



BYRON BIRD BUDDIES

ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 2019 – SEPTEMBER 2020



ABOUT, IN and FOR our Local Environment

Byron Bird Buddies (BBB) is celebrating 16 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, 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 BBB members do to impact wildlife protection/preservation and community education. This year, Jan Olley, one of the founders of BBB, received the BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Award in recognition for her services towards the conservation of bird species. Many people love birds, if the number of Twitchers across Australia is anything to go by. The reality is that this does not necessarily translate into all those twitchers having an active role in the preservation of habitat and working towards the conservation of bird species. That requires an entirely different area of interest and one that BBB additionally works on with signage, education, monitoring, submissions, and conservation of key areas and protection of habitat. Recording of bird species is critical but without advocacy and action, the future for Australia's bird species is limited.

During 2019-20, even with the COVID restrictions, BBB conducted 39 monitoring events/surveys; 4 guided walks; gave 8 public presentations, managed a stall at one event (NRMA's Bright Future), took part in a climate march, participated/facilitated 15 meetings including working bees and numerous local and regional agency habitat management meetings and; finalised the development of the Richmond Valley Bird Trail brochure. Each month, BBB develops a program of events for the coming month which is then widely distributed. In total there were over 550 attendees at Byron Bird Buddies events in 2019-20.



BBB continues to host a Facebook page at 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 and at Twitter: twitter.com/BirdByron



Conservation

The fires on the east coast of Australia in November and December 2019 and extending into January this year causing the destruction of critical habitat for migratory shorebirds throughout Asia and Australia is particularly concerning. The loss of native habitat is astronomical. 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. In Australia, we are still seeing an accelerated destruction of shorelines for farming and residential development in both NSW and QLD and the fires only added to the woes of native fauna. In our 2018/2019 annual report we highlighted the escalation of protests against the large-scale 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. According to the Australian Conservation Foundation “Every summer 32 species of migratory shorebirds, comprising 40,000 individual birds, visit Moreton Bay. Around 20% of the world’s eastern curlews and 50% of all grey-tailed tattlers feed, breed and rest at the wetland following their amazing migration from Russia”. The final decision on the future of Toondah is still unknown but if you add development proposals like Toondah to the January 2020 bush fires which saw the destruction of so much native habitat, this is yet another blow for wildlife, for the simple reason that people can afford it want an ocean view. In our own backyard we have similar pressures from developers who want to profit from the Byron brand and expand ever more into lowland areas i.e. wetlands bordering the town. A future where Byron Bay’s houses are squeezed into tiny lots that extend from the Lighthouse at the most easterly point of Australia to the Byron Hospital, is not unimaginable to greedy developers.

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 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 program conducted during Bird Week in October.
- **Submission:** BBB has made representations via public submissions on Unicorn Falls Master Plan,
- **Representation on Committees:** BBB members Jan Olley and Isabel Borrelli have both been reappointed as community representatives to sit on boards and committees consistent with managing a portfolio of habitat and identifying sustainability needs across the region:
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service (**Byron Area Management Committee**):
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW – **North Coast Region Community Advisory Committee**
 - **Gondwana Rainforest World Heritage Community Advisory Committee**



BBB submitted a report the Unicorn Falls Master Plan. Bird Life recognition for Jan Olley’s work.

Bird Monitoring

Bird monitoring continues to be the highest 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 (more about this in under Community Education).

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 Oystercatchers start nesting directly on the beach in 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:** for over 7 years we have had a 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 capture for removal of fishing line of Pied Oystercatcher in Marshalls Creek. Working bee at the Belongil Estuary, placing signs and fences around breeding areas for Red-capped Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers & Beach Stone-curlews.



The restoration of private land and Council waste water treatment areas as native habitat is critical to the creation of wildlife corridors. Bird monitoring brings a level of validation and excitement to often long rehabilitation processes. Nankeen Night Heron over Byron Wetlands.



19.9.2020
Belongil Beach
Byron Bay

Band number Y13573
Engraved flag 4YRWB
Banded 30.10.2008
Age of bird when banded: 3+
Location NZWS71 Manawatu Estuary North Island NZ
Flag combination White flag & four colour bands



5.12.2019 Three Gull-billed terns spent a few days at the Belongil



Belongil Creek 23.9.20 first Bar-Tailed Godwit this season via NZ



28.1.2020 Belongil BSCs. In next few months juvenile's eye stripe will gradually resemble the adults



25.1.2020 Belongil Little Terns Noteband

Community Education

The key goal of BBB in delivering 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. 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. BBB believes that without education the future of conservation is very limited. Integrated into our teaching program are these three important dimensions of learning which guides our education program.

Education **ABOUT** our environment i.e. developing skills and knowledge. This is usually a presentation to a group, in a classroom or library. It's designed to pique the audience's interest and raise awareness of environmental issues affecting birdlife and wildlife in general.

Education **IN** our environment i.e. connecting to nature and place. Take the learning outside to foster values and attitudes aligned with those needed for the conservation of habitat.

Education **FOR** our environment i.e. taking action to manage, restore, grow and protect our environments. Increasing our sense of responsibility and confidence to resolve local environmental issues.

BBB projects under the education umbrella include:

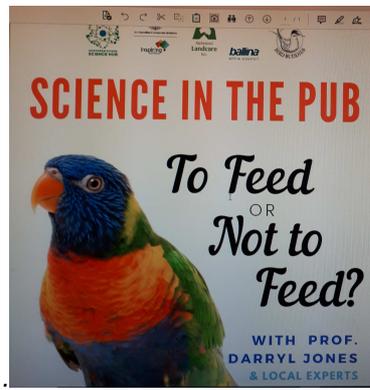
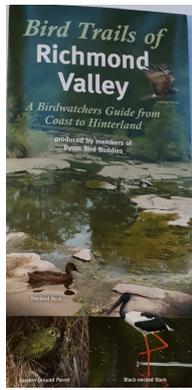
Facebook, Website and Twitter: BBB continues to promote a range of environmental events and talks on our website and to circulate information on local and global birds and conservation initiatives. The Face Book account is a quick method of providing bird lovers with snippets of bird news from around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

Guided bird walks and Public Talks: The number of planned events was minimised due to COVID restrictions which are still in place at the time of writing this report, however 2019/20 BBB managed 4 guided walks and 8 public presentations. Conducted or participated in 39 monitoring events where non-BBB members attended and gained valuable knowledge in bird identification and habitat.

Signage: BBB's signage strategy still focuses on the installation 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.



BBB stall and presentations at the NRMA's Bright Futures tour.



BBB's new brochure; a Science in the pub event in Ballina drew a large crowd.

Monitoring events at Rummery Park, Kyogle, Suffolk Park, & Goonengerry NP



Monthly walks in Arakwal NP and Suffolk Park for kids

And finally Thank you - As always our thanks to Larry Larstead for the daily social media updates and endless support; 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 photographing and documenting and on a daily basis looking out for the welfare and wellbeing of birds. Your dedication to beach nesting birds is recognised. Deb Pearse for your wonderful photos of birds at the West Byron Wetlands. The many supporters and participants and other photographers out there who kindly allow their photographs to be used for our brochures, website etc.

Jan Olley and Isabel Borrelli



Pied Oyster-catchers & Red-capped Plovers – the cycle of life

