

The Byron Bird Buddies Field Report – Jan Olley

Report No 33

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Report for 17th August to 26 October 2007

All round, it has been a very successful couple of month for both the birds and the Buddies. The Birds of the Brunswick Valley Field day, 27th of August, saw over 120 people celebrating the beginning of the migrating bird season and the opening of the bird hide at the West Byron Wetlands. The day was particularly special because of the collaborative effort and support of the Brunswick Valley Landcare (BVL) volunteers, our parent group, and Byron Shire Council. The walks and talks organised during the day were Bird Buddies contribution for shorebird education and awareness as part of a BVL Envirofund dune restoration project for the shire. Look after the dunes and birds will also be cared for. We also supported BVL as charity of the day at the ABC Open garden display Sunday 14th handing out BBB material and we've been invited to have a display stall at the Ballina Landcare Weedbusters Field Day Sunday 28th October.

Byron Bay Pets and Produce have nominated BBB's as the charity to receive donation as part of their Xmas photography promo. Our education material will be distributed to encourage responsible pet ownership. Isabel gave a talk to the Brunswick Valley Bird Observers seeking assistance and support to distribute education material at the southern end of the Cape Byron Marine Park.



Group on the early morning bird walk



Opening of the bird hide by Mayor Jan Barham

For the birds, the increase in the Pied Oyster-catcher population by six this season, has been great news! Members are still reporting the chicks are all doing well; the chick at the Belongil mouth even though fledged, remains with the parents, and the chick up the creek seems to be staying out of harms way judging by the parents protective actions. Keen photographers are still chasing photos of the ones in the Brunswick. The Red-caps again have a couple of fluff-balls running around. This is the second hatching that we know of this season and we are not sure if the first chicks survived. Grave fears are held for the survival of this lot too as we could not see them on last inspection, we suspect the Osprey's as they are forever present and hunting for food to feed their offspring. The Osprey chicks fledged on the week-end of the field trip but one seems to be remaining on the nest and squawking as if saying "feed me". Wisely the parents stay away, well; at least they ignored the squawks when we were watching!

Belongil



Belongil Creek 21st October 2007

The mouth of the creek is just about to close again and the creek continues to undercut the dunes. The face of the dune is eroding quickly and is much steeper compared to the pictures in the August report. It is interesting watching these changes and I assume the recent period of storms has had some impact on the erosion. The bush along the creek shows sign of extensive hail damage; you can actually see through it as the trees have been stripped of their leaves and the ferns have been flattened or severely damaged and instead of being green are now brown and withered. The ground is a carpet of dead leaves and overall there was silence, not the usual sounds of active birds.

The sand flats were a different story. . some of the migrators were back! Last Sunday, the tide was out so the sandflats were exposed and all sizes of birds, mostly grey, were twittering and scurrying for a feed. Identification, as always was a challenge with these waders, the Black-wing Stilts were easy, but then it was assessing , size, feeding habits, bill length and shape, leg colour, eyebrow or not, but finally decided there were Eastern Curlews, Pacific Golden Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits, a Red-cap Plover and Red-neck Stints. There were also Egrets, a Royal Spoonbill and a Striated Heron feeding on the creek edge. If the mouth closes the intertidal flat will remain covered at low tide and the birds will probably find somewhere else to feed. Unfortunately, dog tracks could be seen in the sand in the inner creek as well as inside the fenced area. Several weeks ago Heather witnessed a couple of guys with two dogs canoeing in the creek and they let the dogs loose onto the sandbanks which caused a great deal of stress to the Red-caps and chicks. The report of a Beach Thick-knee being disturbed by a camper inside the fenced area was unfortunate. The camper has been moved on and also disturbing was the naked exhibitionist who insisted on standing in front of bino's and doing more than getting a tan!

Brunswick Heads NR North

Last Sunday four of us met 7.30 at the end of North Head Road and enjoyed a pleasant morning checking out both the inter-tidal flats on Marshall's Creek as well as the track to the mouth of the river and the beach, rocks and the rock wall on the seaward side.. There were lots of migratory birds feeding on the flats similar to Belongil, such as Bar-tailed Godwits and E Curlews but also Whimbrels and Grey-tailed Tattlers. The rock wall that extends into Marshall Creek makes a good resting place for Pelicans and Cormorants including the Great Cormorant which is never seen at Belongil. Resting on the sand flats were about 50 Crested Terns and a number of Common Terns. On the beach side we saw a couple of Ruddy Turnstones feeding on the rocks and a lonely Pied Oystercatcher on the sand along the river. Little did we realise that up the creek the chicks were newly hatched. Not many bush birds about but we did see a Mangrove Gerygone, another bird not recorded at Belongil. Dog foot prints could be seen in the sand in Marshall's Creek and on the seaward side there were car tracks as well as a couple of people walking 2 dogs. People were fishing off the rock wall in Marshall Creek and there was a jet ski in the river. If we understand correctly these are all activities that are not permitted in a Nature Reserve or the Marine Park. Marshall Creek and there was a jet ski in the river. If we understand correctly these are all activities that are not permitted in a Nature Reserve or the Marine Park.



Eastern Curlew – Marshalls Creek



Pelicans and Cormorants - Marshalls Creek Rock

Other Sightings for the Area August to October - The West Byron Wetland has a number of migratory birds especially in Cell I the Wood Sandpiper is still there and one Golden Plover plus Sharp-tail Sandpipers, Black-fronted Dotterels and Red-kneed Dotterels. Flat Rock at Lennox also is very interesting at the moment, with Curlew Sandpipers, Wandering Tattlers, Sanderlings and Stints. I believe a Grey Goshawk and a Forest Kingfisher is nesting in the Billinudgel NR and a Leaden Flycatcher was sited in the reserve as well. A Varied Triller was seen building a nest at Belongil. Some of us have seen chicks hatched such as the Masked Plovers, Honey-eaters and Doves only to become food for the Currawongs. Reid has reported a small number of Little Terns on the beach at Brunswick and Belongil but they don't seem to be staying in the area. The Little Terns are due to arrive from their Asian migration to breed in Australia. Much of our effort has been directed towards the terns once again nesting in the Belongil ... so here is hoping.

Birds Observed in the lower Belongil 25th August to 25th October 2007

Australasian Grebe	Sanderling	Golden Whistler	Magpie Lark
Australasian Gannet	Latham's Snipe	Rufous Whistler	Spangled Drongo
Australian Darter	Bar-tailed Godwit	Little Shrike-thrush	Grey Butcherbird
Little Black Cormorant	Eastern Curlew	Grey Fantail	Pied Butcherbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Common Greenshank	Willy Wagtail	Pied Currawong
Pied Cormorant	Common Sandpiper	Eastern Whipbird	Australian Magpie
Australian Pelican	Black-winged Stilt	Superb Fairy-wren	Torresian Crow
Great Egret	Pied Oystercatcher	Variogated Fairy-wren	
Little Egret	Silver Gull	White-browed Scrubwren	
White-faced Heron	Crested Tern	Large-billed Scrubwren	<i>Reid Reported</i>
Striated Heron	Common Tern	White-throated Gerygone	Beach Thick-knee
Australian White Ibis	Crested Pigeon	Brown Thornbill	Little Tern
Royal Spoonbill	Bar-shouldered Dove	Little Wattlebird	
Australian Wood Duck	Brown Cuckoo-Dove	Red Wattlebird	
Hardhead	Galah	Noisy Friarbird	
Pacific Black Duck	Corella	Noisy Miner	
Black Shouldered Kite	Rainbow Lorikeets	Lewin's Honeyeater	<u>TOTAL 90</u>
Brahminy Kite	Scaly-breasted Lorikeets	White-cheeked Honeyeater	
Osprey	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Spinebill	
Australian Brush-turkey	Pheasant Coucal	Scarlet Honeyeater	
Dusky Moorhen	Sacred Kingfisher	Brown Honeyeater	
Purple Swamphen	Azure Kingfisher	Striped Honeyeater	
Masked Lapwing	Rainbow Bee-eater	Silvereye	
Pacific Golden Plover	Welcome Swallow	Striated Pardalote	
Double-banded Plover	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Red-browed finch	
Red-capped Plover	Varied Triller	Figbird	
Red-neck Stint	Eastern Yellow Robin	Olive-back Oriole	

Feature Bird – Red-neck Stint

Calidris ruficollis



photo: Reid Waters

The Red-neck Stint is Australia's smallest migratory shorebird and flies one of the greatest distances to the breeding grounds of the arctic tundra in Siberia and Alaska. They migrate back apparently through India and Asia to Australia and NZ. It's about the same size as a Red-cap Plover and can regularly be seen feeding at Flat Rock and not so frequently at the Belongil Estuary.

At Belongil when we see them they have been in small groups feeding at the waters edge either along the beach or on the creek edge and occasionally, as recently happened, they were feeding on the inter-tidal flats. Their active feeding habit of darting about picking and probing with their bill differs from the stop and start of the Red-caps.

Not all migrate as we saw a small group at the Belongil during the winter months. We may only see the remnants of their rufous head and neck breeding colours on arrival or before departure otherwise they have an over-all grey-brown appearance and white underparts very distinguishable in flight.

Happy Birding
Jan