

Birdlife Shoalhaven Newsletter

Summer 2018



Photo by Lachlan Hall

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Cover Photo

This season's cover photo - of a Southern Boobook - was taken by featured photographer Lachlan Hall - see his interview on page 11 - and photo of Lachlan (below).



Photographer - Lachlan Hall (see interview on page 11)

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 them with any related photos, drawings or maps to brett@brettdavis.com.au

In addition, if you have any bird photographs you would like to share, please send them in as well.

Contributions of articles, images, suggestions, criticisms, feedback and corrections are always welcome.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the BirdLife Shoalhaven members and friends who contributed articles and photos for this newsletter. These include - Lachlan Hall, Catherine Campbell, Frances Bray, Chris Grounds, Yolande Cozijn, Rob Dunn, Roger Goozee, Brett Davis, Charles Dove, Brian O'Leary and Kim Touzel.

In addition, images and text from the following websites may have been used in this newsletter - the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association, Sea-EagleCam.org, BirdLife Australia, the South Coast Register, the BirdFair website and all of the websites mentioned in the Web Watch articles.

Apologies to those contributors whose text or images may not have been acknowledged. If you have not been acknowledged please let the editor know, and the error will be rectified in the next newsletter.

General 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 and BirdLife Australia accept no responsibility for any of the 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, individual contributors and branch members. They may not be the views of BirdLife Shoalhaven or 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.

President's Report

- by Rob Dunn

The year just gone

2017 was another active and productive year for BirdLife Shoalhaven.

The challenges presented by the conservation and advocacy focus of our work has continued and will be a constant looking forward, with the Shoalhaven's increasing population, development and tourism driving pressure on the local environment. Chris Ground's conservation reports in the year have documented these. None of these have been simple or easy to address and have all taken a lot of time, energy and commitment.

Our key communication platforms continued and expanded in 2017. The newsletter is going out to more people and has more content. Facebook and Twitter are reaping similar rewards with the web-site being a further reference source. Many thanks to Brett Davis for the time he puts into this.

Our on-going commitment to the promotion of the MUD Birders' and Shoalhaven Birdwatchers' bird outings has continued with additional walks being put on by BLS members in the Jervis Bay and Basin area.

We organized two evening talks in the year with Gary Howling on the conservation of connectivity in the landscape in April, and Judy Harrington on the White-bellied Sea-eagle and EagleCAM story in November. Both had good turn-outs and added new names to our supporter list.



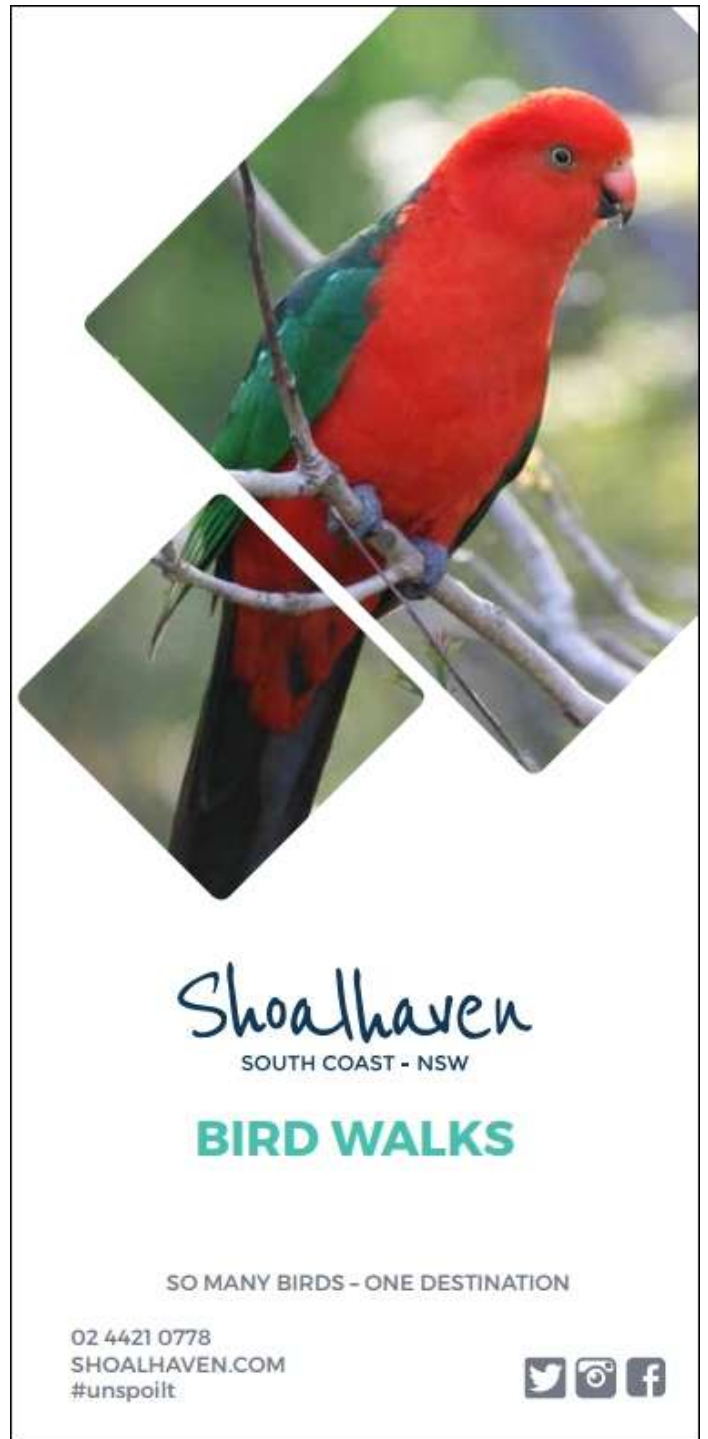
Yolande Cozijn has continued to attract interest in the Birds in Backyard program as guest speaker at a number of community events. In 2017 she gave 12 talks to over 400 people, a number of whom became members.

Two one-off highlights of the year were the Key Biodiversity Area workshop, which we hosted in August, and the production of the new Bird Walks brochure.

The workshop, opened by Mayor Amanda Findley, drew 40 attendees from 14 BirdLife branches and bird clubs

across NSW with training in the Birdata survey tool. This had a number of direct benefits for BLS with newly trained members in survey techniques and setting up survey areas in the Jervis Bay KBA and for key bird walks.

The Bird Walk brochure idea was kicked off in January when we approached the Council's Tourism team. I fully expected a "sounds-good-but-we-do-not-have-funding" response. The opposite was the case and six months later the brochure was complete with 4000 copies printed for us with more copies in the Council's main information offices. I have received many compliments on this initiative and certainly the creative design by Council's in-house graphic designer has added to its appeal.



The year ahead

At our last Committee meeting we signed off on an action plan for the year ahead. This obviously includes all our on-going activities, such as the newsletter, social media, three evening talks, more Birds in Backyard presentations, bird outings and the inevitable conservation and advocacy work.

A flow-on from the KBA workshop and the Bird Walk brochure will involve us in new activities next year with Karen Davis vetting new Birddata records for the Shoalhaven and a core group completing Birddata surveys.

There were some new initiatives that BLS Committee members put their hand up to take the lead on.

Brett Davis is keen to overhaul the web-site and make it more relevant to our audiences. This has already started, so watch-this-space for more.

Mike Jefferis is not satisfied with just getting Council's support for the Bird Walk brochure and now wants to get support to build the Shoalhaven's first bird hide - an exciting goal to set for 2018.

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count was a great success for BirdLife Australia in October. We were a bit slow on picking up on the potential of this Australia-wide project. To do it properly will take effort, but it is a great opportunity, especially to promote birds in our schools, which is an area where we need to make some traction. I have put my hand up to be project leader for this and will be asking for support and ideas of how we can really get behind the Count in October 2018.



Despite these new ideas, a key message from the meeting was not to take on too much and to try to avoid Committee burn-out.

So, we have decided to be more selective on sponsoring films, running bird stalls and making other community presentations. We would still like to take on these activities, but we agreed that this needed to be subject to having enough volunteers to take the lead.

Joining the Committee or being a volunteer

The AGM will be held on Monday 12th February at the Vincentia Golf Club and we hope as many of you as possible will be able to make it. The full details have been emailed out to members and you also find them below.

Unfortunately, in 2017 the Committee lost two key members with the departure of Barry Virtue, who has moved to Bermagui, and Matt Jones for health reasons.

It is always a challenge for any group to find new Committee members. So, the Committee has decided to take a new tack and, rather than simply replacing Barry and Matt, make a greater effort to have members take the lead on one-off or on-going activities.

This has already been happening with some of you leading bird walks, doing bird surveys and, picking up on my last report, adding old copies of the BirdLife magazine to the piles of journals in various reception rooms.

In each newsletter we will have a section on opportunities for volunteers to get involved and would encourage you to add your own projects or ideas - see page 31.

Of course, we are not trying to cut out anyone who feels they have something to add at the Committee level. If that is you, please get in contact with me.

BirdLife Shoalhaven's AGM

The meeting will take place at The Country Club Vincentia (the former Vincentia Golf Club) at 49 Murray Street on **Monday, February 12th, 2018.**

Dinner will be in the room behind the main restaurant from 6pm to be followed by the AGM from 7pm.

You will be able to order from the restaurant's Asian and Australian menu, paying for your own meals and drinks. Hopefully you will be able to join us for dinner or just buy a drink if you prefer.

After the meeting we will be having a bird trivia quiz, taking us through to the end of the evening at 9pm.

The Committee's reports will be brief, as our quarterly newsletters provide a lot of detail on what we have been up to. The meeting will be quick and should not take more than 30 minutes.

As well as having your say at the AGM, the evening will be a chance for you to catch up with fellow birders, as well as an opportunity to test yourself with a fantastic bird trivia quiz!

We hope to see you there!

Birds in Art

by Rob Dunn

Last month, I headed off to Sydney to get some culture. Four exhibitions were on offer, ranging from Dutch masters, to our early botanical illustrators, to photo-journalism, to the darker side of New York in the 60s and 70s. Surprisingly birds could be seen at all four.

Firstly we headed off for the NSW Art Gallery's exhibition of the Dutch Golden Age masters. Courtesy of Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, et al, I expected depictions of wealthy noblemen, biblical scenes, sea battles, women by windows, plants in vases, drunken parties, skaters on frozen lakes and much more.

I was not disappointed and got my cultural fix, while trying to avoid the 11am guided tour and special tours for three primary schools and Chinese and Korean groups.

The work of Melchoir d'Hondecoeter and Jan Weenix were certainly new to me and was not drawing the same crowds as the big names.

All of the painters had their own niche and these two were certainly the bird specialists. Given the time it is not unexpected that a lot of their pictures focused on the spoils of hunting and farm or exotic birds. But I was impressed to see Melchoir's 1686 'Birds in a park' features a very accurate Hoopoe (top left of the painting below).

I have since checked the distribution of *Upupa epops* and my book does not show them as far north as the Netherlands, so perhaps these artists were prone to make use of dead specimens, but it cannot be denied that the earliest bird champions in non-scientific art were Melchoir and Jan!

We then headed on to the NSW State Library for an exhibition of the botanical drawings of Ferdinand Bauer who sailed with Flinders on his 1801 expedition to circumnavigate Australia.

The exhibition focused on Bauer's studies of flora and showed his technique of effectively painting by numbers against a colour key to save time in the field.



The exhibition also featured a study of a Rainbow Bee-eater, by John Lewin, of Lewin's Honeyeater fame. Lewin met Bauer in 1803 in Sydney where he worked as a natural history illustrator until his death in 1819. We always look to John Gould as the forefather of bird illustration, but Gould was only born in 1804.



Also showing at the Library was an exhibition of the top photos in 2017 from the Sydney Morning Herald. I was expecting front page shots of war, famine, politics and other extremes - which is what I got - but I did spot one bird image. It was a photo of someone doing it tough in Waterloo finding solace in the caged birds in his rundown apartment. The caption had a quote from the man about his pets - "They probably think I'm God. I tell them the reality - I'm their servant."



Back at the NSW Gallery after the Dutch Masters, we made a monumental artistic shift to see an exhibition of the confronting photography of Robert Mapplethorpe.

His work features an array of subjects, including celebrity portraits, male and female nudes, self-portraits and still-life images of flowers. A major part of his work focuses on homoeroticism in the underground club scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York City. Given it would be safe to say that birds and homoeroticism are never seen in the same sentence, I was certainly not expecting to see any avian connections in his work.

But then I saw the iconic shot of Patti Smith, his muse and famous rock singer of Because the Night fame, with two white doves providing a balance with her confronting stare at the camera.



In just one day at four exhibitions I had been given avian glimpses from four centuries, through the brushes, inks and cameras of four very different artists.

Bird art and photography is a major focus for birders today, as evidenced in the editor's interview with some of our local photographers. It was gratifying that Dutch Masters, our first naturalists, photo-journalism and even, perhaps just that once, the darker side of the New York city art scene, have also shared our interest.

Conservation Officer Report

- by Chris Grounds

A 2017 Retrospective

Firstly, I must say thank you to BLS committee and members for your support in 2017 and wish everyone in BLS the very best for 2018. The battles will continue.

Well, it has been a more than interesting year on planet Earth and accommodating the multitude of serious environmental issues is a personal challenge for anyone who cares and is concerned. It is a challenge for organizations like BirdLife Australia and BirdLife Shoalhaven who are committed to conservation.

Climate Change and its components remain front and centre. The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has confirmed 2017 was Australia's third-warmest year on record, with temperatures almost a degree above the 1961-1990 average.

The US agriculture department instructs that the terms "climate change" or "greenhouse gases" should not be used in its publications!

At a state level the introduction of the new and misleadingly named "Biodiversity" legislation, replacing established environmental law, has been a seismic shift for the worse in the conservation and care of the environment, habitat and birdlife in NSW.

In terms of direct actions BLS has been involved in two major efforts and a number of other direct actions.

The first was the **TAFE Block**. BLS was a partner with the Heritage Estate Community Network and Jervis Bay Regional Alliance to ensure that a TAFE owned bush block adjacent to Vincentia High School was not sold into private hands.

Success in the lobbying effort with Ministers and the local member and bringing pressure from an extensive array of associated people and environment groups resulted in that land being turned over to the Office of Environment and Heritage for inclusion in the Jervis Bay National Park.

It wasn't a big piece of land but it was a quite symbolic win, recognized in the BirdLife Australia magazine. The land was of significance to BLS because it is in the Jervis Bay KBA and this involved the Eastern Bristlebird.

The second action was to develop a proposal for a **new KBA at Shoalhaven Heads** in line with the development of the KBA concept by BirdLife Australia.

A discussion paper was developed to establish the credentials for recognition as a special biodiverse area worthy of KBA status. The paper established very clearly that the area has outstanding biodiversity credentials.

The BLS paper was built on much of the excellent long term work of staff in the Shoalhaven NPWS and BLS is grateful to Phil Craven for his support.



On that basis the work of BLS also helped to establish a clear and informed position on Shoalhaven Heads, which we previously did not have in hand. We do now and that can serve local conservation for that area.

Indeed it already has done this. A presentation was made to a Local Land Services conference on the Bird based Biodiversity of Shoalhaven Heads and there is now a standing invitation from Shoalhaven Council to deliver the same presentation to a council task force for that area.

The Shoalhaven Heads BLS paper has also been supplied on a confidential basis for reference to Coastal Management staff at Council for consideration on their ongoing management of the area.



Additionally, that presentation led to BLS support for a local conservation effort to preserve an area of bushland on the northern edge of Shoalhaven Heads township. That involved direct submission to the Minister for Environment in support of the local group. It is a small portion of land like the TAFE block but really important in the environmental scheme of things, especially for habitat corridor. Thus our developed position immediately enabled some critical and productive flow-on involvements.

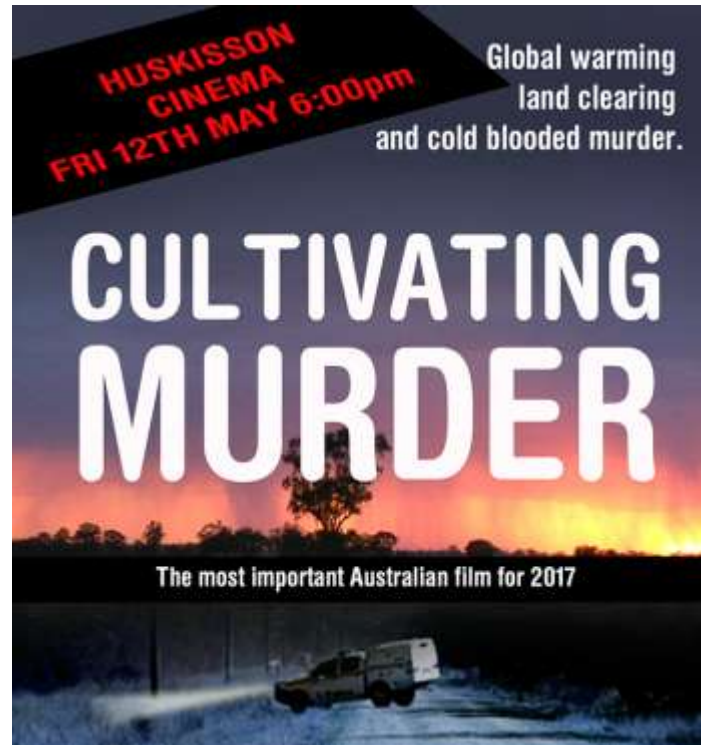
BLS also provided a major submission to Council on a planning proposal for the privately owned “**Worworing Heights Precinct**” opposite the Woolworths Vincentia complex. The land lies in habitat corridor of Jervis Bay National Park with key linkage to Heritage Estate and associated properties.



The BLS hosted October screening of “**Secrets at Sunrise**” made a very important bird conservation story accessible to our members and a host of other interested people. It is a very good film- documentary about the Western Ground Parrot, a close cousin to our own Eastern Ground Parrot and told an intriguing and complex conservation story.



BLS and JBRA co-hosted a May screening of the telling and traumatic “**Cultivating Murder**”, the Greg Miller film-documentary, which took out attention to the horrendous impact of industrial agriculture on habitats in north western NSW and of course on the lives of Glen Turner and his family and co-workers. Glen was murdered in his work by a local land holder.



The most recent guest talk by Judy Harrington about the Newington **Eaglecam-Sea Eagle** project was an absorbing conservation story that as well that laid bare some of the realistic conservation issues for the Sea Eagle on Sydney Harbour that reflected on one of the best known of our local species.



Eastern Osprey - the story continues ...

by Chris Grounds

The latter half of 2017 provided me with an excellent opportunity to stay on the trail and expand on the profile of another threatened species, the Eastern Osprey, which we followed into its fifth nesting at Basin View.



The disappearance of the established resident male and pairing with a new male led to a very late nesting, which was unsuccessful despite the display of known behaviors. So there have been only two successful years for three fledglings from five years of observation.

An audit of the **Atlas of Living Australia** has indicated only 80 records of sightings for the species on the Shoalhaven Coast and only 2 successful nests, both at the Basin View transmission tower. The bulk of records are from OEH staff and Birdata with some private observations.

The picture for the coast south of Wollongong improved dramatically late in 2017 with the successful first nesting of a pair on the **Clyde River estuary** – “Bonnie and Clyde” of course! As with such situations it took a great deal of monitoring.

The interesting aspect of the site was that the nest was in a natural structure of a dead tree, providing good but distant views. The Wollongong and Basin View nests are both on steel towers.



The Eurobodalla Natural History members and myself as our BLS-CO teamed to maintain a reliable record on the site and with registration on the Atlas of Living Australia a valuable extension of the records has been put in place.



The other side of the coin of course is that monitoring efforts need to be recorded to develop databases for such species and provide a scientific basis for assessment. It is possible that the Eastern Osprey is subject to a higher level of threat on the south coast than on the central and north coast of NSW.

BLA's Birdata app fits neatly into this slot and is already being deployed in support of the Jervis Bay KBA.

Threatened Species Conservation

by Chris Grounds

HOODED PLOVER

Individual threatened species stories are necessary grist for the birders' mill that convey complex stories of ecology and geography.

The annual Shorebird Recovery project of the NPWS continues of course along the south coast but one sample of the Hooded Plover has been of specific interest within Booderee National Park.



The **Hooded Plover** three egg nest at Cave Beach, which was in a precarious position, produced two chicks in the week of January 8 after 30 days of incubation. Monitoring through the week by NPWS Shorebird Recovery volunteers, all BLS members and Booderee National Park staff provided key observation and data. Sadly, by the morning of January 11 both chicks had disappeared though parents survived.

This was the second nest of the breeding season, and the eighth of the last three seasons, none of which have produced a fledgling - so hopes were very high. This species is of course Critically Endangered in NSW and Vulnerable under federal legislation.



As with the Western Ground Parrot and Sydney Harbour Sea Eagle a range of threats exist for the Cave Beach 'Hoodies'. They attempt to reproduce in a potentially volatile nesting environment subject to high swell, beach waves, storm winds and 'King Tides' which can bury or drown nest sites. Kangaroos trudging and resting across dunes is common and disruptive and Red-bellied Black snakes roam the area as do foxes on occasions.

That great survivor and scavenger, the Australian Raven is ever present and Silver Gulls never miss a beat in food searches. The rearing territory was being shared with intrusive Masked Lapwings (see confrontation below) and White-faced Herons. Sea Eagles do their regular run along the beach to and from Bherwerre Beach. Throw in the tourist summer crowds and backpacker determination to despoil sites and it is a very challenging mix.



What killed the chicks?

It is not certain, though a certain solo Silver Gull is not very popular! The Hoodie parents mounted a number of aggressive attacks against this gull.

A find by a young lad of a Hoodie chick body on the high tide line had volunteers thinking it may have drowned from an excursion down the beach, which it had been seen doing previously.

The simple message to remember is that, to some degree, a threatened species means that the species is threatened with EXTINCTION.

Lachlan Hall - Photographer

- an interview with BLS

Lachlan Hall (see photo below) is a BirdLife Shoalhaven member who lives at Werri Beach. He is in his early twenties, in the middle of a University course, and he captures award-winning images like the one on the cover of this newsletter. The interview below took place on January 6th, 2018.



BLS: I read that your first camera was a Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ100 super-zoom equivalent to a 600mm lens?

LH: It was. Mum kind of bought it and I hijacked it and started using it. I could fit it in my pocket and go on a walk and pretend I wasn't out there taking bird photos.



BLS: Have you still got it?

LH: It drowned. I was taking photos of seals at the next beach around from Werri Beach and I was getting really close to this guy perched up on a rock when a big wave came in and completely drenched me. The camera just stopped working - instantly - so it's gone - and my Mum still wants me to pay her back ... (laughs)

BLS: And after the Lumix?

LH: I went through a brief limbo period after the Lumix drowned and I just didn't have enough money to buy a proper camera - because they are really expensive and I was just a teenager, but I did a deal with my parents that if I got over 90 in my HSC ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) they would go me halves in a new camera, or something like that. I guess it was also good that I was not taking photos through that period when I was supposed to be studying - I spent less time outside running around after birds! So I went through that stage of nothing, and I got good HSC marks, and I got a Canon 7D with a Canon 400 prime lens and they are the ones that I still have now.

I kind of want to upgrade, so I am just saving up a bit of money at the moment. It is always expensive getting camera gear, but they have served me really well. There was a huge difference from that first point and shoot as you can imagine, and they are a good bit of kit.

BLS: So why Canon?

LH: I think it doesn't matter - Canon or Nikon - they both have really good equipment and they are pretty equivalent. I have friends who shoot Nikon and it's really awesome kit. It was mostly for the 400 lens because it was the sharpest introductory telephoto lens at a price that I could afford - like I picked it up for just over \$1,000 - and Nikon didn't really have an equivalent from what I could tell at the time. They had more expensive lenses like the 500 F4 - but those ones cost in excess of five grand. So I went for Canon mostly because of that 400 prime lens which was relatively cheap and still really sharp.

I don't have anything against Nikon - I use Nikon binoculars and they are good! - but I knew a couple of people who had the same Canon setup as I got - the 7D and the 400 prime - and they were taking really good photos, so I knew that if my photos weren't as good as theirs then I wouldn't have any excuses because of my equipment.

BLS: What are your favourite birds?

LH: The raptors. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is my favourite bird - they're cool - I always get excited watching them soaring around - more than any other bird they just make

you wish that you could fly. Sea-eagles are good too. I was in the surf with just me and my mate and we saw a Sea-eagle fly over the cliffs and dive down to take a fish and he said "Whoa - that was awesome!" and he's not a birder, and I think that everyone should be able to appreciate that.



Osprey

BLS: In a Feathers and Photos interview you said you were studying biology, but that was three years ago, so what are you doing now?

LH: I would like to say that I have finished my degree, but that is not entirely true ... (laughs). I have done the three years of undergrad and that all went pretty well and I got good marks and stuff, but it was a four year course including honours. I ended up getting a bit of work at the end of my third year - where I was volunteering on a koala project up around the Southern Highlands and the Wollondilly, then getting work with them spotting and catching koalas, and I got more work so I decided to give honours a miss while I worked on and off for a year - and it has been great - but now I still have one year of honours to go, and I think I will be going back to Uni in the middle of this year. I am not exactly sure what I will be doing - I am not great at planning ahead!

Things just come up and I jump on that and I think "oh yeah, I will get a bit of work here, and I will go out to the desert and I will do such and such" - like I was out catching penguins on Five Islands just before Christmas and the lady from National Parks said I should do my honours out there, and I thought yeah, that might happen, so I might potentially be doing research on Five Islands with one of the seabirds that are nesting out there.

BLS: So you have been doing a lot of networking ... ?

LH: That's it - I have a good network now, and I have been getting some contract ecology work through it. I am going out again next week to do some survey work in the Snowy Mountains, doing some spotlighting and Elliot trapping, and I have been working with National Parks as well, but as much as I want to keep doing that, I think I should finish my honours degree and get that out of the way first, because if I keep going like I am it is just going to get better and better and it will be harder to go back. It was good to take a year off, but I think I should get that qualification. My dad always wanted me to get a job - like at a supermarket or something like that - but now I can get paid to go out and spot koalas or do bird surveys - which is totally ridiculous - but it has just been through networking, and volunteering, and being very lucky.

BLS: So you've always had an interest in birds AND photography?

LH: Probably birds first - but the photography soon started because I wanted to show people the cool stuff that I was seeing. I distinctly remember, when I was quite young, like ten or something, and we were staying up on the New England plateau at a place where there were quolls. We left out little bits of bacon pieces for them, and I went down to the shops and got Mum to buy me one of those little instant cameras, and I remember sitting at the little window sill and eventually after a couple of hours this quoll came down and I got this really terrible photo of it eating bacon out of a plate, and I was so excited and showing everyone. That's where it all started, with animals and then with birds - trying to ID them all, and some friends gave me a bird book and I tried to figure out all the birds I was seeing, and I started keeping a list - and it helped a lot with the photos and actually being able to ID the birds.



I think I got a photo of a Cisticola and I sent it to the Feathers and Photos identification page and asked "What is this wren? I don't know what this wren is! I have looked through all the wren pages and I can't understand why I can't find it" and then someone said it was a Cisticola and I was like "Oh, okay" ... so the photos helped with identification, but it was also wanting to show Mum or whoever this cool bird that I saw ... and then I wanted to get better shots.

I thought I was taking some cool photos but then I got on Feathers and Photos and saw the awesome shots that other people were taking, and I'm pretty competitive and I wanted to get better and it just flowed on from that.

A lot of birdwatchers are pretty weird, I mean I am pretty weird too, but it is really cool knowing what everything is. Some people know the length of the sixth primary on a particular wader - but I am not quite at that stage yet.

BLS: Have you ever thought about taking up photography professionally?

LH: No, not really. I have had some luck selling some of my photos - Bush Heritage bought some of my Plains Wanderer photos to use in their publications and media stuff, and I sold a few to BirdLife who wanted to use them at certain times, but it is just a hobby. I love doing it, and if I can make some money along the way - great - but if I don't then I will keep doing it anyway.

BLS: So you are more interested in becoming a scientist rather than a photographer?

LH: Yeah, I think science has better prospects for a career. I have always liked the idea of doing documentaries like the latest David Attenborough Blue Planet 2 documentary, and I would love to take people out guiding, but I think I could get frustrated doing that - I don't know that I would be good at that or not. But that said, if National Geographic got onto me and asked me to go to New Guinea and take photos of Birds of Paradise I would definitely take that up, but it's a long stretch so I think I will stick to my science career and see what happens with that ...

BLS: You have an online photographic presence?

LH: Yeah, I am on Feathers and Photos, and on Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/123952930@N04 plus I'm on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lachlan.hall.798 but I have been pretty slack on keeping that updated lately. Actually I haven't been taking a lot of bird photos recently - I have a mate who's interested in frogs and I have been taking lots of photos of frogs and lizards and things with him. I go out with him to 2am or 3am in the morning and then if you want to go birding I have to be up early for the dawn chorus, so it gets pretty tiring.



A couple of years ago I was up on Cape York in the Iron Range and I wanted to see all the birds up there that I hadn't seen yet, but I also wanted to see all of the reptiles and I was looking for green pythons at night and after three days I was absolutely trashed. I was up early trying to find Yellow-billed Kingfisher and Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo and then I would be up after midnight looking for pythons and frogs and things, and it was just exhausting trying to do everything!



BLS: You mentioned that you sold some photos to BirdLife and I notice that you have quite a few photos in the latest magazine ...

LH: I didn't sell any of those ones - I just gave them to BirdLife - because they were small things, but a couple of times they wanted a full page photo - like a big one of a Whistling Duck a while back and there's been a few others, and I did an article in the Photolab section and I got paid for that which was really cool, especially when you already have gone out and taken the photos in your free time and someone says "I will give you money for these" ...

My biggest payoff was the recent BirdFair competition. I went on a birding trip earlier last year down to Victoria where I was trying to get pictures of birds like the Rufous Bristlebird and Cape Gannets, and we got the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and I had seen Plains Wanderers before but my friend hadn't so we did a tour with Phil Maher, and he said we might not see any, but we ended up seeing thirteen or fourteen of them in the one night and we got some awesome views ...



Anyway, it was at the end of the Plains Wanderer tour sometime after midnight and we were just driving back to camp when suddenly "Oh there's a Boobook!" in the middle of the road, and everybody was already sick of me taking so many photos of Plains Wanderers but I thought "Stuff it - I will do it anyway" so I spent 10 or 15 minutes crawling up to it and taking photos - it just sat in the middle of the road in the headlights - that was the only lighting, no flash or anything - and I ended up winning that competition - and oh, man! I won a pair of Swarovski binoculars with that photo, so it is always worth spending some extra time out there, even if your friends are getting really annoyed at you!



Lachlan Hall with his Mum and winning photo

I wasn't expecting to win at all, but I went up to the BirdFair with my mate to check it out, and I said to him that I think I got a few photos in the gallery as well, and then I saw the winning photo up on the wall and someone said "Oh you're Lachlan!?" and I said "Yeah that's me" and they said "Come look at this!" and I said "Oh sick!" - yeah I was frothing, and those binoculars are so good - they are SO good! I never would have bought anything like them, at least until I grew up a bit and got a proper job. But I don't know whether I can go back now after looking at a bird through Swarovski binoculars - it is a whole different experience.

I was really impressed with my old Nikon Monarch 10 x 42's - I still have them downstairs and I am going to give them to a friend who doesn't have any binoculars - but when there is tricky lighting like backlighting or shadows you can really see the difference with the Swarovskis. If you spend a lot of time birdwatching, it is an investment that is really worthwhile. It is worth spending the money if you are doing it for something you love. Like you put up with Black and Gold peanut butter so that one day you can buy Swarovski binoculars!



BLS: A few years ago you also won an award - in the 2012 BirdLife Australia Photo Competition - for best photo by a junior ... ?

LH: Yeah, that was for a Spotted Harrier. That was with the superzoom camera, when I got really lucky. It was probably only about 400 metres from my house, just up on the headland above Werri Beach, and it was the first time that I had seen the Spotted Harrier - I thought it was a Swamp Harrier at the time. It was a young bird, and it wasn't too wary, but after I spotted it, it flew a short distance away and landed again, so I jumped over the fence into this person's paddock and crawled right up to it and it just sat there watching me. I wasn't wearing any camouflage gear at the time, and I just had my point and shoot camera stuffed away in my pocket, and I was just going for a walk looking for birds and things.

He could see me well and truly, but he was a really young bird and probably didn't see me as a threat, and I must have been less than ten metres away from it when I took the photo - but I have never had that kind of luck with a Harrier ever again!

BLS: Are you old enough to have a bogey bird?

LH: Yeah, for a while it was the Owlet Nightjar but I got him early in 2017. Then it was the Australasian Bittern. They reported Bitterns at the Tallawarra Ash Ponds, and me and my friend spent a lot of time walking around in the reeds up there, but with no luck, then a couple of months ago at a swamp between Yass and Canberra we walked around for about an hour and flushed a couple of Bitterns - and it was very exciting! So I am probably free of bogey birds at the moment, but maybe it's because I just haven't been doing much birding lately.

BLS: Do you keep lists?

LH: Oh, yeah, I do ... actually I have got it right here - (opens up the laptop on the table) - I was working on it yesterday. I have all sorts of lists - all my frogs, all my birds, all my reptiles - they are all listed - let's see - birds - 544 at the moment - so it's getting up there ...

BLS: Do you think you will ever catch up to Mike Carter (893) or Richard Baxter (882)?

LH: No, I don't think I could ever be bothered ... like I would never jump on a plane to twitch a bird. I would never have gone up to see the Aleutian Terns (near Taree) if I hadn't already been going up to a place only an hour away anyhow.

Oh, I did do a road trip to go down to see the Little Stint - that was quite a trek, that was a two-dayer - it was about an hour out of Melbourne, but we made a little trip out of it and went to look for Leadbeater's Possums and saw some other birds as well, and that was kind of fun ...



BLS: Are there places in Australia you haven't been where you could pick up a lot of birds - like Tasmania or the Cape for example?

LH: I did Tasmania last Summer, we did the hike, the South Coast Track, so we walked to Melaleuca and that was quite rewarding - we saw the Orange-bellied Parrots - but their survival is not looking too good at the moment - that's really unfortunate. I have really only done the East Coast, from Tasmania up to the Cape. We have been to the Cape twice now. I was up there helping to study Palm Cockatoos in my first year at Uni, and then in my second year we did a family trip up to the tip. So, the Northern Territory - Kakadu, Darwin -there's a lot of birds for me there, and Western Australia - I've never been there so there's heaps of stuff over there for me as well.

Yeah, there's lots left to do, but I'm not really in too much of a rush to see everything - like I don't want to see all the birds before I turn 25 or anything ... and have nothing else to look for ... (laughs)

BLS: So how do you get close to birds?

Different techniques for different birds. Back when I started out I was trying to sneak up to everything, but for little birds like Brown Thornbills and the small bush birds that's not really the way to go for them - you want them to come to you so you set up a water dish with a branch over it, or play their calls or you make squeaky noises because they are really inquisitive and they will come in to have a look ...

Photographing waders ... it's a lot of fun but a lot of the time you get dressed up and just go crawling around in the mud ... it is good fun but you get back to the car covered in mud and smelling like swamp. When we went down to Victoria last year I bought this Ghillie suit ... but so far I think I have spent more time in it dressed up for dress-up parties than I have for chasing birds (laughs).



Anyhow, we were in Victoria and we found a Malleefowl mound that was active so early next morning I put on the Ghillie suit and went and crouched down by the mound and eventually got a few photos of the Malleefowl. The suit works really well ... but I haven't used it a lot.

So, sneaking up to waders, slowly - it is really a matter of reading the birds to see if they are comfortable with your presence. Sometimes I will get down and start crawling and I can tell from the reactions of the birds that they really aren't happy with me being there - so I just give up.



Brian O'Leary modelling a Ghillie suit

There were times when I was at Lake Wollumboola with Duade Paton and Matt Jones a lot - and the birds were just like "Oh, not these guys again!" and they pretty much ignored us, and we could get quite close really easily, but it takes a lot of time, and also a lot of luck.

BLS: What is more important - the right equipment or knowledge of birds?

LH: Knowledge of birds, definitely. I feel that once you have the right level of equipment, kit that is capable of taking a good photo, then it is all about knowledge of birds - getting close, bringing the birds in, knowing what angle to shoot at to blur the background - that's what makes the difference.

We were out at Lady Elliott island a couple of years ago and I was there with my little camera trying to get close to some Oystercatchers, and there was this guy with a 400mm 2.8 lens which was really big and really heavy - lots of glass - and the camera body he had was the latest and greatest - but the Oystercatchers were down on the ground and he was shooting from a monopod at head height and I could just tell that he was not going to get a great looking photograph from that angle, because when you get down and low at the bird's eye level, it makes for a much more intimate shot.

Even if I was using my old point-and-shoot my photo would have looked better than his just because of the angles. Shooting down on the birds, the background is just going to be totally in-focus grass behind the bird - sure the bird is sharp, but getting low gives a totally blurred background that focuses attention on the subject.



BLS: Have you done any photography courses?

LH: No, but the things that have helped me the most were Feathers and Photos and having other people give me advice. And also shooting with photographers who were heaps better than me, and seeing what they do, and them just helping me out because they are nice. So I haven't done any courses or anything like that, but I have spent a lot of time researching on the Internet.

BLS: What do you use for post processing?

LH: I have downloaded Lightroom but I haven't got used to using it yet because I have always used Photoshop. I plug my photos into my computer and they all appear in Camera Raw where I can make adjustments similar to Lightroom.

If you take a good photo, you don't need to do much afterwards. A few little tweaks, but you don't want to be doing too much to your images. You can tell when people have made too many adjustments. The goal is to get the image looking exactly like what I saw when I was there. You don't want to make it look unrealistic.

BLS: Do you print your photos?

LH: Sometimes, mostly for my Mum so I can have presents for Christmas or birthdays or whatever. I started off getting them printed at a camera shop in Kiama but they never turned out very well, then I found a guy that someone else recommended in Milton - Steve Shipton - who does aluminium prints, and I have been getting a few from him (<http://www.signtext.com.au/>)

BLS: What's the one thing you know now that you wish you knew when you started taking photos?

LH: When I first got my camera I was so excited but I didn't know about things like aperture and I thought I should just put the camera on shutter priority to freeze the action, so I set it for 1/800th and just left it on that to make sure my photos were sharp, but now I shoot in all manual so I can control all the bits and pieces.

I was down south of Eden at the Ben Boyd National Park and I spent three mornings up on the plateau tracking down Ground Parrots.



Eventually I flushed one and I got really close to it and took some photos. I was really stoked with the photos at the time, but now I think "if only" because I think I was shooting at f11 which gave me too much depth of field, especially birds which blend into the background so easily - a shallower depth of field would have been nice.

BLS: Any final words of advice or encouragement for someone just starting out?

LH: I just love looking at good photographs of birds, so the biggest help for me was looking at other people's images and working out exactly how they got their photos to look better than mine.

I strive to capture something extra in a shot that maybe lets the viewer connect on an emotional level with the bird. I think the only way to help save the natural world is having as many people as possible that appreciate its value and actually want it to be saved.









For lovers of birds and whodunnits

by Catherine Campbell

I became obsessed with murder mysteries and was sitting down with a good whodunnit book long before I became a birder. That is me in the photo below ...



But for those of you who think you cannot combine both birds and whodunnits, you would be wrong.

Many of you will have enjoyed episodes of the BBC's 'Shetland' and 'Vera' series on the TV and read the books on which they were based by Ann Cleeves.

But did you know that before she became a successful crime writer one of her jobs was as a cook in various bird observatories around the United Kingdom?

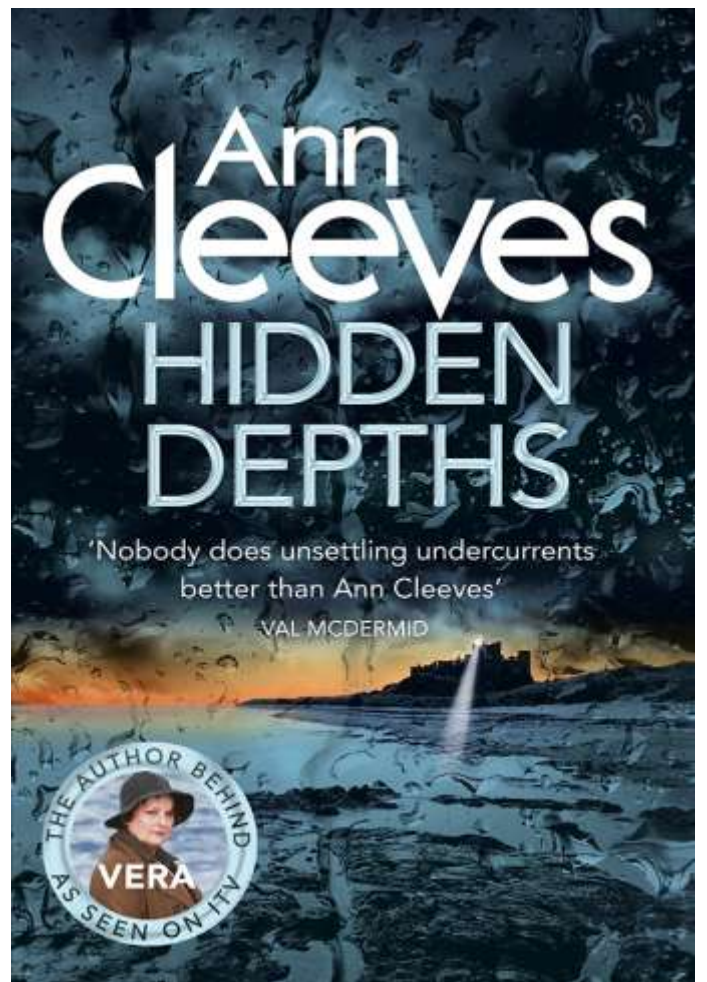


Ann Cleeves

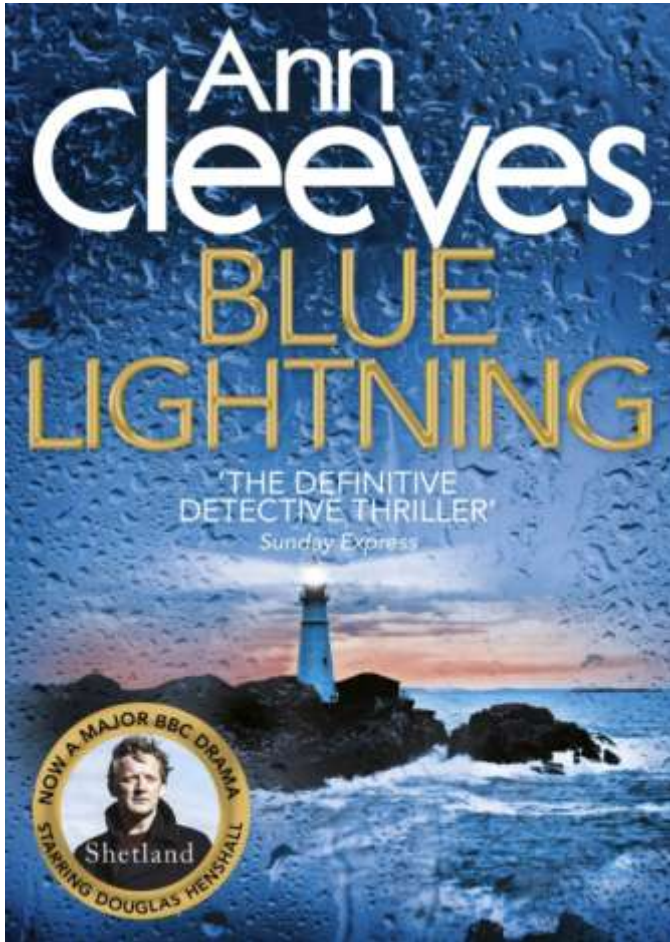
She is the creator of two detectives, Vera Stanhope, who works in Northumberland in north England, and Jimmy Pérez, who is based in the Shetland Islands in Scotland. Vera is well acquainted with the world of birds and birders. Her (deceased) father Hector was a seriously bad egg who engaged in all sorts of illegal (bird related) activities. Pretty much most of the action of these novels are in rural areas with strong themes associated with the environment - and frequently birds.



In the Vera Stanhope novel 'Hidden Depths', three of the main male protagonists are birdwatchers. A great deal of the dialogue is associated with coastal birdwatching and one of the murder victims is actually found in a rock pool close to where the three birdwatchers were observing seabirds. Without spoiling the story, you will be shocked to know that one of them is the murderer. All is revealed in a bird observatory, where there is much mention of mist nets!



One of the Jimmy Pérez novels called 'Blue Lightning' is set in and around the Fair Isle Bird Observatory with lots of discussion on the various birds which are spotted during the course of the novel. This time round the murderer is not a birdwatcher but is closely related to one of them!



A new writer, Steve Burrows, emerged in only 2015 with three novels already written in his 'Birder Murder Mystery series'.

He was certainly a birder before a writer. He has pursued his bird watching hobby on five continents and was the editor of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Magazine and a contributing field editor for Asian Geographic.

The title of his novels will certainly get a birders attention – 'A Siege of Bitterns', 'A Pitying of Doves', 'A Cast of Falcons'. As well as adding some new bird collective nouns and words like crepuscular to your vocabulary, you will also learn about the Socorro Dove, the Gyrfalcon, the American Bittern and the challenges of bird captive breeding and the avian black market. Great stories and bird facts and insights in one read!

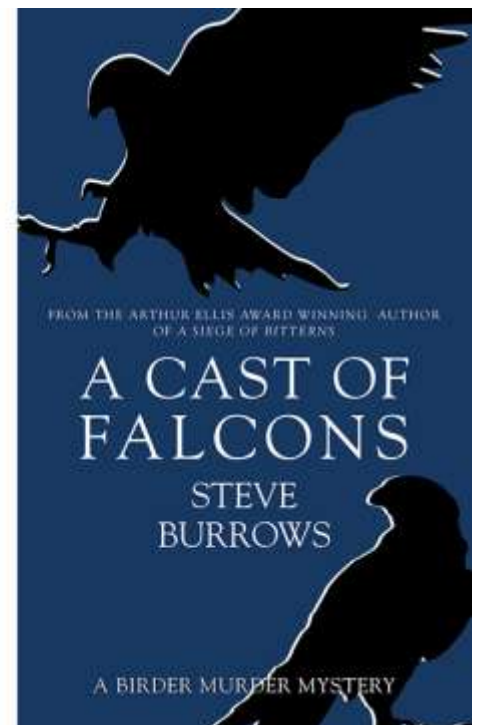
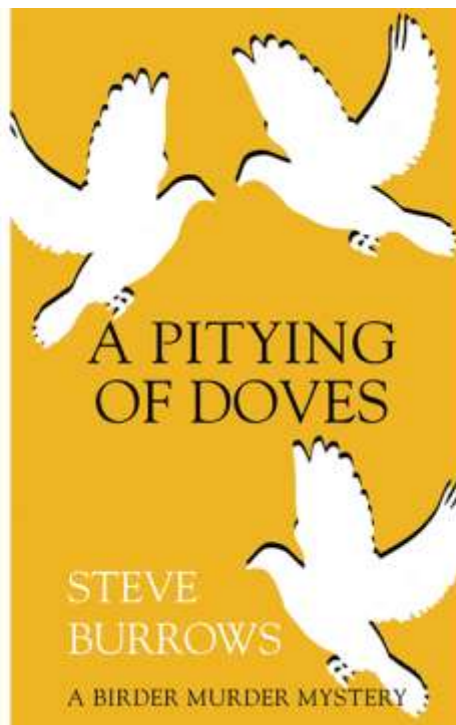
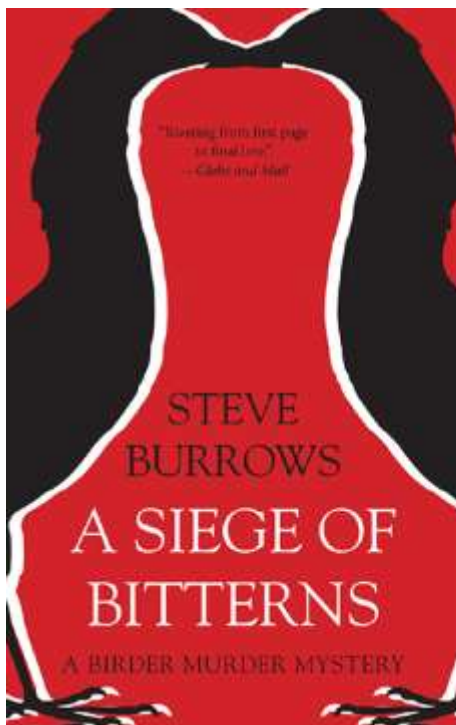
The books are set in the birder's paradise of the coastal wetlands near Cley in Norfolk England with birdwatchers and environmentalists being both victims and suspects.

The stories all centre around DI Domenic Jejeune, who, like the author, is a birder first and expert sleuth second.

He often confounds his colleagues with his sudden lack of interest in the case when he picks up a rare bird on the horizon and with his awkward and aloof style of communication. Clearly Burrows has observed the behaviour of both birds and some birders in his time!

For me, no bird library would be complete without copies of these five novels.

All filed under 'Whodunnits' of course!



Award for Frances Bray

South Coast conservationist and BirdLife Shoalhaven member Frances Bray (pictured below) was awarded the prestigious Alan Strom Hall of Fame Award late last year at the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) 2017 NSW Environment Awards - for untiring dedication to conservation and environmental education.

Since 1993 when she established the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association to lobby for the protection of the lake's natural values, Frances has been the driving force behind the lake's conservation.



The citation for the award reads as follows ...

"Frances Bray has dedicated years to the preservation of Lake Wollumboola on the South Coast, and our incredible coastal zone more broadly. In 1993, Frances established the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association to lobby for the protection of the lake's natural values.

"For many years Frances has volunteered to protect shorebirds, including the little tern and pied oystercatcher, and has documented more than 100 bird species that visit the lake. Frances feels a special responsibility for the little tern.

"With ongoing threats from predators and human pressures, Frances and her colleagues give their time to educate beachgoers about the bird's nesting behaviour and threats to its survival.

"Since the early 1990s, she has monitored the lake's population of endangered green and golden bell frogs that breed in the wetlands on the northern shore. With their distinctive markings, Frances has been able to recognise individuals each year. The species disappeared from Lake Wollumboola for several years but to her delight, they were recorded again in 2015.

"For Frances, the environmental volunteer experience continues to be an enriching journey of discovery in understanding the lake's environment and the fascinating

species it supports. She hopes to inspire others to join her in the challenge."



Frances (centre) with Wendy Bowman and Prof. Don White

Frances regards the NCC Alan Strom award as a great honour from her peers in the environmental protection community, as Alan played a significant role in establishing the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and in fostering environmental education.

Frances continues as a NPWS Shorebird Volunteer at Lake Wollumboola, with most of her time this shorebird season spent monitoring the resident Pied Oystercatcher pair at Lake Wollumboola. After months of waiting, she found their two-egg nest on 11th December. Frances and other volunteers have daily monitored the nesting site and small electric fence erected immediately by NPWS staff.

Tragically one of the eggs was lost to fox attack early on 31st December as captured on camera. However, to the delight of parents and carers, a chick hatched overnight on 2-3rd January, whilst the same night, NPWS marksmen shot 3 young foxes in the area. Let's hope the chick survives.

Once again Lake Wollumboola has experienced a poor shorebird season, with Little Terns showing interest but departing after one lost nest, and all except one Red-capped Plover nest lost to Ravens. Few migratory waders visited apart from a rare Broad-Billed Sandpiper.

Likely causes include disturbance from too many human visitors, particularly prawners at night and earlier in the season, crabbers during the day. Other considerations are changes to the sand bar and habitat, with limited protection for nesting shorebirds following the 2016 East Coast Low.

At the NCC Awards ceremony NCC President Don White also referred to Frances's contribution to NCC Planning and Coastal Policy, as a member of the NCC Planning Working Party from 2012 to 2017 when she resigned to devote more time to Lake Wollumboola and regional issues.

Frances's contributions to NCC environment campaigns, included work on NCC submissions regarding the 2013 Planning Bill (since withdrawn), the NSW Coastal Management Bill now Act 2017 and membership of the NPWS South Coast Region (now Branch) Advisory Committee.

In addition to volunteering as a Shorebird and Bushcare volunteer, her main contribution and that of LWPA members over 25 years has been the campaign to protect Lake Wollumboola and its catchment as part of Jervis Bay National Park and to have the lake listed as a Ramsar wetland of international importance and the catchment protected from major urban expansion.

The environment protection and planning achievements of this campaign from 1993 include:

- three expert independent NSW Government inquiries which resulted in recommendations for protection of the lake and its catchment from urban expansion via rezoning as part of the Shoalhaven LEP, with NPWS including the south west catchment in Jervis Bay National Park in 1998.
- declaration of the lake bed and sand bar as part of Jervis Bay National Park in 2002.
- In principle support for Ramsar listing.
- delay to decisions regarding the West Culburra mixed use development application 2010 and the Long Bow Point Golf course application 2011, both including parts of the lake catchment. The Department of Planning and Environment is now assessing these State Significant applications with decisions likely in 2018.
- Government Agency research 2013-15 confirming the unique character of the lake ecosystem and sensitivity to development pressures, justifying catchment protection.
- acceptance by NSW Governments and agencies that Lake Wollumboola is of international significance, with the current Government regarding the lake as an "ecological jewel." (Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan). 2015 with lake catchment lands south of Culburra Rd, including Long Bow Point, to be zoned for environment protection not urban development because of potential negative impacts on the lake. Zoning of other catchment lands are subject to further environmental studies.

The NSW Minister for Planning agreed in 2014 to defer the Halloran Trust lands from the Shoalhaven LEP to enable a Planning Proposal to be progressed to resolve differences regarding future land use zonings, including the Lake catchment, with the Halloran Trust and Shoalhaven City Council supporting development expansion in the lake catchment and key Government Agencies concerned that existing research and evidence did not support such zoning.

In November 2015 the Department released the Halloran Planning Proposal Determination. This sets specific conditions for zonings and further studies of the Lake catchment, including environment protection zoning for Long Bow Point and biodiversity offsets that include offers from the Halloran Trust for land within the lake catchment to be dedicated to Jervis Bay National Park.

Shoalhaven City Council in September 2017 recommended to the Department of Planning and Environment that the Halloran Planning Proposal be split into the Callala Bay - Kinghorn Point portions and the Culburra Beach portion. The Department is considering Council's proposal, which the LWPA considers contains significant omissions.

Such changes raise further uncertainties regarding the future of the lake catchment and therefore to long term survival of this unique, diverse and internationally significant habitat for birds in particular.

Frances and LWPA members will continue to keep a close watch on the studies required, particularly the ground and surface water, biodiversity offset and Aboriginal cultural heritage studies and the assessment process under way between Shoalhaven City Council, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and the Halloran Trust.

LWPA members remain committed to the Lake Wollumboola cause despite the Planning Proposal process likely to take a further 2-3 years to resolve, including community consultation.

They look forward to continuing support from Birdlife Shoalhaven members in this critical campaign.



The LWPA website www.wollumboola.org provides further details regarding Lake Wollumboola and its catchment and the LWPA campaign."

Facebook - what you are missing!

If you don't follow the BirdLife Shoalhaven Facebook page - at www.facebook.com/shoalhavenbirdlife - then you miss out on some fascinating stories and excellent photography.

In the past couple of months we have had posts on movies at Huskisson, a link to breaking news about Tasmania's Orange-bellied Parrots and reports on how to vote for Australia's Bird of the Year - and who won!



There was also a report on the NPWS Summer Holiday Program of discovery walks, talks and tours, with dates and locations for all activities.



In addition we have regular contributions of photos (see next page) from Charles Dove and Kim Touzel, including the continuing photographic story of a family of Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes and their trials and tribulations while nesting in Kim's backyard.



We also had some photos from the birdwatching outings by the Shoalhaven Birders and BirdLife Shoalhaven to Lake Wollumboola and Bangalee Reserve in November ...



So why not visit our Facebook page regularly!



Variegated Fairy-wren - Lake Conjola NSW charles dove 11/2017



© Kim Fouzel

Web Watch - Warm Season 2018

- by Chris Grounds

It is amazing the number of interesting articles in the print-web media about birds. That is a good thing but in the interest of knowing about them and conservation I put Web Watch together each season.

You will notice I stick to reliable web-print media sources and the articles cover general interest, research and conservation. There is plenty of all of this in this Web Watch including, by mandatory decree, our supposedly "beloved" Magpie, Australia's most popular bird.

We kick off with a bird that is a key to the biodiversity in the proposed Shoalhaven Heads KBA - see the first snippet below. There is also a special 'seniors' feature on the albatross.

Remember to just highlight, copy and paste the web address into your browser.

Australasian Bittern

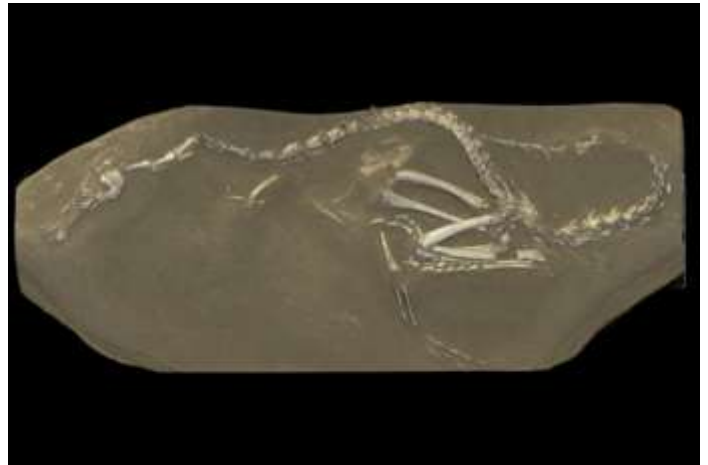
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-08/cryptic-sneaky-rare-bunyip-bird-puzzles-delights-birdwatchers/9125618>



Bob Green's eyes light up when he hears the Australasian bittern's booming call at Bool Lagoon. "It's a great thing, a special thing to hear," he said. "I can guarantee that there'll be smiling faces if anyone else here has heard bitterns tonight." The ornithologist from Mt Gambier is leading field surveys of the globally-endangered species, thought to be as little as 2,000 birds remaining across Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia.

Duck-like dinosaur

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-07/duck-dinosaur-fossil-discovered-in-mongolia/9234342>



With a bill like a duck but teeth like a crocodile, a swanlike neck and killer claws, a new dinosaur species uncovered by scientists looks like something Dr Seuss could have dreamed up.

It also had flippers like a penguin, and while it walked like an ostrich it could also swim. That is the first time swimming ability has been shown for a two-legged, meat-eating dinosaur. The tiny creature, only about 45 centimetres tall, roamed 75 million years ago in what is now Mongolia.

The World's Oldest Known Wild Bird Is About to Become a Mum at 67, Baffling Scientists

<http://www.sciencealert.com/laysan-albatross-laid-egg-67-wisdom-oldest-known-wild-bird?perpetual=yes&limitstart=1>



One Laysan albatross is brazenly defying the norms for her species. Wisdom, the world's oldest known wild bird, has returned to home port and laid an egg - at the magnificent age of 67 years old.

It's a feat that gets more impressive every year because the lifespan of Laysan albatrosses is around 50 years.

Fighting feral cats with lasers and poison spray in remote Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-18/feral-cat-management-in-the-apy-lands>



A new feral cat management device that uses lasers to detect the shape and movements of cats has been deployed in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

Dubbed the Felixer, the machine has been specially designed to help reduce the number of large feral cats that live in far north-west South Australia. University of South Australia ecologist John Read helped develop the machine, which shoots toxic gel at cats walking past.

John Gould dined out on Australian Parrots

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/dec/30/pecking-order-how-john-gould-dined-out-on-the-birds-of-australia>



Of all the changes to the study of ornithology in the past 200 years, the most striking, when reading John Gould's seven-volume 1848 treatise *The Birds of Australia*, is the apparent lack of interest among modern scientists in what their subjects taste like.

Gould left no such questions unanswered. The prototype of his beautifully illustrated guide, digitized and made available online by the State Library of New South Wales, contains many tips for sportsmen on how to shoot each of the featured birds and what they tasted like.

Endangered Short-tailed Grasswren population survives fire in remote South Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-02/rare-short-tailed-grasswren-population-survives-gawler-ranges/9219746>



A survey of a remote, rocky habitat full of spinifex grass in South Australia has found a rare bird still lives in the area, despite fears it could have been wiped out in a fire six years ago. The Short-tailed Grasswren is only found in South Australia, with the Gawler Ranges subspecies classed as endangered, and Flinders Ranges subspecies considered vulnerable.

Magpies: 10 things you may not know about Australia's 'favourite bird'

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-12-11/magies-ten-things-you-didnt-know/9245780>



Magpies. They're a gardener's dream, a cyclist's nightmare, and **Australia's bird of the year**.

But while we all know them for their sweet song and terrifying aerial assaults, there's a lot more to magpies than meets the eye.

So to help us all get to know these singing assassins a little better, here's a few things that may (or may not) surprise you about our favourite feathered friends ...

Maggie geese in their tens of thousands mustered by crop chopper in Kimberley's Ord.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-11-08/maggie-geese-mustered-by-crop-chopper-in-kimberleys-ord/9129542>



A Kimberley muster pilot has taken to the skies over the Ord Irrigation Scheme to round up thousands of magpie geese feeding on crops. He said this season he decided to think outside the box to keep the unwelcome visitors out of his seed crops. "They don't worry the corn at all but they forage sorghum, any that's damaged and laying down close to the ground, they'll feed on all night," he said. "They land en mass, we're talking around 5,000-10,000 birds, and if you leave them they'll clean the whole crop up."

Orange-bellied Parrot survival boosted

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-30/orange-bellied-parrot-survival-boost-with-arrival-second-female/9100910>



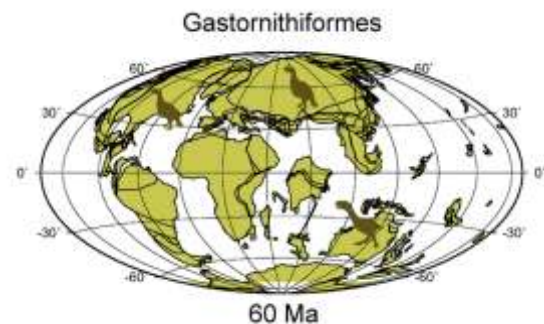
An early call has been made that the endangered orange-bellied parrot's future is secure for another year. A second wild female bird has been found at Melaleuca in Tasmania's wild south-west, taking the total to 12 males and two females. The birds migrate from Victoria and South Australia to Tasmania each year.

New research reveals the origin of Australia's extinct flightless giants, the mihirung birds

<https://theconversation.com/new-research-reveals-the-origin-of-australias-extinct-flightless-giants-the-mihirung-birds-85394>



Australia's living flightless birds - the emu and close relative the cassowary - once roamed alongside much larger birds that resembled dinosaurs. These huge creatures are known as mihirungs, based on the Aboriginal term for "giant bird". The mihirungs not only reached much larger sizes than emus, cassowaries, ostriches, kiwis and kin (known collectively as ratites), but were much more intimidating in appearance. Unlike the small-headed ratites, they had massive skulls, with sail-like bills.



New bird discovered in Sydney Botanic Garden

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/new-bird-discovered-in-sydney-botanic-garden-20180104-h0dg8c.html>



An unusual species of bird has been discovered in the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney. Staff and members of the public were quick to point out the rare Pied Currawong due to its pale "washed-out appearance". Wildlife expert Dr John Martin concluded that the Pied Currawong was suffering from leucism. Leucism is a rare genetic condition that reduces the skin pigments in animals, which causes the skin to appear white. However, Dr Martin said, leucism is different to albinism. "The difference is that traces of colour are present [in cases of leucism]. This Pied Currawong has small patches of coloured feathers ... a washed-out appearance instead of a complete lack of colour like an albino bird".

Crested Pigeons use unique feathers to sound an alarm

<https://theconversation.com/those-noisy-crested-pigeons-use-their-unique-feathers-to-sound-an-alarm-87085>



Crested pigeons are a common sight in many Australian backyards, and are noted for the rapid trilling sound they make when they take flight. In our research we show that these sounds are produced by feathers in the wings that have evolved to communicate about danger.

Canberra becoming Superb Parrot central for not-so-superb reasons

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-07/canberra-superb-parrot-changing-habitat/9207150>



From 10 metres up a huge centuries-old eucalypt, Laura Rayner peers into its rotting heart, and describes what she sees. "The hollow's probably about 50cm or 60cm deep, and when you look inside there's four little ones cuddled up, with a bit of grey down, and eyes closed," she says. They're newly hatched Superb Parrots - the next generation of one of Australia's most endearing and least understood birds. Superb Parrots are listed as a vulnerable species, and the ACT Parks and Conservation biologist has spent much of the past two years scaling giant trees to stickybeak into their private lives.

Conservation scientists 'shocked' at logging of endangered Swift Parrot nesting site in Tasmania

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-12/endangered-swift-parrot-nesting-boxes-destroyed-in-logging/>



Dr Dejan Stojanovic said he had been monitoring the habitat at Tyler's Hill for a decade. Last week he visited the site to plan for the installation of predator-proof nest boxes, used to protect the birds from sugar gliders. Upon arrival he found the area had been clear felled.

BLS Volunteers Wanted!

by Rob Dunn

Many thanks to our non-Committee members who are also giving up their time to support BirdLife Shoalhaven's activities. The BLS Committee is always keen to get more support to expand our work.



So, do you have the time or would like to learn more about the following:

- Distribute old copies of the BirdLife Australia magazine to receptions at dentists, doctors, offices etc. To learn more and source copies of the magazine, contact Rob Dunn on 0438 250 600 or robarb@bigpond.com
- Distribute copies of the Shoalhaven Bird Walk brochure to accommodation businesses across the Shoalhaven. Contact Rob Dunn on 0438 250 600 or robarb@bigpond.com
- Register your interest in promoting the Aussie Backyard Bird Count on 22-28 October 2018. Contact Rob Dunn on 0438 250 600 or robarb@bigpond.com



- Be a leader of a BLS bird walk. Contact Karen Davis on 0487 208 437 or karen@brettdavis.com.au
- Carry out bird surveys on local walks using Birdata. Contact Karen Davis for training on 0487 208 437 or karen@brettdavis.com.au
- Write an article for our newsletter. Contact Brett Davis on 0497 868 471 or brett@brettdavis.com.au
- Current conservation issues, especially for the Nowra, Berry and Ulladulla regions. Contact Chris Grounds on 0401 137 158 or solum306@gmail.com

If you can think of any other activities which you would like to do, please contact Rob Dunn on 0438 250 600 or robarb@bigpond.com.

Common Mynah Deterrents!

by Rob Dunn

During a trip to Sydney I stayed with my friend, Andy Lang, who has been waging a war with Common Mynahs. They have been leaving their "mark" on his expensive outdoor furniture.



He has used all the methods shown in the photo below - his dog, the water pistol and the fake flying hawk were all failures, but the owl figures have made all the difference and he swears by them!



This is hardly empirical science, but is an interesting development in this complex area.

I did mention to him that he was providing Mynahs with the perfect habitat with his lawn and he needs to dig it up and plant a native garden, or talk to his Council about trapping, but he says the owls are doing just fine!



BirdLife Shoalhaven Calendar for 2018

Date	Event / Location / Group*	Details - meeting time and place, leaders etc.
January -----		
Fri 19th	Yatte Yattah NR (MUD)	Meet 8am back of Harry Higgs Room. Geoff Andrews 4454-3580
February -----		
Fri 2nd	Milton Rainforest (MUD)	Meet at 8am at the Milton swimming pool carpark (corner of Church Street and Graham Street). Geoff Andrews 4454-3580
Mon 12th	AGM and Trivia Night (BLS)	Dinner restaurant from 6pm, AGM at 7pm, trivia soon afterwards.
Thu 15th	Spotlighting Night (BLS)	Meet 6pm at 62 Cambourne Rd, Tomerong. Bring something to eat and drink. And a torch. We will spot on both the property and JB NP. Please phone leader Hugh Capes 0499 219 449 in advance.
Fri 16th	Comerong Island (MUD)	Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room or 9:00 at the Comerong Island ferry wharf. Mike Jefferis 4455-5162
Sat 17th	Corramy Regional Park (BLS)	Meet at 5pm on The Wool Rd, Basin View at the dirt road turnoff to Corramy Regional Park for a late afternoon bird walk. The turnoff is 300 metres west of the Basin View Masonic Retirement Village or 950 metres from the Princes Highway. Contact leader if you are coming as the turnoff is hard to find and we will meet by The Wool Road before we drive together into the park. There are picnic tables and a toilet in the reserve and for those that want to stay on we will have a picnic dinner after the walk. BYO all food and drinks. Yolande Cozijn 0409 820 159 and Robyn Hill on 0428 740 364.
Sun 18th	Shoalhaven Heads (SB)	Meet at the end of River Road at the "Airport" Carpark near Heads Caravan Park at 8:30am.
March -----		
Fri 2nd	Fisherman's Paradise (MUD)	Meet: 8 am: Back of Harry Higgs Room or 9:00 at the Fisherman's Paradise Boat Ramp. Leader: Bob Rusk 4455-2169
Fri 16th	ANU Kioloa Campus (MUD)	Meet: 8 am: ANU Campus. Drive almost to Kioloa, watch for ANU sign on right. Marg Hamon & Maggie Mance 4457-1129
Sun 18th	Vincentia Heath (SB)	Meet at Vincentia Golf Club Car Park at 8:30am.
Fri 30th	Ulladulla Sports Ground (MUD)	Meet 8am: south end of Camden Street. Charles Dove 0417 422 302 Note - this is Good Friday Public Holiday
April -----		
Fri 13th	Meroo NP (MUD)	Meet: 8am Lions Park Burrill Lake (by toilets). Chris Shinton 4454-5584
Sun 15th	Bellawongarah (SB)	Meet Apex Park Berry at 8:30am.

* The BirdLife Shoalhaven calendar contains activities from the branch (**BLS**) and two associated birdwatching groups - Shoalhaven Birders (**SB**) and the Milton-Ulladulla District Birdwatching Club (**MUD**). BLS members can attend all activities.

Shoalhaven Birders (SB) have no leaders on their outings and it is possible that nobody else will turn up, especially if the weather is bad. Contacts: Stan and Su Brown 4443-4828 and 0419 287 224, Peter and Julie Hale 0402 076 548.

MUD Birdwatchers (MUD) have outings every fortnight on Fridays from 8am until about 11am. For information about joining MUD Birdwatchers, phone Marg Hamon 4457-1129 or Chris Shinton 4454-5584 or email mubirdclub@gmail.com.

Australia's voice for birds since 1901

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

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

birdlife.org.au

Add your voice

- join us**
Enjoy the rewards of membership, making a real difference for our native birds
- volunteer**
Contributing your time is one of the most effective ways to help
- donate**
Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats