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by Chris Grounds

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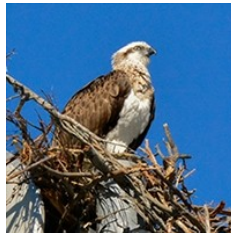
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Special Request - Volunteers Needed! Our "Web Watch" and "Conservation Curiosities" contributors - Chris and Marly Grounds - are taking a permanent leave of absence, and it would be great if someone (or sometwo) could step up and take their place. If you think you are up to the challenge, send an email to communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org

This month's cover photo: is a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. The photo was taken by former BirdLife Shoalhaven Conservation Officer and now freelance contributor, Chris Grounds..

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

Our New Approach to Conservation

- by Rob Dunn, President of BirdLife Shoalhaven

Following the resignation of Chris Grounds as our Conservation Officer earlier this year, the BLS Committee looked at how best to respond to the ever-increasing bird conservation issues across the Shoalhaven.

We decided that trying to find one person to take on the bulk of the "heavy-lifting" on the majority of these issues was not realistic. So, we looked at how best to "spread the load", while still effectively advocating for bird conservation.

Much of this conservation work is already being done by other groups, including the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc., Manyana Matters, the NPWS South Coast Shorebirds Recovery Program, and the Heritage Estate, Bherwerre Wetlands and Save Collingwood Beach partnerships in Jervis Bay.



BLS will continue to support these groups through articles in this magazine, posts on Facebook and our website. Several of these groups are already very effective in getting their messages "out there". This is a huge understatement in the case of Manyana Matters! But BLS is happy to use its own contacts when it can.

BLS also provides support through the power of the BirdLife logo in writing submissions, as well as asking our members and supporters to do the same.

In addition, BLS delivers our own long-term projects, including our Bushfire Research Project, work to protect Shoalhaven's Key Biodiversity Areas and other ongoing issues, like dogs on beaches.



These projects involve several BLS members and we are always interested in getting more people involved. This will be increasingly important as we want to be more proactive in how we deliver these core projects.

For example, the BLS Committee has recently drawn up a plan to increase the awareness of the Jervis Bay KBA through media and presentations and continued advocacy to expand the Jervis Bay NP.

New issues will always emerge. The challenge will be how many of these issues BLS can take on. To help us assess this on an on-going basis, we are looking to recruit a new BLS committee position of Conservation Coordinator.

This person would be the first point of contact for people wanting our assistance on bird conservation issues. They would assess our level of involvement and, if possible, identify someone to help out, rather than do the "heavy-lifting" themselves.

If you want to get involved in bird conservation, either as part of a specific BLS project or by taking on the new role of Conservation Coordinator, please contact me on president@birdlifeshoalhaven.org or 0438 250 600.

BLS Bushfire Research Project

- by Rob Dunn, President of BirdLife Shoalhaven

2020 Annual Report

Since the last magazine, BLS released Bushfire Research Project (BRP) 2020 Annual Report, which includes a foreword by Prof. Martine Maron, the President of BirdLife Australia.

The report looks at the changes in bird populations, following the catastrophic 2019-2020 summer bushfires in the Shoalhaven. It also considers species viewed by the Australian Government as bushfire recovery priorities, nesting and feeding impacts and Shoalhaven's Key Biodiversity Areas.

The report was based on over 250 bird surveys recorded at 100 different locations throughout the Shoalhaven. It also drew upon a further 150 surveys from sites that escaped the bushfires for comparison.

You can download the report from the BLS web site at www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/bls-brp-2020-annual-report.pdf - which also provides links to case studies and interviews featured in recent BLS magazines.

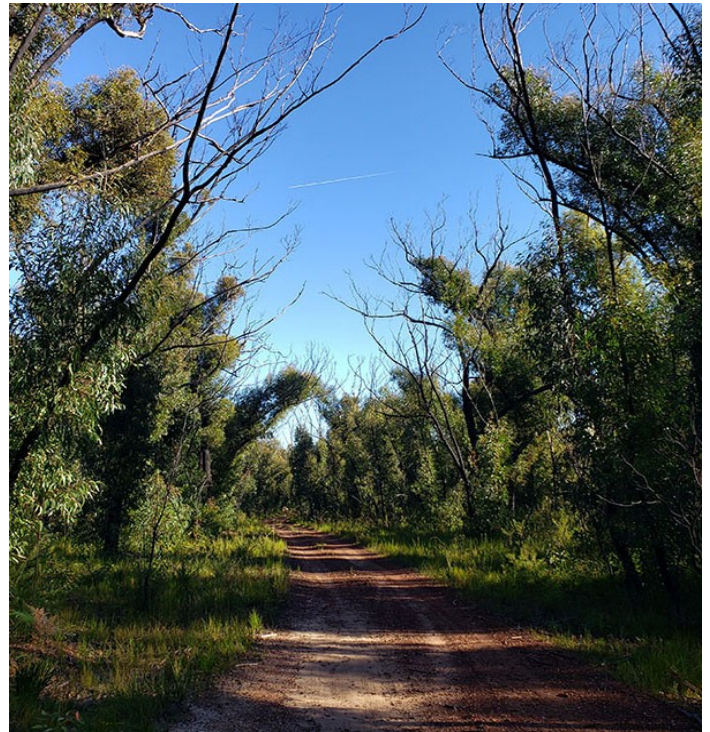


This year has seen our volunteers submit a similar number of surveys to last year. Their continuing commitment will ensure the project can be maintained through 2021 and beyond, which will be vital to assess trends in the recovery of birds over the long-term.



**BIRDLIFE SHOALHAVEN
BUSHFIRE RESEARCH REPORT
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

May 2021



We also hope the project will lead to partnerships with universities, as their research expertise and the involvement of students will be invaluable to build upon the efforts of many people to date.

We are still keen to hear from any experienced birdwatchers who want to get involved in the project. If that is you, please contact Gary Brady, BLS BRP Coordinator - gary.brady2540@gmail.com.

BLS appreciates the commitment to the project shown by local birdwatchers, who contributed many hours of effort in the field. Without their support this report would not have been possible.

Cockatoos in Big Numbers

- by Chris Grounds

One of the great delights for so many locals this cool season has been the very large numbers of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos that have gathered in Jervis Bay NP.

Both seasoned birders, those with a beginner interest and just curious locals have been treated to some spectacular sightings on a regular basis.

The most recent sighting was a flock of at least 220 birds in heathland west of Chinaman's Beach in Jervis Bay NP.

How do you count? Well I took a series of photos, printed the most embracing photo of the flock, divided it into sections, counted each and added it up.

The cockatoos move in a corridor from Booderee, over the heathland of the JBNP, and into the Bayswood area.



The Heath Banksia, *Banksia ericifolia*, [the orange flowering bush] has certainly been a foraging attraction for the birds through the reliable cool season flowering. The warm season flowering of the Old Man banksia, *Banksia serrata*, is usually an attraction, particularly in Booderee and if there is no flowering there is always the woody cones.

The numbers can all but disappear as they land on the small banksia bushes with their size and weight but if something alarms the flock they will all take to the air at once for a very spectacular show, which includes a raucous chorus of course.



Broody and Building Osprey

- by Chris Grounds

We have followed the breeding exploits of our Bay and Basin Eastern Osprey, a vulnerable threatened species, for some years now.

There has been an increase in numbers of birds and sightings, especially around the broader Bay and Basin in recent times at Currumbene Creek, Moona, Sussex Inlet and St Georges Basin.

The best known attempt to nest this cool season has been on the very same telecommunications tower at Sanctuary Point, adjacent to the Bherwerre Wetland that featured a similar unsuccessful attempt in 2020.

Unfortunately, as the adjoining photo will attest, there seems little to recommend the site and even less skill in creating a useable nest.

Other south coast nests investigated occur at the top of a structure, either natural or man-made with good all round vision, but the Sanctuary Point site contradicts that adage.

Perhaps she is just broody or even stubborn!

Discuss in ten words or less!



Much Admired Cockatoos at Great Risk

- by Chris Grounds

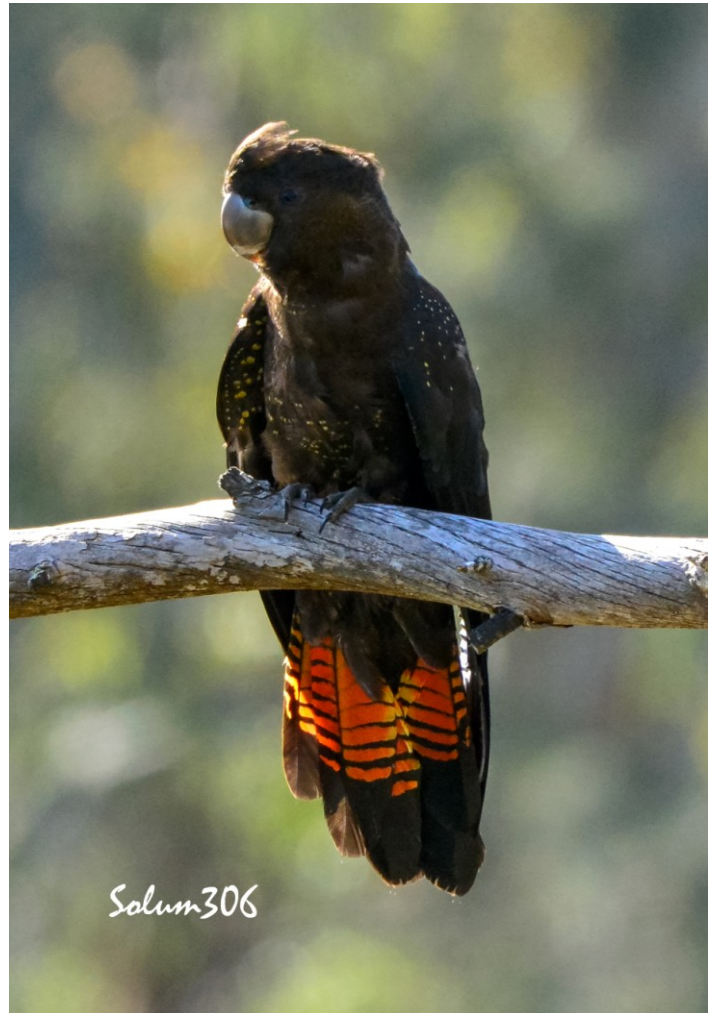
BirdLife Australia's Dr. Samantha Vine, recently reported - on their BirdLifeOz Instagram site - concerns related to two of the already threatened cockatoo species, the Gang-gang and the Glossy Black, both of which we know very well in the Shoalhaven.



Dr. Vine stated that Gang-gangs have lost 36% of their habitat and 21% of their population over the last 18 months.

The Australian Government's Scientific Committee is now recommending that the species be listed as an "Endangered" threatened species nationally with significant loss of both population and habitat. The species is already listed as a Vulnerable threatened species in NSW. Climate change and associated risk of increased severe bushfire is implicated in this threat.

The Scientific Committee has also recommended that the south-eastern subspecies of the Glossy Black Cockatoo be listed as Vulnerable at the federal level.



The Glossy Black Cockatoo is already listed as a Vulnerable threatened species in NSW. There has been very strong evidence of an intensifying of their numbers in the coastal refuges of the Shoalhaven not burnt in the 2019-20 fires.



Birds at the Pub

- by Rob Dunn

I have just returned from a long road trip to the Northern Territory. Along the way, I kept seeing the excellent bird poster produced by BirdLife Top End. Though the branch membership is mostly based in Darwin, this poster kept popping up in the most remote places.

The picture below shows the notice board at the pub in Daly Waters, some 590 kms from Darwin. OK, it might not be in the centre of the notice board, as getting your dinner order in by 6pm is very important, but it was great to see Northern Territory's birds on display. Many congratulations to BirdLife Top End!



Of course, if BirdLife Top End can get their poster to the Daly Waters pub, it should be a lot easier for BLS to get our own on display. We have a number in schools already, but are always keen to have more in community halls, shops, restaurants, galleries, even in the pub near you!

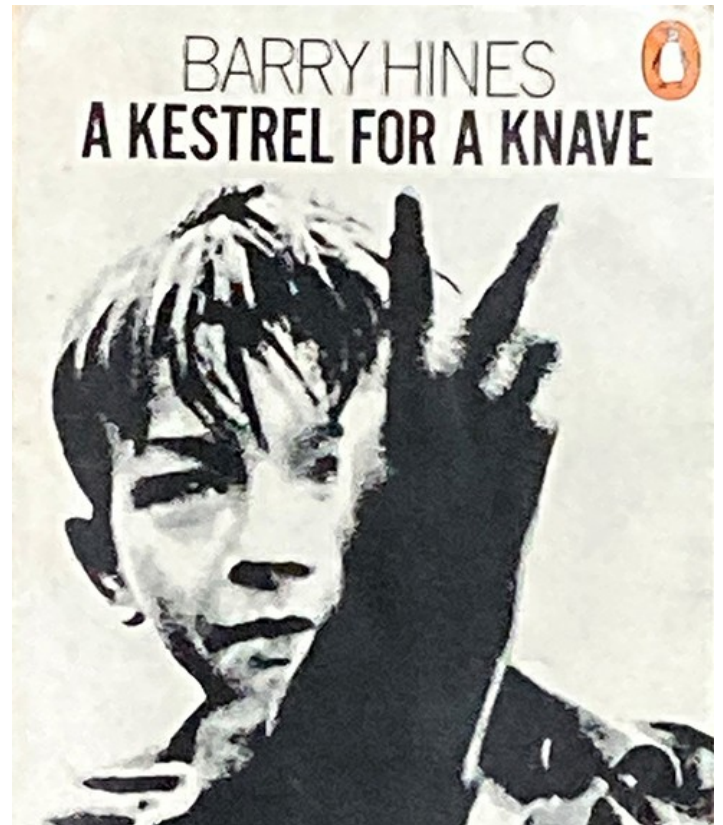
Please email communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org, if you think you can help.

Birds and the Working Classes

- by Rob Dunn

I recently stumbled across a copy of "A Kestrel for a Knave", a 1968 novel by Barry Hines. Set in a mining town in northern England, the book follows Billy Casper, a young working-class boy troubled at home and at school, who finds and trains a kestrel whom he names Kes.

The book was adapted into the film "Kes" in 1969, now regarded as one of the greatest British films ever!



The book's title is taken from a poem in the "Book of St Albans" written in 1486. At the time, the only bird a knave (a male servant or man of low class) was legally allowed to keep was a kestrel. The full hierarchy of raptors - and the appropriate social ranks at the time was:

Emperor	- eagle, vulture, or merlin
King	- gyrfalcon
Prince	- gentle falcon (female peregrine)
Duke	- falcon of the loch
Earl	- peregrine falcon
Baron	- buzzard
Knight	- saker falcon
Squire	- lanner falcon
Lady	- merlin
Young man	- hobby
Yeoman	- goshawk
Poor man	- male falcon
Priest	- sparrowhawk
Holy water clerk	- sparrowhawk
Knave	- kestrel

Luckily birdwatching is open to all these days!

Manyana Matters - July 2021

Fighting to protect vital habitat in Manyana

- by Jorj Lowry

The community continues to fight for the permanent protection of vital habitat in Manyana, with two zombie DAs running concurrently only serving to confuse supporters.

A "zombie DA" is one that has been lying dormant for a long time. The current situation can be quite different to that which existed when the DA was originally granted.

As one concerned citizen wrote in a submission about one of the proposed developments in Manyana - **"Pre-bushfire thinking has no place in a post bushfire world."**

Many of you responded recently to the call to analyze the Ozy Homes (Manyana Coast Pty Ltd) "Preliminary Documentation" (PD) and submit written feedback.

You found that the proponent's PD failed to adequately justify the destruction of a good chunk of the only unburnt wildlife refuge in the Manyana area - on any grounds.

We now wait while the proponent collates all of your feedback and presents it, with their response, to the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE).

There are still a few steps in the process before the Minister makes a decision to either approve, approve with conditions, or outright refuse the action. Many thanks to all who made comment at this important stage in the lengthy process.

Thank you also to all who wrote in to DAWE asking that the "North Manyana Estate" be more thoroughly scrutinized under the EPBC Act. Thankfully, it also was declared a "Controlled Action" on "Preliminary Documentation" so we now await our chance to comment on that documentation, when it is published.

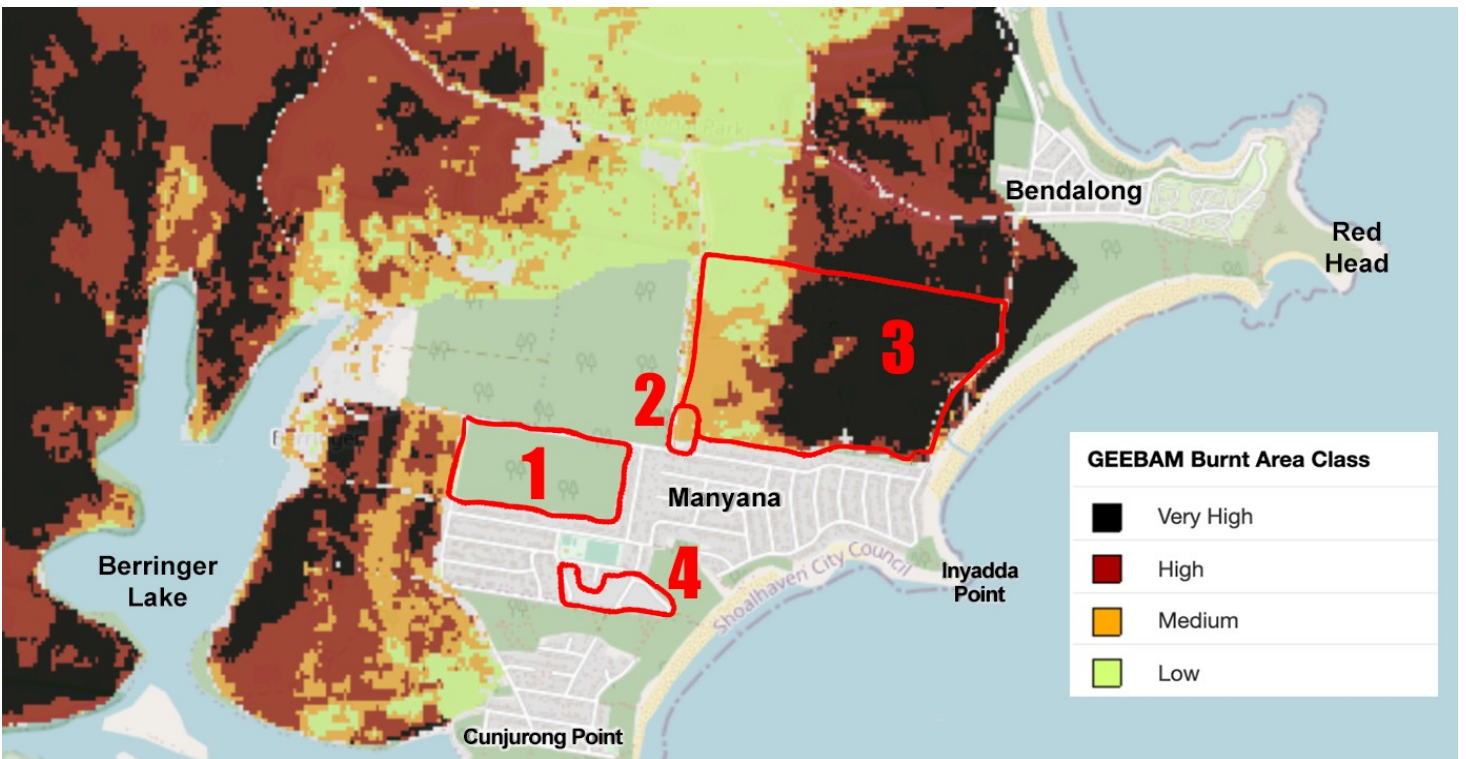
Both the Ozy Homes and North Manyana lands still support threatened and non-threatened birds.

We were excited to recently find a Superb Lyrebird - which wasn't recorded before the fires - now residing in the Manyana Beach Estate forest. Square-tailed Kite nests are still preserved, although these are planned to go in Stage 1 of the development. Little Lorikeets, Gang-gang and Glossy Black Cockatoos continue to be recorded year round.

Red-browed Treecreepers are probable residents and migratory species like Black-faced Monarchs, Spectacled Monarchs and Rufous Fantails have all been recorded breeding locally - with two recorded since the fires.

If you're looking for somewhere to go birding, please consider the Manyana area. Submit any sightings to the Manyana Matters Environmental Association Inc (MMEA) at manyanamatters@outlook.com, including any photos. Your efforts may well save much needed unburnt bird habitat for good.

Details of the zombie DAs along with details of the other major developments proposed for the Manyana area can be found on the next page. These developments would virtually double the size of Manyana in addition to removing vital habitat.



Manyana - Zombie DA's - and more

Location and status of "zombie" housing developments and commercial developments in Manyana - July 2021

[The numbers for each development refer to those shown on the map on the previous page]

1. Manyana Beach Estate

This 20.2 hectare area of land was purchased for \$3.85M in March 2017. The current owner is Manyana Coast Pty Ltd (Ozy Homes Pty Ltd).

This parcel of land was totally untouched by the fires and contains mature native Australian forests including Endangered Ecological Communities.

A Construction Certificate was granted in December 2019 - before the fires. Its current status is "Pending EPBC Act approval". The DA on the land has approval for 182 lots, and the DA was approved way back in **2008**.

2. Commercial Precinct

This 1.14 hectare block was purchased for \$990K in September 2018. The current owner is Manyana Coast Pty Ltd.

Construction can begin on completion of Stage 2 of the Manyana Beach Estate above, and will yield a super-market, 13 additional shops, 4 upstairs professional suites, and 106 car parking spaces.

It currently consists of regenerating, weed-infested native vegetation after its trees and mid-storey were removed in 2015 to keep the DA alive. It was not affected by the fires, and the DA was also approved in 2008.

3. North Manyana Estate / Inyadda Drive (aka KYLOR)

This 76.57 hectare property was purchased for \$4.655M in October 2017. Its current owner is JWD Projects Pty Ltd.

In January this year the Shoalhaven City Council voted to "seek a new Gateway determination at the appropriate point once the outcome of the proponent's upcoming referral under the Commonwealth's EPBC Act is known." Its current status is "Pending EPBC Act approval".

The land is composed of various threatened native Australian forests, heath and grasslands. Its western part suffered nil to moderate burn severity in the fires, while its eastern section had very high burn severity.

If it goes ahead, this development will yield 350 houses.

4. Coast Estate

This 4.96 hectare parcel of land was cleared in 2016, was not affected by the fires, and is currently owned by private individuals, with approximately 10 houses built or under construction.

It will eventually yield 40 lots. The DA was approved in 2008.

If you would like to become involved in our conservation efforts or would like to learn more about the work we do, we invite you to join the Manyana Matters Environmental Association at <https://tinyurl.com/MMEAjoin> or simply subscribe for campaign updates that go straight to your inbox at <https://tinyurl.com/MMEAsubscribe>



Lake Wollumboola Developments

- by Frances Bray

(President Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc.)

Land and Environment Court Public Meeting 10th May 2021 regarding West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846 Culburra Beach.

After weeks of preparation and significant trepidation, the Land and Environment Court public meeting into the West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846 finally commenced on 10th May 2021.

The meeting in the Culburra Beach Community Hall was conducted by a judge of the Court, Senior Commissioner Dixon.

A large crowd of Culburra Beach and Shoalhaven community members, including Birdlife Shoalhaven representatives, attended to oppose the 47 hectare development and were in the majority. The formal court meeting contrasted with the chaotic July 2018 Independent Planning Commission West Culburra community meeting at the Culburra Bowling Club.

Speakers for and against the Application were previously selected to give 5-minute presentations. The NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment lawyers selected speakers opposing the application with the speakers in favour, selected by the Halloran Trust lawyers.

Delia Lowe Jerrinja Elder and traditional owner of the site, made an impassioned speech expressing concerns of the Jerrinja people about the potential destruction of cultural heritage sites along the Crookhaven River and their lack of access to these sites.

Narelle Wright, who spoke as a long term resident, opposed the application as over-development, inconsistent with the village character of Culburra Beach and its coastal environment.

I spoke as President of Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc focussing on environmental impacts - pollution of the Crookhaven River and wetlands with adverse impacts for marine and birdlife, destruction of coastal forest, refuge for threatened bird species and bushfire threats.

The water quality assessor for the Greenwell Point Oyster farmers also provided detailed expert evidence of likely degradation of the local oyster industry due to urban pollution from the proposed development.

The speakers in favour of the application focussed on expansion of housing and industry as benefits for the community.

The lawyers for the applicants and for the Independent Planning Commission are apparently continuing their deliberations under the auspices of the Court.

We continue to be hopeful that the application will either be refused or significantly modified.

The ongoing support of Birdlife Shoalhaven in our 12-year campaign against the West Culburra Development application is much appreciated.

In the image below the red line encompasses an area in the region of one half of the 47 hectares of coastal forest that will be cut down to make way for the almost 300 proposed new dwellings and 13 industrial lots that will make up the West Culburra development if it goes ahead.



Fire Effect

- by Chris Brandis (MUD Birdwatchers)

The effect of the 2019/2020 fire on bird populations at two Shoalhaven sites.

The bird populations were recorded regularly at the low altitude site of Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve and a higher altitude site of the Little Forest walking track since 2016.

The number of species and the number of individuals were recorded, some in eBird and others in Birdata, and now some 18 months on from the 2019/2020 mega fire the data was examined to assess the effects on the bird population that were recorded at these two areas.

Yatte Yattah

The Yatte Yattah NR has a 500 metre Birdata transect through the forest to the rainforest edge which takes about an hour, but over the last 3-4 years access has been limited due to the weed "hitch hiker"/"farmer's friend"/"cobblers peg" - *bidens pilosa*, though observations from the paddock side had been used with the cattle keeping the weeds down.



Since the fire the nature reserve fence was moved some 20 metres north and, as no grazing can now occur, the weeds have proliferated and access is difficult, with no access through the fence to the more open paddock.



As shown in the graph on the next page, the number of bird species and individuals show a dramatic decline since the 2019/2020 fire - as shown by the red line.

The average species count dropped from 24.6 to 6, and the average number of individual birds from 74.9 to 10.8. .

The fire was particularly severe through the open eucalypt forest and along the ground in some of the rainforest with mainly the bird species recorded after the fire being those in transit like Rufous and Grey Fantails.

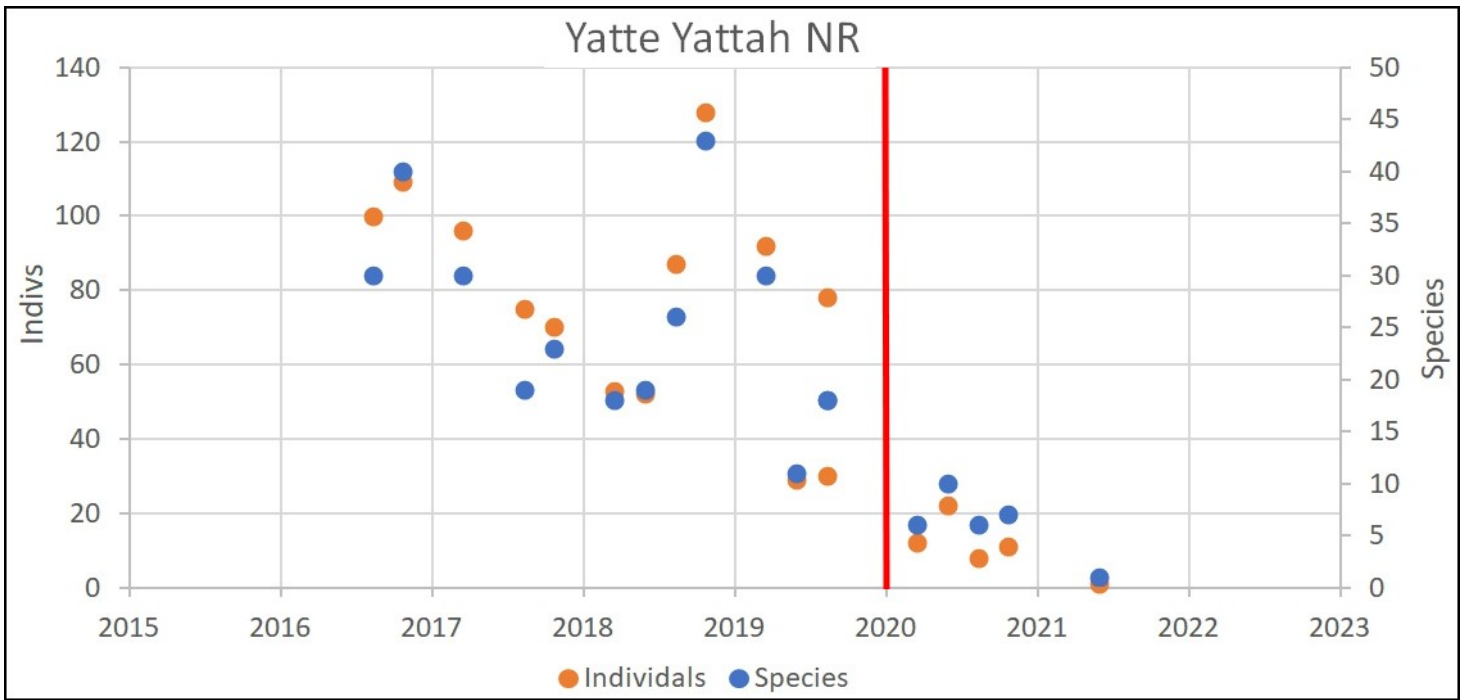
A pair of Jacky Winters did nest in the spring of 2020 as they spent most of their time foraging over the unburnt adjacent fields and a pair of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters also nested in new eucalypt sproutings near the creek.

Currently access is so restricted that continued monitoring may be near impossible.

Little Forest

The Little Forest Walking Track was surveyed from the car park, along the Little Forest Walking Track, then some 500 metres along both the Florance Head and Rusden Head walking tracks, then up to the communication tower and down to the car park, generally taking about 2 hours.





The area was severely burnt and the heath decimated with only a small area about the communication tower remaining unburnt.

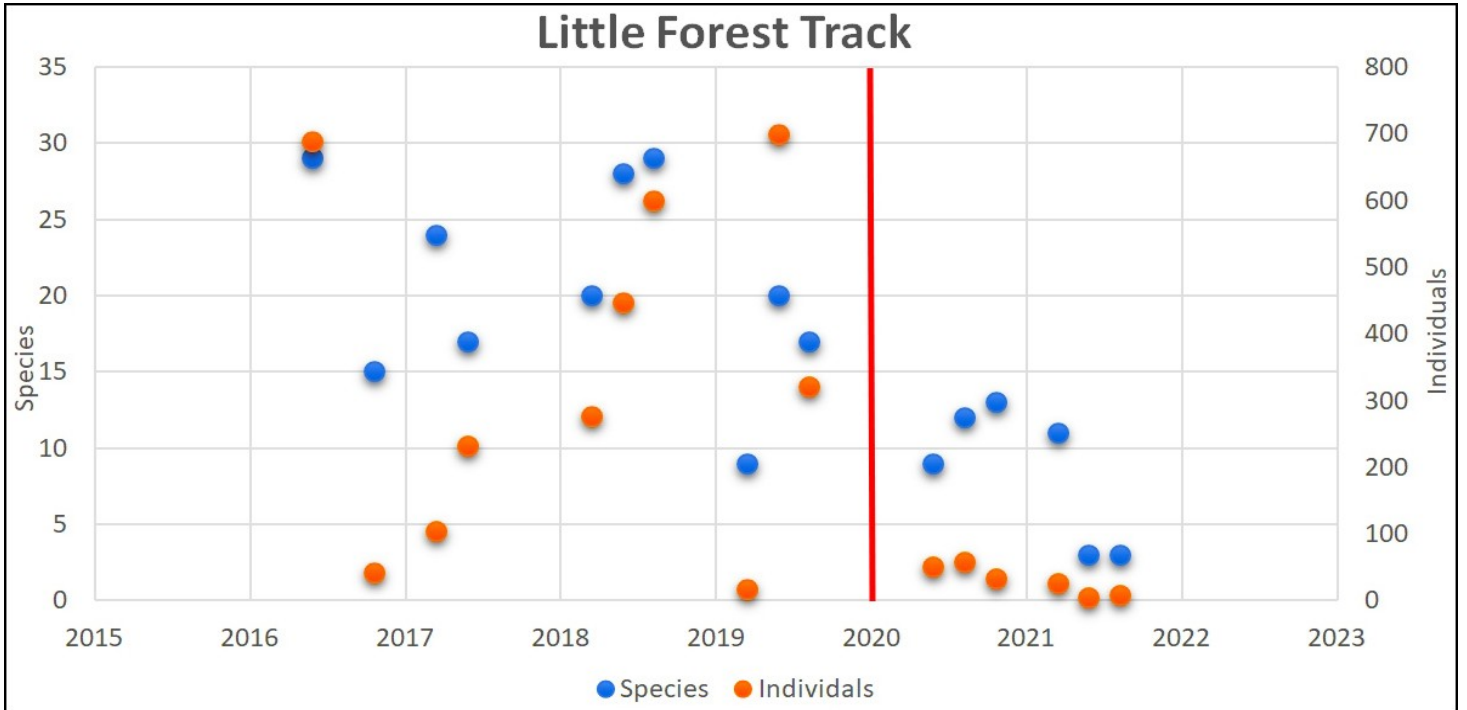
The graph below shows the reduced number of species and numbers of individual birds experienced after the fire. The time of the fire is shown by the red line. The average species count fell from 19.9 to 8.5 and the average number of birds from 304 to 29.7, n = 10 and 6.

Before the fire, high numbers of individuals were reported during the honeyeater migration in Autumn and Spring, which is supported by the banksia flowerings, but during summer bird numbers could be very low with little flowering occurring.

Since the fire, species such as the Southern Emu-wren, Rockwarbler, Beautiful Firetail and the large cockatoos have not been recorded at this site, though there are records nearby in eBird and from other birders' comments.

On the first two surveys the Olive Whistler was observed, but as the ground cover increased it has not been sighted and the main activity has often been around the carpark area.

After some 18 months since the fire there appears to be little banksia recovery which may mean the area will not be suitable as a habitat site for some time, especially for migrating honeyeaters.



John Lewin - our first bird artist

- by Rob Dunn

If you were asked who was the most famous bird artist in colonial Australia, your answer would invariably be John Gould. He built up an extensive catalogue of bird illustrations, which sell for significant sums today, and was also a renowned ornithologist, who collaborated with Charles Darwin. His status is recognised today with the Gouldian Finch and Gould's Petrel both bearing his name.

But a much less known colonial artist, John Lewin, also has two birds named after him - the Lewin's Honeyeater and Lewin's Rail. Who was John Lewin - and why is he overlooked for John Gould?



John Lewin was born in London in 1770, 34 years before Gould. His father, William, was a fabric designer, who became a natural history illustrator and author, and probably taught John his skills.

In 1798 he decided to travel to Australia to paint and publish its natural history "on the spot, and not from dry specimens" to avoid problems faced by natural history illustrators of the time.

Lewin did not arrive in Sydney until 1800. He was the first professional artist to come to the colony as a free settler. He would have arrived much sooner, but the ship left with only his wife on board. They had both been waiting on the ship when he left to go ashore briefly.

The wind suddenly sprang up, and the ship set sail without him. They did not see each other again for 18 months!

More bad luck followed for Lewin, when he went to Tahiti in 1801 to look for gold. Shipwrecked, he was caught up in a civil war and did not return to Sydney for nine months.

Despite these delays and struggling with paper and ink shortages in NSW, Lewin's skills were soon recognised, as his early watercolours were considered 'a striking record of his intense scrutiny of Australian nature'.

Lewin's originality was apparent in his first book, *Prodromus Entomology*, with its detailed observations and design. It was not unique to illustrate the stages of insect development, but there was little precedent for showing them in their environment. He was breaking new ground!



Until 1810 William Paterson, captain of the NSW Corp, was an important patron of Lewin. Paterson had been elected to the Linnean and Royal Societies and regularly corresponded with Sir Joseph Banks. Governors and their families were also important patrons, sending natural history illustrations to Europe to ingratiate themselves with their political masters.

Around 1808 Lewin began to diversify his business. He advertised for art students and took portraits. Lewin now concentrated on large, complex watercolours of exotic flora and fauna and landscapes.



They are works of art, for display on walls, rather than illustrations for scientific examination. They are some of the most original artworks at the time and were hung in Governor Macquarie's residence at Government House.

Lewin's second book was *Birds of New Holland*, which he began preparing in 1803. By 1806 he had completed 18 plates, which he sent to England, so the text could be written by experienced naturalists and the plates professionally coloured.

In Sydney, Lewin had attracted 55 individual subscribers to the book, some for multiple copies. However, these copies were lost on their way back to Sydney. After this setback, in 1813 Lewin produced his own version of *Birds of New Holland*, which he called *Birds of New South Wales with their natural history*. It was one of the first illustrated books published in Australia. Only 13 copies are known to have survived, of which four are held in the State Library of NSW. Because Lewin compiled the books from spare or discarded prints, none were identical.

Governor Macquarie continued to employ the 'masterly hand of Mr Lewin'. His illustrations of an 1815 journey across the Blue Mountains reveal his ability to observe and record Australia's true landscape, rather than as seen through European eyes.

Macquarie also sent Lewin to paint plants and animals discovered on John Oxley's journeys into north-western NSW in 1817-18. Macquarie sent these watercolours to his English superiors, as evidence of the expeditions' success.

Lewin died in 1819 at 49. He had not succeeded as a naturalist, but he was widely recognised for his real and original talent as an illustrator. In his short time in the colony, he had established himself as a respected colonist. He was the town's coroner, was friendly with Government House, and took part in colonial society.

Lewin began describing himself as a gentleman and, while it is unlikely the colony's elite would have agreed, he clearly saw himself as part of the middle classes, rather than a mere artisan.



Social status, a short life, not returning to England and plain bad luck meant that Lewin did not achieve the same recognition as Gould during his life-time and is less known today.

However, they do have equal standing in both having two birds named after them. A good consolation for our first bird artist.

Source: State Library of NSW

Facebook - what you've missed!

Our Facebook page can be found by following this link - www.facebook.com/shoalhavenbirdlife

If you haven't visited the page in the past few months, here are some samples of what you have missed, including reports on various conservation issues, and the usual superb photography by Kim Touzel and Phil Hendry.



The Conversation with Magpies

- excerpts from articles by Gisela Kaplan (by Brett Davis)

The Conversation Australia and New Zealand is a unique collaboration between academics and journalists that in just 10 years has become the world's leading publisher of research-based news and analysis.



Everything you read on The Conversation website - which can be found at <https://theconversation.com> - is created by academics and journalists working together, supported by a team of digital technology experts. Their professional editors turn knowledge and insights from academics into easy-to-read articles, and make them accessible to readers like us.

All their work is free to read and free to republish under Creative Commons. They do this as a not-for-profit company guided by a clear purpose: to provide access to quality explanatory journalism essential for healthy democracy.

The Conversation covers a wide variety of topics - arts & culture, business & the economy, education, environment & energy, health & medicine, politics & society, and science & technology.

Over the years they have published a number of excellent articles on birds, with many references to Magpies, and the articles shown below, all by Gisela Kaplan, Professor of Animal Behaviour at the University of New England, are perfect examples.

<https://theconversation.com/bird-brained-and-brilliant-australias-avians-are-smarter-than-you-think-51475>

In this article, we learn that many Australian birds are brilliant mimics - with Lyrebirds the most well-known exponent of the art, but Magpies are very good as well. Some birdwatchers might be surprised to find out that Magpies are mimics, but it has been mentioned in this magazine before.

In an article I wrote for the Summer 2017 magazine, I described how "my" Magpies were particularly good with the calls of Satin Bowerbirds and Grey Butcherbirds!

Gisela tells the story of a Magpie that was being threatened by a cat. The Magpie had learned the name of the family dog, and called out its name. The dog came running and chased the cat away!

We learn further that Magpies may belong to the few species worldwide that can play a meaningful game of hide and seek, comparable to the performance of 3 to 5 year-old children.



<https://theconversation.com/curious-kids-how-do-magpies-detect-worms-and-other-food-underground-125713>

In this article we learn that Magpies have such good hearing, they can hear the very faint sound of grass roots being chewed.

Experiments used small speakers under the soil playing back the recorded sounds of scarab beetle larvae. Magpies located the speaker every time and dug it up!

<https://theconversation.com/magpies-can-form-friendships-with-people-heres-how-83950>

Can you form a friendship with a magpie – even when adult males are protecting their nests during the swooping season?

The short answer is: "Yes, you can" - although science has just begun to provide feasible explanations for friendship in animals, let alone for cross-species friendships between humans and wild birds.

And since magpies can live between 25 and 30 years and are territorial, they can develop lifelong friendships with humans. This bond can extend to trusting certain people around their offspring.

A key reason why friendships with magpies are possible is that we now know that magpies are able to recognise and remember individual human faces for many years. They can learn which nearby humans do not constitute a risk. They will remember someone who was good to them; equally, they remember negative encounters.



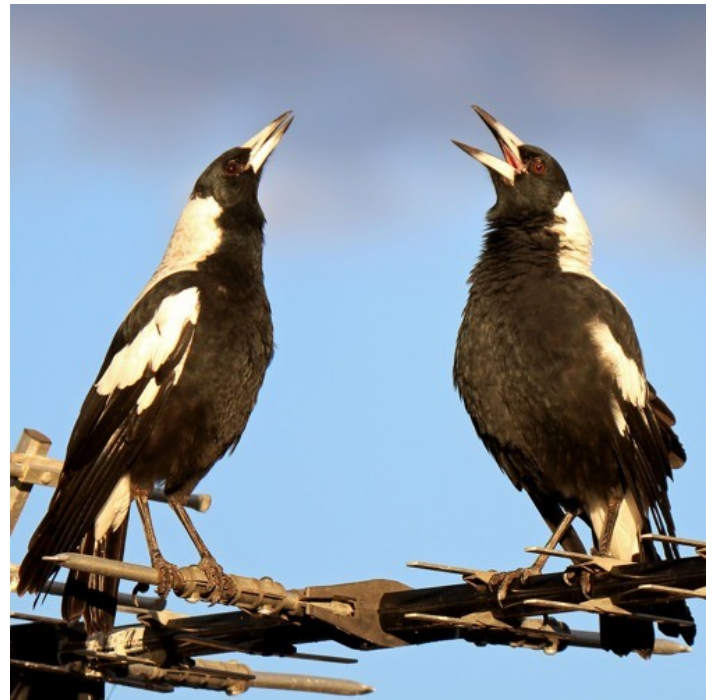
Her study found no significant association between tool use and brain mass. However, very clear differences in relative brain mass emerged when birds showing play behaviour were compared to those that didn't play.

In particular, birds that played with others (known as social play) had the largest brain mass, relative to body size, and even the longest lifespans!

<https://theconversation.com/what-australian-birds-can-teach-us-about-choosing-a-partner-and-making-it-last-125734>

More than 90% of birds worldwide fall into the "joint parenting" category – and in Australia, many of them stay together for a long time. Indeed, Australia is a hotspot for these cooperative and long-term affairs.

Even among mammals, couples are rare; only 5% of all mammals, including humans, pair up and raise their kids together.



<https://theconversation.com/birds-that-play-with-others-have-the-biggest-brains-and-the-same-may-go-for-humans-151079>

For the past 50 years, international animal cognition research has often related the use of tools such as rocks and sticks to cognitive abilities in animals.

But Gisela's research on Australian native birds, published in Scientific Reports, casts doubt on some of the long-held assumptions about the links between large brains and tool use. Instead, it was play that was important!



Even not-so-cuddly native songbirds such as magpies or corvids have long term partnerships and fly, feed and roost closely together.

Bird species that pair up for life, and devote the most time to raising offspring, are generally also the most intelligent (when measured by brain mass relative to body weight).

Such species tend to live for a long time as well – sometimes four times longer than birds of similar weight range in the northern hemisphere.

The strategy has arguably led to birds becoming arguably the most successful, widely distributed families on Earth.

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 for details. Visit www.birdlifeshoalhaven.org/joinus.html for information about becoming a member.

Bird Walk Dates

Friday 13th August
Friday 20th August
Friday 27th August
Friday 10th September
Friday 24th September
Saturday 25th September
Friday 8th October
Saturday 30th October
Saturday 20th November

Birding Camp at Griffith

12th to 15th October 2021.

The MUDbirders will be Birding at selected locations around Leeton and Griffith. There may still be vacancies left, so if you're interested in going, please contact the leader, Phil Hendry on 0448 445 359.



How You Can Help

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

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

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

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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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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