



BYRON BIRD BUDDIES

ANNUAL REPORT October 2011 – September 2012



Preamble

Byron Bird Buddies (BBB) is 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. BBB's objective is to actively advocate for the conservation of shorebird habitat and to educate the community on the needs of all birds on the north coast of NSW. In summary, in 2011/12 BBB conducted 19 guided walks, presented 16 talks across the region, conducted and/or participated in 21 monitoring events and participated in the development of 2 nature programs for broadcasting. We also facilitated the development of bird information brochure for Tweed Shire now to be produced across the region, launched our *Wild About Birds* schools pilot program and attended 9 bird agency meetings.

BBB also maintains a website at www.byronbirdbuddies.com.au.

BBB is an umbrella group of Brunswick Valley Landcare.

Conservation

By working with a range of agencies and organisations, BBB hopes to achieve a broader and more consistent range of conservation outcomes for shorebirds, waterbirds and bushbirds across the north coast. During the past 12 months BBB has worked extensively with the following groups:

- ❖ **Belongil Shorebird Stakeholder Group** – a platform for driving the Belongil Estuary Seabird and Shorebird Management Plan and consisting of Byron Council, Marine Parks Authority (MPA), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Actions include; protection of nesting areas and migratory shorebird roosting areas with fencing, media release, compliance plan, predator control, habitat management, shorebird monitoring and reporting, consideration of the Belongil Opening strategy in protecting the shorebird habitat, amelioration of pollutants of Butler Street drains and submission to planning documents.

Regional Shorebird Committee – a platform for a consistent management of shorebirds, their habitat and threats in the Northern Rivers Region from Clarence River north to the Tweed River. The committee is chaired by National Parks and Wildlife Service and consists of community groups, council representatives and NPWS rangers from across the area. The group has achieved much since its formation in 2010:

- BBB collaborated on the development of the Dogs and Leashes Birds and Beaches brochure produced by NPWS launched at Belongil Beach in December 2011.
- An integrated shorebird signage strategy and sign concept (wrongly reported as a poster in our report last year) was a project presented to the group by BBB and BBB actively pursued funding from Birdlife-Northern Branch and managed the project in collaboration with the committee members. Byron Shire Council contributed greatly with the design. The sign has now been erected at fourteen sites within the Northern Rivers and further signs are planned for NPWS properties.
- As an initiative of Tweed Bird Observers (TBO), BBB partnered with the group in converting the sign to a poster funded by Bush Futures for Tweed and Byron Shires.
- Again in partnership with TBO, we have adapted the sign into a Shorebird Brochure for the Tweed Shire and are now in the process of developing the brochure for each of the shires in the Northern Rivers.

BBB has continued to promote a program of consistent signage on shorebird breeding and feeding areas on public land and in national parks stretching from the Clarence in the south to the Tweed in the north.

- ❖ National Parks and Wildlife Service (Tweed Area): We continue to advocate for a permanent protection area for the endangered breeding Beach Stone-curlew in the Brunswick River. This year it was extremely distressing for NPWS Ranger Lori Cameron to find last year's chick which was ready to fledge, entangled in fishing line, having starved to death. BBB, NPWS and Seabird Rescue will collaborate to run an education campaign around this issue during the 2012/3 summer period.

BBB also presented the following submissions:

- Issues Paper – NSW State Planning System Review
- Marine Parks Audit Report Recommendations
- Department of Planning - West Byron Urban Land Release
- Byron Shire Council re: impact of Kite Surfing

Representation on Committees:

BBB members Jan Olley and Isabel Borrelli 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:

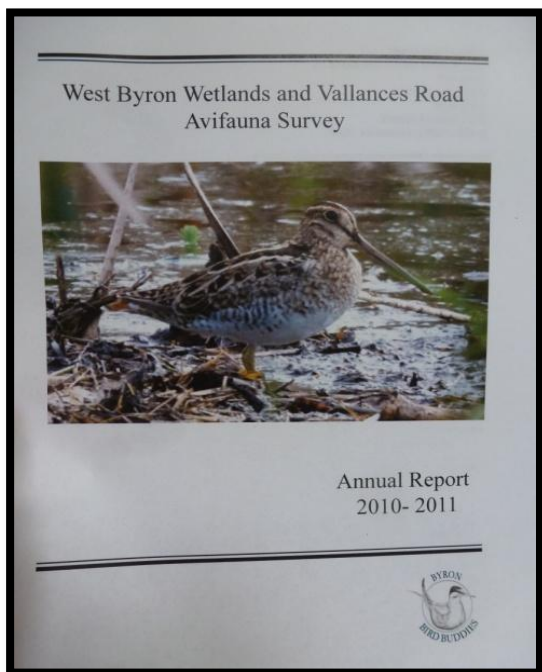
- Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority Board
- Regional shorebird management committee
- Byron Coast NPWS Committee of Management
- National Parks of NSW – Northern Rivers Region Community Advisory Committee (Jan Olley as Chair)
- Ballina 2020 Shorebird Monitoring Group
- BSC Koala Plan of Management Project Reference Group

Bird Monitoring

BBB undertakes paid monitoring and reporting activities on behalf of organisations.

- ❖ Byron Shire Council –West Byron Wetlands and Vallance's Road STP.
- ❖ Wetland Care Australia – Brunswick Heads Saltmarsh.
- ❖ Birdlife Australia Shorebird 2020 volunteer monthly counts for shorebirds at four sites in the Bryon Shire.

This provides critical information on bird numbers and habitat use and condition for use both within the region and by avian peak bodies. BBB also undertakes non-paid monitoring activities where information is collated and reported to Birds Australia as part of an Australia-wide ATLASsing program. BBB also conducts free guided bird monitoring walks where participants learn how to monitor and classify birds.



Points of interest

West Byron

- 154 avifauna species
- 8 threatened species
- *Highlight* – Pale-vented Bush-hen and Painted Snipe observation

Vallances Road

- 129 avifauna species
- 3 threatened species
- *Highlight* – Masked Owl and Noisy Pitta and the increase of terrestrial birds now utilising the re-vegetated area

Community education

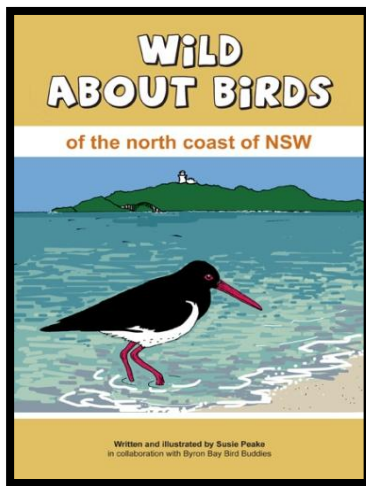
BBB is committed to an on-going community education program which seeks to educate the wider community on the beautiful birds which inhabit the northern rivers region as well as engaging people in conservation activities either in their own backyards or beyond. Although BBB is a very small group of passionate volunteers, each year a comprehensive community education strategy is developed which can be achieved within our limited resources and mostly with little or no funding.

Website: BBB continues to promote a range of environmental events and talks on our website.

Guided bird walks: BBB has led over 100 hours of free guided bird walks and talks during 2011/12. This provides an opportunity to promote biodiversity and conservation values for all fauna. The following is a sample of these:

- Byron & Brunswick Valley Scouts
- Qld Birding Group
- Guided walk West Byron wetlands for Birdlife Australia Northern Branch
- Byron Herb Farm 20th Anniversary celebrations
- Drinks and Nibbles West Byron Wetlands Bird Walk and Presentation
- Wild About Birds Field Day

Education materials:



L: The initial draft of the Wild About Birds schools 68 page project book was funded by a \$1,000 grant from Byron Shire Council.

R: Each year BBB releases a new book mark to raise awareness of bird habitat.

Public Talks:

BBB delivered free presentations on birds to the following organisations:

- ❖ Big Scrub Day
- ❖ Healthy Schools at Newrybar School
- ❖ Brunswick Valley Scouts
- ❖ Tots talk at Brunswick Public Library
- ❖ Mullumbimby Public Library -Wetland birds presentation
- ❖ Global College students walk and presentation
- ❖ Tweed Bird Observers – Migratory Bush Birds presentation



L: BBB's Jan Olley and Seabird Rescue during a segment for Channel 10's Totally Wild Program R: BBB hosts Global College at the West Byron Wetlands

Signage:

Each year, BBB prepares a signage strategy to ensure that adequate information is provided in key bird breeding and feeding areas which are also high human use areas during the migratory shorebird season. During the past year, BBB has initiated the development, sought funding for and has partially funded the production and placement of aluminium signs in strategic locations from the Clarence to Tweed Heads. Four signs have been placed in the Byron Shire. The photos below details the signage and the use of one in-situ at the north wall of the Brunswick River during a *Wild About Birds* field trip with students from The Pocket School. BBB is continuing the collaboration with councils and local bird groups up and down the coast by redesigning the signs into a brochure for each locality. The first re-design has been for the Tweed Shire and is funded by Birdlife Australia and Tweed Council, with the brochures for the remaining four shires funded by BBB.



Annual Community Bird Field Day: Designed to coincide with the commencement of the migratory shorebird season, BBB holds a free bird field day (with limited resources and no funding) for the whole community each year at the West Byron Wetlands. In 2011 this was held on a lovely sunny Sunday on the 23rd October and over 75 people attended. The event is designed to promote the wetlands and the adjacent estuary and the birds who feed and breed there to a wider audience by providing a half day of talks by scientists and bird specialists, specialised children's activities including an art competition, and guided walks around the wetlands and to the Belongil estuary. BBB thanks Byron Shire Council Wetlands staff, Nigel Stewart (ranger, Byron Area NPWS), the outgoing Mayor Jan Barham, Wetlandcare Australia and BVL for their support for this annual event.



Wild About Birds t-shirts released at the 2011 BBB field day and some of the store holders.

Schools education program: Wild About Birds.

In 2011 BBB developed and trialed a bird education and sustainability program called **Wild About Birds**. The aim of the program is to teach students of the far North Coast primary schools, skills which help them to identify and monitor the birds in their schoolyards and along the beaches and wetlands in our area and to use birds as a launch pad for detailed discussions on biodiversity and conservation needs of all fauna. The program is taught by Byron Bird Buddies with support from National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Marine Parks Authority as well as utilising the skills of retired and passionate bird watchers to assist with the field trips. One outcome of the program is that schools and their students can learn to manage school grounds and the surrounding environment for their long-term biodiversity & conservation values and in turn provide stable habitat for native birds. **Wild About Birds** fulfills the criteria of the NSW Education Department's Sustainability Curriculum Framework which is that "*Learning to take action that will result in people being more sustainable is the central learning goal of the framework*". In 2011 four schools and over 90 students participated in a pilot project which had 8 components to it. In August 2012, BBB was successful in obtaining a Caring For Our Country grant for \$18,095.00 (includes gst) to enable us to produce the **Wild About Birds** student book and a range of other resources for students and teachers as part of an extension of the **Wild About Birds** program into 8-10 schools up and down the coast. The entire program and all resources is provided free of charge to all schools.



Saint Finbarr students at Flat Rock Lennox Head with Marine Parks Authority Ranger Jackie Corlass. A Pocket student monitoring birds at West Byron Wetlands.