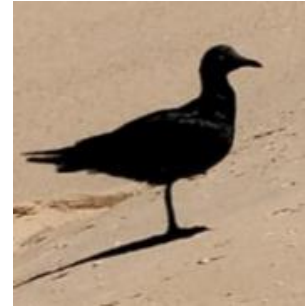


## BELMONT WETLANDS STATE PARK BIRD REPORT

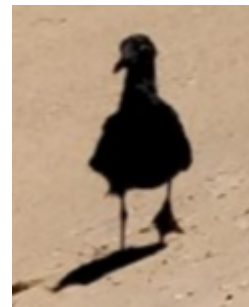
### 9 MILE BEACH SIGHTINGS IN NOVEMBER 2022

#### SHOREBIRD SHOWS TRUE GRIT.

Spotted and photographed by Ranger Greg on 9-Mile Beach in the last fortnight (first seen on Sunday 20nov22). This could be a lucky (or unlucky, depending on the story) Silver Gull<sup>1</sup> (*Larus novaehollandiae*). Maybe it shows remarkable resilience in surviving an encounter with an offshore oil slick. Or maybe it's a Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus*) visiting from Broughton Island at this time of year (as records<sup>2</sup> show). A good look at the body posture, feet and shape of beak will rule out the oystercatcher, and other guesses.



Hunter Bird Observer Club expert and founding member, Alan Stuart, identified it for us as a melanistic Silver Gull, something of a rarity around the world (as a Google search reveals). Melanism is generally defined as an increase of dark pigment in the plumage, resulting in a blackish appearance<sup>3</sup> So it's not a new or different species of gull, just unusual.



Apparently this bird is reported from time to time along our coastline, either alone or in the company of Silver Gulls, but not reported recently.

#### OTHER SHOREBIRD SIGHTINGS ON 9-MILE BEACH IN NOVEMBER INCLUDE:

- 6 Greater Crested Terns (*Thalasseus bergii*) roosting with Silver Gulls on the shoreline near Third Creek (22nov22). This is a common resident bird species.
- 1 Red-capped Plover (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) brooding one egg on a sand nest at the North Dune (reported by Ranger Clinton on same date, and two adult birds seen on the hind dune by Ranger Kevin in the same week).

These sightings are shared to encourage visitors and locals to enjoy bird-watching that is conservation-minded (ethical and protective of our vulnerable species) in this area.

If you would like to know more, or to report your bird observations in north-east Lake Macquarie you might consider joining the Hunter Bird Observers Club<sup>4</sup> ([HBOC](https://www.hboc.org.au/)).

Local bird-watching events (eg. <https://www.lakemac.com.au/News-articles/Annual-bird-count-ready-to-take-flight-in-Lake-Mac>) are advertised on Lake Macquarie City Council's website. Bird-watching brochures, walking trails and related information can be found on BWSP's website (<https://www.belmontwetlands.com.au/>) or by visiting the Rangers office at 119 Kalaroo Road, Redhead 2291.

Reported by BWSP Rangers to Grahame Feletti (0429 455 243) on 29nov22.

<sup>1</sup> <https://birdlife.org.au/bird-profile/Silver-Gull>

<sup>2</sup> Hunter Bird Observers Club. Annual Bird Report Number 27 (2019), p.55.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322219658\\_The\\_dark\\_side\\_of\\_birds\\_Melanism-facts\\_and\\_fiction](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322219658_The_dark_side_of_birds_Melanism-facts_and_fiction)

<sup>4</sup> HBOC meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month, except in January, at Shortland Wetlands Centre at 6pm. Further details from <https://www.hboc.org.au/>