

# Birdlife Shoalhaven Newsletter

Summer 2015



Scarlet Honeyeater  
Photo by Ian Brown

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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. Apologies to any contributors whose text or images have not been acknowledged

## 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.

## Do you want to change the world?

If your answer is "Yes" but you are not sure how to go about it, why not start small by helping to change the world at a local level?

BirdLife Shoalhaven was formed so that BirdLife Australia members within the local area could provide a unified voice for Shoalhaven birds and the environments in which they live.

We would like to think that we "Think Globally - Act Locally" and that our actions can make a difference.

At the beginning of 2014 when BirdLife Shoalhaven was formed we did not know how much work would be involved with the branch or how many committee members we would need to run the branch successfully in order to provide the voice for birds in the Shoalhaven.

It is now one year on, and the three current committee members now know that our local birds need a bit more help.

The BirdLife Australia Branch Working Arrangements say that in addition to the Convenor (we prefer President), Treasurer and Secretary the branch may establish other Executive Committee or non Committee roles.

They recommend a number of roles such as Conservation Officer, Membership Officer, Education Officer, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor, Communication Officer and (of course) an OH&S Officer to report policy and procedure updates from the National Office OH&S committee. In addition, as mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, it might be good for us to have a Publicity Officer or Media Liaison Officer, or something similar.

And if there is anybody out there who loves Facebook and Twitter and would not mind taking control of the BirdLife Shoalhaven accounts, please let us know!

We are not sure that we need to fill all of the roles recommended by Head Office in order to help the cause of bird conservation in the Shoalhaven, but some more help on committee would be appreciated.

Chris Grounds has volunteered to be our Conservation Officer until the position can be formalized at our next AGM, but a few more committee members could really help.

There are many committed, enthusiastic, knowledgeable birders within the branch with all the skills required - it would be a pleasure to hear from you.

If you would like to become a member of the committee in any capacity at all (even as President, Treasurer or Secretary) please contact the current BirdLife Shoalhaven Secretary at [shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au](mailto:shoalhaven@birdlife.org.au).

## Editorial

The former head of one of the largest and most well-known conservation organisations in the world recently looked back on his career and remarked that if all the money spent on animal welfare during his time in office had instead been spent on sex education and condoms, the world, its animals, birds and environment would be substantially better off today.

Rampant population growth is not only the biggest threat to birdlife conservation in the world today, it is also the biggest threat to human conservation as well.

Population growth is not the sole cause of the world's environmental problems, but its importance can easily be realized by asking the following question - "What environmental problems in the world today would not be helped by a reduction in the population of the planet?"

Many "authorities" point to "environmentally sustainable development" as the best way forward. Sustainable development is a classic example of an oxymoron - an allegedly meaningful but actually nonsensical phrase composed of words opposite in meaning.

Classic examples are "government organisation", "military intelligence", "pretty ugly", "civil war", "old news", "one-man band" and "negative growth".

We see, hear and use oxymorons every day, and even though they are obviously ridiculous, we nevertheless accept them, without question!

So it is with "environmentally sustainable development". Any development necessarily involves the destruction of part of the environment, and if we keep on destroying parts of the environment, eventually there will be none of the original environment left.

A large proportion of this newsletter is devoted to Lake Wollumboola - a wetland of national and international significance that is threatened by "sustainable development" in the form of a new golf course for the pleasure of the growing population of the Shoalhaven and the increasing annual influx of visitors from the urban and suburban wasteland further north.

If there was no population growth in Australia, there would be no need for a new golf course, and there would be no threat to the viability of Lake Wollumboola.

It is simple really ...

**- Brett Davis**

**Editor's Note:** If you disagree with the above sentiments why not send a letter to the editor explaining your views. Let me know if you wish to remain anonymous ...



## Rare Bird at Shoalhaven Heads

- by Carla Jackett

On the 5th of January, my son Nigel (visiting from Western Australia) and I went shorebirding at Shoalhaven Heads. The mosaic of sandflats, mangroves, samphire and dunes found near the former river mouth host a good mix of roosting and foraging shorebirds, so we were hopeful of turning up something unusual. Although opportunities to go birding with Nigel are rare, they are often productive, and this occasion proved to be no different!

It was an overcast and drizzly morning, but temperatures were pleasant in the mid 20's. At the parking lot we were greeted by Jodie Dunn and Kim from NPWS at their "Dog Breakfast" tent (a display for educating dog-walkers about the threats to nesting shorebirds). After a short chat about Pied Oystercatchers and Little Terns, we continued along the track towards Comerong Island.

We arrived about an hour before high-tide, meaning birds would be mainly roosting, instead of feeding a long way out on the sandflats. We started counting the many Pacific Golden Plovers (200), Bar-tailed Godwits (150) and Eastern Curlews (15), as well as several Red Knots, a Whimbrel and 2 Lesser Sand Plovers.

We moved on to the Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers roosting on the dune close to the beach, where Nigel slowly worked through them with his scope.

When I said, "time to go get some work done", Nigel said, "We can't leave now, I've got something good here". From the long-winged appearance, and slightly larger size, Nigel thought it had to be one of two species that should be in Central or South America right now – Baird's or White-rumped Sandpiper!

I looked excitedly through the scope, to see a noticeably different bird accompanying the stints, and potentially a very rare bird for Australia.

Nigel took a number of photos of the bird with his iPhone through the scope while it roosted and re-settled amongst the stints. It was obviously different to the stints as it was browner in colour, and also had a longer, slightly decurved bill. Other features we noted were the primary projection (extending well beyond the tail), dark legs, pale eyebrow, and fine streaking on the breast and flanks.

Returning to the parking lot, Nigel posted some pictures to the Australian Twitchers Facebook group, and it didn't take long for expert opinions to arrive – all in agreement of White-rumped Sandpiper, a species not seen in Australia since 1988!

The word of the sandpiper was out, but it was not seen later that day. However, persistence paid off for three enthusiastic young birders, (Lachlan Hall, Stanley Tang and Henry Coleman), who skillfully re-found the bird ten kilometres south at Lake Wollumboola the following morning, leading to many days of twitching madness!



First sighting of the sandpiper at Shoalhaven Heads (darker bird centre front) – photo by Nigel Jackett

# White-rumped Sandpiper

- by Narelle Wright

I first heard about the White-rumped Sandpiper (WRS) (*Calidris fuscicollis*) via a Facebook friend who spotted it at Shoalhaven Heads on 5 January 2015. The very next day a group of Shoalhaven bird photographers found it happily foraging on its own at Lake Wollumboola chasing away the Red-necked Stints and other waders from its "patch" of lake and is still here today (13/1/14). The WRS has not been seen in NSW since 1977 when a group that included ornithologist Joy Pegler, who records birdlife at Lake Wollumboola, identified it at Pitt Town. It is a great addition to Lake Wollumboola's list of birds and a "lifer" for just about all of us who have seen it.



The cat was soon out of the bag with twitchers arriving with long camera lenses from all around Australia to catch a glimpse of this rare bird - an historic moment. The bird quickly became used to its celebrity and tolerated the excited but hushed groups of enthusiasts.

Lake Wollumboola has a rich supply of food which migratory waders need to fatten up for the long flight back to their breeding areas in the northern hemisphere.

I'm not sure which way the White-rumped Sandpiper will fly, but I hope it makes it home to tell the story.

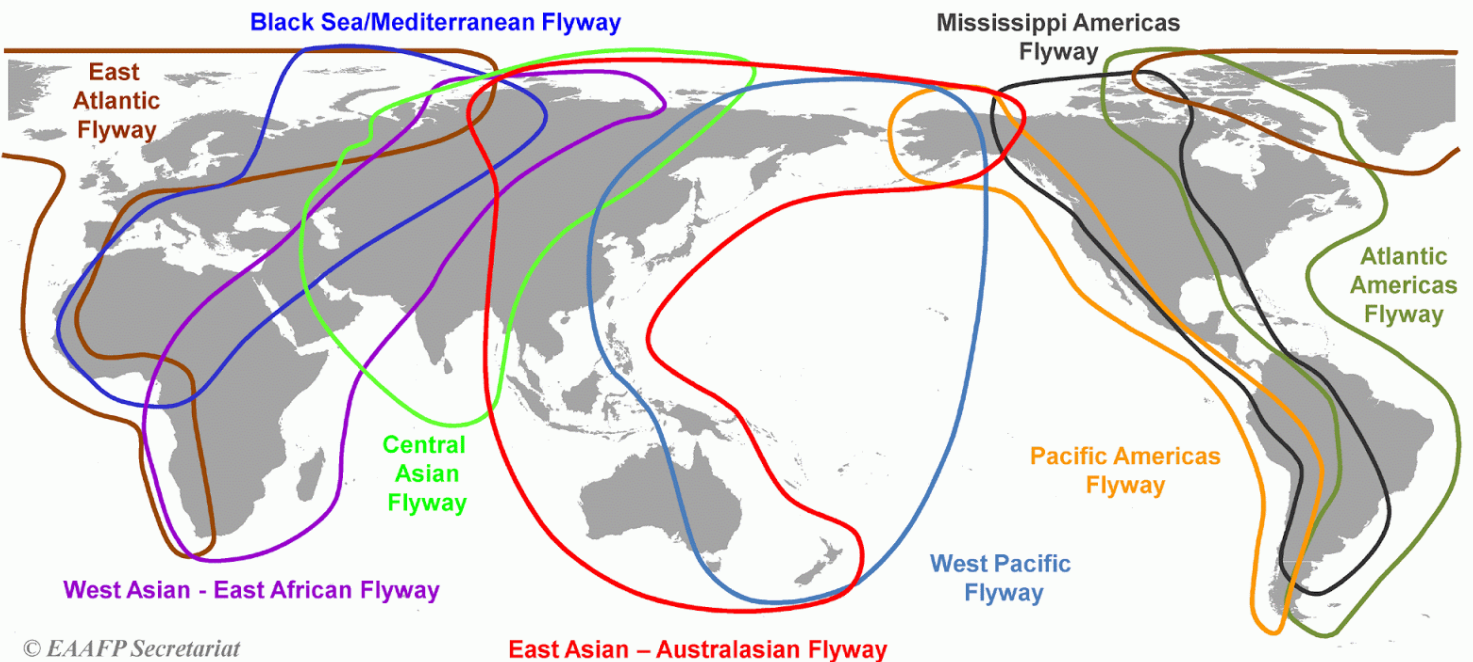
This little bird breeds in Arctic Alaska and Canada and has joined the migration to Australia on the East Asian-Australasian flyway instead of its usual route along an American flyway to South America for the summer.

Happy bird watching,  
Narelle Wright,

(for the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc)

[www.wollumboola.org.au](http://www.wollumboola.org.au)

[info@wollumboola.org.au](mailto:info@wollumboola.org.au)



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## White-rumped Sandpiper Info

The following information is from **Wikipedia**.

The white-rumped sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) is a small shorebird. Adults have black legs and a small thin dark bill. The body is dark brown on top and mainly white underneath, with brown streaks on the breast and a white rump. They have a white stripe over their eyes. This bird shows long wings in flight. In winter plumage, this species is pale gray above. This bird can be difficult to distinguish from other similar tiny shorebirds; these are known collectively as "peeps" or "stints".

One of the best identification features is the long wings, which extend beyond the tail when the bird is on the ground. Only the Baird's sandpiper also shows this, and that bird can be distinguished by the lack of a white rump.

Their breeding habitat is the northern tundra on Arctic islands in Canada and Alaska. They nest on the ground, usually well-concealed in vegetation.

They are a long distance migrant, wintering in southern South America. They are rare but regular vagrants to western Europe. The species is a rare vagrant to Australia.

These birds forage by probing on mudflats or tundra or picking up food by sight in shallow water. They mainly eat insects, mollusks and marine worms, also some plant material.

**Lachlan Hall**, who looked unsuccessfully for the White-rumped Sandpiper at Shoalhaven Heads shortly after it was first reported by Nigel and Carla Jackett, and who eventually found it at Lake Wollumboola, posted the following report on the [www.feathersandphotos.com.au](http://www.feathersandphotos.com.au) forum.

"Super stoked to discover this little guy at the lake this morning, 7th Aussie record I think and the first since 1988. A White-rumped Sandpiper was sighted at Shoalhaven Heads yesterday but my and other's attempts that afternoon failed to re-find it. Three other young birders that I met at the Heads stayed the night at mine for another go at the bird in the morning.

"With the high tide not due till after 10am we decided to go to Lake Wollumboola first, which I figured would be a likely spot if the WRS had moved, but as well as for Fairy Tern which was a tick for two of the others. And there he was!

"We sent out a couple of messages to notify any twitchers that would have been heading to Shoalhaven Heads and then spent a great couple of hours with this although kind of average-looking, undeniably awesome bird in some nice morning light."



Red-necked Avocets have also been frequenting Lake Wollumboola

Photo by Sue Tolley

## Lake Wollumboola reports

by Tom Kaar

### Spring

The highlight of the mid October boat survey with Peter Ward was 9 Grey-tailed Tattlers on a wharf at Greenwell Point, and 18 Pacific Golden Plovers, about 330 Bar-tailed Godwits, 38 Eastern Curlews, 8 White-fronted Terns, an Australasian Pipit and 2 White-fronted chats at the (closed) mouth of the Shoalhaven.

On shrubs on the eastern shore of Lake Wollumboola, an interesting sighting was that of a Singing Honeyeater – my first for the area. I also saw a White-cheeked Honeyeater at Penguin Head at Culburra Beach – not seen one here since October 2009. The Great Crested Grebe was sighted only for a couple of days after discovery.



Photo by Narelle Wright

A bit of a surprise was seeing a flock of some 40 Red-necked Avocets land on the NE corner of the Lake on 1st November – I hadn't sighted them since early October and assumed that they had departed from the area - plus a Pacific Golden Plover and some Curlew Sandpipers.

There are plenty of Black-winged Stilts still around – and the Eurasian Coots seem to also be here, although they are no longer close to the shoreline near the ramp and Scout Hall – the large flocks are further south in the middle of the lake.

Bar-tailed Godwits are not as numerous as usual, but there are good numbers of Red-necked Stints, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red Knots and a few Ruddy Turnstones.

The Red-capped Plovers have been nesting – but several nests have been lost to fox predation. The Pied Oystercatchers produced 2 eggs early in October and their imminent hatching is eagerly awaited as it would result in the first chicks of this species for this site.

### Summer

It certainly is very disappointing that the very promising Little Tern breeding season has been so severely impacted by a rogue wave, and subsequent ongoing predation by foxes and unidentified raptor(s). With some 170 nests having been located, mostly with 3 eggs each (and one with 4 eggs), it is sad to accept that the confirmed number of successful fledglings could be as low as half a dozen – although there is some uncertainty with the identification of the older fledglings.

Despite the best efforts of the NPWS personnel to eradicate the fox threat by the laying of baits and the efforts of shooters prior to the peak tourist period, it seems their canny adversary has thwarted them.

Although there were brief periods when the electrified fence may not have been functioning properly, allowing foxes to enter the main breeding area, full credit must be given to Alex Deura for speedily rectifying the situation – and carrying out major improvements in bad weather.

However the presence of new fox prints within the enclosure would suggest that some foxes may be prepared to accept an electric shock to get to the nests.

The identity of the avian predator is unknown – but a Swamp Harrier or Nankeen Kestrel is likely. Perhaps the question may be resolved by the use of a motion sensing camera on loan from Jodie Dunn.

Although the adult Pied Oystercatcher pair have exhibited very protective behaviour on the SE shore of Lake Wollumboola for quite a while, I got my first sighting of the immature offspring on the morning of 21 December, and on the afternoon of Jan 1 I saw it fly strongly towards the adults and then later further S in a wide arc across the surface of the lake. So one of the two chicks has managed to survive to become fully fledged – a first for this site.

The White-rumped Sandpiper at Lake Wollumboola has been a huge drawcard for bird enthusiasts from all over the country. We must be thankful for the discerning eye of the son of Carla Jackett for first spotting it at Shoalhaven Heads and then again at our lakeshore.

Otherwise things are pretty much the same as regards the waders. Although they are not present in great numbers, a good selection of species is being represented – including Lesser Sand Plovers and Broad-billed Sandpipers.

Although I occasionally see a solitary Pacific Golden Plover near the lake, I was surprised to see a flock of at least 87 of them on the northern rock platform below Penguin Head in mid-December, along with an Eastern Reef Egret.

- Tom Kaar



## Shorebird Conservation Program

### Lake Wollumboola - Summer 2014-5

#### Success for Pied Oystercatchers - devastating losses for Little Terns

- by Frances Bray

The Lake Wollumboola Shorebird Conservation Program at Lake Wollumboola is part of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service South Coast Region Shorebird Recovery Program.

This season three Shorebird / Seabird species nested at Lake Wollumboola. Two are listed as Threatened Species in NSW;

**Pied Oystercatcher**, listed as **Vulnerable**.

**Little Tern**, listed as **Endangered**.

The Red Capped Plover, although not a threatened species, also benefits from the program's conservation measures.

Whilst NPWS Shorebird Co-ordinator Jodie Dunn manages the overall South Coast Region program, at Lake Wollumboola Nowra Area office Rangers and Field Staff members play a significant role. Also this season a dedicated team of ten volunteers took part in daily monitoring of the nesting sites and provision of information to beach visitors.



#### Pied Oystercatchers (POCs)

The shorebird season commenced early with a pair of POCs laying two eggs between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014. NPWS erected a small electric fence to protect the nest and two delightful chicks hatched on 10<sup>th</sup> November.

The dutiful parents quickly moved the chicks to salt marsh vegetation further south along the eastern Lake shore. Whilst this location avoided disturbance from beach visitors it is also fox territory.

Shorebird volunteers made discreet visits to monitor progress, and while the chicks were sighted on a few occasions, it was not until 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 that volunteer Tom Kaar confirmed the presence of both adults and the flight of one young fledgling. Unfortunately a fox is likely to have taken the second chick.

Although Pied Oystercatchers have been known to nest at Lake Wollumboola, this is the first known success where chicks have hatched and one has successfully fledged.

#### Little Terns

The first sighting of Little Terns was 14<sup>th</sup> October and numbers quickly increased to over 200 breeding Little Terns - with spectacular displays of flight. The first nest was located on 14<sup>th</sup> November, with the majority being three-egg nests and in one case, a four-egg nest.

The Little Terns took over the entire southern sandy part of the sand bar in what promised to be ideal conditions. Volunteers erected string fences and signage to protect the nests and to give forewarning to beach visitors to watch where they walked. NPWS staff erected a large electric fence to deter foxes and dogs.

Hopes were initially high for a significant breeding event following the 46 fledglings last season, but it was not to be, with this season ending in near disaster.





This week 120 Little Terns were still present with many pairs courting. More nests may be laid, but it seems unlikely. The following statistics tell the story.

**Maximum number of Little Terns sighted (including breeding and non-breeding birds) - 250**

**Nests (including many second attempts) - 166**

**Eggs laid - 368**

**Eggs lost - 334**

**Nests with chicks - 18**

**Chicks hatched - 34**

**Estimated number of fledglings observed - 7**

A potential 33 chicks could have proceeded to fledge. However one chick was found dead 4 days after hatching and a pair of young wings indicated a fox took another.

So only a total of 7 fledglings at Lake Wollumboola from such a recording-breaking number of nests and eggs, shows long term survival of the Little Terns is precarious.

#### **So what caused the devastating losses?**

The daily records collected by volunteers show that the most significant egg losses were due to natural causes. The most significant was an avian predator or predators, followed by wave wash-over. Foxes also caused egg losses on the same scale as the washovers. Smaller losses were due to eggs being abandoned, unknown causes and rising Lake waters flooding nests after heavy rain.

Avian predators took at least 156 eggs, and possibly accounted for most of the unknown causes. We have not been able to identify the avian predator culprits, as the few footprints are indistinct.

Volunteers used nest frames to protect nests and together with the Shoalhaven bird photography group, kept a close lookout for likely culprits. Australian Kestrels, Swamp Harriers, White-breasted Sea-eagles and a Black-shouldered Kite were observed over the sand bar, with a Kestrel and Swamp Harrier seen to land on one recent occasion. However no expert advice or evidence is available to confirm that these species could take Little Tern eggs especially on the wing and to conclusively identify the culprit species.

However, given the scale and level of activity of such a large Little Tern flock, it is not surprising that avian predators were present.

Wave wash-overs due to high tides and one rogue wave occurred on several occasions, despite efforts of volunteers and National Park staff in constructing sand mounds and diversions to protect nests.

Little Terns laid many nests outside the Electric fence, which fell prey to foxes. Foxes also took advantage of an Electric fence malfunction and once they located the nests, kept on returning.

Foxes are also likely to be responsible for the loss of 26 Little Tern chicks, as the adults moved chicks from relative protection within the electric fence to the less safe dune and salt marsh vegetation. Although NPWS laid fox baits early in the season and employed expert marksmen to reduce fox numbers, the foxes were not deterred.

At least 7 of the chicks survived to fly on their first migration. However most of these still depend on their parents to feed them small fish. So it is unlikely that the remaining Little Terns will depart from Lake Wollumboola just yet.

We have been somewhat relieved to hear that other Little Tern breeding sites including Shoalhaven Heads and Lake Conjola had a late influx of Little Terns, possibly from Lake Wollumboola. So the volunteers hope that the Little Terns have better success this season at these sites, than they did at Lake Wollumboola.

**Frances Bray**

NPWS Lake Wollumboola Shorebird Volunteer Co-ordinator and President, Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc.

(January 2015)



The last Little Tern fledgling of the season?

All photos by Narelle Wright

## Heritage Estate Update

- by Chris Grounds

Conservation is not an easy task in the Shoalhaven with caring and concerned people involved for the long run, but there have been a couple of **crucial advances** in the Heritage Estate saga in the three months since our last BirdLife Shoalhaven newsletter, which have given great encouragement.

A critical watershed occurred on - of all days - Christmas Eve. Justice Foster of the Federal Court handed down his decision on the action of a group of landowners in the Estate, who were seeking compensation, and the rejection of the Peter Garrett decision preventing development of the site. This case began in May 2013 and concluded in October 2013 so it was a long wait, to say the least.

The landowners case was dismissed and costs were awarded against them. It is now hoped this will encourage the balance of landowners in the estate to sell their Lots to the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife.

The decision also triggers the rezoning of the Estate, Council Reserve and Crown Land Reserve of Worroing Creek to Environment Conservation. Two 'sister estates' have already been designated to E2 rezoning. Prior to these developments a non-Estate portion, the 'coat hanger block', fronting The Wool Road and Naval College Road, was purchased by the state government and included in Jervis Bay National Park.

Two recent sightings over the Estate have been the Brown Goshawk and the Swamp Harrier.



Photo by Ian Brown

## The Larmer Avenue Reserve Concept

- by Chris Grounds, Conservation Officer

A survey of birds associated with the Larmer Avenue land at Sanctuary Point has been developing since June 2013.

BirdLife Shoalhaven is now in a position to contribute this catalogue to both Council and the Basin Villages Forum to support the Reserve concept.

**The current catalogue, which is in its third edition, has 58 species listed.**

One of the most interesting additions is the most recent – the Eastern Osprey – observed on two consecutive days adjacent to the tributary canal of Cockrow Creek. [see photo] This was also the first Threatened Species on the catalogue.



Photo by Chris Grounds

The broad community proposal, expressed through the Basin Villages Forum, is for this Council owned block of land to be dedicated to a wetland-bird reserve linked with the Sanctuary Point Road Crown land Reserve. The concept includes walking and observation facilities.

Council is pursuing the possible Bio-banking of the site, which would provide some funding for site works and vegetation mapping has been completed.

The site includes a number of Ecologically Endangered Communities.

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### Fact Filler

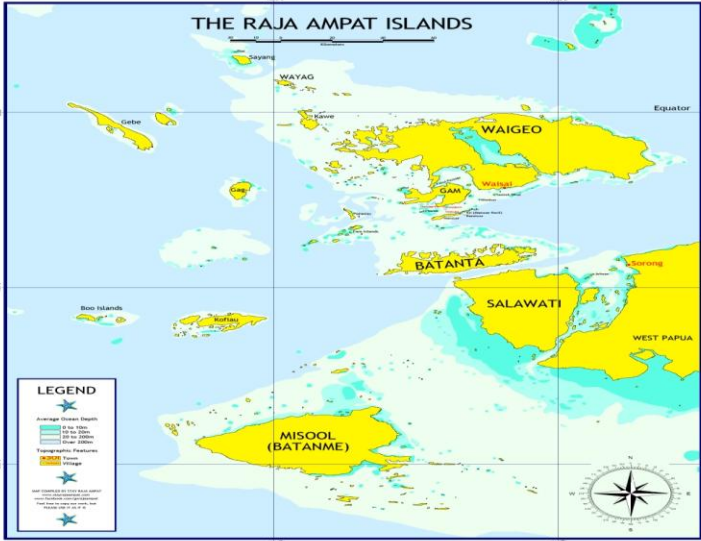
Double-banded Plovers are the only waders to visit Australia that do not breed in the Northern Hemisphere. They breed in New Zealand in summer and they winter in Australia - opposite to all others.



# President's Holiday Report

## Raja Ampat, a must for birding - by Barry Virtue

I recently had a three week birdwatching and snorkelling trip with my long time birding mate Steve to Raja Ampat. This is a spectacular archipelago of karst, limestone islands off the West Papua Bird's Head Peninsula.



We stayed in very economical homestays (about \$30-\$35 AUD a night including all meals) on four different sized islands, Waigeo, Gam, Kri and Friwen and visited another three islands. Many islands have different bird populations and species depending on their size.

The wonderful Papuan people who owned and ran the homestays were very welcoming, friendly and willing to help with the sometimes unusual requests of birders, like getting up at 4am to climb the mountain to watch the BOP, and arrange for guides from nearby villages.



The homestays are registered with a group on line ([www.stayrajaampat.com/ultimate-raja-ampat-guide](http://www.stayrajaampat.com/ultimate-raja-ampat-guide)) and once there bookings ahead can be made using mobile

phones. We found the basic accommodation uniform and comfortable, mostly out over the water.

Nearby villages, within walking distance of the homestays, provided us with access to beer and enjoyable cultural experiences and interactions with the people.



The islands boast two endemic Birds of Paradise, Wilson's (*Cicinnurus respublica*) which is arguably the most spectacular of all the BOP, and Red Bird of Paradise (*Paradisaea rubra*) which features as the cover bird on my small field guide. Wilson's has a terrestrial display mound and the Red displays in groups in the canopy.



There were many other birding highlights but to mention two more special ones I must include the Western Crowned Pigeon (*Goura cristata*) and the Brown-headed Crow (*Corvus fuscicapillus*), an unusual endemic forest crow. Some of the best birding was a short taxi ride from our hotel in Sorong on mainland Papua. An animal highlight would have to be the wild Spotted Cuscus coming in to get bananas at Nudibranch Homestay.

Thanks to Steve for the images ...



## The Wrens of Striking Blue



The winter chill has come and gone,  
The sun is breaking through,  
And wrens are in the garden,  
***The male, a striking blue.***

How I've waited for this moment,  
For wrens to come around,  
As I sit upon the verandah,  
I hear the cheery sound,

Of trilling from the garden,  
From every garden nook,  
And see the wrens spilling,  
From everywhere I look.

They tumble through the foliage,  
And cross the great divide,  
Of pebbled paths and courtyard,  
To reach the other side.

Where majestic grass-trees  
Send mighty scapes on high,  
And cheeky wrens ascend there,  
Their backdrop, only sky.

In a corner of the garden,  
Where melaleuca grow,  
And their branches cast a shadow,  
Over dainty fern below.

Upon a weathered birdbath,  
A jenny wren alights,  
And is quickly joined by others,  
Attracted by the sight.

Without waiting to ponder,  
The wisdom of a dip,  
All at once they're in the water,  
Next moment, on the lip.

While all around the garden,  
Those cheery fairies play,  
And filter through the garden,  
In perfect disarray.

They're looking for a grub,  
Or perhaps a moth, or two,  
Jennies and their youngsters,  
***The male, a striking blue.***

It's at these precious moments,  
When wrens are all around,  
I'm driven by emotion,  
And feelings so profound.

Like Bob Menzies when he saw her,  
"Just a passing by"  
And then declared "he loved her,  
Until the day he died".

His words reflect my feelings,  
For my little garden friends,  
And I do declare I love them,  
With a love that never ends.

Which leads me to thoughts,  
That I certainly can't ignore,  
I really must proclaim them,  
And bring them to the fore.

When all seems lost, and I just don't know,  
What the world is coming to,  
I then take time to recall,  
***The wrens of striking blue.***



*Poetry: Norm Webb*  
*Artwork: Millburn Slater*



## Birth of a Book

### The Inspiration for "Where Song Began" - by Tim Low

My first trip to Africa in 1994 was very exciting, but one of the images that stuck in my mind was completely ordinary: a drongo harassing a bird of prey. It came with the realisation that during six weeks there I had seen few acts of aggression between birds. In Australia we routinely see noisy miners, wattlebirds or friarbirds attacking other species, and I was seeing nothing like that level of violence in Africa.

From then on I began noting the instances I witnessed of interspecific aggression – of attacks by one species on another. On travels in Asia and Africa I could go days with nothing to record, while in North America I saw about one incident a day.

In Australia anyone can witness more than a hundred attacks a day if there are flowering eucalypts, banksias or paperbarks, although attacks are launched by noisy miners, bell miners and magpies whether there are flowers or not.

An earlier book I wrote, *Feral Future*, got me invited to conferences in Cape Town, and I came to know the Cape sugarbird, the largest nectar-specialist in Africa. It relies on proteas, in the same family as our banksias, and it is very aggressive, although small compared to our larger honeyeaters.



Africa's largest nectar bird, the Cape sugarbird, is far smaller than Australia's largest honeyeaters  
- photo by Nevil Lazarus

It struck me as significant that Australia is the only continent where birds are pollinating a large proportion of the canopy trees (eucalypts and paperbarks), and that these trees produce large volumes of nectar. Europe and North America have no canopy trees at all pollinated by birds.

Nectar is the resource that birds all over the world most often fight over. Hummingbirds, despite their tiny size, are considered very aggressive. Because the eucalypt family (Myrtaceae) and banksia family (Proteaceae) are so successful here, Australia has the world's largest nectar-specialists, and large numbers of them, so their aggression influences bird community structure in a way that sunbirds and hummingbirds don't.

I began to construct a framework for understanding how and why Australian birds are distinctive. I came upon the DNA studies showing that Australia was the source of all the world's songbirds, parrots, and large numbers of pigeons.

Australia abounds in songbirds that behave 'unusually', including bowerbirds, lyrebirds, choughs, miners and magpies, and this can be linked to Australia having far more diversity of songbirds than other continents, because it has had them far longer.



Australia has many songbirds with unusual behaviours, including white-winged choughs. (Nevil Lazarus)

Australia is a land of parrots because they originated here. They are the birds that most resemble mammals - smart, talkative, long-lived, able to hold items and to chew.

The more I read and saw, the more there was to think about, and over ten years it grew into a book, *Where Song Began*.

**Tim Low**

Editor's Note: see our Winter 2014 newsletter for the Chris Grounds review of "Where Song Began"

## Scientific Names tell us about the birds!

by Karen Davis

I have always been intrigued by the meaning of scientific names, initially for Australian plants but naturally progressing to our birds. So a few years ago in my spare time I went through our bird field guide and pencilled in the meaning of all their scientific names. The whole exercise proved very entertaining and this is some of what I found.

The scientific name of a bird consists of the genus (usually Greek) followed by the species (usually Latin). The genus always begins with a capital letter and the species with a lower case letter. Note that in my meanings below the genus is written last with the species (descriptor) first.

The scientific name of the Malleefowl is *Leipoa ocellata*, which means that it is an Eye-marked Egg-leaver. The Emu is an Australian Swift-foot. Penguins are Good-divers and Cormorants are Bald-Crows - the Pied Cormorant being the Multi-coloured Bald-Crow. The Magpie Goose is a Half-webbed Goose-Duck - obviously they weren't sure what it really was - a Magpie, Goose or Duck! The Hardhead is a Southern Diving-bird - very apt. The Chestnut Rail is a Chestnut-bellied Cautious-bird which could explain why I have not seen one yet.

The Purple Swamphen is a Purple Purple-bird, so I guess it's very purple. The White-faced Heron is an Australian Egret - now that gets confusing - and even more so when the Australian Bustard is a Southern Heron-bird. The Black-tailed Godwit is a Muddy Muddy-bird and the Red Knot a King Canute Shorebird. A Ruff is a Pugnacious Battle-lover - I am yet to see this.

Our Pied Oystercatcher (below) is a Long-billed Red-foot, and the endangered Hooded Plover is a Red-necked Valley-bird - maybe we are looking for it in the wrong place!



The Long-billed Red-foot  
photo by Sue Tolley

I feel sorry for the Common Noddy as all the Noddies are Witless Birds, but the Common Noddy is the Stupid Witless Bird. The Wonga Pigeon is the Black-white White-flesh - I wonder what the early explorers did with this bird? The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is a Funereal Covered-beak and is the emblem of Nowra - its Aboriginal name.

One of my favourite birds is the Gang-gang and its name means Fringed Beautiful-head, though I think it has a "bad-hair day" every day. The Rainbow Lorikeet is a Blood-red Hair-tongue, the Ground Parrot is a NSW Pedestrian-bird and the Crimson Rosella an Elegant Flat-tail. The Neophemas are New-voices with the Turquoise Parrot being a Pretty New-voice.



Two Fringed Beautiful-heads  
photo by Ian Brown

I couldn't find a definition of the genus Koel though in India they are called Nightingales so perhaps ours is the Snipe-like Nightingale. The Channel-billed Cuckoo is the Australian Sullen-face and the Dollarbird is the Eastern Broad-mouth.

Have you ever seen an owl wink? - the Barking Owl is the Winking Night-bird - better watch closer next time! The Tawny Frogmouth is an Owl-like Trap-foot and this next one is really scary, the Many-eyed Goat-sucker, a Spotted Nightjar!

The Treecreepers are Staircase-birds, Fairy-wrens are Soft-tails and Scrubwrens are Silk-birds. Our local Rock Warbler is a Solitary Cave-bird which is appropriate as it builds its



nest in a cave or overhang. Gerygones are Sound-born and Thornbills are Thorn Bush-dwellers.

The aggressive, raucous Red Wattlebird is the Fleshly-lobed Flower-rejoicer which sounds much too nice for it, and the Noisy Friarbird is the Little-horned Loving-bird which made me chuckle - you can't judge a book by its cover!



The Fleshly-lobed Flower-rejoicer  
photo by Ian Brown

Honeyeaters come in many varieties. There are the Lichen-mouths (the Yellow-faced HE is the Golden-faced Lichen-mouth), Pleasure-lovers (the New Holland HE is the Australian Pleasure-lover), Honey-suckers (the Scarlet HE is the Blood-coloured Honey-sucker), Clawed-birds (the Black HE is the Black Clawed-bird), and Decreasing-tails (the Crimson Chat is the Three-coloured Decreasing-tail).



The Australian Pleasure-lover  
photo by Ian Brown

Our local Eastern Whipbird is the Olive Noise-maker and our stunning Whistlers are Thick-heads (or Flat-heads) with the poor Grey Whistler being the Plain Thick-head. Robins are either Rock-Dwellers (the Rose Robin is the Rose-coloured Rock-Dweller), Wood-nymphs (the Hooded Robin is the Hooded-black Wood-nymph), or Dawn-

harpists (the Eastern Yellow Robin is the Southern Dawn-harpist - how beautiful!)

The Satin Bowerbird is the Violet Feather-bill, the Spotted Catbird is the Black-eared Cat-voice and the Spotted Bowerbird is the Spotted Cloaked-neck - all quite fitting.



A female Violet Feather-bill  
photo by Ian Brown

Then we get into the Horror Movies - the Woodswallows are Butchers, the Butcherbirds are Screamers and the Currawongs are Noise-makers.

The Flute-playing Naked-nose is very apt and one of my favourite birds - the Australian Magpie. Finches are mainly Grass-lovers, Firetails are Tiled-birds, and Mannikins are Spear-tails.

Lastly, can you guess the Swallow-like Flower-pecker or the oddly named Crescent Animal-hunter? They are the Mistletoebird and the Bassian Thrush.

As you can see, the scientific name can sometimes give you an insight into a particular feature or habit of a bird that the Common Name does not reveal. It can also be romantic or horrifying, but either way they are simply fascinating!

**Karen Davis**

\* Please note that due to the whims of taxonomic gurus, some of the above scientific names may have changed since I pencilled in their meanings many years ago.



LIVE IN CONCERT

# The Belle Miners

CANADIAN ACOUSTIC FOLK TRIO  
WITH SUPPORTING LOCAL ARTIST (TBA)



SUNDAY, JANUARY 25TH 730PM

TOMERONG SCHOOL OF ARTS

\$10 AT DOOR

BYO TEA + COFFEE PROVIDED

ENQUIRIES: PHIL 0409 813 079



## NSW Listed Threatened Species in Jervis CMA

49 species, 10 Commonwealth Listed under EPBC Act (marked \*)

4 species listed as “Critically Endangered” (Photographs Chris Grounds)

Source: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp)

### NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995

### NSW Threatened Species Categories

**VULNERABLE**  
Species facing a *High Risk of Extinction* in the medium term future.

**ENDANGERED**  
Species facing a *Very high Risk of Extinction* in NSW in the near future

**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**  
Species facing *Extremely High Risk of Extinction* in NSW in the immediate future



Eastern Bristlebird

[Australasian Bittern\\* E](#)

Bush Stone Curlew E

Striated Field Wren E

Glossy Black Cockatoo V

Lesser Sand Plover V

\*\* Brown Treecreeper V

[Eastern Bristlebird\\* E](#)

Black-necked Stork E

**Beach Stone Curlew CE**

Sooty Oystercatcher V

Pied Oystercatcher V

Black Bittern V

[Swift Parrot\\* E](#)

Broad-billed Sandpiper V

Black-tailed Godwit V

Square-tailed Kite V

\*\* **Orange-bellied Parrot\* CE**

Turquoise Parrot V

Barking Owl V

Powerful Owl V

Olive Whistler V

Eastern Osprey V

[\[Botaurus poiciloptilu\]](#)

[Burhinus grallarius]

[Calamanthus fuliginous]

[Calyptorhynchus lathami]

[Charadrius mongolus]

[Climacteris picumnus victoriae]

[\[Dasyornis brachypterus\]](#)

[Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus]

**[Esacus magnirostris]**

[Haematopus fuliginous]

[Haematopus longirostris]

[Ixobrychus flavicollis]

[\[Lathamus discolor\]](#)

[Limicola falcinellus]

[Limosa Limosa]

[Lophoictinia isura]

[\[Neophema chrysogaster\]](#)

[Neophema pulchella]

[Ninox connivens]

[Ninox strenua]

[Pachycephala olivacea]

[Pandion cristatus]



Eastern Osprey

\*\* The two birds marked are only "predicted" to occur in the area. All other birds are known to occur.

Pink Robin V  
Eastern Ground Parrot V

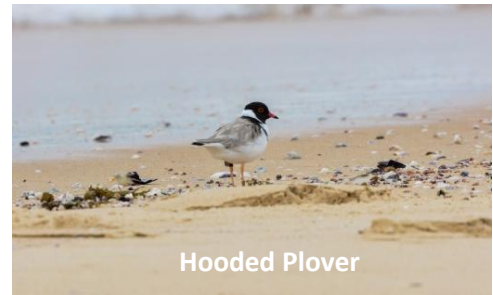
[*Petroica rodinogaster*]  
[*Pezoporus wallicus wallicus*]

Superb Fruit Dove V  
Little Tern E  
Sooty Tern V  
Freckled Duck V

[*Ptilinopus superbus*]  
[*Sternula albifrons*]  
[*Onychoprion fuscata*]  
[*Stictonetta naevosa*]

Hooded Plover CE

[*Thinornis rubricollis*]



Hooded Plover

Masked Owl V  
Sooty Owl V

[*Tyto novaehollandiae*]  
[*Tyto tenebricosa*]

Regent Honeyeater\*CE

[*Anthochaera Phrygia*]

Terek Sandpiper V  
Flesh-footed Shearwater V

[*Xenus cinereus*]  
[*Ardenna carneipes*]

Wandering Albatross\*E  
Gibson's Albatross\* V  
Southern Giant Petrel\*E  
Northern Giant Petrel\*V  
Shy Albatross\* V  
Black-browed Albatross\*V

[*Diomedea exulans*]  
[*Diomedea gibsoni*]  
[*Macronectes giganteus*]  
[*Macronectes halli*]  
[*Thalassarche cauta*]  
[*Thalassarche melanophris*]



Female Glossy Black Cockatoo

Gang-gang Cockatoo V  
Little Lorikeet V  
Flame Robin V  
Little Eagle V  
Scarlet Robin V  
Spotted Harrier V  
Varied Sittella V  
White-fronted Chat V  
Curlew Sandpiper E

[*Callocephalon fimbriatum*]  
[*Glossopsitta pusilla*]  
[*Petroica phoenicea*]  
[*Hieraaetus morphnoides*]  
[*Petroica boodang*]  
[*Circus assimilis*]  
[*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*]  
[*Epthianura albifrons*]  
[*Calidris ferruginea*]



Eastern Ground Parrot



## Art at the Beach

### Lake Wollumboola exhibition an overwhelming success!

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc. presented an exhibition of art works inspired by Lake Wollumboola's natural environment and its Aboriginal cultural heritage and in support of its conservation.

Over 200 people from around the Shoalhaven and further a-field attended the exhibition at the Nowra-Culburra Surf Club, Culburra Beach.



Jerrinja traditional owner Delia Lowe welcomed the visitors, some 25 artists and members of the LWPA to her country and to the exhibition. Delia expressed support for listing Lake Wollumboola as a Ramsar Wetland, but concern at ongoing plans for development expansion in the Lake catchment.



Rob Dunn, Birdlife Australia Director and Shoalhaven resident opened the exhibition, paying tribute to the national and international importance of Lake Wollumboola as habitat for over 100 bird species and acknowledging the role of LWPA members in advocating for conservation of the Lake and catchment over the past 21 years. Many Birdlife Shoalhaven members attended and the LWPA appreciated this support.

LWPA members were delighted that so many talented artists responded to our invitation to exhibit a range of works inspired by Lake Wollumboola.



The hall buzzed with excitement as visitors and exhibitors alike discussed the works and gained fresh insights into this unique environment. The works included paintings, drawings, mosaics, photographs and Aboriginal sculpture and craft.

Duade Paton won the People's Choice award with his mirror image reflection image of two Black-winged Stilts.



The exhibition included works for sale as well as works on loan. Many artists were successful in selling their works and kindly donated part of the sale price towards ongoing LWPA advocacy.

LWPA members participated both as exhibitors and behind the scene organisers, including providing welcome refreshments.

The exhibition was so successful that both artists and visitors encouraged us to hold another in the near future. We will give further thought to this suggestion, taking account of the preparation work involved !

We would like to acknowledge also the generosity of the Surf Club members in allowing us to hire their great venue gratis.

**Frances Bray**

President, Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc.

## BirdLife Shoalhaven Outings

BirdLife Shoalhaven holds irregular birdwatching activities - see below. In addition there are two local birdwatching groups - the Shoalhaven Birders and the Milton Ulladulla District Birdwatchers - who welcome BirdLife Shoalhaven members to their outings - also shown below. Shoalhaven Birders and MUDBirders are also welcome on BirdLife Shoalhaven activities.

Upcoming birdwatching events are as follows :

### **Sunday 25th January: Vincentia WTP and bushland**

WTP = Wastewater Treatment Plant - i.e. the sewerage works. Because of OH&S we are not allowed inside the grounds, but a track around the perimeter allows good viewing. Meet at **8am** at the front gate.



Photo by Christine Rigg

### **Sunday 8th March: Coomonderry Swamp / 7 Mile Beach**

We will survey birds at Coomonderry Swamp before moving across to the Beach Road Picnic Area behind 7 Mile Beach. Access to the swamp is via a right-of-way near the southern-most point of Campbell's Run (off Beach Rd). Meet at 8am.

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## Shoalhaven Birders Outings

Shoalhaven Birders usually hold birdwatching outings on the third Sunday of the month, meeting at 8.30am.

Upcoming birdwatching events are as follows :

### **15 February 2015: Shoalhaven Heads / Comerong Island**

Meet Shoalhaven Heads entrance carpark

### **15 March 2015 Boyd Lookout / Granite Falls**

Meet Bewong Roadhouse

### **19 April 2015 Ben's Walk**

Meet Nowra Showground lookout

### **MAY 1-4: Weekend at Moruya**

Meet highway Riverside Caravan Park

## 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 :

### **20 January 2015: AGM and Evening Meeting**

Meet: 7:30 pm: Harry Higgs Room

Activity: AGM and General Meeting and presentation by Sue Chatfield (AKA "Sue of the Citrine Wagtail")

### **6 Feb 2015: Excursion – Millard's Creek**

Meet: 8am: Cnr St Vincent St & Geoffrey St Ulladulla

Driving: 0 Time: 0 hr Grade: Easy

Leader: Chris Shinton 4454 5584

### **20 Feb 2015: Excursion – Narawallee**

Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room

Driving: 8 km Time: 0.5 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Geoff Andrews 4454 3580

### **6 March 2015: Excursion – Comerong Island**

Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room

Driving: 160km Time: 3 hrs Grade: Easy

Leaders: Mike Jefferis 4455 5162

### **10 March 2015: Evening Meeting**

Meet: 7:30 pm: Harry Higgs Room

General Meeting

Activity: Chris Brandis talk - subject to be advised

### **20 March 2015: Excursion – Milton Rainforest**

Meet: 8am: Milton swimming pool carpark

Driving: 0 Time: 0 hr Grade: Easy

Leader: Marg Hamon & Maggie Mance 4457 1129

### **26 - 28 March 2015: Campout in the Cowra district**

Leader: TBA

### **3 April 2015: Excursion – Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve**

Meet: 8am: Back of Harry Higgs Room

Driving: 15km Time: 1 hr Grade: Medium for those going down into the rainforest valley, otherwise easy.

Leader: Bob Rusk 4455 2169

### **17 April 2015: Excursion – Little Forest Nature Track**

Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room

Driving: 42km Time: 2 hrs Grade: Easy

Leader: Chris Shinton 4454 5584



## Awards for Frances and Narelle

Late last year two members of the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association ([www.wollumboola.org.au](http://www.wollumboola.org.au)) were the recipients of prestigious awards for their efforts to conserve the Lake Wollumboola environment and its resident and visiting wildlife - particularly its bird life.

Frances Bray, the president of the LWPA, received the Ruth Readford Award for Lifetime Achievement at the 24th Annual NSW Coastal Management Conference at Ulladulla.

The awards are presented to publicly recognise and acknowledge the contributions of individuals, groups, organisations and agencies to ecologically sustainable management of the NSW coastal zone.

The Ruth Readford Award honours an individual who has dedicated significant energies, time and commitment to improving planning and/or management of the NSW coast.

Narelle Wright received the Ziggy Megne Volunteer for the Environment Award from The Nature Conservation Council (NCC).

The NCC acknowledges and appreciates the valuable contributions made by countless volunteers in a broad range of capacities in past and present environmental campaigns and their efforts to make our world a more sustainable place. The Ziggy Megne Volunteer for the Environment Award celebrates these unsung heroes.

Narelle received the award as the most outstanding and inspiring individual who has voluntarily contributed his or her time for the cause of conservation and the environment during 2014.

Articles about Frances and Narelle and the photo of the two winners at work at Lake Wollumboola (below) appeared in both the Illawarra Mercury and South Coast Register.

# South Coast Register

Sunday January 18, 2015

## Top honours for lake's defenders

By ROBERT CRAWFORD Nov. 25, 2014, 3:45 p.m.



PASSIONATE: Narelle Wright and Frances Bray have been honoured for their ongoing environmental efforts.

## Media Watch

### Gardening Australia and the ABC promoting cats

A member of BirdLife Shoalhaven recently complained to Audience Consumer Affairs about the ABC's promotion of cats on its Gardening Australia (GA) television program, and its lack of interest when a complaint was made.

Despite being aware of the dangers of irresponsible cat ownership to Australian wildlife - particularly birds - GA persistently shows cats roaming freely in gardens, rather than showing them in bird-friendly cat runs, or better still, not showing them at all.

GA has said that they may do a segment on responsible cat ownership, e.g. cat runs, this year, which is commendable but not nearly enough.

Cats are not part of a wildlife friendly garden, and it gives a bad impression when cats are shown as part of the gardening experience on Gardening Australia.

There has been an enormous amount of work by local government, State Government and a multitude of agencies including the RSPCA promoting responsible pet ownership and presenting free-roaming cats in gardens negates these campaigns - especially when it is done by the National Broadcaster.

If you have concerns about the depiction of irresponsible cat ownership on the ABC, let them know of your concerns. If commercial stations do the same thing, let them know too, or better yet, let their sponsors know!

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### Australian Geographic

Chris Grounds, the BirdLife Shoalhaven Conservation Officer, recently wrote to the editor of the Australian Geographic (AG) magazine expressing concerns about one of their articles 4x4 driving on Australian beaches.

Many of us volunteer our time trying to protect and conserve beach-nesting birds such as Little Terns, Hooded

Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers, and any promotion of an activity that can only destroy the environment and species that we are trying to save is really disappointing, especially coming from a supposedly "environmentally friendly" publication like AG.

The response from AG was initially pathetic, but eventually they let us know that they are planning an article on the Asian flyways next year and will be including a section on the case for increased protection for sensitive areas of coastline.

If Australian Geographic, or any other magazine, upsets you, let them know - and let us know too!

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### National Parks and Wildlife Service threat to shorebirds

The BirdLife Northern Rivers branch of BirdLife Australia in June 2013 made representations to the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) stating its concerns over allowing 4WD access through the intertidal zone within Wooyung Nature Reserve for vehicles with mobility parking permits.

Like us, BirdLife Northern Rivers is concerned at the potentially damaging effect on shorebirds resulting from 4WD vehicles on the beaches of NSW. This activity is counter to two NPWS policies which clearly intend the prevention of vehicular access along beaches in Nature Reserves. Firstly, the Plan of Management for Wooyung Nature Reserve states that "private vehicles will be prohibited from driving in the reserve" and the Service's "Vehicle Access – General Policy" (2010) states that "Vehicular access to and along beaches ... will have an impact on the environment and may pose a hazard to public safety. Public beach access will not be allowed in nature reserves under any circumstances."

Birdlife Northern Rivers is concerned that permits have been issued in the past, and may be issued in the future, in contravention of the Service's own adopted policies.

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