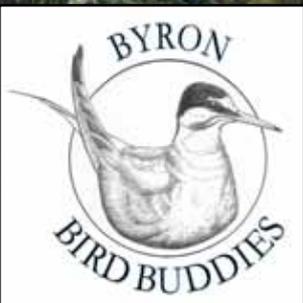
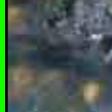
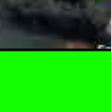
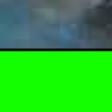
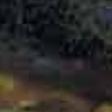


# Northern Rivers Birds of the Big Scrub & Gondwana Rainforest



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**October 2018 - September 2019**





Byron Bird Buddies (BBB) is celebrating 15 years as a small, self-funded community education and conservation group focusing on the preservation of habitat for resident and migratory shorebird roosting, breeding and feeding areas. Originally started as a Belongil Estuary conservation group in 2004, it became BBB in 2006 as it expanded its objective to actively advocate for the conservation of bird habitat and educating the community on the needs of all birds on the north coast of NSW. BBB is a special interest group of Brunswick Valley Landcare.



Our annual output each year includes this annual report, summarising the work we do and the impact a small group can have on wildlife protection/preservation and community education. The nature of being a small group means that we need to do a wide range of activities including fund raising, in order to continue with our primary roles. Our monitoring results contribute to BirdLife data on the numbers and status of birds in our area. Without this, peak organisations have nothing to demonstrate a basis for a claim for conservation. Locally, it means that we are relevant part of the conservation discussion and more and more people know who we are and what we do. We know BBB's work matters.



In addition we conducted/participated in 50 monitoring events/surveys; conducted 10 guided walks; gave 12 public presentations, participated/facilitated 7 meetings, conducted 3 workshops, managed stalls at five events, took part in a climate march, coordinated one working bee: developed the "Bird Watching in and around Ballina" brochure, and the "Birds of the Big Scrub & the Gondwana Rainforests, poster, sticker and bookmarks. During 2019 BBB commenced work on a bird trail brochure fo Richmond Valley Council area. In addition, BBB members continued our participation in numerous local and regional agency meetings on bird and habitat conservation. Each month, BBB develops a program of events for the coming month which is then widely distributed. In total there were over 401 attendees at Byron Bird Buddies events in 2018/19.



BBB continues to host a Facebook page at [facebook.com/byronbirdbuddies](https://facebook.com/byronbirdbuddies) with all the latest bird news and photos, local information plus that from within Australia and around the world. BBB also maintains an up-to-date website at [www.byronbirdbuddies.com.au](http://www.byronbirdbuddies.com.au) and at Twitter: [twitter.com/BirdByron](https://twitter.com/BirdByron)



## Conservation

The destruction of critical habitat for migratory shorebirds throughout Asia and Australia is particularly concerning and international scientific bodies are documenting a rapid decline in species of birds highly reliant on these habitats as they migrate up and down the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which in the north stretches eastwards from the Taimyr Peninsular in Russia to Alaska and in the southern end encompasses Australia and New Zealand. Here in Australia, we are still seeing an accelerated destruction of shorelines for both farming and residential development in NSW and QLD. 2018/2019 has seen an escalation of protests against a large development of Toondah Harbour, a RAMSAR wetland of international significance which also boasts vital habitat for dugongs, turtles as well as a significant population of migratory shorebirds and of particular concern is the decline of the Eastern Curlew.

Inland, our rivers, lakes and marshes which are critical breeding areas for large colonies of water and seabirds, such as pelicans and seagulls. Also the shorelines of these waterbodies, hosting egrets, finches and Latham's Snipe which breed in Japan, are also feeling the pressure of human decision making which sees more and more water removed from the inland river systems to prop up inappropriate agricultural practices. The once famous Macquarie Marshes, also RAMSAR wetland, is no longer considered a viable water bird habitat after years of water deprivation.

Despite significant bodies of scientific evidence which shows the monetary value of conserving native habitats, more and more habitat is being lost and given over to monoculture or houses. By comparison, the amount of land saved for conservation is miniscule, and hence continues the divide between developers, farmers and those of us who value habitat. The conservation of habitat and the promotion of bird friendly areas within communities continue to be a top priority of BBB and hence sometimes, conservation is about protest.



By working with a range of local communities, agencies and organisations, BBB aims to achieve a broader and more consistent range of conservation outcomes for shorebirds, waterbirds and bush birds across our area. During the past 12 months BBB has worked with the following groups:

- **BirdLife Australia:** BBB continues to undertake the National 2020 shorebird monitoring, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) monitoring and contributes to the Beach-nesting Birds project. Members also participate in the annual Birds in Backyard count program conducted during Bird Week in October.
- **Representation on Committees:** BBB members Jan Olley and Isabel Borrelli continue to sit on a variety of boards and committees consistent with raising the profile of habitat and sustainability needs across the region and in developing consistent strategies:
  - **National Parks and Wildlife Service (Byron Area):**
  - National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW – **North Coast Region Community Advisory Committee**
  - **Gondwana Rainforest World Heritage Community Advisory Committee**

## Bird Monitoring



Bird monitoring is a high priority of BBB. Programs for monitoring are prepared for each month and distributed to a wide range of interested persons. BBB undertakes voluntary monitoring and reporting on many sites within the Byron Shire, the results are retained locally and are also loaded onto the BirdLife Australia national database/Australia-wide ATLASSing program. This provides critical information on bird numbers, habitat use and condition, this data can be used both within the region and by avian peak bodies. BBB also conducts free guided bird monitoring walks where participants learn how to monitor, classify & identify birds.

Projects include;

- BirdLife Australia Shorebird 2020 bi-annual counts for shorebirds in four different locations in Byron Shire.
- BirdLife Australia KBA – bi-annual monitoring for 6 species; Regent Bowerbird, Albert’s Lyrebird, Green Catbird, Logrunner, Pale-yellow Robin, Paradise Riflebird in the Goonengerry and Mt Jerusalem NPs. Jan has taken on the role of guardian for the Nightcap KBA – which also includes Nightcap NP, Rocky Creek Dam, and Whian Whian SCA.
- Beach-nesting Birds – protects beach-nesting bird sites with fencing and signage and provides a wardening type watch during the breeding season. This is very important particularly when birds such as Pied Oyster-catchers & Beach Stone-curlews start nesting directly on the beach is very exposed and trafficked areas.
- Byron Shire Council – continue monitoring bi-monthly the Byron Wetlands and Vallances Road, Brunswick Valley STP site.
- Monitoring on a number of private properties in Byron Shire.
- Members are involved with other birding groups in the area including BirdLife Northern Rivers, Ballina 2020 Shorebird group and Richmond/Brunswick Birdwatchers and assist with monitoring of other sites in the Northern Rivers.
- **Byron Eco Tours:** mutually beneficial partnership with Byron Eco Tours, collecting bird species numbers which are then handed to BBB for entry into our database. BBB supplies educational material for the boat tours.

The series of photos below, taken and documented by long term bird buddy, Reid Waters, demonstrates the value of the citizen scientist, recording observations about bird behaviour and breeding cycles, over a long period of time. There are less than ten breeding pairs of Pied Oyster Catchers in the Byron Shire and hence their successful breeding is a highly anticipated event. Reid’s photos and observations demonstrate that these birds have had to face numerous hurdles in their reproductive lives and yet against the odds, they are mostly successful.



20.10.16 POC pair attempt to steer Eastern Brown snake away from hidden & immobile chick



16.10.10 Signs too close to nest - encourages people to move in to read - disturbing the bird off the nest



17.10.14 POC pair attempt to protect their chick during repeated attacks by rival nesting pair of POC's



19.11.06 Brunswick River construction -disturbs nest - one chick survived



16/10/10 - Eggs disappear from nest several days after laying - either too much disturbance by people or dogs



Anne and Ann monitoring at Goonengerry KBA and at a private property which has been restored as rainforest habitat.





*Catherine and Jenny - Bird Week at Cumbebin Swamp; Anne, Peta and Rhody at Durrumbal; Marion – 2020 bird count, Marshall's Creek*

## Community Education

**Community** education plays a key role in both the promotion of the work undertaken by BBB but more importantly to inform and education students and the community about the large variety of birds which surround us. We do not have the Big 5 (as in Africa) to wow people but our coastal waterways and rainforests are rich with a large number of bird species and host some very spectacular migratory journeys. The key role of BBB in presenting community education programs is to ensure that an increasing number of people can tell the difference between a seagull and a Pied Oystercatcher or a crow and a magpie etc. Increasing that knowledge and in particular when you add the fascinating science of North/South migration, can create a deeper interest and understanding of the urgent need for conservation. With limited resources and mostly self-funded, BBB carries out a wide range of projects under the community education umbrella.

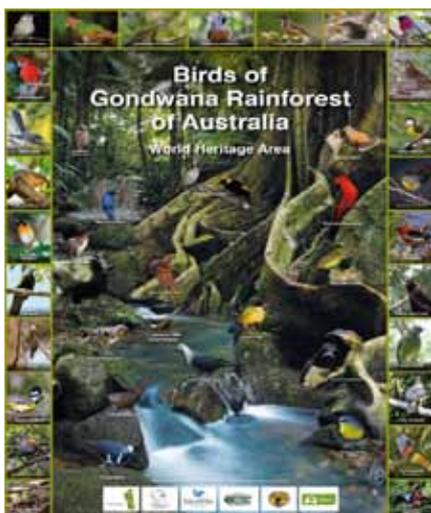
**Facebook, Website and Twitter:** BBB continues to promote a range of environmental events and talks on our website and to circulate information on local and global birds and conservation initiatives. The Face Book account is a quick method of providing bird lovers with snippets of bird news from around the world.

**Guided bird walks and Public Talks:** During 2018/19 BBB has presented 10 guided walks at some of the 25 sites highlighted in the “Birds of Byron Shire” brochure which was produced by BBB several years ago. We presented 12 public talks at various locations in the Northern Rivers including the Ballina, Lismore U3A, Byron Scouts Group and the story of bird migration as part of the “Stories in the Club” events in Mullumbimby. Members also conducted or participated in 50 monitoring events both in the Byron Shire and surrounding Shires, where non-BBB members attended and gained valuable knowledge in bird identification and habitat. We had stalls at five local events such as the 40<sup>th</sup> Celebration of the Nightcap Protests at The Channon markets and the Bangalow Landcare 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations. Members conducted three workshops including one on bird identification to NPWS volunteers.

**Signage:** BBB’s signage strategy continues more focused on the preparation of permanent signs as well as continuing to install temporary signs as required during key bird events (e.g. breeding or migratory flight times) and in areas where there is high human impact and the Belongil Estuary is a good example of this. Our shorebird signs , developed in 2012, for roosting, feeding and nesting sites in the Northern Rivers have now being adapted for Shire areas as far south as Port Stevens.



Isabel presenting Wild About Birds program at Brunswick Heads library. BBB funded a bird interpretation sign for the opening of WaterLilly Park in Ocean Shores. (pictured are Neil from Bangalow Signs, Jan, Isabel and Tom from the WL Park Committee).



BBB produced a poster, sticker and bookmarks to celebrate the Birds of Big Scrub and Gondwana Rainforest. These were launched at the Big Scrub Day 9/9/19. R: a screen shot -BBB website –guided walk and children’s activities at Yallakool Reserve in Ocean Shores.



Anne and Maureen at Jabiru-Geneebeinga Wetlands, Casino     Jan and Margaret - Fundraising at Byron Markets.



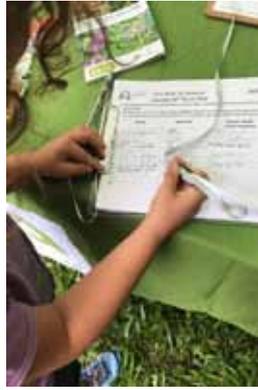
*Work-bee at Belongil fixing fences and installing educational signs to protect the nesting site of the POC to assist the community to make better choices about where they walk.*



*Community participants at a beach nesting bird workshop in Hastings Point - conducted by BirdLife Australia with the assistance of Byron Bird Buddies.*



*Southern Cross University at Vallances Road. - Isabel presenting Wild About Birds at Seabird Rescue school holiday event.*



*Suffolk Park Scouts joining us for another year (with little Bird Buddies, Amelie and Alessandra) at Byron Wetlands.*

*Middle: Signing on at the Yallakool walk opening event; Right: Larry, Jan and Ross at 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Terrainia Creek protests.*

**And finally Thank you** - Our thanks to Larry Larstead for the daily social media updates and endless support; Ivonne Rother for your graphic interpretation of our educational message; Anne Jones for assistance at various functions and stalls and in particular for your skills in the field and in editing our words, Reid Waters for your dedication to the beach-nesting birds and to the many supporters and participants and all the photographers out there who kindly donate their photographs for our brochures, website etc.

Jan Olley and Isabel Borrelli



# Rainforest Birds Highlight



Clockwise from above: Rufous Fantail; Brown-capped Emerald Dove; Crested Shrike-tit (*Ross Hollands*) Street art - King Parrots adorne building in Murwillumbah, & Satin Bowerbird (male), Little Shrike-thrush (*Ross Hollands*) - Middle - Albert's Lyrebird (*Margaret Hodgson*)