



Photo by Kim Touzel

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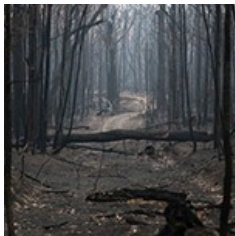
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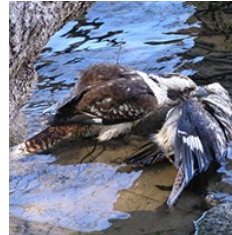
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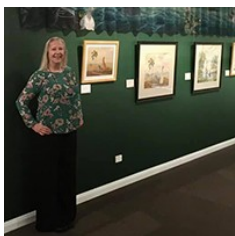
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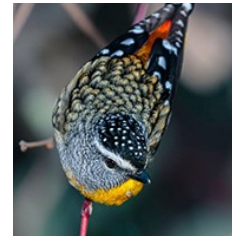
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Jervis Bay Maritime Museum

Upcoming Events

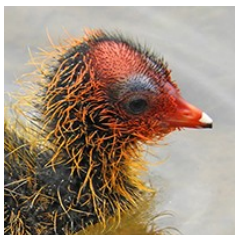
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Cover Photo: This month's cover photo is a Grey Goshawk (white morph). The photo was taken by BirdLife Shoalhaven Facebook contributor, Kim Touzel, in Tapitallee earlier this month.

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

Looking back and looking forward

- by Rob Dunn, President BirdLife Shoalhaven

2020

All 2020 "year in review" articles must be put in the context of the bushfires and COVID. Both have presented numerous challenges for all nature conservation organisations and community groups. BirdLife Shoalhaven is no exception. However, if you measure what we have achieved against our three organizational goals - <http://birdlifeshoalhaven.org/whoweare.html> - it has been one of our most productive years.

Improving conservation outcomes

One of the key achievements last year was our Bushfire Research Project. In a response to the disastrous impacts on wildlife, BLS members started doing Birddata surveys in areas impacted by the bushfires. In 2020, 500 surveys were completed compared to only 100 last year. While the data is important for BirdLife Australia's national bird database, BLS saw that it could also be used to track the recovery of Shoalhaven birds over time.



Rob Dunn on a bird survey

Major features in each of the four BLS Magazines in the year played a key role to promote the work in the field. An important part of these features were interviews with landowners directly impacted by the fires and our surveys on private land. While our project is obviously focused on bird conservation, the social side of this project is another key part. Completing bird surveys close to home in fire-impacted areas and seeing the bush slowly recover and birds start to return, can trigger emotions, both positive and negative. This project is about people, as much as about birds.

Advocating for bird conservation in the Shoalhaven remains a primary focus of our work. While a number of formal submissions have been made to Ministers at all tiers of government and to Shoalhaven Council during the year - see <http://birdlifeshoalhaven.org/submissions.html>

- this belies the seemingly constant need to assess issues as they arise and support other groups on issues relating to bird conservation. This year has been no different.

Promoting the appreciation and understanding of birds

In March we arranged for Dr. Martine Maron, University of Queensland researcher, Deputy Director of the Threatened Species Recovery Hub and the BirdLife Australia President to speak on the bushfires at the Mollymook Golf Club.

The event was attended by over 130 people and all three tiers of government were represented, including Fiona Phillips, Member for Gilmore, Justin Field MLC and Mayor Amanda Findley. This was an important event, effectively launching our Bushfire Research Project, and very timely so soon after the fires.



Also, as part of our partnership with Shoalhaven Landcare, BLS has run five well-received "Birds for Beginners" talks for landowners at clubs, community halls and on private properties impacted by the bushfires.



Of course, running events during the Covid pandemic has been increasingly challenging. However, Covid became the catalyst for a new initiative with a series of talks on Zoom, which we called "Dinner with the Birds".

The webinars were done in partnership with the NSW Department of Industry and the Environment and both NSW Government staff and BirdLife Australia personnel were involved. Between 70 and 100 people attended each talk, which certainly helped raise awareness of birds in a wider audience.

Ironically, people's interest in birds seems to have been heightened with so many lost in the fires and everyone spending much more time at home.



In December, bird interpretative signage and a painted mural were completed at Lake Wollumboola with support from the NSW Government's Save our Species program and Shoalhaven Council. This can only help promote the Lake for its importance as a Key Biodiversity Area and as a sanctuary for migratory shorebirds, beach nesting birds and many other bird species.

The Lake continues to be a drawcard for birdwatchers and, the more ways we can highlight this, the more we can broaden support for its conservation.



Building a stronger BirdLife Shoalhaven

The BLS Magazine continues as the cornerstone of our communications to an expanding number of members and supporters. Being able to offer an informative and colourful summary of the local bird scene each quarter has been vital in establishing BLS as an effective voice for Shoalhaven birds.

Another sign of a strong organisation is a well-established Committee. It is great to see the existing members all standing again for re-election with some "new blood" due to come on board.

We have also taken strides in the year to get more people involved from outside the Committee to focus on key activities. In the past few months, BLS established a Bushfire Research Project Sub-committee and a new Bird Walk Coordinator role. Add to this an increasing number of bird walk leaders, contributors to Birddata, presenters and event organisers, and it is clear that 2020 has seen more people than ever help build a stronger BLS.

2021

To help guide our priorities, BLS completes an Action Plan each year. You can find our 2021 Action Plan on <http://birdlifeshoalhaven.org/whoware.html>. Amazingly progress has already been made on several of the priorities set in this year's plan.

The most notable achievement was the very successful "New Leaves, New Lives" art exhibition held from 4-11 January in Ulladulla, which is reported on later in this magazine.

Our Bushfire Research Project team is currently focused on the completion of an Annual Report, which we will release in March. This quarter's bird walk calendar is a sign of things to come with more options for walks being offered to members and we hope to announce another series of "Dinner with the Birds" soon.

With another ambitious year ahead, I am keen to talk to anyone who wants to get involved in our activities and has ideas they would like to contribute. If this is you, please get in touch.

In summary, despite the turmoil of fires and COVID, in 2020 BLS achieved much for bird conservation, bird appreciation and understanding and is now an increasingly strong organisation.

Despite the continuing pandemic, 2021 has started off much the same, and I am sure this year will be as productive as last for BLS.



The BirdLife Shoalhaven AGM

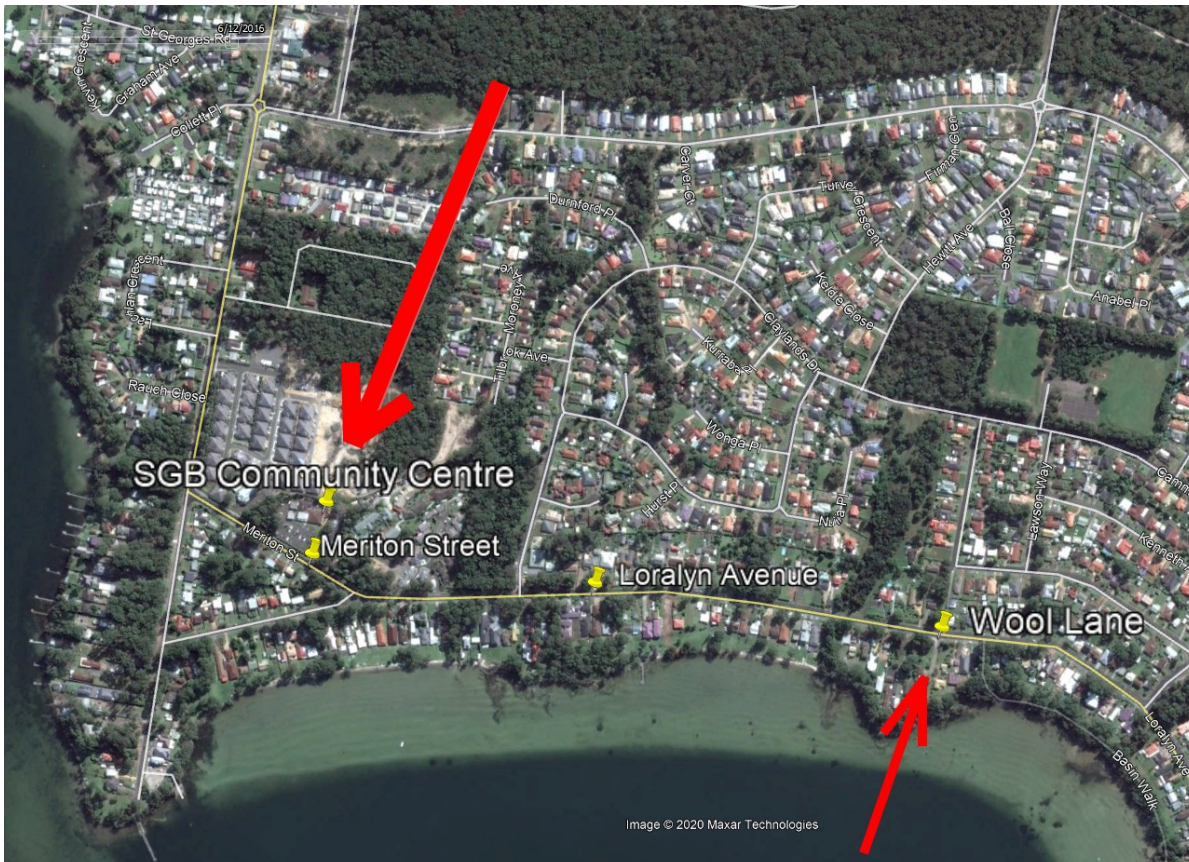


At: St Georges Basin Community Centre (Meriton St)

Time: 7pm

Date: Monday 8th February - put it in your diaries!

Prior to the AGM there will be a **birdwatching walk from 4pm until 6pm**. We will meet / park at the corner of the Wool Lane and Loralyn Avenue (1km east of the Community Centre) at 4pm (sharp) where the return walk along the Basin foreshore will begin.



After the walk we will go to the Community Centre for **dinner from 6pm until 7pm**. Dinner will cost \$10 per person for the pizzas we have organised, and we will also provide salads, cake and soft drink. All dietary requirements will be catered for! You can BYO if you'd like something stronger than soft drink!

For catering, and because of COVID restrictions, it is important that you email Rob Dunn by February 1st at president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org to let him know which of the three activities (bird walk, dinner, AGM / trivia) you will be attending - if not all of them !!!

The AGM will begin at 7pm and should only take about half an hour. We have already received nominations for all Committee positions. These have been endorsed by the existing Committee, but will still need to be approved by the members at the AGM.

However, we are very keen to have more ideas to help guide our future direction and activities, so if you are interested in volunteering your time in any way, including nominating for a committee position, please call Rob Dunn, BLS President, on 0438 250 600 by Monday 1st February to discuss your interests, ideas and availability.

The AGM will be followed by our famous and now traditional **Bird Trivia Quiz**. This year's questions will again be multiple choice, and the quizmaster has promised that everyone present should actually know the answers - but given the nature of the quizmaster, there is sure to be a twist to that statement!

The trivia should be finalized by **9pm** which should give everyone plenty of time to get home at a reasonable hour, no matter where you live in the Shoalhaven.

While we hope to see you at everything - the birdwatching, the dinner, the AGM and the trivia, it will be fine if you can only attend from the dinner onwards, or just for the AGM and trivia!

We hope to see you there!

The Jervis Bay KBA is threatened

- text, photos and maps by Chris Grounds

[Note: the author is not only the BLS Conservation Officer, he is also the coordinator of the Heritage Estate Community Network]

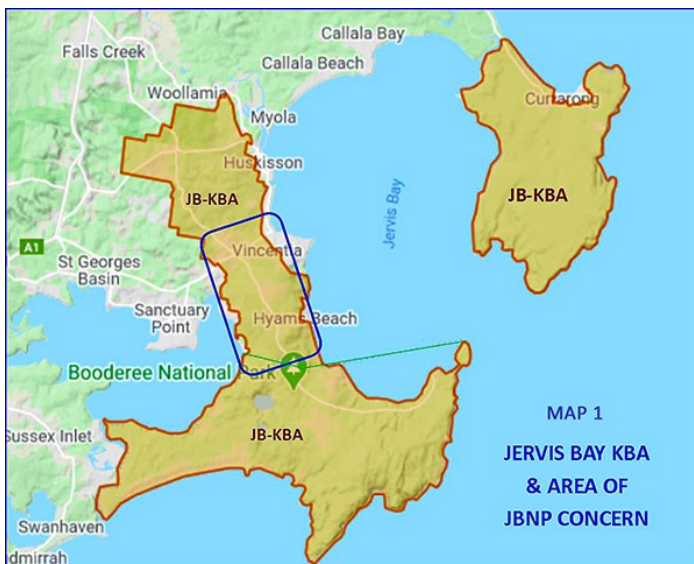
The state government failure to consolidate a number of key neighbouring properties into the Jervis Bay National Park (JBNP) is a singularly important threat to the environmental integrity of the Jervis Bay Key Biodiversity Area (JB-KBA).

Key Points

- The JB-KBA, as with many KBAs, has a critical link to the National Park estate.
- In 2019, BirdLife International rated the KBA subject to "High Threat".
- There has been a failure by the state to consolidate that estate in the interest of both the JBNP environment and the JB-KBA.
- The intervention of the Minister has been sought recently as the next step in a thirty year plus community-led conservation history.

The Minister for Energy and Environment, Hon Matt Kean, has been approached concerning seven properties linked to the necessary consolidation of the JBNP and thus impacting the interests of the JB-KBA. The core focus of these is the Heritage Estate, though all other properties are immediately adjacent and / or adjoin that Estate. These comprise an environmentally significant habitat corridor for the JBNP and for Booderee National Park.

The area involved is illustrated in Map 1 below -



That habitat corridor was significantly damaged by the Bayswood and Woolworth's developments as Map 2 will indicate and the decision required of the Minister will, in part only, restore some of that.

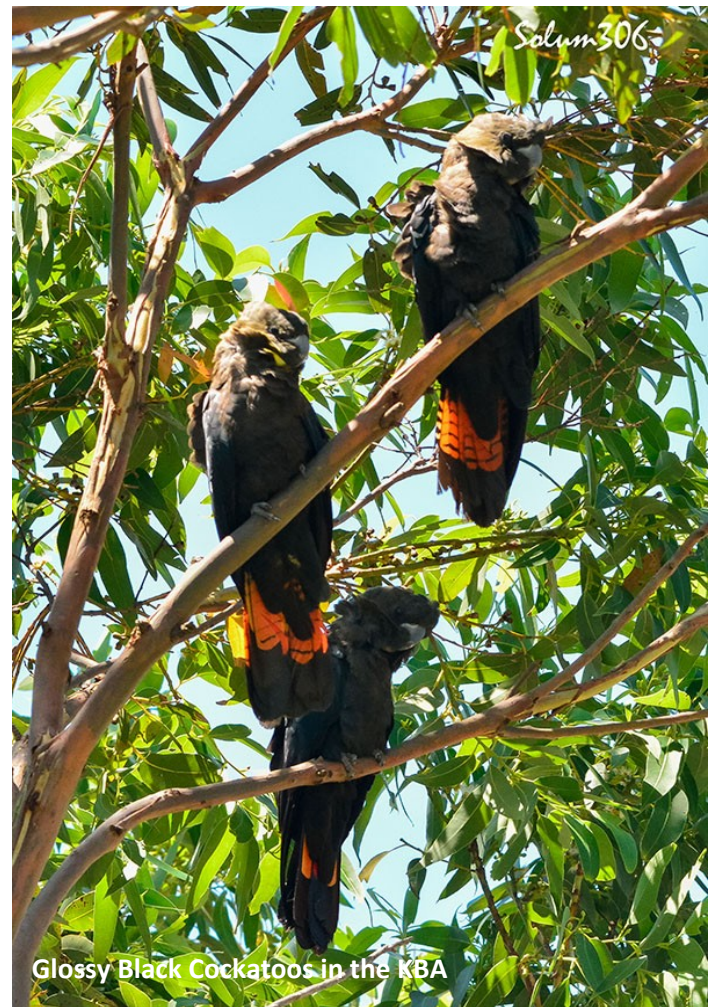
The maps will also reveal just how important the corridor is to the biodiversity health of Booderee National Park, which is dependent on that one, relatively narrow, land bridge corridor.

The Shoalhaven now has 4 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) - Jervis Bay, Lake Wollumboola, which is part of JPNP, part of Ulladulla to Merimbula, and most recently Jerrawangala National Park - see our last magazine.

Jervis Bay, Lake Wollumboola and Ulladulla to Merimbula are all listed for bird species 'triggers'. These KBAs have been subject to long, lingering and intensive conservation battles, which persist to the present day despite decades of conservation advocacy, planning processes, evolving environmental challenges and some noteworthy successes.

The JB-KBA of 17,756 ha embraces a significant area of the southern precinct of the JBNP, all of the Aboriginal owned Booderee NP and the Beecroft Peninsular, and adjoins key areas of the JB Marine Park. Booderee NP and Botanic Gardens is 5,597 ha of this KBA area - see Map 1.

The JB-KBA of forest, shrubland, heath and estuarine coastline is subject to the highest threat level from "invasive and other problematic species and natural systems modifications".



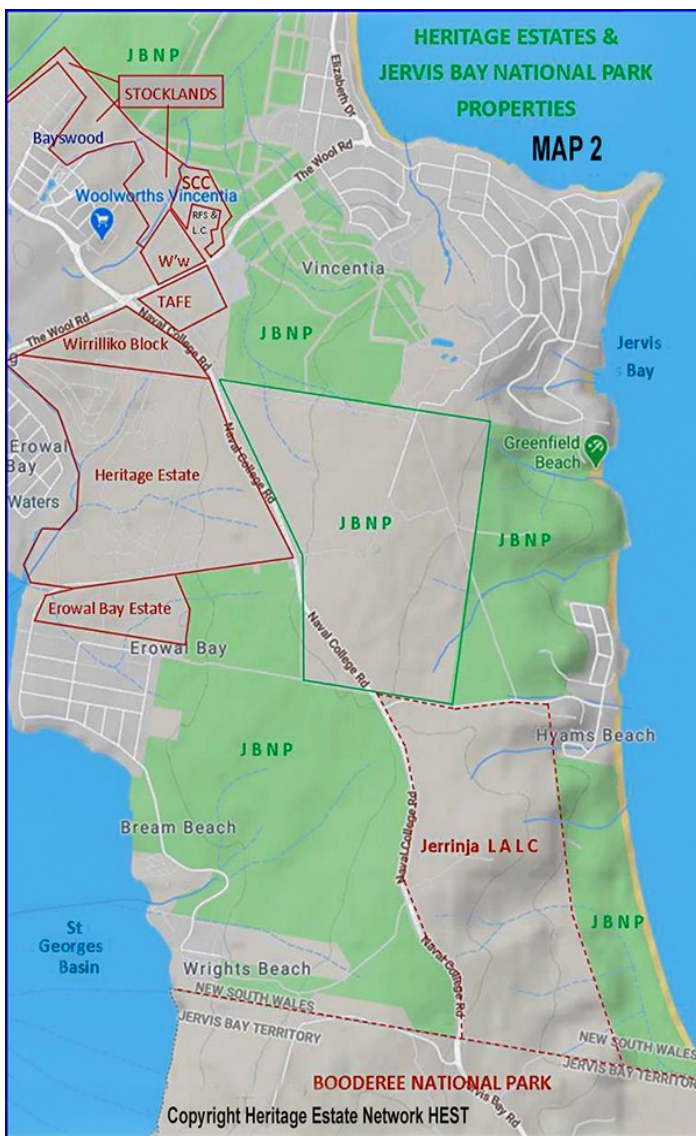
Bushfire Refugia

Perhaps the most immediately pertinent characterisation of the JB-KBA and the properties of contention is that these now represent an important part of the Shoalhaven refugia from the 2019-2020 bushfires. One reflection of this has been the increase in sightings and numbers of Glossy Black Cockatoos in the KBA, which serves to stress the urgency of the task proposed to the Minister.

Submission to the Minister

The issue of consolidation of the JBNP and security of the environment for both the JBNP and JB-KBA has been taken up in recent months with the state Minister Matt Kean, who has been asked to intervene to resolve what is now a considerable property portfolio requiring inclusion in the JBNP.

The Heritage Estate Community Network (HEST), which will be well known to many readers, provided an extensive submission to the Minister in early October 2020 seeking his intervention to resolve the issues associated with 7 individual properties. These properties are illustrated in Map 2 below. Some are already in NPWS hands.



That submission has been supported many Shoalhaven conservation organizations including BLS itself, BirdLife Australia and its KBA Manager, Golo Maurer.

Bird Biodiversity

The BirdLife profile of the JB-KBA notes the recording of over 200 species in the KBA including the sub-population of Eastern Bristlebird, isolated from those in the Budderoo NP / Barren Grounds NR and Nadgee NP and the significant (Mainland) Ground Parrot population.

The cataloguing of the bird species as part of the environmental assessment of the Heritage Estate listed 99 individual bird species from contemporary observations in just that confined area.

Further observations have added five species to that list - Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Dusky Woodswallow, White-naped Honeyeater and White-cheeked Honeyeater - for a total of 104 species.

The dossier of Threatened Species is headed by the Eastern Bristlebird, the trigger species for the JB-KBA, which contains a healthy population of this essentially flightless bird.



The Eastern Bristlebird is at a very high level of threat of extinction as an "Endangered" threatened species on the Federal listing under the EPBC Act but is also "Endangered" under NSW legislation. It is "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List.

The JB-KBA is one of the most important enclaves of this bird. Indeed, the species and its status was a major contributor to the success of the conservation case for Heritage Estate. It is also a species listed as a "Species of Concern" by the Commonwealth.

The Heritage Estate list also features the Glossy Black Cockatoo listed as an "Endangered" threatened species on the Federal list and a "Vulnerable" threatened species on the NSW listing. It is worthy of note that they have been seen in greater number in the unburnt refugia areas such as the JB-KBA, especially in Booderee.

The much revered Mainland Ground Parrot, listed as a "Vulnerable" Threatened Species in NSW is a special resident of the area of concern in the KBA.

The threatened species in the Heritage Estate catalogue include: Eastern Bristlebird, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Little Lorikeet, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Hooded Robin, Masked Owl, Black Bittern, Powerful Owl, Dusky Wood Swallow, Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Square-tailed Kite and White-bellied Sea Eagle.

The JB-KBA also includes vital shorebird breeding sites. A number of sites, particularly in Booderee are involved in breeding of the Pied Oystercatchers, an "Endangered" threatened species on the NSW List. There have now been five successful fledgings this season.



The Shoalhaven's one endemic "Critically Endangered" species, the Hooded Plover, also features in the JB-KBA on Cave Beach in Booderee National Park. The breeding pair at that site are the northern-most birds of that species in the southeast Australian distribution.



Both of the shorebird species are included in the NPWS Shorebird Recovery Project, which is shared with Booderee.

The Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (Nowra) though not threatened can occur in very large aggregations (130+) in the JB-KBA and is noted as having numbers declining in southeast Australia.



Community Action

Community action on the Heritage Estate began when land first was put up for sale in 1988, contrary to the existing zoning and given its proximity to Erowal Bay village it is not surprising that an "Erowal Bay Action Group" was formed to take up the cudgels in a conservation fight that worked supported by the Jervis Bay Regional Alliance. The Action Group was a sub-committee of the now defunct Erowal Bay Progress Association.

That was the first phase of the long term historic battle leading to a second phase community action that was rewarded with the Peter Garrett Ministerial declaration in March 2009 that development could not be approved for the Heritage Estate.



ON SITE: Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett met with some of the people opposing Heritage Estate on Wednesday, when Maureen Webb and Alan Stephenson took an opportunity to speak to the minister.

Whilst that was a key moment that established an environmental paradigm rather than a private property paradigm to guide thinking and planning, it did leave a lot of work to do and results to achieve in a developing context that seemed to change year by year.



Conservation Curiosities

- by Chris Grounds

1. Threatened Species Hub axing

On December 10, 2020 news broke that the Federal Minister, Susan Ley had announced that the Threatened Species Hub would be collapsed in June.

The BLS Magazine previously carried news of the "Threatened Species Hub", a federal scientific initiative created to streamline and standardize information, particularly data, on threatened species. It was one of six such Hubs.

The work of the Hub had commenced with the creation of a Threatened Species Index and a Threatened Species Bird Index. That bird index listed 16 species in starting their work. It was of some considerable interest that 9 of these were birds found in the Shoalhaven, like the Glossy Black-Cockatoos shown below.



The Minister was quoted as indicating that "about \$149 million will be invested in four new research hubs over the next seven years, building on the \$145 million invested in phase one of the program".

This is when the HEST network came into existence and it has operated as a private network of caring and concerned people over the last decade and continues to this day. It has taken that last decade to -

- research, expand and further catalogue the environment of the Heritage Estate
- have the Heritage Estate physically secured from damaging intrusions
- successfully campaign for both the Erowal Bay Estate and the TAFE Block, to be dedicated to the JBNP
- ensure rezoning of both Heritage and Erowal Bay Estates to Environment Conservation 2
- process significant legal victories against landowners over 3 years led by the Commonwealth Government
- instigate a soil erosion remediation program managed by Council and NPWS with community representation.
- Represent specific bird and habitat conservation interests as a high priority in any proposals impacting the JB-KBA

A recent campaign successfully ensured valuable JBNP, KBA and adjacent Jerrinja land did not become a car park for Hyams Beach tourists, as sought by Council originally.

BLS has had a growing interest and participation in this conservation since 2014, built around the exceptional birdlife biodiversity and JB-KBA interest of the area.

A major aspect of the work of HEST is the HEST Newsletter, which provides research, information and news regarding conservation of the Heritage Estate and now the associated properties.

The task of the HEST Network has changed considerably though as the specific interest of the Heritage Estate has extended to include a range of properties now numbering seven, all of which adjoin the southern portion of the JBNP and each other. All are involved in the JB-KBA.

The Minister's decision regarding the Jervis Bay National Park properties will clearly impact the Jervis Bay Key Biodiversity Area - for better or worse.

The new Hubs are the Climate Systems Hub, the Resilient Landscapes Hub (which will "provide national leadership in research in threatened species research"), the Marine and Coastal Hub, and the Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub.

But the dedicated Threatened Species Recovery Hub - which includes 150 of Australia's leading environmental scientists - will not be funded under the next phase of the program!

Ms Ley said all hubs would have a focus on threatened species as it was a "national priority". "Everyone who works across every hub will have a threatened species lens", she said.

Environmental science is known to have suffered deep cuts under the Coalition's university funding reforms.

The Minister has commented that for Threatened Species the "... work may not always be done in the same place and it won't always be done with the same people but what I'm always focused on is the practical outcomes for our threatened species across our landscapes." Perhaps the rider on this comment is that "it may not always be done".

[Editor's Note: Perhaps the biggest Conservation Curiosity is how Susan Ley became Minister for the Environment?]

2. Goshawk chicks arrive

Murphy's law prevailed on our Grey Goshawk nest story from the Spring edition.

Just as the Spring e-magazine was being finalized, the nest in the Blenheim Beach Reserve produced two chicks for observation and verification of the nesting.



The nest was perched very high in a Blackbutt eucalypt and difficult to see over the edge of the nest and into the bowl. The two chicks eventually became sufficiently grown to see them on a regular basis and track their growth to fledging.

The area is now part of the Council Reserve behind Blenheim Beach on Jervis Bay that survived the notion of being developed for tourist accommodation before locals got busy to conserve the site of beautiful Blackbutt eucalypt forest.

The parents were a Grey Goshawk (father) and a white-morph Grey Goshawk (mother) who is the parent to spend most of the time at the nest with the chicks.

True to their breeding, one chick was a Grey Goshawk and one a white-morph Grey Goshawk, the latter being by far the bigger of the two, as with the parents.

An embellishment on the experience was the sight of the mother picking out a Rainbow Lorikeet in an instance like a stealth fighter. It took just seconds and was one of those incidental bird experiences!

2. Dubbo Biodiversity Garden, Sewerage Ponds & Open Range Zoo

An Early Warm Season visit to Dubbo, part of the Wiradjuri First Nation, in a year that local farmers were calling one of their best ever following the savage drought of 2017-19, also meant some excellent birding interest, sometimes in very unlikely places.

One feature though that caught the eye was the **Biodiversity Garden** within the urban area of East Dubbo. This excellent public facility is dedicated to a display of the ecosystems of the broader Dubbo area.

It adjoins the Japanese Gardens and Children's Adventure Playground and café so is integrated into an area that is very popular, especially for families - and the bonus is that entry is free!



The signage accompanying the site is especially impressive with a strong information and education orientation.

The Garden is even more important in such a rural area because of its historic lack of reserves and National Parks and thus public access to natural areas.



The second different birding area is the **sewerage pond** in industrial North Dubbo.

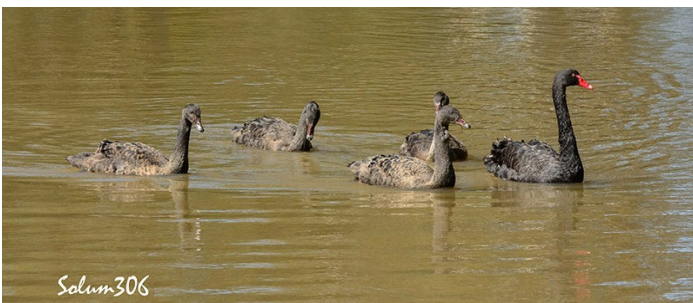
The local Field Naturalists group was involved with Dubbo Council in the construction of a bird hide at the pond site using a converted container.



The pond attracts a range of birds in numbers enough to make an interesting morning and afternoon birding site in a quiet location.

As with the Biodiversity Garden it is clearly a site that readily accommodates children with a guarantee of multiple sightings - and it is free!

Dubbo's most popular attraction is the **Taronga Western Plains Zoo**, but it too is a birding experience as many species have taken advantage of the new environment and habitat created over the last forty plus years.



The lakes in particular are a great attraction to nesting Black Swans and the Australian White Ibis but there is a great range of western bush birds as well.



The zoo is about 3km SW of the Dubbo town centre, and comprises 300 hectares (741 acres) of land. It opened in 1977 with 35 different species from six countries, but now is home to almost 100 species - not counting the native birds which fly free into the wetlands!



The latest on Lake Wollumboola

-by Frances Bray, Lake Wollumboola KBA Guardian

Lake Wollumboola displays its significance as an internationally significant Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) for birdlife.

2020 commenced with the dark days of the on-going drought and Lake Wollumboola shrouded in smoke from the South Coast fires. Ash settled in the lake waters and shores, a grim sight. The water level was below mean sea level with extensive sand and mudflats exposed in the north-east bay.

Birdlife over the 2019-20 summer was sparse with few migratory waders and water birds, and the failure of all but one of the 13 known Little Tern nests. The Pied Oystercatcher pair were successful nevertheless, with their second nest producing 2 chicks that survived to fledge.

On a more positive note, the December 2020 bird count resulted in almost 2,000 migratory shorebirds and 60 Little Terns and 830 coastal and wetland birds counted.

The February 2020 cyclone aftermath and the March storms and waves washed bushfire debris into the Lake, after the Shoalhaven River entrance was opened. Despite the ferocious conditions, ponds formed on the sand bar. They quickly filled with golden-brown Kelp, creating ideal conditions for the migratory waders.

Large flocks including over 80 Bar-tailed Godwits, Red-Necked Stints and Grey Plovers gorged on crustaceans and seaweed flies fattening up and changing into breeding plumage as they prepared for their northern migration.



About 40 juvenile Bar-tailed Godwits remained at the lake throughout the winter, gaining strength before their first northern migration.

Few water birds were present although Swan numbers increased to over 200. However, with the rain, species such as the Black-winged Stilt and Red-Necked Avocet departed, most likely for the Murray-Darling Basin.



The Lake experienced a further battering with rainfall from the July East Coast Low rapidly increasing the water level to over 2m AHD, the first time in years. The change raised hopes that the next few months would result in the return of large numbers of water and coastal birds, but this was not to be.

Instead, the heavy rain of the August East Coast Low contributed to the lake's opening on 9th August. It closed 5 weeks later on 12th September and despite continuous wave wash-overs, and sporadic rain and seepage, the water level continues to be very low, with large sand and mudflats exposed.

These conditions set the scene for a feeding frenzy for birds, particularly migratory waders, which arrived in large numbers from October. However, the cold and blustery conditions and long distances to walk out to the shallows made it difficult to observe and count the birds.

The resident Pied Oystercatcher pair successfully raised one chick.

Malcolm McKenzie a NPWS Volunteer and on occasions, Phil Craven, former NPWS Project Officer, undertake the monthly counts with me. Wader numbers increasing each month from October, including Bar-tailed Godwits (91 in November), Red Knots (177 October), Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (389), Red-necked Stints (311) in December and an additional 200 unidentified small waders. These numbers are likely to be an under-estimate given the birds' flightiness, numbers, diversity and distribution.



Once the twitter-sphere heard about the feasting birds, hundreds of birdwatchers, photographers, and experts in the field arrived from Sydney, Newcastle, Taree and Albury. In particular they were attracted by news of four rare species, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and Broad-billed Sandpiper and the Long-toed Stint, a reminder of the White-Rumped Sandpiper which became a celebrity in 2015 and an endorsement of Lake Wollumboola's reputation for attracting rare species.



Pectoral Sandpiper

© Kim Touzel

While most of the Little Tern nests are 3-egg nests, they are vulnerable to strong winds, rain and rising lake levels. Sadly, we found several tiny chicks dead, so we expect a high loss rate. The weather has also impeded our ability to count fledglings. At this stage we are not able to provide an estimate of Little Tern fledglings.



Shorebird Volunteer Group members continue to be kept busy monitoring the nesting birds and erecting extensive string fencing to protect the nests and young chicks from lake users, the prawners and in some cases, bird watchers! Thank you in particular to Mike Abramowitz who with assistance from NPWS Rangers and other volunteers, erected the fencing.

I continue to be concerned regarding the future of the NPWS South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program, especially with the decision to end the employment of long term Shorebird Recovery Program coordinator, Ms Jodie Dunn and to transfer her duties to NPWS Rangers, many of whom are already overstretched.

The ongoing success of the South Coast Program is due in large part to Jodie's inspiring, professional leadership. She introduced innovative methods of protecting the nesting birds, particularly with the Hooded Plover banding program and educational initiatives for beach visitors and school children.

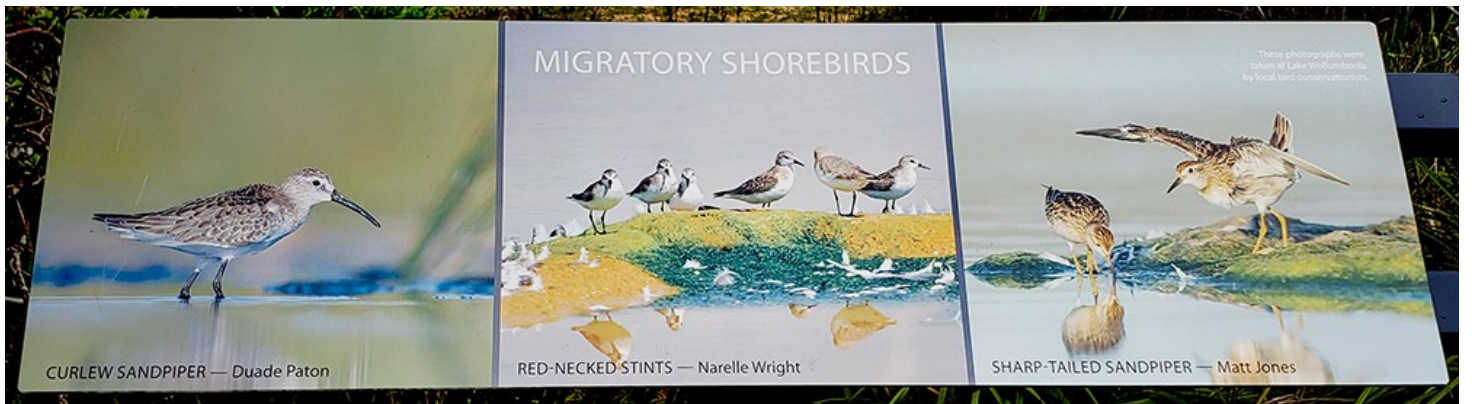
Jodie has been responsible for managing the contribution of at least 80 dedicated South Coast shorebird volunteers, who work collaboratively with her for up to 8 months each year. She has always been supportive of the volunteers and is quick to respond positively to issues raised.

Jodie will always be welcome at Lake Wollumboola.



Jodie Dunn and Mike Abramowitz

In addition to her Shorebird Recovery Program role, Jodie oversaw the initial stages of development of the Save Our Species initiative to provide new interpretive signage at Lake Wollumboola. NPWS Save our Species (SOS) staff Member Jessica Sharp oversaw completion of the signs which were installed at Lake Wollumboola just before Christmas last year.



During the design process, I emphasized the need for authenticity in the photos and text, specific to Lake Wollumboola. The result is a beautiful, engaging display in Lakeside Park at the Dorrigo Shelter, the Bird mural at the Toilet Block and the Bird observation platform overlooking the lake.

The platform features a panel of photographs of nesting shorebirds, water birds and migratory wading birds all taken at Lake Wollumboola by local photographers involved with the Lake Wollumboola nesting Shorebird program.

The new signage is the result of a collaborative effort between Shoalhaven City Council, BirdLife Shoalhaven, the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association and NSW SOS.

The signage explains Lake Wollumboola's international significance as a KBA and displays the migration routes for different species, from south east Australia and New Zealand to Siberia and Alaska and return.

I recommend that BirdLife Shoalhaven members and friends visit Lake Wollumboola soon - to see the birds and the display of their life stories.

WELCOME TO LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA

Lake Wollumboola is the largest shallow saline lagoon on the NSW South Coast and an important Aboriginal place. Recognition of the lake's significant natural and cultural heritage resulted in its addition to Jervis Bay National Park in November 2002.

With most of the lake bed sitting above sea level, the entrance can breach naturally after very high tides. This causes water levels to fall dramatically, exposing large areas of sand and silt until waves deposit enough sediment to close it again. This complex, unique system of intermittent opening and closing is what supports such high levels of biodiversity, it provides the rich and varied habitat critical for waterbirds, shorebirds and migratory bird species alike.

Jervis Bay National Park

Aboriginal Connections

Lake Wollumboola is very significant to the local Aboriginal people the Jerrinja. For thousands of years the lake has seasonally sustained groups of Aboriginal people by providing food and other resources, and opportunities to relax, share tucker and tell stories around its shores.

'Everyone shared everything'

Lake Wollumboola offers many bird memories for the local Aboriginal elders (Dagging life being very tough). Aunty Jean Davidson says that they were 'All good memories what we used to do when we were kids'. Camping trips to the lake were eagerly awaited by the children of Dorrigo. During these times, extended families and friends got together.

Even in very dry times, access to different areas of the lake made for some memorable adventures. Different seasons brought different species of fish to catch in the lake. In the years after floods, prawns would be on the menu. And no matter how low the lake, waterfowl were always present in big numbers.

HOW CAN YOU HELP THESE BIRDS SURVIVE?

WATCH WHERE YOU WALK and walk slowly to avoid disturbing birds day and night

USE BINOCULARS to observe birds. If you are too close, birds may abandon nests and feeding and nesting areas, wasting energy essential for them to migrate vast distances.

KEEP AWAY FROM fenced areas.

KEEP DOGS AWAY — dogs disturb nests and are known to take eggs, and kill chicks and nesting birds.

SEE OVER FOR MORE FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA

Logos for Shoalhaven City Council, BirdLife, and Lake Wollumboola Protection Association are visible at the bottom right.

SHARING THE SHORELINE WITH:

BEACH NESTING BIRDS

Lake Wollumboola is home to local endangered pied oystercatchers and they red-capped plovers, who nest on the beach and shore each spring and summer.

During October they are joined by endangered little terns, who nest in a colony on the sandbar. Please stay clear of these amazing animals so they can breed successfully.

MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS

Migratory shorebirds mainly come here to escape the Arctic winter and fatten up on the plentiful food the lake provides. Some species nest in the dunes bordering the lake.

These amazing long distance champions need our help. Their pit stop habitats are disappearing worldwide as saltmarshes are filled in for housing and industry.

NATIVE WATERBIRDS

The lake is a stronghold for waterbirds. Flocks of over 13,000 black swans have been recorded here nesting in some of the most important habitats for black swans on the south coast.

With a range of habitats from saltmarsh to deep open waters that support a variety of food, the waterbirds of Lake Wollumboola are generally very well fed.

FOLLOW THE FLIGHT PATHS OF MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS THAT VISIT THE LAKE

EAST ASIAN AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY

BECOME A NPWS SHOREBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM VOLUNTEER

Shorebird volunteers assist NPWS rangers to protect nesting shorebirds.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Reporting migratory bird numbers, arrivals, and departures.
- Monitoring and documenting nesting shorebirds.
- Locating and documenting nests and chicks.
- Erecting shorebird signs and protective fencing.
- Monitoring predators and other threats.
- Engaging beach visitors and providing information about the birds and their progress with nesting.

CONTACT DETAILS:
southcoastshorebirds.com.au

KBA KEY BIODIVERSITY AREA

KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) sustain the most important sites for nature around the globe. Australia is home to over 300 of these irreplaceable sites including the Blue Mountains, Kakadu and Christmas Island. The criteria is set by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Lake Wollumboola is a KBA due to its critical habitat and reliable feeding grounds for huge numbers of black swans and chestnut teal. When conditions are favourable Lake Wollumboola hosts up to 3% of the world's black swans in addition to thousands of chestnut teal.

New Leaves, New Lives Art Exhibition

- by Phil Hendry

On the first anniversary of the crescendo of the Currowan fire, a powerful exhibition of art works made in response to the fires was held at the Ulladulla Civic Centre. Driven by local artist, and BirdLife Shoalhaven and South Coast Wildlife Rescue member, Vivien Davidson, the exhibition focused on loss and recovery in the natural world and healing for the people impacted. An underlying theme was the power of immersion in the natural world to help us heal from trauma.



Vivien Davidson

Sponsored by Lifeline South Coast, the exhibition was held from the 4th to 10th of January, 2021. Over 100 attended each day and generated a lot of discussion and responses from the visitors. Lifeline, Red Cross and Anglicare counselors were in attendance and engaged with many of the visitors to talk about their experiences of the fires.



Each morning there were art therapy workshops held for people impacted by the fires. At one of these workshops, children created sculptures of flying foxes and wrapped them up like orphaned babies, learning about the role of flying foxes in the forest ecosystem while getting the chance to talk about their experiences in the fires.

To emphasize connections with the natural world, Vivien engaged with BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS), Shoalhaven Landcare and South Coast Wildlife Rescue (SCWR) to publicize their roles in protection and promotion of environmental issues.

Each afternoon, BirdLife Shoalhaven and Shoalhaven Landcare presented a well attended series of talks addressing their areas of interest and the impact of the fires. Thanks to Rob Dunn, Yolande Cozijn and Chris Grounds for their BLS presentations.



A well-attended Chris Grounds talk

Special thanks should go to Peter Wale who hosted a one-day drawing and painting workshop, and donated the proceeds to BirdLife Shoalhaven.

BLS also raised money by selling bird prints kindly donated by a number of our members - Brian O'Leary, Carla Jackett, Chris Grounds, Duade Paton, Geoff Ball, Kim Touzel and Lachlan Hall.



The BLS display

The prints were framed and displayed in the exhibition - as shown above - and all of the prints are featured in an article starting on page 17 in this magazine.

Another highlight of the show was a video featuring birds, animals and insects against a burnt landscape backdrop by BLS member Charles Dove. Charles created the video as part of a show in the 2021 Sydney Festival by the celebrated artist Janet Laurence. Both Janet and Charles kindly gave their permission to give an early preview of the work.

Birdsong coming back from the ashes *

- by Rob Dunn

The sudden absence of birdsong in those places hit hardest by the fires was heard by everyone.

Birds are an ever-present link for us to the healing powers of nature. When they disappear, that link is broken.

However, the reverse is true. Seeing birds return to our gardens and local bushland became a subject for conversation, as well as being significant for nature conservation. Birds were being seen more than ever, ironically when so many had been lost.

The impact of the fires on birds was especially felt by BirdLife Shoalhaven's members. As birdwatchers, we all wanted to get a closer appreciation of what had happened. So, we did what serious birdwatchers do; we went out into nature and counted the birds we saw. At the same time our bird photographers took amazing images to catalogue the return of birds as the habitat they rely on slowly recovered.

These bird counts and images are the focus of our long-term Bushfire Research Project. This project will tease out who the bird winners and losers were. But importantly it will help us work out what we can all do to make sure birdsong returns just as loudly as it was before.



Previous page (top) - Male Gang-gang by Duade Paton. Gang-gangs were highlighted as requiring urgent management action after the fires, however they have still been seen in the Shoalhaven after their usual winter habitat was destroyed.

Previous page (bottom left) - Female Glossy Black-Cockatoo by Duade Paton. With the devastation of vast areas of their Casuarina feeding grounds inland, Glossies are now being seen in large numbers along the coast and in north-eastern Shoalhaven.

Previous page (bottom right) - Silvereye by Chris Grounds. This colourful insectivore, a possible Tasmanian seasonal migrant, was seen in Jerrawangala National Park's burnt landscape in October, drawn in by Xanthorrhoea flowering.



Red Wattlebird by Chris Grounds - This honeyeater was seen in large numbers in July on Xanthorrhoea, flowering profusely after the good rainfall.



Male Superb Lyrebird by Brian O'Leary - Over 40% of the distribution area of this iconic bird was impacted by the fires, but it is still being spotted and its amazing call heard in rain forests across the Shoalhaven.



Yellow-tufted Honeyeater by Carla Jackett - In February this colourful honeyeater was seen at an emergency feeding station in Kangaroo Valley set up by volunteers.



Black-faced Monarch by Geoff Ball - This summer migrant to the Shoalhaven lost much of its habitat along its migration route, but there have been several sightings in recent months in more remote, unburnt areas.



Rockwarbler by Chris Grounds - This bird, found only in NSW, was listed as "of concern" following the bushfires, but early surveys indicate it has survived in its rocky escarpment and cliff top habitat.



Crimson Rosella by Geoff Ball - This brilliant parrot was spotted feeding in heavily burnt bush near Bendalong in August, as the understory was slowly recovering.



Male Southern Emu-wren by Kim Touzel – Last month this rare, heathland bird was recorded in BirdLife Shoalhaven surveys in Booderee National Park for the first time since the area was devastated by fires in 2017; proof that even small, specialist birds can return after fire.

Male Superb Fairy-wren by Geoff Ball – This common garden and forest bird was moving through a heavily burnt bushland in Bendalong in a small family group.



* These images made up the BLS contribution to the New Leaves, New Lives exhibition. Rob Dunn wrote the "Artists' Statement" on page 17 as well as the captions.

Mainland Ground Parrot by Lachlan Hall – There are two main areas where this heathland specialist was found in the Shoalhaven; while one has remained intact, the other bore the worst of the fires, and how this population has fared is still to be assessed.



No Laughing Matter

- by Norm and Maureen Webb

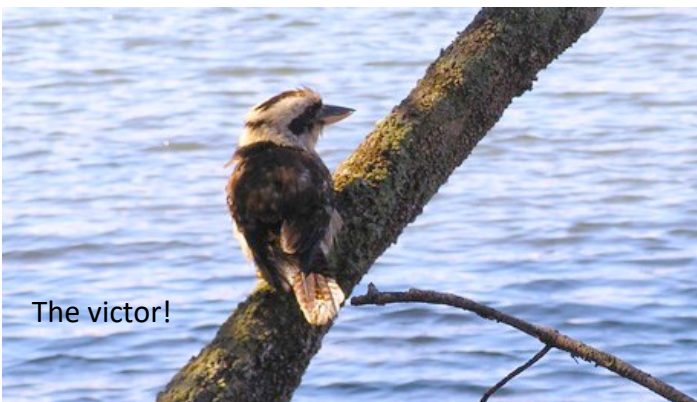
Kookaburras live in close family groups that vigorously defend their chosen territory especially in the breeding season. As avid birdwatchers, we have known Kookaburras to have a darker side than normally shown. Keeping this in mind we relate an interesting happening during a recent bushwalk in Corramy Recreation Area, Basin View.

Walking along the edge of Wandandian Creek we decided to have morning tea so, believing it would make a good seat, stopped at a fallen tree where we could sit and enjoy the trappings of nature.

Looking down to the water's edge we were surprised to see two kookaburras in the shallow waters, even more surprised to realise that one kookaburra had the other by the neck, apparently holding its head under the water. If the dominant kookaburra had planned to kill the other bird then it had been successful! The two birds appeared to have been there for some time.



Standing as still as a statue and seeming not to notice us watching, the victorious bird grimly held on to the neck of the other and didn't flinch, even as we moved closer to photograph the amazing sight. Eventually we threw a small twig near the two birds and the victor flew to a nearby branch where it gave a satisfied chuckle.



Was this a case of "birdicide", or possibly some other strange ritual that only kookaburras understand?

It seems we will have to leave it as an "open finding" ...

Another small drama took place outside our cabin in 1770 (QLD) also some years ago. While one would have thought this would be done and over with quickly, the two kookaburras were in this position for over 10 minutes and were there when we had to leave so we don't know the outcome. Half each - or "winner take all"?



Recently, the January heat was oppressive so I thought it best to check the water bowls in our front garden. It was midday when I climbed the few steps up to where a bowl was situated and I heard what sounded like a small bird calling in distress.

Peering into the bushes I saw a small bird hanging upside down, held by its legs in a damaged spider web. It was a Red-browed Firetail with its legs entangled separately in a matted spider web and its wings were flapping in a desperate and vain attempt to free itself. A disinterested Orb weaver spider sat in the centre of the undamaged part of the web.

In hindsight I should have made more of an effort to free and hold the finch with my hand when I could have cleaned the remaining sticky web from its legs.

Instead, I used a small stick to free it from the web and it dropped into some lower shrubs where it hung again briefly before freeing itself with vigorous wing flaps and scrambling into deeper vegetation.

Unfortunately I was unable to find it again. Hopefully it flew away and was able to clean its legs and is again now as good as new!



Jervis Bay Maritime Museum

Two bird-related events are happening at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum at Huskisson over the coming weeks.

The first is a solo exhibition - "Promiscuous Provenance" - by award-winning Shoalhaven artist Anna Glynn, which is on show until March 1st.



The museum is open every day - except Christmas Day - from 10am to 4pm.

The second bird-related event at the museum is a weekend art workshop - "Introduction to Bird Illustration" - with nature artist Peter Wale, on the weekend of 30th and 31st January 2020 from 10am to 3.30pm.

The workshop is suitable for beginners and experienced artists alike and will include practical demonstrations and one-on-one instruction using live specimens and / or photographs.

The cost of the workshop is \$180.

If you are interested, contact Peter on 0432 327 089 or email walepeterjack@gmail.com



Web Watch

- by Chris and Marly Grounds

The onset of the Warm Season brought a flurry of media attention to birds and even this sample, bigger than usual, testifies to the range of interest birds create.

Photographer Paul Mclver captures resilience of lyrebirds after Black Summer bushfires

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-06/photographer-paul-mciver-shows-how-lyrebirds-survive-bushfires/12951204>



"I've been photographing the Australian alps and the Monaro for 40 years. When you see the damage that's been done that will most likely be irreparable, it's just incredibly devastating." On a trip to Yarrangobilly Caves in Kosciuszko National Park in late autumn, Mr Mclver came across a female lyrebird on the fireground, collecting material for her nest. When he visited again in spring, he discovered a chick on the nest. "Lyrebirds are very resilient. They seem to know where to go during bushfires. They can't fly like other songbirds, but they can run long distances. They know the landscape very well, and are experts at surviving."

Gulf land recognised as 'critical' shorebird pit-stop on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-18/gulf-land-nominated-vital-shorebird-flyway/12992596>



A critical shorebird pit-stop on a flyway route in the Gulf of Carpentaria has been recognised as one of Queensland's most important migratory areas. About 7080 hectares of Gulf of Carpentaria wetlands are recognised as vital to migratory shorebirds. The local Indigenous corporation and pastoralists have nominated the Wernadinga Coast site. The site supports up to 13,000 migratory shorebirds from 22 species. The Wernadinga Coast site, located on the traditional country of the Kukatj people, was internationally recognised this month by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership.

Birds that play are smarter than those that don't, new research finds

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-26/birds-that-play-are-smarter-finds-gisela-kaplan-research/12990902>



A new study shows a link between birds' play habits and their relative brain size. Birds that play are smarter than those that don't, according to the research. Birds that play together are smarter than those that only play by themselves.

Booderee National Park's Little Penguins put on a show

<https://www.southcoastregister.com.au/story/6986817/booderees-little-penguins-are-just-as-famous/?cs=5999>



Booderee's Little Penguin - or Fairy Penguin - provides one of the park's great wildlife experiences. They can be seen at Murray's Beach an hour before dusk, from September to December. Visitors can sit back and delight in the magical sight of huge groups of Little Penguins swimming back to Bowen Island and making their ritual march back to their burrows.

Newfound brain structure explains why some birds are so smart - and maybe even self-aware

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/newfound-brain-structure-explains-why-some-birds-are-so-smart-and-maybe-even-self-aware>



Never before has "bird brain" been such a compliment: In recent years, birds have been found to make tools, understand abstract concepts, and even recognize paintings by Monet and Picasso. But their lack of a neocortex - the area of the mammalian brain where working memory, planning, and problem solving happen - has long puzzled scientists.

Now, researchers have found a previously unknown arrangement of microcircuits in the avian brain that may be analogous to the mammalian neocortex. And in a separate study, other researchers have linked this same region to conscious thought.

Rare western ground parrot caught on camera in wild

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-04/western-ground-parrot-rare-photo-in-the-wild/12950068>



It is estimated that fewer than 150 western ground parrots remain. Photos are rare and until now camera traps have never captured the bird. The black-and-white photo was taken in September in Nuytsland Nature Reserve. The critically endangered western ground parrot is found on Western Australia's south coast, where bushfires in recent years have decimated its habitat.

Hard to spot, but worth looking out for: 8 surprising tawny frogmouth facts

<https://theconversation.com/hard-to-spot-but-worth-looking-out-for-8-surprising-tawny-frogmouth-facts-146484>



Tawny frogmouths are excellent parents. Both males and females share in building the nest and incubating the eggs, generally one to three. The eggs take 30 days to hatch, with the male incubating during the day and both sexes taking turns during the night. Once hatched, both parents are very involved in feeding the fledglings. A young bird's wings take about 25 to 35 days to develop enough strength for flight. Tawny frogmouths pair for life.

Women have disrupted research on bird song, and their findings show how diversity can improve science

<https://theconversation.com/women-have-disrupted-research-on-bird-song-and-their-findings-show-how-diversity-can-improve-all-fields-of-science-142874>



Recent findings have shown that female song is widespread, and it is likely that the ancestor of all songbirds had female song. Now, rather than asking why males originally evolved song, the question has become why both sexes originally evolved song, and why females have lost song in some species.

The secret suburban stormwater drains being turned into vibrant public wetlands

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-12/secret-suburban-stormwater-drains-transformed-to-public-parks/12977968>



Old and tired stormwater drains are being transformed into public parks. They're common in established suburbs, fenced with barbed wire. In dense built-up areas, the drains provide much needed green relief. Behind the gates lies a stormwater drain — an essential suburban utility, but often a banal, neglected and sometimes vandalized eyesore. But across the nation these so-called 'dead spaces' are slowly being converted from derelict wastelands into vibrant community waterways.

Study finds only 300 swift parrots could remain as Tasmanian court challenge heard

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/dec/02/study-finds-only-300-swift-parrots-could-remain-as-tasmanian-court-challenge-heard>



Former Greens leader Bob Brown warns extinction is coming rapidly for the species as he goes to court over forestry agreements. DNA sampling by Australian researchers has found there is likely to be fewer than 300 critically endangered swift parrots left.

Humans are changing fire patterns, and it's threatening 4,403 species with extinction

<https://theconversation.com/humans-are-changing-fire-patterns-and-its-threatening-4-403-species-with-extinction-150532>



In a major [new paper](#) published in Science, we reveal how changes in fire activity threaten more than 4,400 species across the globe with extinction. This includes 19% of birds, 16% of mammals, 17% of dragonflies and 19% of legumes that are classified as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable. There are three main ways humans are transforming fire activity: global climate change, land-use and the introduction of pest species.

Environmental water flow reaches wetland triggering big breeding event for rare, endangered bitterns

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-13/rare-and-endangered-bitterns-breeding-bonanza/13051488>



A bittern breeding boom in a New South Wales Riverina wetlands is being heralded as a significant step forward for the secretive water bird species.

Endangered Australasian bitterns and near-threatened Australian little bitterns are found breeding in Yanga National Park. Environmental water is being heralded as the catalyst for the breeding event. Last week, during a research trip to Yanga National Park on the Lowbidgee floodplain near Balranald, wildlife ecologist Matt Herring discovered the nests and live chicks of both the endangered Australasian bittern and the near-threatened Australian little bittern. There were only about 1,300 Australasian bitterns in the country.

Great news about native wildlife survival after fires

<https://www.bombalatimes.com.au/story/7021252/wildlife-rising-from-the-ashes-in-east-gippsland>



Camera monitoring of far East Gippsland's forests after the fires has resulted in some great news about native wildlife survival. "Superb Lyrebirds were detected at 42 per cent of the sites." Southern Ark Operations manager, Andy Murray said, "We've had cameras out in the bush at 249 sites since April to check on the wildlife and their survival after the fires."

Click through the tragic stories of 119 species still struggling after Black Summer

<https://theconversation.com/click-through-the-tragic-stories-of-119-species-still-struggling-after-black-summer-in-this-interactive-and-how-to-help-131025>



Before the summer bushfires destroyed vast expanses of habitat, Australia was already in the midst of a biodiversity crisis. Now, some threatened species have been reduced to a handful of individuals – and extinctions are a real possibility. And fewer than 100 western ground parrots remained in the wild before last summer, on Western Australia's south coast. Last summer's fires destroyed 40% of its habitat. Here, dozens of experts tell the stories of the 119 species most in need of help.

Water from Murray-Darling Basin plan not being delivered to wetlands, Australian-first report finds

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-17/murray-darling-missing-water-in-floodplains/12887342?>



The majority of environmental water redirected from irrigators under the \$13 billion Murray-Darling Basin Plan isn't being delivered to its intended wetland targets. The research is the first peer-reviewed analysis looking into how much environmental water has actually reached its intended wetlands. The research found less than a quarter of floodplains targeted have actually been hit with an effective flood. It found the floods were being stopped mainly by towns and farms.

Drought-breaking rains not enough to boost wetland bird numbers

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/drought-breaking-rains-not-enough-to-boost-wetland-bird-numbers-20201215-p56npc.html>



Wetland bird populations across eastern Australia have failed to respond to drought-breaking rains, as reservoirs and farm dams absorbed the bulk of water flows. The 38th aerial survey, conducted by the University of NSW with four state governments, has found most bird species struggled to find enough water to spark breeding events.

Banded stilts fly hundreds of kilometres to lay eggs that are over 50% of their body mass

<https://theconversation.com/banded-stilts-fly-hundreds-of-kilometres-to-lay-eggs-that-are-over-50-of-their-body-mass-85447>



Sixty banded stilts were tagged with solar-powered satellite trackers. This focused survey effort – which required overcoming the logistical challenges of very remote sites, knee-deep mud, heat and flies – has revealed major new insights into how banded stilts breed and the incredible distances they travel: we recorded one bird that flew 2,200km in just two nights.

Zebra finches' ingenious 'vocal panting' cools them down and signals hot weather to embryos

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-04/zebra-finch-vocal-panting-in-hot-weather-helps-survival/12945962>



Zebra finches make a 'vocal panting' noise to help cool themselves down in hot weather. The song is also used by parent finches to signal hot weather to embryos still in eggs. Embryos will then grow less to conserve energy, according to a study at Deakin University.

New research details Black Summer wildlife toll in the billions

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/new-research-details-black-summer-wildlife-toll-in-the-billions-20201206-p5611n.html>



The 3 billion animals estimated to have been killed, injured or seen their habitat destroyed by the summer fires is now understood to have included 143 million mammals, 181 million birds, 51 million frogs and 2.46 billion reptiles. The toll includes an estimated 40 million possums and gliders caught in the path of fires; more than 36 million antechinuses, dunnarts, and other insectivorous marsupials; 5.5 million bettongs, bandicoots, quokkas, and potoroos; 5 million kangaroos and wallabies; 1.1 million wombats and 114,000 echidnas.

Mass die-off of birds in SW US 'caused by starvation'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/26/mass-die-off-of-birds-in-south-western-us-caused-by-starvation-aoe>



Biologists fear hundreds of thousands of birds may have died on their migration through New Mexico because they were unable to find food, made worse by unseasonably cold weather probably linked to the climate crisis. 80% of specimens showed typical signs of starvation. Muscles controlling the birds' wings were severely shrunken, blood was found in their intestinal tract and they had kidney failure and an overall loss of body fat.

Australian wildlife 20 times more likely to encounter deadly feral cats than native predators

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/06/australian-wildlife-20-times-more-likely-to-encounter-deadly-feral-cats-than-native-predators>



Australia's wildlife are at least 20 times more likely to come across a deadly feral cat than one of the country's native predators, according to a new study. Feral cats have been implicated in at least 25 mammal extinctions in Australia. They kill about 2 billion animals a year, while domestic cats kill about 230m Australian birds, reptiles and mammals each year.

A wing and a prayer: how birds are coping with the climate crisis

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/03/a-wing-and-a-prayer-how-birds-are-coping-with-the-climate-crisis>



Climate change is radically reshuffling UK bird species, report finds. The researchers found that although the birds can respond to climatic shifts, they are not doing so quickly enough.

Dying birds and the fires: scientists work to unravel a great mystery

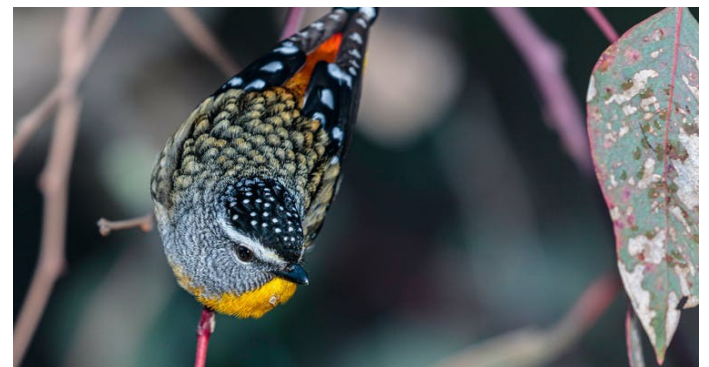
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/18/dying-birds-and-the-fires-scientists-work-to-unravel-a-great-mystery>



Nobody knows precisely how wildfire smoke affects birds' health and migratory patterns. Now, citizen birdwatchers are stepping in. "These enormous smoke plumes are harder to escape than those from smaller fires that have been more typical for the last century," Siegel said. "This is a really unusual phenomenon without a lot of precedent – and it is unknown how that might affect birds." Researchers are increasingly relying on data collected by citizen scientists and birdwatchers to better understand the effects of climate change on bird populations.

Friday essay: in praise of pardalotes, unique birds living in a damaged country

<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-in-praise-of-pardalotes-unique-birds-living-in-a-damaged-country-148921>



Pardalotes are an obscure and odd group of four species of small (thumb-sized) birds. They have little public profile, which is not helped by the awkward name. But they are quintessentially Australian, occurring nowhere else in the world. I found that they have long adapted to and exemplify an Australian ecology: they fit this country well.

"Unnatural" Birdwatching

- by Brett Davis

If you have been paying attention to this year's schedule of BirdLife Shoalhaven birdwatching activities, you might have noticed that some of the destinations have been decidedly "unnatural", but this should not come as a big surprise to experienced birdwatchers.

A large percentage of the Shoalhaven is covered by crown land, state forests, and national parks. Indeed, the total area and quality of the ten national parks in our area is astounding - with Morton, Budderoo, Seven Mile Beach, Budawang, Booderee, Murramarang, Cudmirrah, Conjola and Jervis Bay National Parks, and the Jervis Bay Marine Park as well.

While national parks are vital to the continued survival of many species of birds, they are not necessarily the best places to go birdwatching if you want to see a lot of different species in one place.

The "Self-guided Walks" page on the BirdLife Shoalhaven website lists the 12 walks in the Shoalhaven Bird Walks brochure, plus 6 additional birdwatching locations. Of the 18 walks listed, only 4 are in national parks. 13 are on crown land reserves, and 1 is on private land.

Many of the listed walks are in small pockets of relatively "natural" habitat that are in the middle of - or adjacent to - developed areas, like Lake Conjola Entrance, Hyams Beach, Callala Wetland, Burrill Lake and Ben's Walk.

Two of the "best" birdwatching locations in the Shoalhaven are in highly modified environments. Bangalee Reserve is former farmland that still contains many exotic plant species, and the Vincentia Water Treatment plant is an industrial site. Even one of the national parks walks is in a "built" environment - the Booderee Botanic Gardens.

So what makes a good birdwatching site? Why are the best birdwatching areas the best? Although there are no hard and fast "rules", experience shows that better birdwatching occurs on the edges of habitats, rather than right in the middle.

And the greater the variety of habitats, the greater the variety of birds. Bangalee has tall forest, grassy paddocks, rainforest, rocky cliffines, the Shoalhaven River and nearby farmland.

The Vincentia WTP has large, open grassy areas, man-made lakes and wetlands, open forest, natural wetlands, the nearby Moona Moona Creek with its mangroves and a beach not too far away.

Even the Murray's Beach Circuit in Booderee NP has multiple habitats, including forest, coastal heathland, rocky sea-cliffs, the ocean, and sandy beaches.

"Unnatural" places often produce the most birds. How many birds have you seen in town parkland, or caravan parks, or even parking areas!?

Three decidedly "unnatural", "man made" and "built" locations have become "must see" birdwatching sites for BirdLife Shoalhaven birdwatchers this year, containing many different species of birds, including rarities that have become "lifers" - even for a couple of very experienced and well-travelled birdwatchers! And apart from being totally man-made, the three sites all have one thing in common - they are slap bang in the middle of huge housing developments!



The first is in the Twin Waters estate in South Nowra. The north-east corner of the development was originally bushland with the headwaters of a small creek flowing through it. This was then used as a quarry site that has now been converted into a wetland. It has houses on three sides, a concrete walking path surrounding it, with a large, grassed embankment to the south and the Worrigeer Nature Reserve to the east.

A short walk in early October yielded a bird list of 40 species, with many of them breeding successfully - Purple Swamphens, Dusky Moorhens, Eurasian Coots and Masked Lapwings. And a Buff-rumped Thornbill nest was found just a short walk away in the nature reserve. All of this was happening despite a constant flow of walkers, bike-riders, dog-walkers and free-roaming cats!

The second location is Bayswood at Vincentia. Like Twin Waters, it too consisted of a bushland and a couple of small creeks. The creek in the centre of the development has two small dams that have created three separate lakes, with the creek then flowing through a large, cleared park to the north-east - complete with a playground, picnic and BBQ areas - before entering a large swamp.



Bayswood - 2004



Bayswood - 2018

Primarily designed for sediment control and public amenity, the lakes and parkland are now home to many waterbirds that may not have otherwise used that area. The "unnatural" location has produced two remarkable sightings - a Lewin's Rail and a Spotless Crake!



Birdwatching at Bayswood



A young Purple Swamphen at Bayswood

In the past few years, the Bayswood lakes have produced a horde of young waterbirds - Purple Swamphens, Dusky Moorhens, Eurasian Coots, Chestnut Teals, Pacific Black Ducks and more.



A baby Eurasian Coot at Bayswood

Continuing the theme, the third location is Bada Dam, just south of Burrill Lake. It too was originally bushland with a small creek running through it, before being cleared for pasture, with the creek dammed. The land then became a housing development, with the dam retained to form a wetland now being surrounded by houses.



Bada Dam is a regular birdwatching site for the MUD Birders. Charles Dove alerted me to the presence of a Little Bittern at the Dam a couple of years ago, and a visit to the dam rewarded me with another "lifer". The sighting of a Latham's Snipe on the same day was an added bonus!



Am I advocating the destruction of native bush for the building of housing developments and man-made habitats? Not at all!

Unfortunately, human population growth is unstoppable, even with the Coronavirus pandemic. Covid-19 has now killed more than 2 million people since the start of the pandemic a little over a year ago.

How long will it take for the world to replace those 2 million people? Given that approximately 385,000 babies are born each day, the world will replace all the Covid victims in a bit over 5 days!

As long as our population continues to grow, more bushland will be cleared to make way for more developments to house that growing population. But if we can include bird habitats in those developments - like those at Bada Dam, Bayswood and Twin Waters - then the damage to bird populations through reduction of their habitat can be reduced.

If we then line the streets of those housing developments with trees, and fill up those suburban gardens with native plants, even more habitat can be created and more birds can be saved.

After the fires of the past year and the destruction of huge swathes of bush in the Shoalhaven, the few remaining green pockets in the north-east of the local government area have become vital havens for those bush birds lucky enough to escape the devastation.

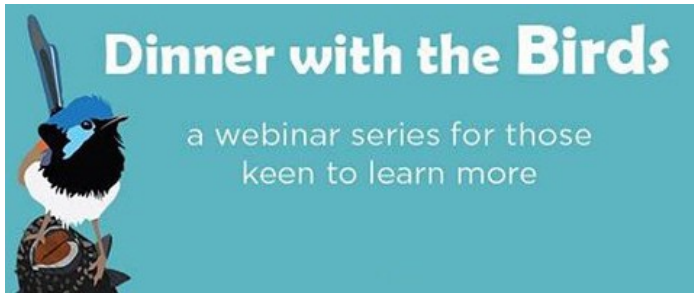
The man-made habitats in the midst of our housing developments have also played their part, and as more and more houses are built, these oases in the suburban desert that was once native bushland may become even more crucial!



Our Social Media - what you missed!

- by Brett Davis

For those unfortunate souls who are not regular visitors to the BirdLife Shoalhaven Facebook page, here are a few examples of what you have missed out on in the past three months.



During Spring our Facebook page promoted "Dinner with the Birds" - a series of five webinars run by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and BirdLife Shoalhaven. Those webinars were recorded, and are available for viewing at the **new BirdLife Shoalhaven YouTube channel** at - www.youtube.com/channel/UC6WVr1jZUANPgQGoA2xo36Q

There is a link to our YouTube channel at the top of every page on our website - just in case you forget!

To go with the White Magpie we reported in Spring, we also reported a **Black Kookaburra** photographed by one of our Facebook visitors. The melanistic Kookaburra photo was taken on Xmas Eve in Milton. Thanks Dimity!



Photo by Dimity Castillo Rhodes

For the twitchers out there, we reported the arrival of a rare **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Lake Wollumboola which prompted a lot of interest from around the state!



Photo by Kim Touzel

We also welcomed a new contributor to our Facebook page - **Phil Hendry** (see image below of Phil in front of the BirdLife Shoalhaven images at the New Leaves, New Lives exhibition). A couple of the images he has posted are shown on the next page, with a selection from regular contributor Kim Touzel on the page following.

Our Facebook page also promoted the "New Leaves, New Lives" art exhibition at Ulladulla from January 4th to 10th, with the BLS contribution being 12 images of local birds.



Our Facebook page also reported the Pacific Black Duck that laid its eggs in the nest of the White-bellied Sea-Eagles at Olympic Park in Sydney, an exhibition involving birds at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum (which is still ongoing), an article by BirdLife Shoalhaven Conservation Officer Chris Grounds in the New Bush Telegraph, and a report on one of our bird walks as well!

Do yourself a favour and like and follow our Facebook page so you can keep up with the avian happenings in the local area!

Photo by Phil Hendry



Little Wattlebird, Immature, Ulladulla.

Photo by Phil Hendry



White-headed Pigeon, Rescued Chick.

Red-necked Avocet



Kim Touzel

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Kim Touzel

West Culburra Concept Proposal

- by Frances Bray,

President, Lake Wollumboola Protection Association

The West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846 at Culburra Beach is currently on exhibition until 26th February 2021. This is an amended proposal after the last version of the longstanding application was refused by the Independent Planning Commission in 2018 and appealed in the Land and Environment Court.



It would be a great help if to the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association if members could make a short submission opposing key aspects of the proposal, primarily because of its impact on the Culburra Beach environment, including Lake Wollumboola and its birdlife, but also with potential impacts for the community.

Substantial documentation is available at the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website - www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/40901

The easiest way to send a submission is via email to: industry.assessments@planning.nsw.gov.au and cc to Patrick Copas at: Patrick.Copas@planning.nsw.gov.au

If writing, address your submission to:
The Director, Industry Assessments,
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.
Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta NSW 2124.

Required information.

1. Your name and address, contact details.
2. Name of the application and application number i.e. **"West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846"**
3. Make an introductory statement that: **"I object to the proposed West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846 at Culburra Beach because of the following environment and safety issues."**

Please translate the suggested points **into your own words** so your submission is consistent with LWPA Inc

recommendations but does not simply repeat the suggested text below.

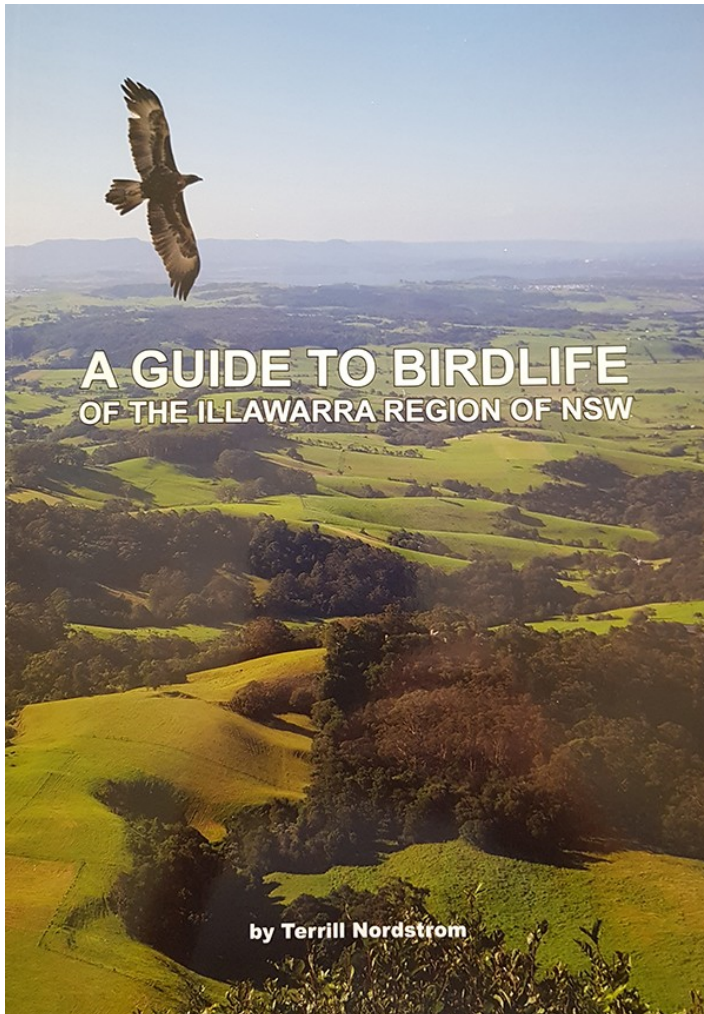
Suggested points for your submission.

- Regarding potential environment issues arising from the proposal, I support the decision to remove the Lake Wollumboola catchment from the development proposal.
- I object to the proposal to locate 244 low density residential lots capable of providing up to 293 dwellings in the Crookhaven River catchment west of the Sewerage Treatment plant.
- Location of a large housing estate with access to the Crookhaven River shore would result in degradation of Aboriginal middens which are recognised as Regionally Significant Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Construction of the housing estate would require clearing of over 47 ha of Currumbene Lowland Coastal Forest. The forest is part of a habitat corridor which extends west to the Shoalhaven escarpment and north to the Crookhaven River Wetlands.
- If approved this part of the development, would cause loss of habitat including for threatened bird species such as the Powerful Owl and Glossy Black Cockatoo as well as for other native fauna and flora species.
- It is likely also to degrade mangroves in the Coastal Wetlands along the Crookhaven River, causing water quality issues for the oyster and fishing industries.
- It would also cause indirect impacts on the Culburra Beach environment including Lake Wollumboola's internationally significant birdlife due to increased pressures from a potential trebling of Culburra Beach's population.
- It is concerning that intensive development is proposed in unburned coastal forest, when so much of the South Coast forests were destroyed in the 2019-2020 fires. Such intact remnant forest must be protected as refuge habitat for species displaced by the fires.
- Also concerning is the safety of Culburra Beach residents if there is a major increase in the population of Culburra Beach as a result of this development.
- Culburra Beach is a "one way in and out community" with narrow a 20km road access into Nowra. During the 2019-20 fires the Forest Rd fire came within 9 kilometres of the Culburra Beach town centre and all part-time and holiday visitors were required to leave. The town was closed to outside contact.
- With significant increases in population due to the proposed development, safe evacuation from Culburra Beach would be extremely difficult, potentially putting lives at risk.

Meeting Calendar

January 29th (Friday) - Committee Meeting, 2pm.

February 8th (Monday) - AGM, with pre-AGM bird walk at 4pm, pre-AGM dinner at 6pm, AGM at 7pm with the post-AGM trivia immediately following the AGM.



A new book on the Birdlife of the Illawarra region that covers the 440 species recorded in the five council regions of the Illawarra. This one hundred and ninety-four page book provides the history, habitat and conservation of each bird species including photographs. Cost is \$35.

To obtain your copy, contact Terrill Nordstrom on 0420 848 713 or terrillnordstrom1@gmail.com

Bird Walks Calendar

There will be bird walks **for members only** on the dates shown below - members will receive an email with the starting time and meeting place details soon - or they can contact communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org.

Please visit www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html for information about becoming a member.

Bird walks for members have been scheduled for - Friday January 29th, Saturday January 30th, Thursday February 4th, Friday February 12th, Friday February 26th, Friday March 12th, Sunday March 14th, Friday March 26th, Friday April 9th, Sunday April 11th, Friday April 23rd, and Sunday May 16th.

The Fine Print

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

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

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

Errors - if you find any errors in this magazine, please inform the editor at communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org

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Sources - images and text from the following websites may have been used in this magazine - australiangeographic.com.au, themonthly.com, birdlife.org.au, wikipedia.org, abc.net.au, theguardian.com, theconversation.com, australia.museum, smh.com.au, southcoastregister.com.au, google.com/earth, sciencemag.org, bombalatimes.com.au and If you like the content from those websites, we urge you to visit those websites and subscribe to their content.

Apologies - to contributors and sources who have inadvertently not been acknowledged. Let us know of our oversight and we will acknowledgment your contribution in the next magazine.

Opinions - the opinions expressed in articles in this magazine are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of BirdLife Shoalhaven or BirdLife Australia.

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