

The Belongil Estuary Bird and Field Report – Jan Olley

Report No 28

Date 28/8/06

Report for July to August 2006

The Belongil Bird Buddies have joined Brunswick Valley Landcare. So, as a new locality group with Brunswick Valley Landcare the Belongil Bird Buddies are looking forward to being part of an active and committed group of people who care for all aspects of our environment. For our new associates, this report has been a part of BBB's activities since 2004 and aims to give an account on bird observations and happenings associated with the Belongil Estuary as well as some general BB activities.



Belongil Creek Mouth 26/8/06

The Belongil Estuary and the surrounding littoral rainforest is one of the great places to view birds in the Brunswick Valley and like all coastal environments the Belongil estuary is dynamic. Due to severe weather events over the past eighteen months the environment at the estuary has been under gone constant change. Each visit the scene is different. Since my last report at the end of June when the creek opened to the sea, north of the Becton Bayside building, the creek now opens to the sea south of where the building use to be (it was pulled down a couple of weeks ago). Further erosion has occurred to the front dunes with slumping of the larger dune. The dune is so undercut it is about to collapse further and all the garden refuse, which has been used in the past, supposedly to stabilise the dune, is about to be tipped into the creek. Where there was once a board and chain access which gently sloped to the beach, there is now a 3 meter drop and access is almost impossible. An old fence and a number of car tyres have been revealed and these were apparently used as a form of beach protection in 1975. But for the birds it's great, a large sand spit provides a resting place for the gulls and terns with 250 Crested Terns being counted in one visit in August.

The protected area behind the temporary fence is once again a nursery. The Pied Oystercatchers have hatched one chick, now one week old. Not all good news though as the second egg was abandoned. The Red-capped Plovers eggs have gone from their nest but no chicks in sight, and the Osprey which definitely had two chicks in the nest a couple of weeks ago appear to have none now and over the week-end a juvenile skeleton was found on the ground under the nest.

On the inner tidal flats at low tide and foraging for food was a lone Pacific Golden Plover, five Double-banded Plovers, Great Egret, Black-winged Stilts and on the island the Beach Stone-curlew. The air was filled with the sound of Rainbow Bee-eaters, their numbers have increased considerably over the last few weeks as they seek suitable sand slopes to tunnel their nests.

Belongil Bird Buddies celebrated a season launch at Oski Art Supplies August 13th in support of a fellow BB photo exhibition, exhibiting photos of birds from the Belongil. The exhibition is on for a couple of more weeks. We meet generally once a month and have an on-site presence when ever we can and over the breeding season we need to increase our presence mainly educating the public and monitoring the birds. If you wish to assist please feel free to contact Sarah Harris, birdbuddygroup@yahoo.com.au

Feature Bird – Double-banded Plover



Double-banded Plover

Five Double Banded Plovers have been spent the winter months at the estuary. These birds breed in the New Zealand summer and migrate to the warmer Australian east coast, usually arriving in autumn and leave during the spring months. Easily recognised by the double black and chestnut breast band, they are the only small plover in Aust, with two breast bands. As they are in their non-breeding phase during their visit here the strong colours in the bands may only be seen on arrival and before departure. Over the winter the bands usually fade to a dull brown and may be broken centrally and they will look very similar to the smaller female Red-capped Plover. People are usually unaware of their presence on the beach as they are well camouflaged; they huddle down and hide in the sand depressions and amidst beach flotsam. Their behaviour is typical of small plovers, stopping and starting frequently as they run in short bursts when disturbed and also when foraging for food.

Bird list for July and August

Australasian Gannet
Little Black Cormorant
Little Pied Cormorant
Pied Cormorant
Australian Pelican
Great Egret
Little Egret

White-necked Heron
White-faced Heron
Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis
Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
Brown Goshawk

Whistling Kite
Osprey
Australian Brush-turkey
Beach Stone-Curlew
Dusky Moorhen
Purple Swamphen
Masked Lapwing

Pacific Golden Plover	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Noisy Miner
Double-banded Plover	White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike	Lewin's Honeyeater
Red-capped Plover	Varied Triller	White-cheeked Honeyeater
Black-winged Stilt	Eastern Yellow Robin	Eastern Spinebill
Pied Oystercatcher	Golden Whistler	Scarlet Honeyeater
Silver Gull	Rufous Whistler	Brown Honeyeater
Crested Tern	Grey Fantail	Silvereye
Crested Pigeon	Willy Wagtail	Striated Pardalote
Bar-shouldered Dove	Eastern Whipbird	Figbird
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie Lark
Galah	Variegated Fairy-wren	Spangled Drongo
Rainbow Lorikeets	White-browed Scrubwren	Pied Butcherbird
Scaly-breasted Lorikeets	Brown Thornbill	Pied Currawong
Sacred Kingfisher	Little Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Rainbow Bee-eater	Noisy Friarbird	Torresian Crow
Welcome Swallow	Blue-face Honeyeater	

5/9/06 Adit

The above report written last week for our first report to the BVL newsletter. Since I wrote it Reid reported two Beach Stone-curlews at the estuary last week-end. Heather and I visited to-day but did not see them; instead a huge carpet snake occupied the place where I last observed one several weeks ago.

We did see the Pied Oyster Catcher chick though, and an Eastern Yellow Robin chick. Large numbers of gannets were diving for ocean fish in the tannin coloured shore-break, with about 60 sitting on the surface just bobbing up and down in the waves. For the first time since early 2005 we spotted a Restless Flycatcher and Leaden Flycatcher, the Belongil Littoral rainforest is doing its job as a corridor I'd say as these birds don't seem to stay in the area for long.

I will be away till the end of September, so by the time I return some of the northern migrating birds should be showing up. One Eastern Curlew and one Pacific Golden Plover have already turned up – just a small start to the season.

Jan