



Education

ANNETTE COOK

Photo: Cecily Jones

BOCA EDUCATION PLANNING

At BOCA we are working towards a coordinated future for our education activities. The first step in the process has been to determine what Branches and Affiliated Groups are already doing by way of education. The definition of what makes an activity educational is also being explored. This has been done through a survey that was emailed to Branch contacts; at the time of writing not all surveys have been returned. A full report of the results will be published in the August edition of *The Bird Observer*.

The second step toward a BOCA education plan will be an Education Planning Day to be held on Sunday 21 June at National Office in Nunawading. Invitations have been sent to Branches. As some BOCA Branches are situated a long distance from Melbourne, alternative means of communication have been offered – Skype, emails, telephone or written submissions are acceptable.

If you would like to make a contribution to the future of education at BOCA please contact Annette Cook, Education Coordinator on (03) 9877 5342 or education@birdobservers.org.au

NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN EFS

In April, I discussed the concept of Education for Sustainability (Efs) and its role and aims. Just as *The Bird Observer* was going to print, *Living Sustainably: The Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability* was released. "The aim of the Plan is to equip all Australians with the knowledge and skills required to live sustainably." Four strategies are described in the framework.

1. Demonstrating Australian Government leadership
2. Reorientating education systems to sustainability
3. Fostering sustainability in business and industry
4. Harnessing community spirit to act

While all four strategies could have an influence on BOCA, it is the fourth that has potential to have the most impact. The National Action Plan (NAP) "seeks to engage the many diverse providers of education for sustainability". To assist community organisations like BOCA to deliver education for sustainability, the NAP recognises that they must be empowered with knowledge, skills and opportunities.

To help guide education planning, the NAP aims to provide best practice standards for EfS as a means of assisting education providers to improve current programs. Strategy 4 recognises the importance of building the capacity of education providers and improving networking and information sharing between different organisations. Research into the community understanding of sustainability issues will be supported to assist in program design. The Strategy lists improved consultation with the media as a means to better communicate sustainability messages to the public. Finally, a Community Education Grants Scheme will financially support best practice education programs.

As planning for BOCA education proceeds we will need to consider how our activities can be best supported by *Living Sustainably – The National Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability*. If you would like to look at the plan it is available at: www.environment.gov.au/education/nap

STICKYBEAK BIRDBATH WATCH

In the Autumn Stickybeak newsletter, Stickybeak members have been encouraged to set up birdbaths in their garden or school ground. They have been asked to report their observations to BOCA. The activity provides opportunities for young birders to learn to identify birds that visit their neighbourhood and encourages them to keep clear records of the birds they observe. It is an activity that can involve the whole family or school community.



A Grey Fantail, Clematis, Vic. Photo: Arthur Carew

WESBOC WORKS WITH NEWHAVEN COLLEGE



Bessie Tyers from Wesboc talks to year 9 students from Newhaven College. Photo: A. Emmanouil

The Year 9 Campus of Newhaven College on Phillip Island in Victoria has as its focus environmental studies. Wesboc was asked to assist the students' studies of Western Port, in particular the migratory birds that visit. On Wednesday 22 April, Bessie Tyers, Wesboc President, and I met with 40 Year 9 students on the boardwalk at Rhyll Inlet. Although there were no migratory waders to see at this time of year we were able to give the students an insight into their feeding habits, the long flights the birds undertake each year and the importance of Western Port to the birds' survival. An information leaflet was provided for students that described the importance of mangroves and listed all the birds that have been observed by Wesboc members at Rhyll Inlet. It was agreed that it would be useful to revisit the area in November so students could observe migratory waders when the birds return for summer.

BIRDWATCHING FOR BEGINNERS PROGRAM

Southern Highboca recently held its first adult beginners' course at Bundanoon with 13 participants attending. Homework was set after the first session for follow-up during the second

session. The third session was an outing to Morton National Park where participants tried out their newly acquired skills. The feedback has been very positive.

A slide-show of common birds, supplied by BOCA, was modified by including a few bird calls and a video on lyrebirds shot by David Attenborough some years ago near Bundanoon. The Branch plans to repeat the program in other centres using the same format which worked so well.

BOCA BIRD WEEK 2009

WETLAND HABITAT-WETLAND BIRDS

Australia has 65 Wetlands of International Importance that are protected under the Ramsar Convention. The Convention is so named because it was signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971. It is an intergovernmental treaty with the mission of "conservation and wise use of wetlands". The Ramsar Convention defines wetlands as "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres." Australia also has a directory of wetlands of national significance – there are more than 900 wetlands currently listed.

Wetlands have many roles in the environment but significantly for birders they provide habitat for many species of birds, great bird watching and photography opportunities. Whether your favourite wetland is of international, national, state or local significance, or just a place you love to visit, BOCA Bird Week 2009 is the time to celebrate and to help others to understand the importance of wetlands.

Information on how to plan your activities for BOCA Bird Week 2009 will soon be available.

To find out more about Australian Wetland Birds visit:
www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/wetbrds.html

Wetland Habitat - Wetland Birds
 BOCA Bird Week 2009
 25 - 31 October

Fivebough Wetlands. Photo: A. Cook. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Photo: J. Barkla