



## **BYRON BIRD BUDDIES**

### **ANNUAL REPORT September 2015 – September 2016**



Byron Bird Buddies (BBB) is a small, self-funded community education and conservation group focusing on the preservation of habitat for resident and migratory shorebird roosting, breeding and feeding areas.

BBB's objective is to actively advocate for the conservation of all bird habitat and to educate the community on the needs of birds on the north coast of NSW.

**In Summary, during this period BBB undertook 34 avian surveys in the local area, participated in 8 local events and delivered several bird presentations and conducted 14 bird walks/presentations with over 690 people attending these events and an additional 90 attending dog's breakfast events held both at the Belongil Estuary and at Brunswick Heads. In addition BBB has continued to use social media (BBB's Website, Twitter and Facebook pages) as important tools in the dissemination of local bird news and with very interesting news from around the world.**

**BBB members have attended and participated in numerous local and regional agency meetings on bird and habitat conservation. All the above represents many hundreds of volunteer hours.**

BBB also maintains an up-to-date website at [www.byronbirdbuddies.com.au](http://www.byronbirdbuddies.com.au) and at Twitter: [twitter.com/BirdByron](https://twitter.com/BirdByron); Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008758333905>

**BBB is an umbrella group of Brunswick Valley Landcare.**

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## CONSERVATION

BBB works with a range of agencies and organisations with the aim being to achieve a broader and more consistent range of conservation outcomes for shorebirds, waterbirds and bush birds across the north coast. During the past 12 months BBB has worked with the following groups:

- **BirdLife Australia:** BBB continues to undertake monitoring for the National Shorebird 2020 Program. Monitored results are then uploaded into the national shorebird database, providing vital information for decision makers.
- **Belongil Shorebird Stakeholder Group** – a platform for driving the Belongil Estuary Seabird and Shorebird Management Plan and consisting of Byron Council, MPA, NPWS.
- **Regional Shorebird Committee** – a platform for a consistent management of shorebirds, their habitat and threats in the Northern Rivers Area from Clarence River north to the Tweed River. The committee is chaired by National Parks and Wildlife Service and consist of community groups, councils and NP rangers within the Northern Rivers National Parks and Wildlife Service, Byron Council, Ballina Council, Marine Parks Authority: on the on-going protection and monitoring of shorebird breeding areas in the Tweed, Brunswick, Evans and Clarence River estuaries.

Byron Bird Buddies also works closely with private companies such as Elements at North Byron in an attempt to cooperatively manage local bird habitat by putting in strategies which benefit birds in the long term and mitigating short term risks to those small populations resting, breeding and feeding in those areas.



*Elements of Byron staff learn about local birds.*



*Dog's Breakfast-Joint presentation with Seabird Rescue*

### Representation on Committees:

In April 2016 Isabel Borrelli was re-appointed to the Byron Area Board of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for a period of four years.

BBB member Jan Olley sits on a variety of committees consistent with raising the profile of habitat and sustainability needs of avian fauna across the region and in developing consistent strategies for the management of birds:

- Regional shorebird management committee
- Gondwana Rainforest World Heritage Community Advisory Committee

- National Parks and Wildlife Service Northern Rivers Region Advisory Committee
- Ballina 2020 Shorebird Monitoring Group

BBB members also undertake practical activities such as fence repairs with Marine Parks and National Parks staff.



## BIRD MONITORING

BBB continues to undertake paid and voluntary monitoring and reporting activities on behalf of organisations.

- ❖ Byron Shire Council – Byron Wetlands and Vallance’s Road STP.
- ❖ Birdlife Australia Shorebird 2020 volunteer bi-annual counts for shorebirds in five different locations.

BBB also assisted with the Annual NPWS Threatened Shorebird Species Count, a state wide shorebird count on the Brunswick River, Tyagarah & at Belongil Estuary. BBB then compiled the collected data for NPWS.

**BirdLife Australia Atlas:** BBB members are part of an Australia-wide network of bird observation groups providing critical information on bird numbers and habitat use and condition for use both regionally and by avian peak bodies. BBB also conducts free guided bird monitoring walks where participants learn how to monitor and classify birds.



*420+ Crested Terns resting at the Belongil Estuary, demonstrating that this area continues to be an important bird habitat for resident and migratory birds.*

## Community education

BBB continues to be committed to building community capacity through its education program targeting both children and adults, by way of our bird walks and talks. Every three months BBB publishes an events calendar with dates for monitoring, bird walks, events etc. BBB also provides special education events for business and government with the goal of enabling decision makers to be better informed of the impact of decision making on native and migratory birds. The Byron Wetlands guided tours also continue to be very popular with more and more new and interested community members (schools, individuals etc) attending each event. This year BBB also participated in the Brunswick Heads sculptural show and our bird sculptures workshop attracted a large number of participants both young and old.



*Dorroughby Environmental Students*



*Making bird sculptures at Brunswick Heads*



*Bird week at Tyagarah*



*Survey team at the Wetlands*



*Byron Bay Public School*



*Upper Main Arm Public School*

**Website, Facebook and Twitter:** BBB continues to promote a range of environmental events and talks on the website but we are mostly using the Facebook and Twitter accounts as quick methods of providing bird lovers with snippets of bird news from around the world and to encourage participation in our own events.

### The stats:

- Over 690 people participated in 14 walks, talks and public events.
- 170 people attended the Bird Sculptures workshops in Brunswick Heads.
- BBB conducted 35 bird surveys which is an average of one every 10 days.
- A new piece of bird information from here and around the world was posted on our Twitter or Facebook page on average every three days.
- An events calendar providing dates for surveys etc was produced and emailed every three months.
- Over six hundred volunteer hours were calculated for these events which is approximately 10 hours per week (not including report writing, social media updates, travel times etc).
- Not bad for a very small band of dedicated bird lovers.

## AND FINALLY SOME LOCAL OBSERVATIONS:

### What's breeding?

As a local conservation group, BBB is keenly monitoring the populations of our resident birds and in particular our shorebirds as these are especially vulnerable due to high levels of impact by humans and predatory domestic animals. An example of this is the Beach Stone-curlew where current NPWS data estimates that there are only 15 breeding pairs of this iconic bird in NSW and we happen to have a pair in the Brunswick River. The following are a snippet of our local breeders.



**Beach Stone-curlews** : our resident 'beachies' in Marshall's Creek have successfully hatched their sixth chick. This is the sixth consecutive year that a chick has been hatched in the enclosed site and demonstrates that as far as possible, excluding people and non-native fauna from breeding sites results in successful outcomes for threatened species. Beach Stone-curlews usually have one nesting each year (they may re-nest if the egg/nest is destroyed) however the pair had two successful nestings during 2015-2016. They nested in September and again in February and both chicks successfully fledged.



**Red-capped Plovers:** You have to be quick to see these tiny but determined birds. They are fast but at the Belongil estuary they are often not fast enough to escape dogs or other non-native predators and yet every year, less than a handful continue to defy predictions and environmental conditions and breed at the estuary mouth.



**Eastern Osprey's** reproductive rates are at sustainable levels here. The Brunswick/ Byron area has at least 3 pairs of nesting Ospreys



**Brahminy Kites** are land based hunters and scavengers. The Brunswick/ Byron area has at least 4 pairs of these kites.



**Pied Oystercatchers,** the Brunswick/ Byron area has recorded 7 pairs of Pies of which five regularly nest successfully.

## Who's migrating?

For the Northern Rivers, late August marks the beginning of the migratory shorebird season for birds migrating from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere. For Byron Shire, we have previously recorded 18 of the 36 species that regularly migrate to Australia. However, shorebird numbers have been collapsing worldwide and during 2015-2016 BBB only recorded 8 migratory shorebird species and, compared to previous years, in smaller numbers.

Others such as the Little Tern used to breed on our beaches but although it remains a regular visitor, it has not bred in the Brunswick or Byron area since 1991?



*Top left: Bar-tailed Godwit from the Arctic, Latham's Snipe from Japan, Wandering Tattler breeds Alaska & Northern Siberia*



*Little Tern in breeding colours – breeds Australia and after breeding 90% of the population migrates to Asia. Some breed in Japan which results in mixed flocks of breeding & non-breeding plumage on the beaches at Belongil and Brunswick Heads*