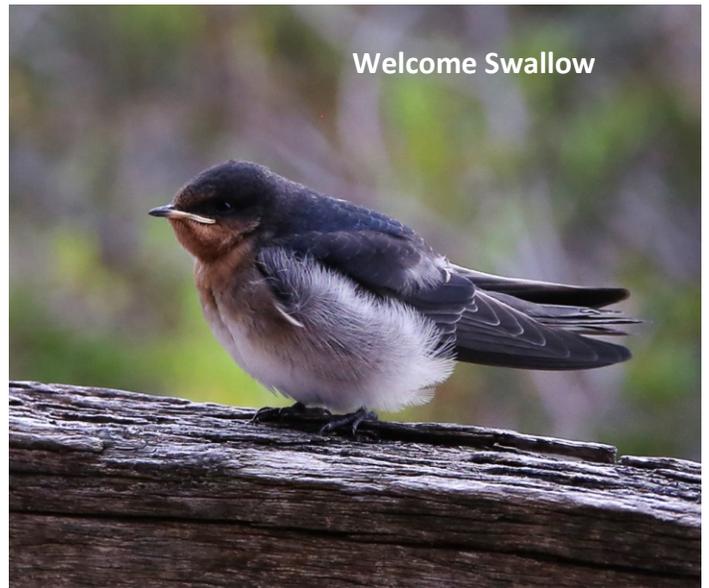
Pink Cockatoos

There are a number of walking tracks surrounding the homestead, the sand dunes are spectacular, photographic opportunities abound, the museum is fascinating, the bones collected from the beach are amazing and you could spend days just examining the ruins and history!

Do yourself a favour - go there!



Singing Honeyeater



Welcome Swallow



Excellent sign-posting



Turtle bones



The Observatory



Intercolonial
Telegraph
Station
Ruins



Comfortable accommodation



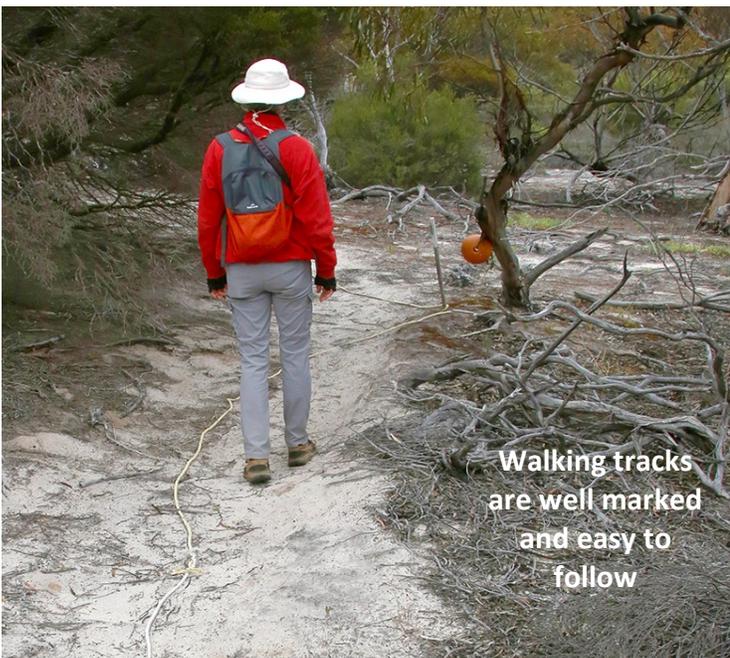
Dining room with fire and library



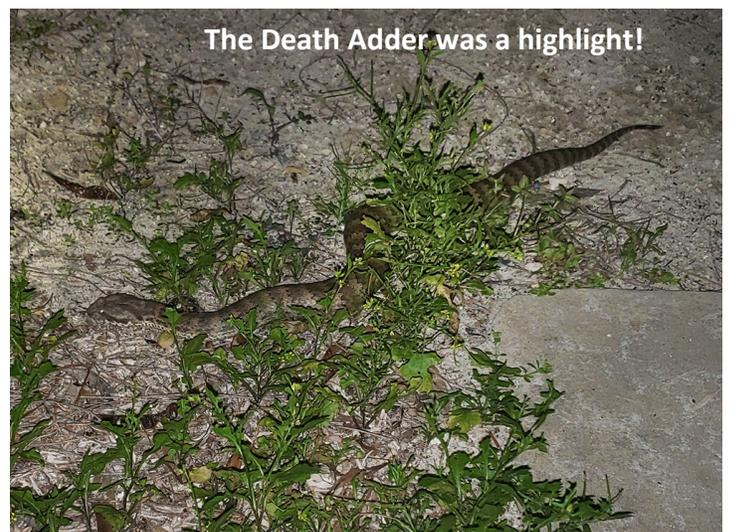
Historical Telegraph Station stuff



The beach is only a kilometre away



Walking tracks
are well marked
and easy to
follow



The Death Adder was a highlight!

Royal Spoonbills in Nowra

A couple of months ago, residents and visitors alike were surprised to see Royal Spoonbills nesting at Harry Sawkins Park in Nowra.

Given that the park is bounded on the west and south by the town, on the north-east by an extremely busy highway and on the south-east by a skate park, the use of the park by wildlife is gratifying.

A number of fishermen were seen trying their luck in the waters of the lake's central pond - another indication of a functioning eco-system in a highly modified environment.

Royal Spoonbills form monogamous pairs for the duration of the breeding season and nest in colonies alongside many other waterbirds, including Yellow-billed Spoonbills, ibises, herons and cormorants.

A solid bowl-shaped nest is built of sticks and twigs lined with leaves and water plants, and is usually placed in the crown of a tree over water or among high reeds and rushes. Nest sites may be reused year after year.



Share the Shore

- from the NSW Government Saving Our Species program

Help us share the word and share the shore this beach-nesting bird season. You can find more information at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/beach-nesting-birds-share-the-shore

Threatened shorebirds like the Little Tern, Pied Oystercatcher and Hooded Plover nest on NSW beaches over summer. The nesting period is hard for these birds as they face foxes, floods, storms and disturbance from humans - but we can all do something about that last one.

By being mindful when you're down at the beach, you can help these birds raise healthy chicks!

Share the Shore key messages:

There are a few simple steps you can take to help keep beach-nesting birds safe:

- Look out for bird nesting signs or roped-off nesting areas on the beach and follow the advice.
- Walk your dogs on dog-friendly beaches only and always keep them on a leash, unless you're on a designated off-leash beach.
- Drive only on designated beaches and keep below the high-tide mark. Stick to the wet sand!
- When you're near a nesting area, stick to the wet sand and give the birds plenty of space.

Photographers and birdwatchers:

Tips from the PROS - how to observe and photograph shorebirds. A responsible birder always:

- Keeps their distance
- Doesn't outstay their welcome
- Respects beach closure signs, fences and beach driving rules

Click [here](#) to learn more from a couple of professional bird photographers and researchers.

Love beach walks?



We do too!

Share the shore when you see us on the beach

#sharetheshore 

Kids on the beach?



Us too!

Share the shore when you see us on the beach

#sharetheshore 

Love fishing?

We do too!



Share the shore when you see us on the beach

#sharetheshore 

Painted Silos and Water Tanks

According to the Australian Silo Art Trail website - which can be found at www.australiansiloarttrail.com - silo art is extremely important for promoting tourism in regional Australia and if everyone of us was to take their next holiday within Australia, these regional towns and communities would benefit significantly.



Not only does Australia have fantastic painted silos, it also has over 100 painted water storage towers as well. Not every country town has a silo, but many have water towers they can enhance to help entice visitors to their towns.



Art does not have to be confined to just silos and water tanks - any building will suffice. Sheffield in Tasmania is famous for its 140 murals!



But what about the Shoalhaven?



As can be seen from the map, the Shoalhaven and South Coast is severely under-represented when it comes to silo and water tower art.

Wouldn't it be great if bird art featured on Shoalhaven silos, water tanks and buildings. It could promote tourism and bird conservation at the same time!

Are there any artists out there who would like to take on the project?



Are You A Good Birder?

- by Brett Davis

Picture this scene from your average birdwalk with "good birders", "average birders" and "novices". A little brown bird flies past the group and one of the good birders says "White-browed Scrubwren". A faint call is heard and another "good birder" says "Brown Gerygone". Then comes a repetitive one-note call and one of the "average birders" says "Trecreeper" and another one adds "White-throated Trecreeper" but one of the "good birders" says "Nice try, but it's an Eastern Yellow Robin" and a minute later an Eastern Yellow Robin is spotted.

Does this sound familiar?

Most "normal" people are in awe of "good birders" who can instantly identify a bird from the most fleeting of glances, or who can hear a single note and accurately distinguish the correct species. When I started birding I know that I was definitely one of those awe-struck people, and after 30 years of birdwatching with more than 600 Australian species and a similar number of overseas birds on my "life list", I'd like to think that I was approaching "good birder" status.

However, a recent trip to Western Australia with my wife Karen and a couple of non-birders made me realize that I have a heck of a lot to learn before I could consider myself to be an "average birder", let alone a "good birder"!



Mt Augustus

I first became aware of my shortcomings while staying in the campground at Mount Augustus (allegedly the largest rock in Australia). It was late evening and I noticed a Nankeen Kestrel fly into the top of a nearby palm tree. It was an easy ID - and a quick tick! A short time later another Kestrel landed in the same tree. Both appeared ready to roost for the night.



The roost

"Fascinating!" I thought, "probably a breeding pair in their own territory". I moved closer with my binoculars to check them out, when another Kestrel flew into the tree. There was a bit of squabbling over the best position, but it soon became apparent that all three birds were settling in for the night - slightly separated, but definitely together.



Young Kestrels

"It must be a breeding pair with one of their youngsters" I thought, but they all looked the same to me in the fading light and I realized that I had no idea whether young Kestrels differed from their parents or how I could tell them apart.

Deciding to check out the field guide later, I kept watch and saw three more Kestrels land in the tree, find an unoccupied position, and make themselves comfortable for the night.

My wife Karen had joined me by this stage, and we discussed the possibilities, with a large number of differing opinions being offered ...

"Do you reckon all these Kestrel babies came from the one clutch?"

"Four babies seems like a lot, so maybe they are juveniles from last season as well as this season?"

"Maybe Kestrels have more than one clutch per season?"

"Do Kestrels even have a breeding season or do they breed all year round?"

"Do Kestrels form family groups like Magpies?"

"Maybe multiple breeding pairs of Kestrels, or groups of juvenile males, roost communally?"

"Do Kestrels have their own territories?"

I could identify Kestrels no problem, but I had absolutely no idea about how Kestrels live, how they breed, whether males were different from females, whether juveniles were different from adults, how they roost, or whether they are territorial or not!

It was a bit like knowing a person's name, but not knowing where they live, whether they were married or not, whether they had kids, what they did for a living, what sports they played, what hobbies they had, whether they were religious or not, or what side of the political divide they were on!

I pretty much knew nothing about Kestrels apart from their name - so into the bird guides / internet I went ...

It turns out that male and female Kestrels are so sexually dimorphic (different) that an uneducated observer (such as myself) could be forgiven for thinking they might be two different species!



Male Kestrel

Males Kestrels are smaller than females (like a lot of raptor species) and they have greyish crowns and tails. Females have brownish crowns and barred tails, and juveniles are similar to females but with darker streaks on the chest.



Female Kestrel

Kestrel pairs are usually monogamous, with some pairs resident in some areas while others migrate north during winter or follow food sources in outback areas.

Kestrels lay from 3 to 7 eggs - but usually 4, so it is possible that Karen and I saw a family group. However, Kestrels can also gather in loose flocks of up to 30 birds, so maybe it wasn't a family group.

My shortcomings as a birdwatcher were further revealed by a question from my non-birding companions - "How long do they live?"

Not only didn't I know how long Kestrels live, I have absolutely no idea how long most birds live - apart from Cockatoos which can live as long as humans. (If you are an adult, don't buy a young pet cockatoo unless you have someone to bequeath it to!)

There was nothing much about how long Australian Kestrels live in the literature, but there are many sub-species of Kestrels around the world, and they all look surprisingly similar and have similar habits. The internet provided a variety of answers for the life expectancies of the different sub-species - who'd have thought!?

I found sites that said American Kestrels live about 11 years in the wild and up to 17 years in captivity, while British Kestrels typically live for only 4 years in the wild.

Another site said European Kestrels lived for about 5 years, though one Kestrel was known to have reached the ripe old age of 24!



Female

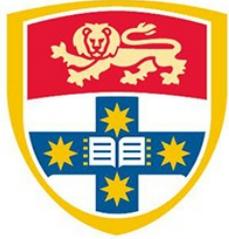
Male

This whole exercise made me learn a whole lot more about Kestrels than I ever knew before - and I probably still haven't even scratched the surface of all possible Kestrel knowledge!

But let's say I now know one species fairly well. This leaves only about 750 more species for me to learn about before I can begin to consider myself a "good birder"!

Most of the images used in this article come from the website of UK artist Robert E. Fuller which can be found at www.robertefuller.com. They are a different sub-species to our Kestrels but look very similar.

Wildlife Assist Provisioning Survey



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Did you participate in wildlife provisioning (providing food, water or shelter to wildlife) during the 2019/20 Australian bushfire season? If so, can you follow the link below and complete the survey?



This voluntary and anonymous survey will contribute to research being undertaken by the University of New England and the University of Sydney that aims to understand why people engaged in these practices and what their experiences were during that period. This information will help to inform provisioning activities during future environmental disaster events.

To read more about the study and start the survey, please click [here](#) or follow the link below. The survey should take approximately 20 – 30 minutes to complete.



Bird Photography

- by Kim Touzel

[This is what you miss if you don't visit our Facebook page]



Exotic Bird Sightings?

The bird pictured below - photographed by Kim White in late November last year, is an Indian Ringneck Parrot, and is hopefully an escapee.

According to Wikipedia - "The rose-ringed parakeet ... known as the ring-necked parakeet (more commonly known as the Indian ringneck parrot) ... has disjunct native ranges in Africa and the Indian Subcontinent, and is now introduced into many other parts of the world where feral populations have established themselves and are bred for the exotic pet trade."

A similar bird was seen around Bayswood in Vincentia a few years ago - and it may be the same bird!

Please let us know if you see this bird - or any other exotic birds. Let's hope it doesn't find a mate!



How You Can Help BLS

If you would like to get involved in bird conservation in the Shoalhaven, either as part of a specific BirdLife Shoalhaven project or by taking on a committee position, please let us know!

There are, however, a lot of other things that you can do. You could write an article (or articles) for this magazine. Or you could lead a bird walk in your local area, something that you might do on a regular basis anyhow, but something that no other BLS members usually do.

You could also become one of our Facebook editors, send us some photos, or tell us about conservation issues in your neighbourhood!

Just email communications@birdliveshoalhaven.org

The Fine Print

Contributions - any bird photographs, articles, conservation issues, birding experiences, anecdotes or sightings that you would like to share with fellow members, please send to the editor (Brett Davis) at communications@birdliveshoalhaven.org

Requests for **re-publication of articles** must be referred to the Editor for approval.

General Disclaimer - the information in articles in this magazine is accepted in good faith and although the editor has tried to verify the accuracy of all information, BirdLife Shoalhaven and BirdLife Australia accept no responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies or exaggerations in this magazine.

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