



" One Good Tern Deserves Another"

I.B.O.C. NEWS

The Newsletter of the ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.
 POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 56 FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519
<http://www.iboc.org.au/>
 Founded in 1977

Club's Aim: To bring together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birdlife around them.

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Cape Barren Geese, recently sighted at Shellharbour Golf Course
Photo by Charles Dove
 (Note: if you go in search of them please ask for permission at the Golf Club first.)

CLUB ACTIVITIES MAY 2009

CLUB MEETING – Monday 11th May 2009, 7.30pm, Fairy Meadow Community Hall. Speaker: Bob Ashford - “Different time, different place, same bird!” This is a talk with a ‘travelling with birds’ theme. Bob will be looking at some of the birds that he has found interesting over the course of his life and travels. **Please remember to bring a mug and a small plate for supper afterwards.**

MID-WEEK WALK – Wednesday 13th May 2009, Darkes Forest, Leaders: Anne and Alan Cousins (Tel: 4284 2051) Meet at 8.30am sharp at the turning for Cordeaux Dam off Picton Road ie corner of Picton Road and Cordeaux Dam Road. Bring morning tea, hats, sunscreen etc.

MAY MONTHLY OUTING - Saturday 16th May 2009, Featherdale Park Bus Trip, Leader: Neil Wheway Pick up is from Dapto Ribbonwood Centre at 7.15am and from Fairy Meadow Community Centre at 7.30am. **Please be on time.** Anyone having arrival problems on the day should ring Neil on his mobile number 0409 999 394. Hopefully we should arrive around 10.00am or a little earlier and we will meet up with those travelling by car at this time. Neil will collect the entry money for the park on the bus as admissions are on a group discount basis with one payment only. Please have the correct money ready. Those travelling by car will have to be at the gate to receive the group discount.

Entry fees:

Pension card holders \$12.00, Senior Card holders \$9.75, Adults \$16.00

There is a snack bar at the park serving chips, hamburgers, sandwiches, tea & coffee etc. for those who want to buy. Neil’s suggestion is that we treat this as a regular walk and take morning tea and lunch with us and perhaps buy a hot or cold drink there. We will leave Featherdale at 2.00pm prompt. Our arrival back in Wollongong will be around 4.00pm.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING - Monday 18th May, at 7.30pm at the home of Lorraine Pincus, 20 Cottonwood Crescent, Figtree (Tel: 4225 9789).

ADDITIONAL WEEKEND OUTING - Sunday 24th May 2009, Tallawarra Ash Ponds, Half day walk, Leader: Darryl Goldrick Meet at the small car park about 300m down road to Tallawarra from the old highway **8.30am sharp.** We may have to move the cars into the ash ponds area, so those who are late will be locked out. This is a half day walk around the ash pond area only. Bring morning tea. Contact Darryl Goldrick on 4296 1316, or Betty Hudson on 4236 0307 or mobile 0432 892 945.

WADER COUNT – Sunday 7th June, 8.30am, Windang Surf Club Car Park. Meet in the car park under the pines. All welcome – come along and hone your wader identification skills. Bring morning tea.

JUNE 2009 NEWSLETTER Deadline for articles for the next *IBOC News* is **Friday 22 May.** Please don’t leave submitting your contributions to the last minute and where possible please submit by email to John Cashman: cashman5@bigpond.com.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS due 1st January each year: Family \$35, Single \$30, Junior \$10. Please pay Bronwyn Wilson, our Treasurer, by cash, cheque or mail order.

AUTUMN CAMP, CAMP CYPRESS, BARADINE 25th OCTOBER – 1ST NOVEMBER 2009

Please note that the camp dates are from a Sunday to a Sunday. This is due to an error on my part, my apologies. If you wish to arrive on the Saturday and leave on the following Saturday please amend your accommodation dates with Camp Cypress.

There is still plenty of accommodation available at Camp Cypress., individual rooms, powered and unpowered sites. Each room has an ensuite and is in a block of 4, with a common room with a kitchenette. The kitchenette has the facilities for a continental breakfast and packed lunches ie it has a jug, toaster, fridge and microwave as well as a sink. All cutlery, china etc is provided There is a communal BBQ outside.

Cooked meals can be obtained, with at least 24hrs notice, from the dining hall. The menu is varied and prices very reasonable. Evening meals are from \$12 to \$25 depending on what you choose. I suggest that if you wish to eat in the dining hall on your first night that you let them know before you leave Wollongong. I can send you a copy of the menu on request. For details of prices and phone numbers etc, please see the IBOC March newsletter, or contact Betty Hudson on 4236 0307 or email elizabethhudson@bigpond.com.au

Report on Wader Count Field Trip – Sunday 5 April 2009 Jill Molan

Six enthusiastic IBOC members met at about 8.30, EST, under the pinetrees at Windang Caravan Park to count the migratory shorebirds for the second time this year. Return to Eastern Standard Time overnight allowed a little sleep in for these members. These counts are usually additional to the regular counts undertaken by Chris Brandis. Numbers of Double-banded Plovers near the mouth of the estuary were good at 20 most of which had residual signs of breeding plumage. A small number of the 10 Red-necked Stints were colouring up into their breeding plumage and may soon be heading further north. It will be interesting to see how many of this species remain through the winter months. In addition, 35 Red-capped Plovers, several Crested Terns, cormorants, pelicans, 1 Eastern Great Egret, 1 Sooty Oystercatcher and 1 Kelp Gull were present.

The group then moved on to Whyjuck Bay where 1 Greenshank, a Little Egret and a number of Black-winged Stilts mixed with several hundred Chestnut Teal, and a number of Pelicans and Little Pied Cormorants, as well as 3 Caspian Terns. A Yellow Thornbill called from the Casuarina Trees around us as we counted.

Next stop was the foreshore of the Caravan Park in Cudgeree Bay. More than 70 Bar-tailed Godwits mixed with Chestnut Teal, making the identification a little challenging when a roosting Bar-tailed Godwit with good breeding colour was mixed in a group of male Chestnut Teal! However, the group were confident of their differentiation of species and numbers at the end of the count. More Black-winged Stilts, pelicans, cormorants, and 2 White-faced Herons were at this site. This regular field trip is planned for the first Sunday of each month and should provide some interesting data to the national Shorebirds 2020 project, giving the club a particular interest in the outcome of that project over time.

About Jude

The true-blue Jude I'll always see
 is lanky, khaki, irreverent, free,
 Sun-tanned, bush-striding,
 Beckham-haired, motorbike-riding,
 Tomboy, madcap, Earth's defender.
 Only Nature made her tender.
 Birds charmed her,
 Plants disarmed her,
 (Cats alarmed her!)
 She shared.
 She cared
 about a flower.
 We've lost a jewel from our bower.

Alison Foley



Rose Robin by Charles Dove

Mid-Week Walk to Wollongong Botanic Gardens, 15 April Jann Gowans

We ventured out on a breezy but sunny Wednesday morning with a small band of 11 birders. Those who hadn't yet seen it admired the new playground - especially the kookaburra wind-vane sculpture. Before long, we were standing around a very popular profusely blooming callistemon. Musk Lorikeets lingered and posed to give everyone various angles and profiles. Several Wattlebirds and Rainbow Lorikeets were also about.

We continued past the Discovery Centre and ran the gauntlet with construction efforts blocking the path and drowning out the bird songs. Fortunately, we had a good look earlier at the Musk Lorikeets because an affectionate pair Ross and I had seen several days earlier in a hollow were nowhere to be seen. A King Parrot had been dive-bombing their location then and we saw numerous King Parrots around Wednesday morning (reclaiming their turf?). While heading towards the rainforest, a flock of Cockatoos took flight very raucously and we noticed a raptor amongst them but were unable to identify it. We backtracked on our approach to the rainforest as the original planned track was closed. Fortunately, as we entered the rainforest, the construction noise abated and many of the usual suspects were sighted but Thornbills seemed conspicuously absent.

We stopped for morning tea and eventually set down our cuppas to pursue the best sighting of the day - a Rose Robin who gave everyone a good look as he tried out various perching spots. Thankfully, Charles had wandered off during our morning tea break and while investigating a loud startling noise (a gardener!), spotted the Rose Robin. After our break, we re-entered a fairly quiet rainforest but when we ventured back towards the duck pond along the creek, things picked up. Here we finally saw a few Thornbills and (after some debating) Grey Shrike-thrushes. We think we saw a glimpse of a Flycatcher but it didn't stick around for proper id! The duck pond and surrounds provided most of the usual birds, in addition to a royal spoonbill in residence and a large eel. While we were tallying up the bird list, another raptor (Peregrine Falcon) was spotted and several folks went to investigate. Along the way, this led us to a very popular fig tree, with appropriately,

Figbirds among a variety of other birds. A Cuckoo-shrike also flew out and perched nearby and I admired the barring on its chest, thinking it was the garden variety Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (d'oh!). Only later did I realize it most likely was a white-bellied one but I had failed to look at it properly as we were trying to get a definitive id on the Figbirds, many of which looked similar to immature Olive-backed Orioles. I learned the important lesson to look carefully and don't assume (we all know what that does!). All in all, a very good day's birding and the last few stragglers even spotted a White-headed Pigeon on our way back to the car park.

Australian Wood Duck	Musk Lorikeet	Australasian Figbird
Grey Teal	Australian King-Parrot	Australian Magpie
Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Rosella	Pied Currawong
White-headed Pigeon	Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Fantail
Spotted Dove	Satin Bowerbird	Willie Wagtail
Crested Pigeon	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Raven
White-faced Heron	White-browed Scrubwren	Magpie-lark
Royal Spoonbill	Yellow Thornbill	Rose Robin
Australian Hobby	Brown Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Spinebill	Welcome Swallow
Purple Swamphen	Lewin's Honeyeater	Common Blackbird
Dusky Moorhen	Noisy Miner	Common Myna
Silver Gull	Little Wattlebird	Domestic Goose
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Domestic/Feral Duck
Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Shrike-thrush	Muscovy Duck

Report on BASNA Seminar Day

Jill Molan

Each year Birds Australia Southern NSW and ACT (BASNA) holds an annual seminar day to coincide with its AGM. This year it was held on 4 April in the Newington Armory site at Sydney Olympic Park, adjacent to the Birds Australia Discovery Centre (where some IBOC members provide volunteer support on weekends). This centre is becoming a wonderful source of interest to the public using the park, with numbers of visitors growing and taking the opportunity to learn about both local and migratory species of birds.

The seminar theme this year, 'Birds and Water', was celebrated through seven excellent presentations with topics ranging from ocean birds through shorebirds to arid country birds. While some presentations were from seasoned and well known experts, such as Lindsay Smith and Richard Kingsford, others were from postgraduate students recounting their research findings. The increase in research into birds and their ecology in Australia is an exciting development in the world of ornithology, but also for us amateurs who wish to have better knowledge about the birds we love to observe.

Richard Kingsford set a high standard for the day with the first presentation 'Long term trends in waterbird populations in eastern Australia in relation to wetland and river water management'. In this presentation he provided an overview of the extensive aerial surveys that were undertaken Australia-wide during 2008 with a focus on three specific river systems. A postgraduate student Andrew Smith then reported on his research on the ecology of the Australian White Ibis in the Sydney area. A group of researchers who had explored the habitat restoration efforts for shorebirds at Sydney Olympic Park gave a joint presentation, followed by Hazel Watson's work on the changes in the shorebird populations at Botany Bay in relation to the local industrial development and habitat loss. Lindsay Smith and Janice Jenkin-Smith's presentation on SOSSA

efforts on education, research and conservation of pelagic seabirds brought home the crucial issues facing these birds, and the possible linkages between SOSSA and other bird groups (this could include IBOC).

The two final presentations involved arid country birds, the far extreme of water availability. Max Tishler recounted his results in monitoring granivorous desert birds' response to a significant rainfall event in central Australia. The importance of the gidgee woodland emerged as a refuge for these birds in dry times. The last presentation of the day by Rhidian Harrington gave an overview of the impacts of artificial watering points, and their closure, on the distribution and abundance of birds in an arid environment. These two talks provided fascinating insights into the way birds adapt to changes in their arid environment.

The annual seminar day is open to Birds Australia members and non members alike. It is a worthwhile day, and also provides the opportunity for a visit to the BA Discovery Centre, in the historic Newington Armory, well worth a visit next year.

Birds Around Berry – February 2009

Bob Ashford

"It's there, it's there" came the urgent and excited whisper from Nick as he peered through the sunroom window. He, brother Andrew and parents Deb and Martin leaned a little closer and sure enough it was there, a long, rather fat Red-bellied Black Snake. It resided in this particular piece of broken drainpipe by the pond. That was their first sighting and every morning thereafter our visitors went to the window to greet 'Blackie'. On the morning of their departure a second 'Blackie' appeared unexpectedly from the pipe generating much excited speculation about 'babies'.

'Blackie' stimulated a lot of discussion in Nick's family and a new level of awareness about wildlife in general. "What are those lizards called?" as they laughed at the Eastern Water Skinks territorial battles. "Why don't we get those sorts of pigeons at home (Five Dock, inner Sydney)?" pointing to the fat White-headed Pigeons lounging around the bird feeder and, of course, "Why is Wombat poo a different shape to Ash's (their dog)?" A small window to another world had opened and now everything was fascinating.

Over the years I've seen this happen many times, a trigger that sparks a new enthusiasm about other creatures around us. In 1974 on my first trek to Everest Base Camp in Nepal I remember the odd looks I got from my co-trekkers as I chased after every bird I saw. "What is Bob up to?", one asked. "He's a Birdo", another explained. "A Weirdo more likely" several others muttered. Yet, from the moment I showed them a glowing Green Magpie I rarely held my binoculars, a dozen trekkers had morphed into avid birdwatchers. We forget, or perhaps are yet to realise, just how much pleasure we get from the other creatures that inhabit the earth with us.

Even if we don't know exactly the species we are looking at we draw comfort from knowing it is there, even a 'Blackie'. Intuitively we know that if they are around us then the earth is still working, that things are OK. Of these creatures birds are the most visible and a lot of weirdos like myself get immense satisfaction from watching their antics.

In the USA, according to a 2001 survey by the National Parks Service, 46 million people described themselves as active birdwatchers. Astonishingly they spend US\$32 Billion a year on books, binoculars and activities pursuing their hobby generating an overall economic impact of US\$85 Billion per year that sustains 863,000 jobs.

In the UK the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs uses 115 Quality of Life Indicators to measure business and community wellbeing. These include, for example, economic output, poverty levels, jobs, child health, pollution and the number and abundance of bird species, popularly known as the Skylark Index.

Monitoring the number of birds in the countryside is the modern equivalent of the old coal miner's Canary. If it stopped singing or died the miners knew they had to get out of the mine super quick. Similarly, as we lose our birds our quality of life is diminished or, even worse, a terminal catastrophe is imminent.

Over Christmas news services reported the deliberate destruction of protective fencing and the trampling of eggs and chicks of Little Terns and Hooded Plovers at Lake Wollumboola and Cudmirrah Beach. Perhaps those responsible really didn't understand how important our snakes and birds are or the joy they offer to those prepared to watch and wonder. And I was reminded yet again of that wonderful observation by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, "Where there are birds, there are angels".

NSW ORAC CASES DECIDED IN 2008 (ALL ACCEPTED) – Chris Brandis

443	L.Hyde	Painted Finch	Mount Wood, Tibooburra	7 May 2007
444	M & G Davis	Cotton Pygmy Goose	Swan Creek, Grafton	20 May 2007
445	D. Colbourne	Hardhead	Lord Howe Island	24 March 2007
446	D. Thomson	Yellow Chat	White Cliffs	14 April 2007
456	F. Valckenborgh	Flock Bronzewing	Sturt N P	25 September 2007
457	C. Brandis	Kermadec Petrel	off Wollongong	22 March 2008
458	I. McAllan et al	Painted Finch	Menindee (?)	19 August 2007
459	B. Jones	Pied Heron	Bega	31 May 2008
463	C. Meadows	L M Sooty Albatross	Port Macquarie	5 June 2008



Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Surveys 16-17 May and 1-2 August 2009

Chris Tzaros and Dean Ingwersen are the new national recovery coordinators for these birds, with the respective recovery efforts now being administered under Birds Australia's Woodland Bird Conservation Project.

For the past 15 years, volunteer surveys have been an integral component of the Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater recovery efforts. The season is upon us again whereby Swifties have returned to the mainland from Tasmania (and have already been recorded at several locations) and Regents are expected to show their faces any time soon (we hope!). If you would like to participate in these survey weekends or additional searches at other times, please get in touch.

For further information or if you have any questions please contact Chris Tzaros (c.tzaros@birdsaustralia.com.au) or Dean Ingwersen (d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au) or via phone on (03) 9347 0757. Feel free to visit our project website, a work in progress, at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/wbc. Finally, there are freecall numbers to report sightings - 1800 66 57 66 (for Swift Parrots Parrot sightings) and 1800 62 10 56 (for Regent Honeyeater sightings).

Birding Abroad – Assam**David Winterbottom**

Over the past few years David and Elizabeth Winterbottom have been going overseas to look at birds and other things. Here is a vignette from a voyage in January 2007.

An elephant ride in the early morning mist allowed us to get close to a Rhino, herds of Hog and Swamp Deer, and some Wild Boar, although the birds were few and far between. However, later in the day the flood plain of the mighty Brahmaputra River yielded an array of water birds. The most common were the Spot-billed Duck, Teal (quite different to our Teal), Pheasant-tailed Jacana, the familiar Cattle, Great, Intermediate and little Egrets, Darter, Great and Indian Cormorants, Greater Coucal, Bar-headed and Graylag Geese, Grey, Purple and the ubiquitous Indian Pond Herons as well lots of Openbill and Woolley-necked Storks.

The raptors were not to be outdone. Most common were the Grey-headed Fish-eagles and Crested Serpent Eagles, but Pallas' Fish-eagle, Changeable Hawks and Short-toed Snake-eagles were also present. Marsh Harriers quartered the grasslands as did the spectacular Pied Harriers. Grey-backed and Long-tailed Shrikes picked off the smaller prey.

The nearby tea plantations and fringing woodlands produced the stunning Green Magpie and the Greater Yellow-nape, a huge woodpecker with a golden-yellow crest. There were also five species of Barbets, whose monotonous but distinctive calls go on and on, Spiderhunters (now there is a bird name to conjure with) and six different species of Drongo. More difficult for us were the bird families we had hardly heard of: Tailorbirds, Leafbirds, Minivets, Mesias, Treepies, Shamas, loras or the endangered Bengali Florican (a cross between a pheasant and a bustard). However, the Red Jungle Fowl, you will be pleased to know, looks and behaves like a chook, its descendent.

A day trip into the forbidden country of Bhutan was to a different world in terms of people, buildings (with painted decorated friezes under eaves and balconies), culture (a temple with people twirling the prayer cylinders), topography (steep) and birds. Mountain streams host not just the very common White Wagtails, but also attractive little Water-Redstarts – we saw both the White-capped and the Plumbeous. On the hillside were both the Chestnut-bellied and the Blue-capped Rock-Thrush.

Assam has its share of Parakeets. Rose-ringed (incidentally now well established in England) are everywhere, Alexandrine (similar but much bigger) not uncommon and Grey-headed, Blossom-headed and Red-breasted were also seen. To our surprise we did not see Peacocks – they seem to be mostly confined to areas further south.

On the animal front, we were chivvied back down the road by one irate rhino and another time by an irate elephant. There heaps of both species about, as well as Wild Boar, Indian Buffalos, and deer of various kinds. Assamese Macaques, Capped Langours and squirrels were not uncommon and once we saw a herd of Gaur Bison. However, the highlight was seeing the little freshwater Dolphins leaping in the broad Brahmaputra River.



BASNA WORKSHOP - Beyond Bird Watching

Presented by Chris Lloyd

Saturday May 16th 2009, 9.00am until 4.30pm
Building 22, Newington Armory, Jamieson St, Sydney Olympic Park

Why do birds stand on one leg? Why do many birders enjoy taking measurements of birds? Are they bird brained or just misunderstood?

Beyond Bird Watching aims to answer such questions by looking at some of the physiological and behavioural characteristics of selected bird species.

This workshop is aimed at bird watchers who want to enhance their understanding of what lies on the other side of their binoculars. It also introduces some of the field skills that may encourage participants to become more involved in volunteer fieldwork and/or further training in this area. If you would like to explore new ways of getting involved in birding, or just want to learn more about birds then this workshop will benefit both experienced and novice birders.

The workshop uses a combination of presentations and practical exercises involving bird specimens to:

- Introduce people to ideas, which may enhance their bird observation and involvement in field studies
- Provide a basic understanding of how different birds' body functions and how this aids identification and field work with different species
- Outline morphology (a birds form as against function) and morphometrics (the measurement of its features) as both an identification tool and as data collection
- Introduce some of the ornithological methods that underpin work such as banding and behavioural observations

Chris Lloyd has extensive experience in rearing wild birds for release both here and overseas, he is a committee member of the Australian Bird Study Association and Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association and continues to undertake post-graduate study and field work in ornithology. Chris has spent two decades in adult education in Australia, Africa and New Zealand and most recently as a professional training officer for the wildlife rehabilitation organisation, WIRES.

What to bring:

Notebook and pen, lunch and snacks.

Morning and afternoon tea will be provided

The cost is \$59 for Birds Australia members and \$69 for non-members.

For a registration form or to enquire about the course, please email basna@birdsaustralia.com.au or call Pixie on 02 9647 1033.

The Eye of the Sharpie (Sharp-shinned hawks don't eat carrots)**Diane Cooledge Porter**

This article can be found at www.birdwatching.com, and has been reproduced with the kind permission of the author Diane Porter who lives in Iowa.

Before the thud, it was a scene of peace and abundance, and it made me feel very jolly indeed. Through the falling snow, morning came into my living room and filled it with soft light. A cardinal perched plump in the hawthorn tree, his red colour muted by the snow sifting between us.

On the ground, juncos jumped backwards, scratching for sunflower seeds. Three mourning doves drank from the heated birdbath. I was deeply contented with this scene, whose stage I had prepared with the sanctuary of evergreens, berry-giving trees, never-frozen birdbath, and an endless supply of birdseed.

I'd glanced away when something thumped against the glass. By the time I looked back again, birds were exploding out of the yard like shrapnel. Water still rippled where the vanished doves had sucked. The bird that struck the window was not lying in the snow. Apparently it made it to the safety of the evergreens.

But there, on a low branch over the bath, orange eyed, alert as an angel, crouched the cause - an adult sharp-shinned hawk. Her head swivelled in little jerks like the second hand of a watch. It cocked up as she studied bare branches above, and down as she searched for any bird that might be hoping to escape notice on the ground.

A royal visitor

She was beautiful, a joy to see. Hawks are not common like juncos and cardinals. I knew she had come to my yard for them though, just as they came for berries and birdseed.

Hawks don't eat carrots. Sharp-shinned hawks eat birds, and I don't begrudge them their rightful prey, even in my yard. I know that wild predators help keep prey populations healthy by picking off the weak and the slow. The hawk wouldn't wipe out my backyard company. She was just another bird at the feeder, a royal guest. But still I felt uneasy, wondering which bird she would seize.

As the sharpie watched over the empty yard, two tufted titmice flitted into a hawthorn tree. I knew these two little grey birds and regarded them as friends. I feared that if one of them went for the seeds on the platform feeder, she would have it in her yellow talons.

And then I began to shrink from my manly acceptance of nature and all its processes. "Ohh," I moaned out loud, "Not the titmice!" Where were the expendable house sparrows when we needed one?

Inwardly I offered an incautious junco to the sharpie. One could be spared, to nourish the hungry hawk. But my yard had only two titmice, with their cheery lispings calls, with their bright black eyes and expressive crests that rise and fall with their moods.

The dilemma

The titmice wanted those sunflower seeds. They worked their way through the hawthorn toward the feeder. And I kept moving up closer to the window, until my hands were pressed flat against it. "Don't do it!" I pleaded. "It's not worth it! She'll get you." I was begging a sparrow, a junco, a cardinal, anything, to come out of hiding.

The sharpie turned her head away from the titmice, as if uninterested. She preened the delicate white-and-orange feathers of her breast. She turned her head around and ran her bill through the dark feathers of her back. She stretched her long, grey-and-white-banded tail, spreading it like a fan, and shook it.

A titmouse perched on the tip of a branch over the feeder. It leaned down toward the seeds.

Should I try to warn the titmouse by waving my arms? If I did, maybe I would startle the bird I was trying to save, distract it, cause it to make a mistake. I stood as if paralysed.

And, paralysed, I had time to ponder whether I really wanted to interfere. I definitely wanted to save the titmouse. But did I want the sharp-shinned hawk's orange eye to close forever? I treasure the charming titmice in part because they are less commonplace than juncos and cardinals. Yet even titmice are abundant compared to sharpies, and their lives are easier. The hawk's difficult role is to hunt and capture wild, watchful birds, or else perish.

This sharpie might have travelled hundreds of miles from her breeding grounds in the north to get to my Iowa backyard, surviving on her speed and wits. Why hadn't she kept she kept going south, like the majority of her species? Perhaps she was starving and did not have the strength to continue. The meal that she sought in my yard that morning might have been a matter of life and death for the hawk as well as for the titmice.

A daring solo

At last, when the sharpie's head was turned away, one of the titmice dashed to the platform feeder, snatched a sunflower seed, and bounced back into the shelter of the thorny branches.

I gasped. The hawk looked hard at the titmouse and then returned to preening. Apparently that was sufficient adventure for the titmice. They drifted through the hawthorn and evergreens and out of the yard. The hawk sat in the maple for an hour, occasionally flicking away the snow that fell upon her, but no other birds came out into the open. At last she leaned forward and sailed off the branch and across the snowy lawn, out of sight. In a few minutes my yard was full of birds once more.

Hope of the human heart

The sharpie must have found something to eat elsewhere. She did not starve, for she returned occasionally throughout the winter. I found feathers on the ground few times. Once I saw her catch a house finch. The titmice were still visiting my yard when spring came.

Against all reason I had wanted both to cheer for the sharp-shinned hawk and to save the titmice. And this time, nature indulged my sentimental heart. Sharpie and the titmice all survived.

In a larger view, such a wish is not necessarily a vain hope. We have an emotional, almost instinctive, desire to preserve individual birds that we know and love. If we can extend that desire to embrace entire species and the natural habitats on which their existence depends, we can save more than one or two birds. We can preserve what makes our planet a good place for all species to live, including ourselves.

MEMBER'S SIGHTINGS-APRIL - Compiled by Martin Cocker

A smaller number of records fit into the "Unusual or Interesting" category this month but again we have had many records submitted. The Cape Barren geese were a great sighting. I have never seen them in the wild but have seen them as exotics in private collections, an unusual looking bird. Other records have been submitted by Betty Hudson, Mike Morphett and Charlie Dove.

SPECIES	No.	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Cape Barren Goose	2	6-Apr	Shellharbour Golf Course	Rural	Chris Brandis
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	10-Apr	Primbee	Garden	Ron Imisides
Bar-shouldered Dove	8	15-Mar	Killalea SRA	Parkland	Nikolas Haass
White-throated Nightjar	1	30-Mar	Shoalhaven Heads	Heath	Nigel Jackett
White-throated Nightjar	1	5-Apr	Exeter Exit, Hume Hwy	Heath	Nigel Jackett
White-throated Nightjar	1	22-Mar	Seven Mile Beach NP	Bush	Nigel Jackett
Pacific Baza	1 to 2	3 to 10 April	Kangaroo Valley	Rural	Carla Jackett
Grey Goshawk	1	8-Apr	Kangaroo Valley	Rural	Carla Jackett
Grey Goshawk	11	26-Mar	Killalea SRA	Parkland	Patrick Lyons
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	29-Mar	Kangaroo Valley	Rural	Nigel Jackett
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	9-Apr	Kangaroo Valley	Rural	Carla Jackett
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	26-Mar	Killalea SRA	Parkland	Patrick Lyons
Brown Falcon	2	11-Apr	Coolangatta Mountain	Bush	Nigel Jackett
Brown Falcon	1	15-Mar	Killalea SRA	Parkland	Nikolas Haass
Peregrine Falcon	1	19-Apr	Berry	Rural	Nigel Jackett
Musk Lorikeet	5	11-Apr	Shoalhaven Heads	Rural	Nigel Jackett
Musk Lorikeet	many	15-Apr	Wollongong Bot. Gardens	Garden	IBOC
Brush Cuckoo	1 Juv	15-Mar	Killalea SRA	Parkland	Nikolas Haass
Rockwarbler	1	13-Apr	Bungonia Gorge	Bush	Gleniss Wellings
Satin Flycatcher	1	23-Mar	Red Rocks Cambewarra Range	Bush	Nigel Jackett
Rose Robin	1	16-Apr	Figtree	Garden	Lorraine Pincus
Rose Robin	1	15-Apr	Wollongong Botanical Gardens	Garden	IBOC

Several members have asked about Gang-gang Cockatoos and their apparent decline over previous years. Over the last two years we only have five records mostly away from the coast. When I lived in Bowral they were regular winter visitors to the hawthorn bushes in gardens and road sides. Please can we make a special point of looking out for these birds and submitting reports.

Our Wader Counts on the first Sunday of the month are becoming a regular feature of the Clubs Calendar. We have spent time establishing the best locations to find these birds at roost and have met local residents who have shown interest in our activity and have provided local knowledge. Everyone is always welcome to join this morning activity.

Recently I was contacted by phone from a web site enquiry from a local who had found a badly injured Little Tern at Windang that subsequently died. The bird was carrying a ring and I submitted the details on-line to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme. This bird was banded on 31 January 2009 at Lake Conjola as a nestling, so its life span was only one month and 15 days and it had travelled 89km to Windang. A life far short of its potential.

Many thanks for all your records! Please send in your sightings to cocker@speedlink.com.au and don't forget that these lists are on our website www.iboc.org.au. Good Birding!

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