

# VOLUNTEER

NEWSLETTER OF THE THREATENED BIRD NETWORK

Volume 42, March 2016



UPCOMING EVENTS,  
UPDATES AND  
MUCH MORE

Greening Australia

birds are in our nature

  
**birdlife**  
AUSTRALIA

## The Threatened Bird Network turns 20

Welcome to the 42nd edition of the Threatened Bird Network's newsletter, *Volunteer*, which marks the 20th year of the Threatened Bird Network. We hope you all had a great break over the summer period and were able to get out and see some interesting birds. We hope you also had a chance to get out and volunteer with some projects and learn a bit more about some of our threatened birds. If not, there are plenty of opportunities coming up over the next six months.

Since the last issue of *Volunteer*, the Threatened Bird Network has produced another publication, *Woodland Birds of south-east Australia — Identification Booklet*, with another soon to be available, *My Tern*. An electronic version of the woodland bird guide is available from the website; simply click through to [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/threatened-bird-network/tbn-latest-news](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/threatened-bird-network/tbn-latest-news).

We've also been busy with workshops in Victoria, New South Wales and North Queensland, providing information and training to members of the community, school groups and Indigenous groups on various threatened birds. A number of other workshops are planned for the next six months, so keep watching the Threatened Bird Network website for details.

In 2016, we are very excited to be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Threatened Bird Network. To commemorate 20 years of helping Australia's threatened birds, we are holding an art exhibition, *'Birds and Us'*, that will run for two weeks from **15–27 April** in Melbourne. An opening night will be held on **Friday 15 April**, so mark it in your diary. Further details of the opening night will be available closer to the time and will be available on the TBN website, and in case you miss it, we'll send out an email alert. We look forward to seeing you there. Find out more at <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/threatened-bird-network/calling-all-artists-tbn>.

Over the next few months we will also be out at festivals and other community events, so if you are interested in coming along to help or would just like to drop in to one of the events, details of these activities are in the Calendar of Events on pages 18–19.

Thank you everyone for all of the time you volunteer. If you would like any further information, would like to provide feedback or share your stories, please contact us at [tbn@birdlife.org.au](mailto:tbn@birdlife.org.au).

*Janelle Thomas and Caroline Wilson*



Mary Whittall

## AUSTRALIAN PAINTED SNIPE



Update and call for records. Chris Purnell reports:



Chris Purnell

Contributions from volunteers have been crucial to unlocking several knowledge gaps identified for the Australian Painted Snipe (APS). Records and habitat information submitted to the APS database have also been crucial in advocating for the protection of threatened wetlands, but sightings of APS have all but dried up since the remnants of the 2010–11 La Niña dwindled, causing potential habitat to become patchy.

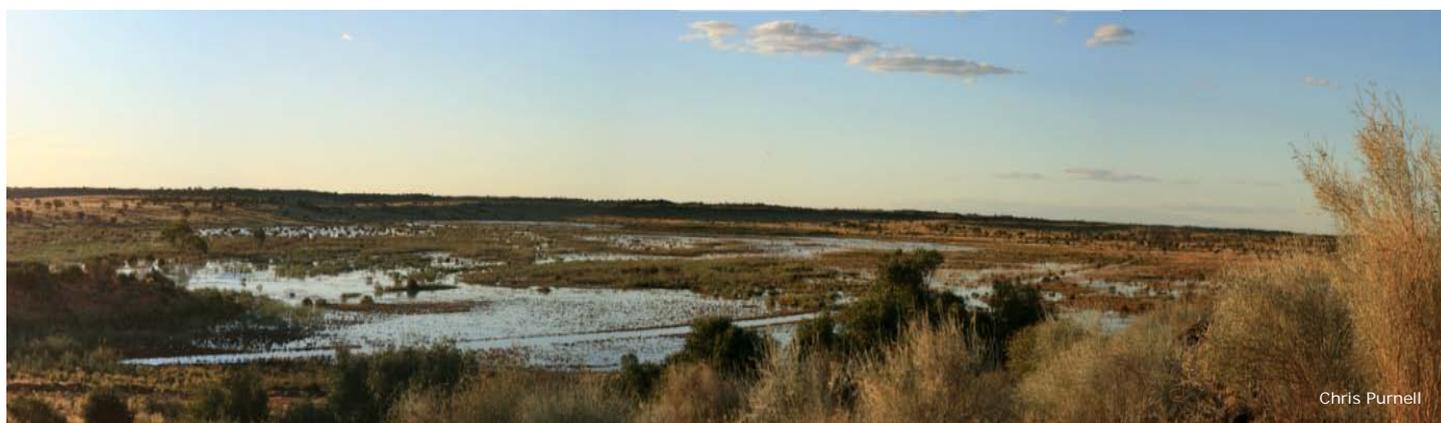
Due to the severe drought, records in Queensland have been confined to near-coastal wetlands. Below-average rainfall also affected the Murray–Darling Basin, but after a 71-day

environmental flow delivered over 52,000 megalitres to the Macquarie Marshes, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage staff recorded 16 APS there. Other records in eastern Australia have been few, with small numbers recorded in central NSW and northern Victoria. None were recorded in the Riverina or in coastal NSW, where known refuges have been flooded. In contrast, nearly 450 APS were recorded across Australia between 2010 and 2013. Where are they now?

The Lake Eyre Basin and Pilbara–Gasgoyne has had above-average rainfall for the second consecutive year, transforming the Channel Country and Central Australia into a temporary oasis, with breeding APS recorded by the Punmu Rangers in the Great Sandy Desert. Hopefully a general lack of observers in these remote areas is the reason behind the decline in sightings.

If you've been searching (or plan to search) for APS, we'd like to hear about it, whether you've been successful or not. Similarly, if you have records of the species (historic or recent) which may not have been passed on to us, please get in touch.

More information on survey methods, how to submit records, what to look for and where can be found at [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/painted-snipe-project](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/painted-snipe-project) or by contacting [chris.purnell@birdlife.org.au](mailto:chris.purnell@birdlife.org.au).



Chris Purnell

## BEACH-NESTING BIRDS



### Update and call for volunteers. Renée Mead reports:

The Beach-nesting Birds (BNB) Project has been busy training people to monitor their local beach-nesting birds. We've even held workshops in Queensland to learn more about nesting Beach Stone-curlews. Last October, the BNB Project was presented a Victorian Coastal Council Award for Excellence in Education, acknowledging our hard work in developing the Beach-nesting Birds Education Kit, visiting classrooms and working interactively with coastal schools. The Project was also a finalist in the Community Engagement category, for the Biennial Count. We also launched new Beach-nesting bird mini-documentaries for our revamped education kit.

Over the past year, our team of interns has made a valuable contribution to the Beach-nesting Birds Project. Joris, our Biennial Count Coordinator for the 2014 count, has been working closely with us over several years, while Georgie has worked to engage young adults via social media; Hannah, our graphic design intern, has created some amazing resources for us to use, and Milla did a fantastic job organising our first Plover Appreciation Day last year, which was a great success.

In 2016 we will engage some new volunteers with exciting ventures that will enhance the experience of working with other volunteers and coordinating conservation projects.

A taste of what's new in 2016:

- Five fact sheets about different threats facing beach-nesting birds are available on the education tab at [www.birdlife.org.au/beach](http://www.birdlife.org.au/beach).
- The data portal will be expanded to include additional species of beach-nesting birds.
- The second annual Plover Appreciation Day (**16 September**) will feature fun and engaging events to build on awareness of the issues various species of plovers are facing.
- In October, we'll host a two-day workshop, to hear from groups across NSW and discuss future directions.
- The 2016 Biennial Hooded Plover Count will be conducted on ocean beaches across NSW, Victoria and South Australia in November.

### Volunteers are needed for a number of tasks:

#### Beach-nesting Birds along the NSW coast

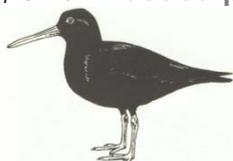
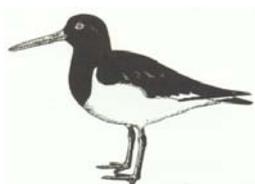
This role will involve working with coastal communities, in particular engaging and liaising with coastal caravan parks, local birding/environmental groups and land managers, and assisting with the coordination of a two-day conference in NSW. The applicant may be from Victoria or NSW.

#### Biennial Count Volunteer Coordinator

Every two years, volunteers from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia survey suitable Hooded Plover habitat to allow us to estimate numbers of beach-nesting birds. It's not only Hooded Plovers that are counted — other beach-nesting birds, such as Red-capped Plovers, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers and breeding colonies of Fairy Terns, are counted as well. We need a volunteer, based in Melbourne, to help us recruit participants and coordinate the survey.

For more information on the Beach-nesting Birds Project, head to our website [www.birdlife.org.au/beach](http://www.birdlife.org.au/beach). You can also follow us on social media, on Facebook [www.facebook.com/hooded.plover.birdlife](http://www.facebook.com/hooded.plover.birdlife), Instagram [@birdlife\\_hoodie](https://www.instagram.com/birdlife_hoodie), and Twitter [@birdlife\\_hoodie](https://twitter.com/birdlife_hoodie).

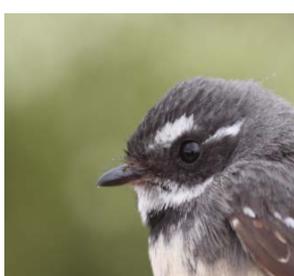
To report sightings of Hooded Plovers and other beach-nesting birds, or for more information on the volunteer roles and application details, email [hooded.plover@birdlife.org.au](mailto:hooded.plover@birdlife.org.au).



## BIODIVERSITY IN MELBOURNE'S EAST



### Update and call for volunteers. Kerryyn Herman reports:



In 2015, Birdlife Australia began a collaboration with the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA), the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology and Melbourne University to develop a bird monitoring project for the seven EAGA municipalities (Boroondara, Knox, Maroondah, Monash, Stonnington, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges). The EAGA was formed in response to community concerns about climate change and a desire to drive environmental sustainability in Melbourne's east. The monitoring project collects the data required to help EAGA councils develop adaptive Natural Resources Management practices in the face of ongoing climate change.

The project relies on volunteers conducting bird surveys across 35 survey sites. The information, added to data from BirdLife Australia's Atlas, have been analysed across the EAGA municipalities, and will be used to measure changes in bird communities and species abundance.

A key result has been the confirmation of 'typical' urban bird communities across Boroondara, Whitehorse and Monash, dominated by Red Wattlebirds, Noisy Miners, Rainbow Lorikeets and Australian Magpies. Other species are generally reduced in both number and frequency of occurrence. Stonnington has a similar community, but reporting rates and abundance are more even.

The bird communities in the other three municipalities are different. In Yarra Ranges, the least urbanised, Red Wattlebirds, Noisy Miners and Lorikeets don't dominate, and the most frequently encountered birds are Grey Fantail and Crimson Rosella. Knox and Maroondah have a bird community intermediate between urban and rural communities. It will be interesting to see if these communities gradually become more like those in the urban areas or if management maintains these more peri-urban communities.

The study examines changing rates of occurrence across the study sites. Introduced Common Starlings are declining and so are Willie Wagtails. However, other species, such as the Grey Butcherbird and Crested Pigeon are increasing in occurrence, indicating changes to the habitat available in urban environments. Crested Pigeons have also been associated with changing climatic conditions.

Flame Robins have dropped out of the system completely. This species may already be responding to changes in climate. An altitudinal migrant, this Flame Robins move into the lowlands, such as the EAGA region, during winter. However, there is increasing evidence of changes to snow melt in alpine areas, and warmer temperatures may mean this species is not travelling as far during winter. Eastern Yellow Robins, on the other hand, appear to be returning to sites where they have not been recorded for some time.

The results of the first six months of this project provide a baseline for research. Continued surveys are necessary to collect data to direct management decisions made by local government.

We're always looking for more volunteers to get involved in this project, especially if one of these sites is your local park. Surveys can be conducted as often or as infrequently as you like, though ideally we'd prefer seasonal surveys to assist with analysis of the effects of birds' response to climate change. For more information, including the location of survey sites, head to the website at [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/biodiversity-monitoring-in-melbournes-east](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/biodiversity-monitoring-in-melbournes-east).

## BLACK-THROATED FINCH



**Update. Alma Ridep-Morris reports:**



Chris Tzaros

The southern subspecies of the Black-throated Finch (BTF) occurs in eastern Queensland, but formerly extended into north-eastern NSW. The largest known populations survive in the Galilee Basin and the Townsville coastal plain, with small numbers elsewhere. Both these populations are under threat.

Large areas of the Galilee Basin are subject to mining. Last year, a campaign saw approval for mining BTF habitat reversed, but early this year final approval was granted, with offset areas specifically set aside to mitigate the mine's effects on the species. However, a substantial net loss of high quality habitat is still likely.

The population on the Townsville coastal plain is under threat from a different source —urban growth of the city. Although the BTF persists in highly modified landscapes around Townsville, they still require intact open eucalypt woodland with diverse native grasses.

For the past 13 years, the BTF Recovery Team has conducted annual waterhole surveys for the BTF around Townsville. The 2015 survey failed to find any BTFs at waterholes that were previously reliable sites. Habitat change and a poor season are likely causes. For more information, head to [www.blackthroatedfinch.com](http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com).

## CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOO



**Call for volunteers. Adam Peck reports:**



Keith Lightbody

The Great Cocky Count will take place on Sunday **3 April**. This annual citizen science survey aims to count as many black-cockatoos as possible across Western Australia on a single evening. This will be the eighth annual count, and each year the data recorded become more valuable to our understanding of the state's black-cockatoos. You can download the 2015 report at [www.birdlife.org.au/documents/GCC-report-2015.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/GCC-report-2015.pdf).

Getting involved is easy — simply go to the roost location you've been allocated and count all the cockatoos flying into their night-time roosting trees. The survey only takes an hour, starting 30 minutes before sunset. To register, go to [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/southwest-black-cockatoo-recovery/great-cocky-count-swbc](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/southwest-black-cockatoo-recovery/great-cocky-count-swbc) and scroll. Registrations close on **20 March**.

If you know of a roost site near you, fill in the details on the form. If you're willing to travel to a roost outside suburban Perth, please tell us on the form, since these sites are more difficult to survey.

We will be conducting a series of workshops in March to inform counters about black-cockatoo identification, behaviour and ecology, and how to do the survey. The details of these workshops will be sent out in the next few weeks.

## COWRA WOODLAND BIRD SURVEYS



**Upcoming surveys. Malcolm Fyfe reports:**

**Survey dates for 2016 will be:**

*Autumn:*               **16–17 April**  
*Winter:*               **16–17 July**  
*Spring:*               **15–16 October**

If you're interested in lending a hand, contact Malcolm at [malcolmfyfe33@gmail.com](mailto:malcolmfyfe33@gmail.com) or call him on (02) 4471 8757.

New participants are always welcome.

## GLOSSY BLACK-COCKATOO (KANGAROO ISLAND)



### Update and call for volunteers. Karleah Berris reports:

In South Australia, the Glossy Black-Cockatoo is restricted to Kangaroo Island. Its population has gradually recovered over the past 20 years due to the actions of the Recovery Program.

#### Results of 2015 field season

By December, 294 nests — including 104 in artificial hollows — had been protected from possums by pruning adjacent trees and fixing tree collars to ensure nest trees remain inaccessible to them.

Breeding success was high, with 54.5 per cent of monitored nests producing a fledgling. Breeding was also recorded on the Dudley Peninsula for the first time since the 1970s, which indicates the population is increasing and expanding its range. Our annual census in September recorded 351 individuals, our second highest ever, only slightly fewer than the 356 counted in 2014.

We also carried out a 5-hectare revegetation project on the north coast with the assistance of Natural Resources Kangaroo Island staff and volunteers. A total of 2700 seedlings were planted on private land, mostly Drooping She-oaks (the Glossies' only food source), as well as 49 other species of plants.

In 2015, the Recovery Program was assisted by 82 volunteers, who helped monitor nest success, revegetation activities and conduct the annual population census. Thanks to you all.



Michael Barth

#### Volunteer opportunities in 2016

Once again we're seeking volunteers to assist with our fieldwork. No experience is necessary, as all training is provided, and it's a great way to see some spectacular parts of Kangaroo Island.

#### February–August

We are seeking people to assist with checking nests during the day, and evening nest watches to locate new nests. Transport is provided between Kingscote and the field sites. Contact us for more details.

#### 18 June

We are revegetating an area with Drooping She-oak woodland to increase the available feeding habitat for the Glossies. Work will involve planting seedlings, and, being outdoors, will require warm clothing, comfortable shoes and rain gear. Morning tea and lunch are provided, and children are most welcome.

#### 4–9 October

Throughout September and October, Recovery Program staff will survey Glossy feeding habitat to locate flocks, conduct the annual population census (over a week in early October), and determine flock composition and recruitment. Volunteers are welcome to assist between mid-September to mid-October, but our time of greatest need is during the week of the census, **4–9 October**. There are field activities that cater for all fitness levels, and work will be among some of Kangaroo Island's most spectacular scenery.

For further information or to register, contact Karleah at [Karleah.Berris@sa.gov.au](mailto:Karleah.Berris@sa.gov.au) or phone (08) 8553 4444.

## GRASSWREN SURVEYS



Call for volunteers. Graham Harrington reports:

**When:** 1–31 May

**Where:** Centred on Mount Isa south to Djarra and north to Lawn Hill and into the Northern Territory.

**Who:** Anyone who is fit enough to walk up hills for up to four hours every day.

You do not have to be a gun birdo. We are looking for young people with good eyes and ears and experienced older people with 4WDs, all keen to enjoy themselves in a beautiful landscape with masses of birds. You will be camping as you go.

We may be able to subsidise your expenses and arrange transport.

The purpose of the survey is to see if Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens have recovered after the widespread fires in 2011–12 and the subsequent drought.

The aim is to cover the entire range of both the Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens. Their ranges have a large overlap zone.

If you're interested, email Graham Harrington at [riflebird1@gmail.com](mailto:riflebird1@gmail.com), or phone (07) 4096 5051 or 0437 794 836.

## GREAT WESTERN WOODLANDS



Update and call for volunteers. Maris Lauva reports:



Spanning the landscape between the Nullarbor Plain and the Western Australian Wheatbelt is the largest intact temperate woodland remaining in the world — the Great Western Woodlands (GWW). With so much of Australia's woodland having been cleared, this vast area presents a unique opportunity to study its unique bird communities.

In 2012, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, BirdLife Australia commenced a long-term project of volunteer bird surveys in the GWW. Based on the data collected, we hope to make informed decisions on what actions are required to preserve the woodlands.

Volunteers have been conducting repeat 2-hectare bird surveys at 231 designated sites in the GWW since 2012, and additional surveys are often conducted on an ad hoc basis throughout the woodlands. By mid-2015, 152 volunteers had submitted 4,374 Atlas forms. An interim report with findings and conclusions based on this data will be released soon. With weather conditions that vary wildly — both between seasons and between years — the surveys are planned to continue until 2024 to capture the full range of climatic variability.

Surveys are scheduled for autumn and spring each year. Dates are suggested but people are free to organise their survey teams for when it best suits them. For safety reasons, we insist that a minimum of two 4WD vehicles comprise each survey party. Two of the nine GWW survey areas, Credo and Fraser Range Station, offer camping areas with showers and a camp kitchen, but all other areas require self-sufficient camping.

Suggested dates for this autumn's surveys centre on the **Easter** and **Anzac Day weekends**. In spring, survey dates are from **24 September–2 October** and **15–23 October**. We are asking people to put their hands up, to experience the magic of the Great Western Woodlands and participate in this ambitious project. For more information about what is involved, contact Maris Lauva, the Volunteer Surveys Coordinator, at [gww@birdlife.org.au](mailto:gww@birdlife.org.au) or phone 0403 029 051.

For more information, head to the website [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/great-western-woodlands](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/great-western-woodlands).

## HELMETED HONEYEATER



**Update. Bruce Quin reports:**

### Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve

Outcomes from the 2015–16 breeding season are extremely satisfying because population indicators are their highest since the Recovery Program began in 1989: 32 breeding pairs and 66 fledglings have been confirmed, and there is at least one active nest. The population has more than trebled over the last three years, with almost 200 Helmeted Honeyeaters recorded at Yellingbo recently.

The increase in population is believed to be due to:

- Pre-release predator awareness training of Helmeted Honeyeaters conducted by Zoos Victoria staff, leading to increased survivorship of individuals
- Releasing captive-bred Helmeted Honeyeaters in spring instead of autumn, as spring and summer presumably provide a greater abundance of natural foods
- Increased supplementary feeding in degraded habitat while the habitat is being restored
- Some restored sites are now suitable to be inhabited by Helmeted Honeyeaters
- An increasing number of breeding Helmeted Honeyeaters.



Andrew Silcocks

More than half of the fledglings from the 2015–16 breeding season have been banded and DNA sampled.

### Bunyip State Park

Last January, three Helmeted Honeyeaters (two of which were banded), at least one Yellow-tufted Honeyeater (Gippsland subspecies) and a suspected hybrid were detected in Bunyip State Park. The banded Helmeted Honeyeaters (both 8–9 years old) are a breeding pair, and it is likely that the unbanded bird with them was one of two fledglings they produced in the 2014–15 breeding season. Breeding by this pair was not confirmed in 2015–16. It is planned to band and take a DNA sample from all unbanded birds of both subspecies (and the hybrid) in this area.

### Volunteer activities

New volunteers are always welcome.

Supplementary feeding of captive-released birds at Yellingbo NCR — email [hehofeeder@gmail.com](mailto:hehofeeder@gmail.com).

Plant nursery days at Yellingbo: Tuesday and Thursday of each week, plus the first Saturday of each month from April–December — contact Michelle Faram of Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater on (03) 5964 8341.

Revegetation days at Yellingbo: often second Sunday of each month — contact Richard Case of Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater on (03) 9720 4062.

## IMPORTANT BIRD AND BIODIVERSITY AREAS



### Call for volunteers. Golo Maurer reports:

As a commitment to the BirdLife International partnership, BirdLife Australia is responsible for the identification, monitoring and conservation of Australia's Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).

### IBA Guardians

BirdLife Australia aims to have a Guardian for each IBA. An IBA Guardian doesn't need to be a bird expert or conduct the annual IBA Easter Health Check, though some choose to get involved. They have the support of a local, branch-based IBA Coordinator and the national IBA Program Manager. A list of IBAs without Guardians is available online. If you are interested in becoming an IBA Guardian, please contact Golo Maurer at [iba@birdlife.org.au](mailto:iba@birdlife.org.au) or phone 0467 444 114.

### Easter Health Check

Every Easter, the IBA Program takes a snapshot of the threats and conservation status of the areas that matter most to birds and wildlife, allowing national and international comparisons. The data gathered link our bird surveys and conservation. The Easter Health Check can be filled out after a field visit or as a desktop exercise. It shouldn't take longer than 2–3 hours. A summary of the findings from the Easter Health Check will be presented in our *Whitsun-tidings* magazine, which will go out to all IBA Guardians, and the data will be submitted to BirdLife International's database and used to update site information on [www.birdlife.org/datazone/site](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/site).

## MALLEEFOWL (VIC)



### Update. Robyn Rattray-Wood reports:

#### Motion-sensitive Camera Project Update



John Fraser



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Predators, such as foxes and cats, have an enormous impact on Malleefowl breeding. An important aspect of monitoring Malleefowl breeding is the detection and monitoring of the presence of other species, especially predators, in the Malleefowl environment.

In 2013, VMRG began a trial using motion-sensitive cameras to photograph all animals that visited two Malleefowl mounds. The cameras captured all animals that passed in front of them, day and night, for a year; 100,000 photos that were taken.

On the basis of this trial, VMRG received funding from the Iluka Malleefowl Management Committee to buy 50 cameras with solar panels, which were installed at six sites across north-western Victoria in 2015.

Ultimately, we will only have to visit cameras once a year to swap memory cards. The information collected will contribute to estimates of the populations of other animals in Malleefowl habitat. Further analysis will allow us to assess the numbers of cameras needed to characterise fox activity at a site.

### Reporting Back Meeting at Wedderburn

VMRG members and interested others are invited to attend the Reporting Back Meeting at Wedderburn on the weekend of **16–17 April**. Dr Joe Benshemesh will give an analysis of data collected in the 2015-16 breeding season. For more information, visit the website [www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au](http://www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au) or contact Robyn Rattray-Wood at [secretary@malleefowlvictoria.org.au](mailto:secretary@malleefowlvictoria.org.au).

## MORNINGTON STATION BIRD SURVEYS



### Call for volunteers. James Smith reports:

This year's annual bird census at Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Mornington Sanctuary, in the Northern Territory, will run from **23–28 September**. The census involves counting the finches (including Gouldian and Long-tailed Finches), parrots, pigeons and quail that come in to drink at a waterhole at dawn. Data collected will assist the AWC to measure the effectiveness of its current management strategies.

It's always fun, but requires moderate fitness, a willingness and ability to get up really early (e.g. 3:30 am) and experience in identifying and counting birds quickly as they arrive at the waterholes. Conditions can range from very hot (often >30°C) to very cold (sometimes <10°C).

If you're interested in assisting in this year's census on Mornington Sanctuary, please email James Smith at [james.smith@australianwildlife.org](mailto:james.smith@australianwildlife.org) with your details and outline your relevant experience.

## POWERFUL OWL PROJECT



### Update. Caroline Wilson, Holly Parsons and Janelle Thomas report:

The Powerful Owl Project focuses on the urban Powerful Owl population of Greater Sydney, the NSW Central Coast and Newcastle. Over 120 registered volunteers monitored 83 Powerful Owl breeding sites. The data is critical for the effective management of populations of Powerful Owls in urban areas.

#### Results from 2015

Of the 83 Powerful Owl monitoring sites, 37 per cent produced chicks and a further 42 per cent maintained an active territory, but didn't produce chicks. There were 17 per cent of breeding pairs that moved to a new territory and only 4 per cent failed, possibly due to predation or storm damage. Seven new sites were discovered, these were within 2km of other known territories.

Common roost trees included Turpentine (17 per cent), Smooth-barked Apple (14 per cent), Coachwood (10 per cent) and Blackbutt (7 per cent). Nest trees were Smooth-barked Apple (43 per cent) and Blackbutt (21 per cent).

Analysis of Powerful Owls' diet was conducted on pellets collected from 16 sites in Sydney (23 pellets) and Lake Macquarie (six) in 2015. Ringtail Possum comprised more than half the prey items identified, while small prey (birds and insects) made up only a small proportion — it's less likely to be taken during breeding season, as they provide less energy for breeding females and chicks.

In 2015, there were 155 sightings of Powerful Owls within Greater Sydney, the Central Coast and Newcastle, mostly of birds foraging at night in gardens and green spaces. There were also 12 records of injured and dead Powerful Owls, with half hit by vehicles.

Community engagement is an important component of the Powerful Owl Project and in 2015 we carried out many presentations in NSW and the ACT, spreading the word about Powerful Owls and the project. The Beecroft–Cheltenham Civic Trust raised funds for the project through a community movie night and a Powerful Owl and Gang-gang Day (a community day with information and stalls).

To find out more, head to <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/powerful-owl-project> or our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/ThePowerfulOwlProject](http://www.facebook.com/ThePowerfulOwlProject).

#### 2016 Workshops

Powerful Owl Project workshops will be run in northern Sydney on **2 April** and on the Central Coast on **3 April** to say thank you to our existing volunteers, and as a training session for new volunteers. For more information, email [powerfulowl@birdlife.org.au](mailto:powerfulowl@birdlife.org.au).

## RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO (SOUTH-EASTERN)



### Call for volunteers. Bronwyn Perryman reports:

BirdLife Australia and the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team are seeking volunteers to assist with the 2016 annual count for the Endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo on **Saturday 7 May**.

2016 marks the 20th year of counting cockies, and the Recovery Team is keen to see a good turnout of volunteers to help locate Red-tails across more than 60 sites in stringybark forest across the species' range in the South East of South Australia and south-western Victoria.

Participating is easy — all you need is partner/friend or group, a pair of binoculars, a love of the outdoors and a vehicle, preferably 4WD. Volunteer groups will cover their allocated site via vehicle, stopping regularly to listen for the distinctive call of Red-tails.

Volunteers need no previous experience with surveying for birds, but are required to become familiar with what Red-tails look and sound like, as they can often be mistaken for the more common Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. To hear the difference between a Red-tailed and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, please visit our website [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

Sites are scattered from Nelson to the Little Desert National Park in Victoria and from Mount Gambier to Keith in South Australia. Landholders who have remnant stringybarks are also encouraged to search their own property. You can request a particular area to search when you register, or nominate to search your own property.

The most important aspect of the annual count is to identify large flocks as part of our annual flock counts. Flock counts are undertaken each year, after the count, to provide an indication of breeding success in previous seasons. The count also allows us to identify patterns of habitat use and helps us to build community knowledge and capacity to become involved in recovery efforts.

A training session will be held on the morning of the count in Casterton for those who haven't participated before or would like extra information on searching for Red-tails. Volunteers will learn what Red-tails look and sound like, what their feeding signs look like and how to distinguish stringybark habitat from other eucalypt woodlands.

After the count, volunteers are encouraged to attend the annual Bailey's Rocks BBQ and Campout to celebrate 20 years of counting cockies.

To register your interest in participating or to find out more about what's involved, please email Bronwyn Perryman at [redtail@birdlife.org.au](mailto:redtail@birdlife.org.au) or phone 1800 262 062.

Background image by Bob McPherson

### Please report any sightings of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos

The success of the count relies on reports of Red-tails in the months leading up to the count. If you see Red-tails from now onwards, please report all sightings to Freecall 1800 262 062 or via the website [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

## THREATENED MALLEE BIRDS



### Update. Jenny Lau reports:

The Murray Mallee of south-eastern Australia provides crucial habitat for several threatened species of birds — the Endangered Mallee Emu-wren and Black-eared Miner, as well as the Vulnerable Red-lored Whistler, Western Whipbird (eastern subspecies), Regent Parrot (eastern subspecies) and Malleefowl.

Since large-scale fires that wiped out key populations of the Black-eared Miner and Mallee Emu-wren in 2014, BirdLife Australia, State and Commonwealth governments, fire and threatened mallee bird experts from universities, natural resource management agencies and zoos have worked together to develop and implement a Threatened Mallee Birds Conservation Action Plan which identifies key strategies and actions required to mitigate threats for six nationally-listed species and secure their future.

### Threatened Mallee Birds Field Day, 14–15 May

BirdLife Australia and members of BirdLife Mildura, together with ecologists from La Trobe Uni and the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will hold an information session, bird walk and bird surveys round Hattah-Kulkyne National Park (Victoria) on **14–15 May**. Places on the bird walk are limited. To register, please send an expression of interest to [mallee.events@birdlife.org.au](mailto:mallee.events@birdlife.org.au).

## THREATENED SHOREBIRDS (FAR SOUTH NSW)



### Call for volunteers. Amy Harris reports:



The NSW NPWS Shorebird Recovery Program—Far South Coast region has had a busy summer. Many volunteers in the region have assisted us with essential monitoring and implementing habitat protection measures surrounding vulnerable nest sites of Pied Oystercatchers, Hooded Plovers and Little and Fairy Terns. The program would not be as successful or far reaching without the help of local (and some visiting) volunteers. The focus areas include Eden, Merimbula, Tathra, Bermagui and Batemans Bay.

For the first time in many years, Hooded Plovers have extended their breeding distribution north into Eurobodalla Shire, which was fantastic for the FSC region and well supported by passionate locals assisting with their monitoring and protection. Little Terns established colonies at both Tuross Lake and Mogareka this season, and by the end of the season it is estimated that over 50 chicks will fledge from the Far South Coast this season. Pied Oystercatchers are still nesting at some sites, but their breeding success appears to be low this season due to several factors.



This vital shorebird program is ongoing (it's been running for over 16 years) and coordinated by the NSW NPWS. We

always welcome interest from members of the community. For further information, please contact Amy Harris on [amy.harris@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:amy.harris@environment.nsw.gov.au).

## THREATENED WOODLAND BIRDS IN THE WOLLONDILLY VALLEY



### Call for volunteers: Nicki Taws reports:

Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots rely on woodlands in the valleys and lower slopes across south-eastern Australia, but much of this habitat has been destroyed. The Wollondilly Valley, which forms a gap in the Great Eastern Ranges flyways, between the Illawarra–Shoalhaven and the Blue Mountains, has seen extensive clearing of the native woodlands.

Greening Australia is restoring woodland habitat in valleys and waterways of the Wollondilly Valley to help reconnect migratory pathways and provide food for these threatened species and other woodland birds. Greening Australia is looking for landholders to be involved in restoring woodland habitat in the Wollondilly Valley. We will be organising community planting events during the year.

In addition, with the assistance of BirdLife Southern Highlands, Greening Australia will be conducting a workshop on bird identification and monitoring in April.



For more information, email Nicki Taws at [ntaws@greeningaustralia.org.au](mailto:ntaws@greeningaustralia.org.au) or phone 0408 210 736.

## WESTERN GROUND PARROT



### Update and call for volunteers. Anne Bondin reports:

Last November, catastrophic bushfires around Esperance killed four people and devastated large areas, burning sites known to contain Western Ground Parrots in Cape Arid National Park. When the fires started, staff from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and several volunteers were attempting to capture some Western Ground Parrots to boost the captive population at Perth Zoo; they caught two young birds. Although the birds adapted well to captivity, they fell ill in December and died while still in quarantine. The remaining five birds at Perth Zoo are well and will hopefully breed this year.

About 90 per cent of Western Ground Parrot habitat was destroyed. Two small pockets of unburnt habitat have now been baited and trapped for feral cats. Further predator controls are under way, as well as conducting listening sessions to detect parrots which may have survived the fires.

This autumn, the Department of Parks and Wildlife is inviting volunteers to assist in monitoring surveys in Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River NPs. Please email the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot at [wgparrot@gmail.com](mailto:wgparrot@gmail.com) to register (beware: these surveys tend to fill up quickly). Surveys will be conducted in Cape Arid NP on **13–19 March** and **3–9 April**, and in Fitzgerald River NP on **18–22 April**.

Previous surveying experience is welcome, but not essential (you'll receive training). Good hearing is essential, and be prepared for off-track walking and remote bush camping with limited facilities. Food is provided and camping gear can be made available on request. BirdLife Australia has made available a grant from the Australian Bird Environment Foundation to subsidise the travel costs of volunteers.

## WOODLAND BIRDS FOR BIODIVERSITY



Update. Dean Ingwersen, Caroline Wilson and Mick Roderick report:

### Regent Honeyeater Captive Release Program

The Regent Honeyeater Captive Release Program was a huge success, with 77 birds released in the Box Ironbark forest of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park last April. Radio-transmitters were fitted to 39 birds (with more transmitters attached in early July) to monitor the birds' post-release movements and survival. This monitoring provided encouraging results, with interesting movement data and high survival rates of released birds. The Program Coordination Team and volunteers identified and monitored the outcomes of 11 individual breeding pairs and 25 separate nesting attempts, including the successful fledging of three juveniles (one of which, 'Lucky', was going strong two months after fledging; see photo).



Another interesting finding from the program included the predation of Regent Honeyeater eggs by native marsupials (including both the Sugar Glider and threatened Squirrel Glider), destruction of eggs by a female House Sparrow, and predation of the sibling of 'Lucky' by an Australian Magpie. This was all discovered thanks to nest surveillance cameras set up and monitored by Gemma Taylor, a PhD student who is evaluating the successes of the captive releases. These new findings might explain the unsuccessful nesting attempts by many of the recently released birds. This information is critical to help strengthen future releases, and we will now investigate potential mitigation strategies to prevent predators from accessing nesting birds in the future.

As with previous releases, volunteer participation has been crucial for radio-tracking birds with transmitters (and actively searching for banded birds, reporting sightings and making behavioural observations), and over 4000 volunteer hours of monitoring have racked up more than 5900 individual GPS waypoints (each waypoint is an observation of a Regent Honeyeater). Although the 2015 Captive Release Program has wrapped up now, people are still encouraged to keep an eye out for Regent Honeyeaters in the Chiltern–Mt Pilot National Park, particularly around water points and in flowering areas, as well as on surrounding properties. Remember to check for bands with your binoculars and take photos wherever possible. For more information on Regent Honeyeater identification and where to report a sighting, head to [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/woodland-birds-for-biodiversity/regent-honeyeater-wl](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/woodland-birds-for-biodiversity/regent-honeyeater-wl).

If you would like to participate in the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot surveys in 2016, and contribute to critical long-term data of these two species, the first survey weekend will kick off in **mid-May**. We will be looking for volunteers to help search for Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters across Victoria, ACT, NSW and Queensland.

For more information about the surveys, see <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/woodland-birds-for-biodiversity> or contact [dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au](mailto:dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au) (Regent Honeyeaters), [mick.roderick@birdlife.org.au](mailto:mick.roderick@birdlife.org.au) (Swift Parrots in NSW, ACT and Queensland) or [caroline.wilson@birdlife.org.au](mailto:caroline.wilson@birdlife.org.au) (Swift Parrots in Victoria).

## YELLOW CHAT (Capricorn)



### Update. Wayne Houston reports:

The Capricorn subspecies of Yellow Chat occurs only on the marine plains to the north and south of Rockhampton and is Critically Endangered. The Capricorn Yellow Chat Recovery Team at CQ University conducts a number of projects, many of which rely on the efforts of volunteers from BirdLife Capricornia.

### Population estimates and Trend monitoring

In the mid- to late dry season (September–November) each year, we monitor the numbers of chats at all known sites. In 2015, surveys found good numbers around Broad Sound, in the Fitzroy River delta and on Curtis Island. On Curtis Island, with support from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, we are also evaluating the use of song meters for population monitoring. Importantly, there has been no evidence of medium-term impact from Cyclone Marcia on the population or its habitat.

Monitoring chats at Torilla Plains has allowed the Recovery Team to evaluate long-term trends in the population. Between 2004–07 (a drought period) and 2008–15 (above average rainfall), chat numbers have virtually doubled, from an average of 85 to 162. This is consistent with predictions that above-average rainfall would be favourable for chats.

### Weed biocontrol

The Recovery Team is evaluating the efficacy of mealybugs as a biocontrol agent of the *Harrisia* Cactus that infests saltmarsh. Chemical treatment kills the samphire shrubs, which chats use for nesting and foraging, so mealybugs were released into the environment in 2010. Now the infestation had contracted from about 50 per cent groundcover to almost none.

### Chat genetics

After investigating whether Yellow Chats in Broad Sound, the Fitzroy River delta and Curtis Island interbreed or not, we discovered that there was almost no mitochondrial genetic diversity of birds at the extreme ends of their range, indicating that the ancestral population of the current groups have suffered a major bottleneck. The main consequence of a low diversity and small population is an increased vulnerability to environmental change. Another finding was that this subspecies has been separated from the western Queensland subspecies for at least 20,000 years.

## WORLD WETLANDS DAY



### Update. Louise Duff reports:

WetlandCare Australia presented a seminar, 'Shorebirds of the Hunter Estuary', at the Hunter Wetlands Centre to celebrate World Wetlands Day on 2 February. Louise Duff, from WetlandCare Australia, spoke about policy for shorebird conservation; Chelsea Hankin, from Niche Environmental, presented shorebird flyways, ecology and habitat; Chris Herbert, from Hunter BOC, spoke about shorebird trends in Hunter Estuary and identification techniques; and Jo Erskine, from NSW NPWS, updated us on the Hunter Wetlands National Park Plan of Management.

The Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar Site supports at least one per cent of the global population of the Eastern Curlew and Red-necked Avocet, key criteria for its listing, and is a designated site in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF). The Hunter Estuary Wetlands and Kushiro Wetlands in Japan have a sister relationship under the EAAF partnership (a conservation program which unites countries along the EAAF), focusing on protecting Latham's Snipe.

The EPBC Act protects 37 species of migratory shorebirds, and lists migratory species that are noted under the Convention for Migratory Species and bilateral treaties with Japan, China and Korea.

Sixty-four people attended the World Wetlands Day Shorebird Seminar, representing community groups, consultants, government agencies, NGOs and industry. WetlandCare Australia is grateful for the assistance of our speakers, and the Office of Environment and Heritage, the NSW Environmental Trust, Hunter Local Land Services and the Australian Wetland Network. For more information, head to [www.wetlandcare.com.au](http://www.wetlandcare.com.au).

## YOUR POEMS

### TBN Poetry Competition

To celebrate Threatened Species Day on 7 September 2015, and to thank all of our volunteers that have contributed to help save our threatened birds, TBN ran a Poetry Competition.

We had many fantastic entries, but there could only be one winner and this was Shoshana Rapley for her poem 'Long Line'. Second prize went to Charlotte Clutterbuck for her poem 'Bush-Stone Curlews — Evening' and third prize went to 13-year-old Saxon Downton for his poem 'Technology in the Park'.

#### Long Line

Shoshana Rapley

The albatross stands waiting  
Upon bare cliff-top prow-  
The night is swiftly closing-  
Unyielding in her vow.

The amber frost horizon  
Is dotted black with marks  
Of many travelling wingbeats,  
Pacing through the dark.

But which one holds the sceptre?  
And which one holds the crown?  
Where is her Royal nomad?  
The sun sinks further down.

The sentinel waits stony-  
Dusk washing feathers grey-  
In the shrieking icy gale,  
She braces briny spray.

To the callous sea she cries,  
"What secret do you know?"  
Entreaty plaintive, trembling,  
On rock resounds her woe.

"Wretched creature," booms the Sea,  
"Your love long hast been lost,  
"And never to you shall return,  
"For fishing lines he cross'd."

"Like meat wrapped in butcher's string-  
"Contorted detainee-  
"Swiftly in death's gross weight sank  
"Like lead into the sea."

Albatross with skyward eyes,  
Her beak to Southern Cross.  
There she stays 'til stars retreat;  
They care not for her loss.

#### Bush-Stone Curlews — Evening

Charlotte Clutterbuck

Thinking that their crepuscular laments  
came from the garden of the old convent  
where two ancient nuns dodder

arm-in-arm along the lawn  
in the declining sun,  
we dubbed them the Shrieking Maries.

Perhaps, as I first thought,  
only their mothers  
could love their knobble-kneed walk  
the heavy beak and mournful  
staring eyes, but when  
you get to know them  
their wailing, screaming, guttering  
calls from the peninsula at night  
are strangely comforting,  
their subdued brown and buff  
lacy feathers more beautiful  
than gaudy chasubles.

Like their namesakes,  
the two old Sisters,  
the Bush Stone-curlews  
face their own god-forsaken  
twilight, having, as my neighbour notes,  
seeing them maundering  
across the road at dusk,  
no sense of self-preservation.

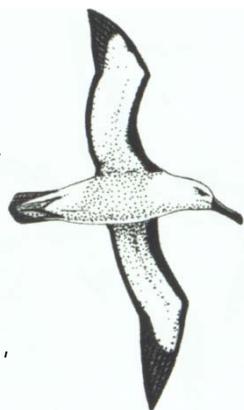
#### Technology in the Park

Saxon Downton

*I walked among a garden of grace,  
Ground well paved, fences evenly spaced,  
Steel posts of a metallic stain -  
shining differently to the rain.*

*Past the green were office blocks,  
Cold, concrete, grey at best  
On the roof were birds, a flock  
Restless, no food, no nest.  
Soon did I sit alone,  
Sad watching the people -  
Constantly checking their phone.*

*Looking around, I shed a tear,  
The birds, the bees, the butterflies,  
Joggers, oblivious to the blue skies,  
A heavy beat filled their ears,  
What a waste and for this, I cry  
As technology has caused their senses to die.*



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2016

Date	State	Details	Contact
<b>March</b>			
5	VIC	Bioblitz City of Melbourne — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
13–19	WA	Cape Arid NP Western Ground Parrot surveys	wgparrot@gmail.com
18–19	VIC	Plains-wanderer surveys	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
20	VIC	Festival by the Sea, Barwon Heads — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
22	VIC	Getting Involved Week, Deakin University, Burwood campus — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
25–28	National	IBA Easter Health Check	iba@birdlife.org.au
25–27	WA	Great Western Woodlands surveys	gww@birdlife.org.au
27	VIC	Deans Marsh Festival — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
<b>April</b>			
2–3	NSW	Powerful Owl workshops	powerfulowl@birdlife.org.au
3	Vic	Southern Gippsland Sustainability Festival, Coal Creek, Korumburra — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
3	WA	Great Cocky Count	greatcockycount@birdlife.org.au
3–9	WA	Cape Arid NP Western Ground Parrot Surveys	wgparrot@gmail.com
5	VIC	Family Fun Day, Olinda — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
15–27	VIC	'Birds and Us' art exhibition — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
16–17	NSW	Cowra woodland bird surveys	malcolmfyfe33@gmail.com
16–17	VIC	Malleefowl meeting, Wedderburn	www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au
18–22	WA	Fitzgerald River NP Western Ground Parrot surveys	wgparrot@gmail.com
23–26	WA	Great Western Woodland surveys	gww@birdlife.org.au
<b>May</b>			
7	VIC & SA	SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo count	redtail@birdlife.org.au
14–15	VIC	Mallee community event, Ouyen — <b>TBN</b>	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
14–15	VIC, NSW & QLD	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater surveys	dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au
1–31	QLD & NT	Grasswren surveys	riflebird1@gmail.com
<b>June</b>			
18	SA	Revegetation, Kangaroo Island	Karleah.Berris@sa.gov.au
<b>July</b>			
16–17	NSW	Cowra woodland bird surveys	malcolmfyfe33@gmail.com

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2016 (cont.)

Date	State	Details	Contact
<b>August</b>			
6–7	VIC, NSW & QLD	Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater surveys	dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au
<b>September</b>			
16	National	Plover Appreciation Day	hooded.plover@birdlife.org.au
23–28	NT	AWC Mornington Sanctuary bird census	james.smith@australianwildlife.org
24/9– 2 Oct	WA	Great Western Woodlands surveys	gww@birdlife.org.au
<b>October</b>			
4–9	SA	Glossy Black-Cockatoo surveys — Kangaroo Island	Karleah.Berris@sa.gov.au
15–16	NSW	Cowra woodland bird surveys	malcolmfyfe33@gmail.com
15–23	WA	Great Western Woodland surveys	gww@birdlife.org.au
<b>November</b>			
19–20	SA, NSW & VIC	Hooded Plover biennial count	hooded.plover@birdlife.org.au

### Ongoing Activities and Dates to be Announced

April	NSW	Bird identification and monitoring workshop — Wollondilly Valley	ntaws@greeningaustralia.org.au
May	WA	Black-Cockatoo workshops	janelle.thomas@birdlife.org.au
October	NSW	State-wide beach-nesting birds workshop	hooded.plover@birdlife.org.au
February–August	SA	Glossy Black-Cockatoo nest checks — Kangaroo Island	Karleah.Berris@sa.gov.au
April–December	VIC	Helmeted Honeyeater Plant Nursery Days	Michelle Faram (03) 5964 8341
Ongoing	National	Australian Painted Snipe sightings	chris.purnell@birdlife.org.au
Ongoing	VIC	Biodiversity monitoring — Eastern Melbourne	kerryn.herman@birdlife.org.au
Ongoing	VIC	Helmeted Honeyeater monitoring — Yellingbo	bruce.quin@delwp.vic.gov.au
Ongoing	VIC	Helmeted Honeyeater reveg. days	Richard Case (03) 9720 4062
Ongoing	VIC	Helmeted Honeyeater supplementary feeding	hehofeeder@gmail.com
Ongoing	NSW	Monitoring of shorebirds and beach-nesting birds	amy.harris@environment.nsw.gov.au
Ongoing	NSW	Revegetation — Wollondilly Valley	ntaws@greeningaustralia.org.au
Ongoing	QLD	Black-throated Finch sightings	www.blackthroatedfinch.com
Ongoing	VIC & SA	SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo nest sightings	redtail@birdlife.org.au
Ongoing	National	Grey Falcon sightings	jonnybird@bigpond.com

**THREATENED BIRD NETWORK**

**BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA**

Suite 2–05, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton VIC 3053

T (03) 9347 0757

E [tbn@birdlife.org.au](mailto:tbn@birdlife.org.au)

W [www.birdlife.org.au/projects/threatened-bird-network](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/threatened-bird-network)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/threatened.bird.network](http://www.facebook.com/threatened.bird.network)

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