

BELMONT WETLANDS STATE PARK REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

It's all happening around Belmont Wetlands at the moment; exciting times for birdwatchers! First and most obvious, access changes to the Lagoon. Second, more uncommon species appearing as spring-summer visitors; some not seen since pre-covid days. And third, sad but inevitable observations of many dead birds on the beach – reminding us how precarious life on this planet is for migratory birds.

NINE-MILE BEACH REPORT

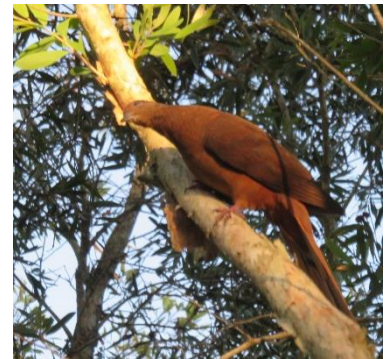
As expected, many bird species are being observed and reported around the north-eastern part of the Lake and Lagoon; these include not only woodlands species that stop-over or pass on through this area, but also 'international' arrivals - shorebirds and waders¹. Some migrate 1000's of kms annually; a legacy of their ancestral evolution and survival (over 50 million years). Inevitably, for various reasons, many bird species don't reach these shores.

Recent news reports are of hundreds of dead birds² (mostly Sharp-tailed Shearwater) washed up on Central Coast and Newcastle beaches. Some experts suggest that extreme bad weather and ocean warming are to blame; these factors affect their ocean food chain. Others say such 'wreck events' are normal, but still confronting to see many birds perishing.

BELMONT LAGOON SURVEYS

Compared with survey records at the Lagoon from August to mid-October there's been more woodlands species³. Coastal rain squalls and warmer weather are providing many puddles and insects. By contrast, inland areas are returning to drought conditions, perhaps also forcing wetlands species to return. Very few native tree or shrub species are in blossom.

Species recently noted include Brown Cuckoo-Dove⁴ – (GF) first recorded it at BWSP on 4/7/15. Observations of this shy species dwindled that year, coinciding with removal of Wild Tobacco⁵ (an invasive weed and food source) along Kalaroo Fire Trail in 2016.



Other notable species this month are: Sacred Kingfisher, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Variegated Fairy-Wren, White-winged Triller, Rainbow Bee-eater, Brush Bronzewing and much-loved early-morning callers, Eastern Koel and Channel-billed Cuckoo.

A final note of caution. Walking access to the Lagoon from the Highway/Capri Close gate along Cold Tea Creek track is blocked off due to LMCC earthworks. This inconvenience (for ~3-4 mo.) is to install an exciting new pathway and boardwalk for walkers, cyclists and birdwatchers. Please contact LMCC or BWSP Rangers for alternative access details.

Hunter Bird Observers Club⁶ is a great resource group if you are interested in birdwatching.

Grahame Feletti (BWSP volunteer) gfeletti@hotmail.com

20nov23

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

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-11-06/migrating-shearwaters-found-dead-on-nsw-beaches/103068222>

³ Weblinks to bird surveys are published on BLA's Birddata base, as well as BWSP's Facebook page.

⁴ Brown Cuckoo-Dove <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Macropygia-amboinensis>

⁵ <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/biosecurity/plants/invasive/other/wild-tobacco>

⁶ 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>