



# 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

"One Good Tern Deserves Another"

**CLUB'S AIM:** To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birdlife around them.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS** due 1st January each year: **FAMILY \$25 SINGLE \$20 JUNIOR \$5**

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## FORTHCOMING IBOC EVENTS NOVEMBER 2005

**AGM & CLUB MEETING – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November - 7.30pm Fairy Meadow Community Hall - Kevin Mills** will give a talk on the Birds of Norfolk Island, an Australian territory 1,700 km to the east of Sydney. The talk will look at the endemic species and the great changes that have occurred since European settlement. **Please remember to bring a mug and a small plate for supper afterwards.**

**MID-WEEK WALK – Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November – Puckey's Estate – Val Dolan, Joan and Tom Wylie.** Meet at Fairy Meadow Surf Club at **8.30am**. Bring morning tea, hats, sunscreen etc.

**NOVEMBER MONTHLY OUTING - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2005 - Shoalhaven Heads / Comerong Island.** Meet at **9.00am** sharp in the River Road foreshore carpark at the eastern end, adjoining the Holiday Haven Tourist Park. Travel via the Gerringong, Gerroa, Shoalhaven Heads Rd. Turn off to the left at the second turning to Shoalhaven Heads. Take the first on the right (Bailey Road) and then left again at the end, into River Road. Bring eats, drinks etc also **insect repellent** in case of sandflies. Be prepared to get your feet wet to get close up views of waders/shorebirds and to test your identification skills.

**NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING - Tuesday 22nd November 2005, at 7.30pm** at the home of Val Dolan, 26 Morandoo Have, Mt Keira (4229 6737). Turn off Mount Keira Road at Yates Ave, first right heading down hill. All members welcome.

**DECEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER** Deadline for articles for the next *IBOC News* is **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November**. Please don't leave submitting your contributions to the last minute and where possible please submit by email.

**AGM** The AGM with election of the new Committee will be held at the start of the November Meeting. Are you interested in helping to provide ideas for IBOC Speakers, Walks or Camps? If so, the Committee are looking for new members of the club to join them for next year. Please contact Roger, Betty or any other Committee member before the start of the AGM at the November meeting.

### EDITOR WANTED!!

As I am unable to continue as Editor for another year, the club is looking for a new editor. If anyone is interested could they please contact either myself or the President. There is a possibility I could share the role with someone (6 months each?) or offer a supporting role if necessary, but I can't take on another full year so please consider coming forward. You would only be responsible for putting the Newsletter together, not copying or mailing.

NB The New South Wales Bird Atlassers *Identification Sheet on the Weebill and Thornbills of NSW* is reproduced at the back of the newsletter for the interest of members and with the kind permission of Ken Schaefer.

## REPORT ON OCTOBER MEETING

Bruce Coyte

### Talk by Peter Nolan

With only short notice Peter Nolan proved once again how thoroughly entertaining his talks and presentations are. On this occasion the subject chosen was his recent overseas trip which included a visit to Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas USA. From the outset Peter's indefatigable style of photography (and wit) were to the fore. We were all treated to images of expansive vistas where out "in the beyond" wheeled cranes, strode whooping cranes and sat a golden eagle (not to be confused with the Bald Eagle by its perching habit (Bald perches bolt upright Golden leans forward), pointed out to Peter by his authoritative companion, Vanessa, who assisted his viewing of spectacular wildlife scenes with the help of a powerful tripod mounted spotting telescope which, alas, failed to magnify Peter's carefully composed photographs. Hence slides containing marvellous scenery and by Peter's descriptive wit and word-pictures, amazing scenes of birds of prey, migratory water birds, deer and altogether amazing wildlife all to a backdrop of marshy wetlands, at the time of day (dusk) when birds/wildlife returned from afar to the relative security and shelter of the marsh/wetlands. Peter also had photographs of a rare Albino Eastern Screech Owl with a regular version in a refuge. Also there were hummingbird photos which Peter mused were at the expense of 3 rolls of film.

Discussion arose at question time from the audience regarding the nature of "National Wildlife Refuge" as practiced in the United States which although varied state to state Peter pointed out follows a general theme that licensed hunting is allowed with bans on rare/endangered or otherwise precluded species and some sort of training/familiarization of the hunters at the time of license issue. The proceeds from the license/fees and presumably fines funding upkeep of reserves/national refuges and parks.

Of concern to many was the fact that of three Whooping Cranes identified and enjoyed at the refuge by visitors at the time, two were later shot dead and found in the possession of the culprits when they were apprehended. There was a radio tracking device present on the birds!

On a lighter note up for discussion was Peter's amazing attire for the onset of winter in Kansas notably T-shirt, shorts and thongs with a "sloppy-Joe" over the top if a "nip" in the air, apparel needed in the past when Peter had conducted his Birds Of Prey Seminars at Barren Grounds in September or thereabouts during southerly changes and massive temperature drops.

A vote of special thanks was conveyed by acclamation and opportunity is taken on behalf of members present to especially thank Peter Nolan for a fine talk at short notice. Peter is shortly off overseas again and hopefully he can be easily enticed to talk to us all again regarding his "adventures", and enlighten us especially in the area of his most fervent birding passion: Birds Of Prey.

**BIRDING ABROAD: Reunion**

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 October 2001.*

Reunion is an island with an active volcano in the western Indian Ocean. It is still part of Metropolitan France and so is very French. We saw it first a year earlier from the air with the volcano in full blast. It was in the evening and very impressive with fiery flying debris and red lava flows.

We landed at St Denis, picked up our hire car and made our way to hotel finding the birds few and far between except for the familiar House Sparrows, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, Common Mynahs and the inevitable feral pigeons. However, in and around the hotel were dainty little Zebra Doves, Madagascar Turtle Doves and the ubiquitous Madagascar Fody – a dinky sparrow-like bird.

Our first outing was up an incredible corkscrew of a road above the town (Elizabeth kept her eyes tight shut for much of the way). We eventually stopped, went for a walk and saw both the endemic White-eyes - the Olive and the Grey, but the Reunion Cuckoo-shrike eluded us. We also had an excellent view of the endemic Reunion Harrier, a striking black and white bird, gliding along the edge of the steep hillside.

The only good road is round the island, where we noticed Mascarene Swiftlets and Mascarine Martins. Mascarine is the term given to the island group of Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues. Suddenly we found the road cut by a lava flow from the volcano we had seen erupting a year ago. We walked up the flow a short distance. Vegetation was beginning to come back in the gullies. We saw a Reunion Stonechat.

There was a temporary deviation round the flow so we were able to keep going to St Louis. From there a road leads to a village in the middle of the island which is a gigantic volcanic crater creating a vast circle (Cirque) of high cliffs. The road was even more incredible than our earlier experience – one lane wide in places under cliff overhangs – hoot and hope nothing is coming the other way! (Elizabeth under the dashboard).

We were rewarded with more Martins and Swiftlets, another Reunion Harrier and a Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher. Numbers of White-tailed Tropicbirds sailed high up the mountainside presumably seeking crevices in the rock faces in which to nest.

On our way back to St Denis we stopped by a small swamp. Not much on it, but we unexpectedly came across a Green-backed (Striated) Heron. The book says that they are not supposed to be seen on the island, so we left for home in high spirits.

**LIBRARY NEWS**

Our library has a small collection of bird books from particular countries. These can be borrowed before or after trips or just for general interest.

Also, there are more books and magazines which have been culled from our library for sale (cheap!). Bring your money to the next meeting.

*Birds of New Zealand*  
*Birds of the World*  
*Field Guide – Birds of North America*  
*Field Guide – Birds of Japan*  
*Indian Hill Birds*  
*Birds of Eastern and North Eastern Africa (2 vols)*  
*Pocket Guide to Kansas Raptors*  
*Pocket Guide to Kansas Mammals*  
*The Birds of Africa*  
*The Birds of Borneo*  
*The Book of Indian Birds*

**BIGnet Meeting, 10-11 September 2005****Chris Brandis**

The Bird Interest Group Network biannual meeting between the various birding groups in NSW and the ACT was held in the idyllic surroundings of Shortland Wetland Centre. The Centre had been in financial strife but with new sponsors and tighter management the Centre now attracts many visitors as well as regulars, a worthwhile stop for any one going north.

Various subjects of concern were discussed including the closure to birdwatching of most of the sewerage treatment works around Australia due to OH&S concerns. Cumberland Bird Observers Club has been in negotiation with the local council for over a year to have induction sessions, similar to what we use for Tallawarra, but the legal people keep throwing up concerns. The Dubbo representative reported on a proposed scheme to buy water licences to provide water to the Macquarie Marshes which are now almost destroyed as water for cotton, especially in Queensland, has allowed no flooding for many years preventing both grazing and bird breeding.

Graeme Hamilton, the new CEO of Birds Australia, gave a brief overview of where BA should head into the future and their relationship with the birding groups of Australia. They are in the process of developing a strategic plan for the next 3 years with a business plan that should be finished by October 2006. They have found that they are trying to do too much with too few people and not enough funds so a focus on core activities that can be done most effectively at a cost that can be borne by members and sponsors is required. For example some 45 to 50 conservation projects are being managed by one person, that's about an hour a week on each one. As with most groups, the vitality of the club will be a measure of the vitality of the committee.

Clubs gave brief reports on their current and proposed activities and project updates with many groups very active in conservation issues in their area. Public Liability Insurance was discussed with all clubs trying to reduce this high cost to members. A draft set of guidelines for conducting field trips was tabled and IBOC will look at this to ensure members are thoroughly looked after.

Sunday morning was used to familiarise members with the practical side of nominating Important Bird Areas and IBOC, with the assistance of some other groups, have submitted IBAs for Eastern Bristlebirds at Barren Grounds/Budderoo NP, Jervis Bay NP and Nadgee NP and for the Superb Parrot in the Cowra area. The morning ended with a lovely lunch prepared by the staff of the Wetland Centre with the next meeting proposed for Riverina area next March, if possible. If any member wishes to become involved in this activity and meet with birders from all over the state please let me know.



One fine day a chicken walked into a library and said BUCK (book); so the librarian gave the chicken a book. The next day the same chicken came back to the library and said BUCK BUCK, so the librarian gave the bird two books. The next day the same chicken came back to the library and said BUCK BUCK BUCK, so this time the librarian gave it three books. However the curiosity of the librarian was now aroused and so followed the chicken to see what such a bird wanted with three books. As he saw the chicken come to a stop at the edge of a pond, he saw the chicken pass all three books to a frog, who, while he was looking at them was saying, REDDIT, REDDIT, REDDIT!

**BIRDS AROUND BERRY - November****Bob Ashford**

I expect that for some it was simply morbid curiosity. For others it was the possibility of food. But for most I suspect it was sheer relief the danger had passed for them even if they were keeping a wary eye on proceedings. And all the while 'snow' kept falling.

Following a mighty 'THUMP' on our sunroom roof and a crescendo of calls and scattering birds I had noticed 'snow' drifting slowly to the ground. I imagined an unfortunate bird had flown into the glass and lost a few feathers in the process. On closer inspection, I discovered a situation far more brutal. A large female Brown Goshawk was astride a very dead and even larger Wonga Pigeon busily plucking it clean.

Warily watching the process were parrots, honeyeaters and bowerbirds. Calculating the possibility of a takeover bid were currawongs and magpies. Sitting calmly surveying the 'big picture' was a Kookaburra. No doubt, the currawongs, magpies and Kookaburra together could have harassed the Goshawk to abandon its prey but there was no indication of collaboration and I imagine the conversations were along the line of "After you". "Not at all, after you". None, it seemed, were prepared to risk the wrath of this avian assassin.

Suddenly the tense calm shattered and pandemonium erupted again. I had been spotted and the Goshawk took off carrying the Wonga. The audience, including Mr Cool the Kookaburra, scattered in all directions.

Female Brown Goshawks are extremely powerful birds and weigh about 650 grams. They regularly catch prey averaging 250 grams and may catch prey up to twice their own weight, using surprise, speed and impact. However, catching and carrying are two different matters. A Wonga is significantly larger and heavier than a Goshawk and in this case, it was just too heavy to carry and was quickly dumped.

Reluctant to see such effort wasted and thrilled with the opportunity to see such a magnificent bird of prey at such close quarters I decided to 'assist'! I retrieved the Wonga, placed it a little further from the sunroom closer to the shrubs, and waited. Sure enough about fifteen minutes later our hungry lady returned. Thoroughly rattled the honeyeaters and parrots gave up and flew off to less stressful feeding grounds.

Brown Goshawks need about 5 to 25 percent of their body weight in food each day and will stash a hard won catch if necessary. I was keen to see what this one would do. For the next hour she plucked the breast feathers from the Wonga and ripped the meat from its body. This lady was in no mood for stashing. At this time of the year, when eggs need to be laid and chicks need to be fed, Goshawks feed up, storing food in their crop to digest later or to feed their young, and there is a banquet of meat on a Wonga.

As fierce and as fast as the Goshawk is it still misses up to 60 percent of its targeted prey. I have regularly seen them just sitting in trees seemingly assessing the proposed effort against the possible return. It's a stealth hunter silently slipping through trees and shrubs to smash into its prey – if it's lucky. Experience and skills are critical and fifty percent of young Goshawks die in their first year through starvation because they simply keep missing. The world's supreme avian predator, the Peregrine Falcon, also occasionally preys upon Brown Goshawks and a Powerful Owl will take a roosting Goshawk. There is no room for complacency among birds!

Patience has its rewards though. The currawongs got the scraps.

**UNUSUAL RECORDS for September 2005****Chris J. Chafer**Send your records to: email [cchafer@speedlink.com.au](mailto:cchafer@speedlink.com.au)

Species	#	Date	Location	Habitat	Observer
Australian Brush-Turkey	1	16-Sep	Mt. Keira	forest	NW
Plumed Whistling-Duck	1	6-Sep	Jamberoo	wetland	JW
Plumed Whistling-Duck	3	11-Sep	Jamberoo	wetland	MR
Plumed Whistling-Duck	1	25-Sep	Jamberoo	wetland	JM
Little Egret	1	11-Sep	Primbee	lake shore	MC
Little Egret	1	29-Sep	Tom Thumb Lagoon	wetland	DW
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	10-Sep	Marshall Mount	farm dam	TB
Square-tailed Kite	1	9-Sep	Falls Creek	overhead	GD
Black Kite	1	7-Sep	Bendalong Point	overhead	MJ
Swamp Harrier	1	4-Sep	Bolong	overhead	BA
Brown Goshawk	1	16-Sep	Bellawongarah	garden	BA
Grey Goshawk (white phase)	1	1-Sep	Stanwell Tops	overhead	TB
Grey Goshawk (white phase)	1	10-Sep	Mullet Ck. Dapto	overhead	TB
Grey Goshawk	1	16-Sep	Black Ash NR	forest	BA
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	15-Sep	Bellawongarah	overhead	BA
Little Eagle	1	2-Sep	Coomaditchie Lagoon	overhead	PN
Australian Hobby	1	11-Sep	Windang	overhead	MC
Australian Hobby	1	14-Sep	Figtree	urban	LP
Australian Hobby	1	16-Sep	Keiraville	overhead	NW
Australian Hobby	1	25-Sep	Comerong Island NR	sandflats	NJ
Peregrine Falcon	1	7-Sep	Bolong	overhead	BA
Peregrine Falcon	1	10-Sep	Cambewarra	overhead	BA
Latham's Snipe	1	24-Sep	Berkley harbour	wetland	MC
Latham's Snipe	1	29-Sep	Tom Thumb Lagoon	wetland	DW
Grey Plover	1	13-Sep	Windang	sandflats	TN
Black-fronted Dotterel	5	7-Sep	Bolong	wetland	BA
Black-fronted Dotterel	3	27-Sep	Forest Grove, Kanahooka	wetland	MC
Gull-billed Tern	2	25-Sep	Comerong Island NR	sandflats	NJ
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	16-Sep	Minnamurra R. Dunmore	riverine	DG
Topknot Pigeon	18	25-Sep	Comerong Island NR	forest	NJ
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	3	25-Sep	Comerong Island NR	forest	NJ
Long-billed Corella	1	11-Sep	Jamberoo	paddock	BH
Little Corella	9	10-Sep	Jamberoo	overhead	BH
Red-rumped Parrot	20+	16-Sep	Paddy's R. Canyonleigh	woodland	DG
Brush cuckoo	2	25-Sep	Comerong Island NR	forest	NJ
Australian Owlet-Nightjar	1	16-Sep	Paddy's R. Canyonleigh	woodland	DG
Azure Kingfisher	1	16-Sep	Minnamurra R. Dunmore	riverine	DG
White-cheeked Honeyeater	1	14-Sep	Hewitts Creek	wetland	IM
Flame Robin	3	9-Jul	west of Marulan	woodland	LP
Logrunner	4	16-Sep	Black Ash NR	rainforest	BA
Spangled Drongo	1	12-Sep	Puckey's Reserve	woodland	NJ
Figbird	2	10-Sep	Nowra	urban	PF
White-winged Chough	8	16-Sep	Paddy's R. Canyonleigh	woodland	DG

**Contributors:** BA – Bob Ashford; JB – John Blomsteadt; CB – Chris Brandis; TB - Teresa du Bois; MC – M. Cartlett; JC – Josh Coyte; GD – Garry Daly; TE – Terri Edwell; ME – Mary Eskdale; PF – Peter Fackender; DG – Darryl Goldrick; IM – Ian McKinlay; BH – Betty Hudson; NJ – Nigel Jacket; MJ – Michael Jarman; KM – Kevin Mills; JM – Jill Molan; PN – Peter Nolan; TN – Terill Nordstrom; DO - Danie Ondinea; LP – Loraine Pincus; MR – Michelle Rower; NG – Ngarla Tetley; RT – Roger Truscott; NW – Nathan Waugh; DW – David Winterbottom; JW – Joan Wylie. **Comment:** Good to see another Plumed Whistling-duck in the region. Black Kite and Owlet Nightjars are always a great observations in this region.