

BELMONT WETLANDS STATE PARK REPORT OCTOBER 2023

ANOTHER great month for birdwatching at the Park. It might seem (to our way of thinking) this is a summer holiday destination for Australian and other bird-tourists! Birddata records suggest we can expect an influx of woodlands species to visit and breed in spring-summer. But many 'international' visitors are shorebirds and waders – some species travelling thousands of kms from places in the Northern Hemisphere¹.

NINE-MILE BEACH REPORT

On a routine beach patrol (15/9/23) Rangers Clinton and Shane Smith noted seeing a 'small shorebird with a long, slightly upturned beak' foraging the water's edge. It was identified² (most likely) as a Bar-tailed Godwit³. This species is a summer migrant, recorded in good numbers (94) in the Hunter Estuary (6/4/19), but also in small numbers at numerous freshwater habitats. Using geo-tracking devices, scientists have calculated this species⁴ has broken a world flight record (13,000km) by migrating from Alaska to Tasmania (28/10/22).

On 16/9/23 GF and Rangers noted an unusual bird sighting on Nine-Mile Beach (as shown in the photo opposite). Mick Roderick later confirmed the two species were Ruddy Turnstone⁵ (on the right) and Red-necked Stint⁶. Note that neither species is in (more colourful) breeding plumage. Both species are summer migrants to Australia, after breeding finishes. Their distribution maps show each species being recorded almost right round Australia's coastline. Adding to their month's tally the Rangers observed a pair of Red-capped Plover⁷ on the beach (19/10/23). The species has been reported here since May 2022.



These two species are usually observed in different habitats. In the Hunter Region⁸ up to 250 Stint have been counted in Hunter/Manning Estuaries (16/3/19), while the Turnstone is usually noted on coastal rock platforms, typically in numbers less than 10.

What is exciting is that both Stint and the Turnstone species are known to migrate from Siberia and Alaska. Although each species is observed in different habitats in Australia, what are the chances that this pair of birds on Nine-Mile Beach departed together?!

If you have an interest in shorebirds, Hunter Bird Observers Club⁹ is a great resource group. Membership provides opportunities to help in local bird surveys and do online bird counts.

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¹ Jackie Kerin and Milly Formby. *A Shorebird Flying Adventure*. 2022. CSIRO Publications. Clayton South, VIC.

² Mick Roderick (MR) Birdlife Australia expert and vice-president, Hunter Bird Observers Club. Previous photos and birddata records (Grahame Feletti) from Belmont Lagoon and east Lake Macquarie.

³ Bar-tailed Godwit. http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=844

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uY8M2aNFVtk>

⁵ Ruddy Turnstone <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Arenaria-interpres>

⁶ Red-necked Stint <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Calidris-ruficollis>

⁷ Red-capped Plover <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Charadrius-ruficapillus>

⁸ Hunter Bird Observers Club. Annual Bird Report Number 27 (2019). Use index for latest records of sightings.

⁹ Hunter Bird Observers Club meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month, except in January, at Shortland Wetlands Centre. Further details may be found via the website <https://www.hboc.org.au>