



BOCA Forum 2008 Beyond the Tick

Black Swans at Fivebough. Photo: Annette Cook

Planning for BOCA Forum 2008 began almost as soon as the inaugural forum in 2006 finished. What was most definitely decided two years ago was that we would hold another – what came later was the theme, the venue and the certainty that Fivebough Wetlands, though a drive of an hour and a half away, would be ideal for a field trip.

Charles Sturt University at Wagga Wagga provided a perfect venue, with conference facilities and accommodation both on campus, reducing the need for transport on a daily basis. Woodland that supports some interesting birds, in particular the Superb Parrot, was an added bonus.

The theme – Beyond the Tick – was taken from a comment by BOCA member Christine Wichems, who first used it to describe the potential for BOCA's education activities. The Forum Committee saw it as encapsulating the aim for BOCA Forum 2008 of highlighting the important work that BOCA members already do in monitoring birds and the need to expand some of these activities especially in a time of drought, land use impacts and climate change.

The program, therefore, reflected the theme and included descriptions of BOCA Branch monitoring projects with a practice session for survey techniques. The scene was set by BOCA President Tim Landsberg who stressed the importance of BOCA Branches and Affiliated Groups meeting together to share their knowledge and experiences.

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are an initiative of Birdlife International and Guy Dutton, from Birds Australia, spoke about their importance in Australia. He also encouraged the involvement of BOCA Branches in monitoring IBAs found in their locality.

Don Saunders, BOCA's Conservation Coordinator, spoke of the impact of climate change on BOCA. His message being that long term survey data collected by BOCA members provides important information that can influence planning decisions.

Sessions on Friday and Saturday offered the opportunity for several BOCA branches to describe their surveying work. Of particular interest was how survey data had influenced management decisions.

The survey work of Townsville and Region Bird Observers Club (TRBOC) described by Ian Boyd clearly indicated the value of weekly surveys conducted over 15 years. Data from such surveys has been used in Environmental Impact Statements, Local councils, EPA and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Alec Hawtin, Sunraysia Branch, told us of their involvement in the Black-eared Miner and Malleefowl recovery programs and regular surveys at Ned's Corner.

The preservation of mangroves in some parts of Australia is needed but Robert McDonald described how the work of Hunter Bird Observers Club has demonstrated that excessive growth of mangroves can destroy bird habitat. Dredging causes changes in tide levels and allows more mangroves to grow, so reducing mudflat habitat – important for waders.

Jenny Lau, BOCA's Conservation Officer, described the surveys being conducted for Melbourne Water. The surveys have been underway for approximately a year and involve members from MELBOCA, BAYBOCA AND PENBOC. They are conducted in several wetlands found in urban areas of greater Melbourne.

Rod Bloss of BRISBOCA described an education program about Glossy Black-Cockatoos. His talk illustrates the importance of providing education so people have skills and knowledge to enable them to be involved in survey work.

Chris Healey from East Gippsland Bird Observers Club (EGBOC) talked about the monitoring of birds following bushfires. Historical data, from three sites, has been used to make comparisons with post fire information.

Friday afternoon provided the opportunity to get out of the lecture room and do some bird watching. Fivebough Wetlands at Leeton was the destination and we were treated to some great birding followed by a barbeque dinner. Our hosts were Mike Schultz (Chairman) and Tracey Valenzisi (Secretary) of the Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Trust. Mike described the history of the trust and how knowledge of the birds using the wetlands helped prevent development of the wetlands to form a recreational lake.

The finale of the Forum was a fun event that tested participants' bird knowledge. Tania Ireton ran a bird trivia quiz that kept us all on our toes by asking questions about habitat, adaptations, identification features and bird calls.

This is a brief description of BOCA Forum 2008: Beyond the Tick. The full proceedings will be published soon and made available on the BOCA website early in 2009.

Annette Cook



Left: Forum Participants at Fivebough. Photo: Annette Cook, **Right:** Robert McDonald, Hunter BOC and Max Markey, EGBOC. Photo: Annette Cook

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