

## OVERVIEW

Substantial local rainfall and early onset of cold weather made conditions difficult for birdwatching at Belmont Wetlands State Park this season. Surface flooding along tracks and trails restricted normal access to areas around Belmont Lagoon. These conditions also delayed the expected completion date of the FAST<sup>1</sup> extension project this month.

## NINE-MILE BEACH

Observation of shorebirds and waders on the beach revealed lower numbers of species and total birds than in previous winters. Rangers reported sporadic and short-duration visits of (1-5) Pied Oystercatcher, (1-2) Red-capped Plover, Osprey and White-bellied Sea Eagle. Up to 20 Crested Tern often congregated at 3<sup>rd</sup> Creek; groups (30-100) Silver Gull grouped along the shoreline, while Raven and (1-2) Magpie foraged the high tide level.

## BELMONT LAGOON

The only survey completed this month (25/7/2024) noted very few waterbird species (8/31) on the Lagoon or Cold Tea Creek compared with 24 woodland species. This imbalance is likely reflective of dietary supplies (and cold freshwater). By contrast, the number and range of 'honeyeaters' (in the broad sense) appear to be on the rise – anticipating early blossom of coastal wattle, tea tree and flowering gum. Striped Honeyeater, identified by its distinctive call this morning<sup>2</sup>, is one woodland species that has been scarce for nearly 3 years.

## FAST TRACK EXTENSION GOOD NEWS

Lake Macquarie City Council has some good news for visitors and residents. The jointly funded extension of the Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Track is almost completed. It offers an exciting new walking trail and bird viewing platform on the western side of the Lagoon<sup>3</sup>. Its indigenous significance and birdwatching potential are highlighted by its unique sculpture and civil engineering. Read more on these aspects in BWSP's August Facebook page.



Lake Macquarie Council is hosting a celebration and public opening of this new section on **Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> August from 10-12 n.** The special program will begin at the Belmont TAFE end (Alick Street) of the boardwalk. Bring your binoculars and share the excitement! Photo permission: Robbie Economos.

Those interested in learning more on birdwatching or activities with local birdwatchers are invited to contact Hunter Bird Observers Club<sup>4</sup> Some members may be at this opening.

Queries? Grahame Feletti 0429 455 243, [gfeletti@hotmail.com](mailto:gfeletti@hotmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lakemac.com.au/Projects/Fernleigh-Awabakal-Shared-Track-FAST>

<sup>2</sup> Belmont Lagoon survey results (25/7/24) <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=10043660&h=5066b6bb>

<sup>3</sup> FAST extension Project <https://glascott.com.au/projects/fernleigh-awabakal-shared-track-fast/>

<sup>4</sup> Hunter Bird Observers Club (for specific information) <https://www.hboc.org.au/>