

Brian Everingham
Escaping to the Manning
2025

July



Bird List – Mid North Coast

1. Australian Brush Turkey
2. Black Swan
3. Pied Stilt
4. Australian Wood Duck
5. Pacific Black Duck
6. Grey Teal
7. Chestnut Teal
8. White-headed Pigeon
9. Spotted Dove
10. Brown Cuckoo-Dove
11. Crested Pigeon
12. Purple Swamphen
13. Dusky Moorhen
14. Eurasian Coot
15. Cattle Egret
16. White-necked Heron
17. Royal Spoonbill
18. Australian White Ibis
19. Straw-necked Ibis
20. Great Egret
21. White-faced Heron
22. Striated Heron
23. Little Egret
24. Australian Pelican
25. Australasian Gannet
26. Little Pied Cormorant
27. Great Cormorant
28. Little Black Cormorant
29. Great Pied Cormorant
30. Australasian Darter
31. Far Eastern Curlew
32. Australian Pied Oystercatcher
33. Masked Lapwing
34. Silver Gull
35. Greater Crested Tern
36. Osprey
37. Wedge-tailed Eagle
38. Swamp Harrier
39. White-bellied Sea Eagle
40. Black-shouldered Kite
41. Brahminy Kite
42. Azure Kingfisher
43. Sacred Kingfisher
44. Laughing Kookaburra
45. Nankeen Kestrel
46. Galah
47. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
48. Eastern Rosella
49. Rainbow Lorikeet
50. Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
51. Noisy Pitta
52. Satin Bowerbird
53. Superb Fairywren
54. White-cheeked Honeyeater
55. New Holland Honeyeater
56. Brown Honeyeater
57. Noisy Friarbird
58. Eastern Spinebill
59. Lewins Honeyeater
60. Little Wattlebird
61. Red Wattlebird
62. Yellow-faced Honeyeater
63. Noisy Miner
64. Brown Gerygone
65. Mangrove Gerygone
66. Yellow Thornbill
67. Striated Thornbill
68. Australasian Figbird
69. Golden Whistler
70. Grey Shrike Thrush
71. Eastern Whipbird
72. Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
73. Australian Magpie
74. Pied Butcherbird
75. Grey Butcherbird
76. Willie Wagtail
77. Grey Fantail
78. Spangled Drongo
79. Magpie-lark
80. Torresian Crow
81. Australian Raven
82. Eastern Yellow Robin
83. Tree Martin
84. Bassian Thrush
85. Welcome Swallow
86. Red-browed Finch
87. House Sparrow
88. Common Myna

Tuesday 22nd July 2025

We have arrived in Harrington and have settled into Cabin 9 in the Harrington Beach Discovery Park, right behind the lagoon and the break wall. It's a comfortable cabin but there is not a skerrick of Wi-Fi here and that cuts out much by the way of communication with the outside world.

We left home at 7.40am and of course that put us in the thickest of traffic, especially as the school holidays had ended. It was made worse by the road works along much of Heathcote Road and almost the entire length of the M7/M2. Thankfully, it eased once we started the tunnel towards Hornsby. To get from home to the other side of Sydney took almost 2 hours.

I am not convinced that all that road expansion is going to ease congestion and it will certainly not make for a "liveable city"!

But, eventually, at 12.50pm, we arrived at the Manning Regional Art Gallery and we were able to check out the Naked Nude Art Prize for 2025! This prize is issued every two years and the first winner, in 2013, was Wendy Sharpe.



There were good pieces again this year but many looked derivative of other artists. What was impressive was the catalogue that came with the exhibition.



Jenny Rodgerson – Poised



Lauri Smith – Dawn's Visitors



Matthew Quick- Vanity's Whisper



Tamara Dean – Genesis

Judged to be the winner this year and I do love the backdrop



Tess Hagan – Enough Bared

Of interest to me is that when Kenneth Clark wrote that classic, *The Nude*, where he delved into the difference between the nude and the naked and tried to separate art from pornography, many of the models were female and most of the artists were said to be male. Indeed, there came to pass that there was a thing called the “male gaze”. Now, as I flick through the catalogue and remember the art we saw today, many of those artists were female! The subjects were mixed. The body shapes varied! Even the one above, the obvious head as penis, is from a female artist. I will leave it to others to determine whether there is a different gaze at work!



Julie Vinci – Have you ever started a trend?

This one is a self-portrait



Bruce Rowland – Apples

That will do! Apparently, I didn't take images of Faye's favourites but we do have that catalogue!

After we unpacked, had afternoon tea and a snack and then went to the IGA for supplies, we had a walk here down through the caravan park, onto the lagoon and then out along the break wall, to discover that beyond the sand, it reappeared as a relic of days when this was probably the actual northern mouth of the Manning River.









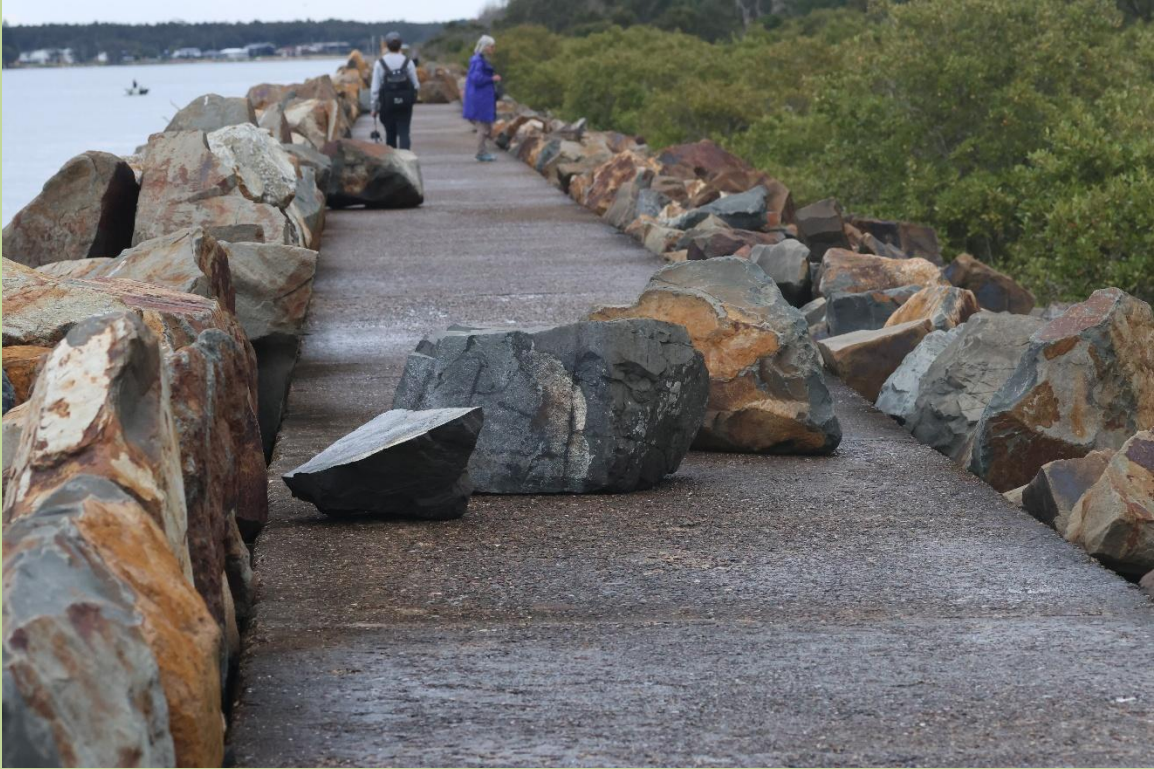
Wednesday 23rd July 2025

It rained on and off for much of the day but in between – and sometimes during – showers, we went birding! In the end, I think we also walked about 6km and at the end of today, the bird count for the area is 58 species. That's not bad considering we have not yet disappeared into the forests of the Mid North Coast and all the migratory waders have long since departed.









Flood damage



Including trying to remove sand to fill the new mouth made by the Manning River closer to Manning Point



Little Black Cormorants love to fish in convoys



Sacred Kingfisher

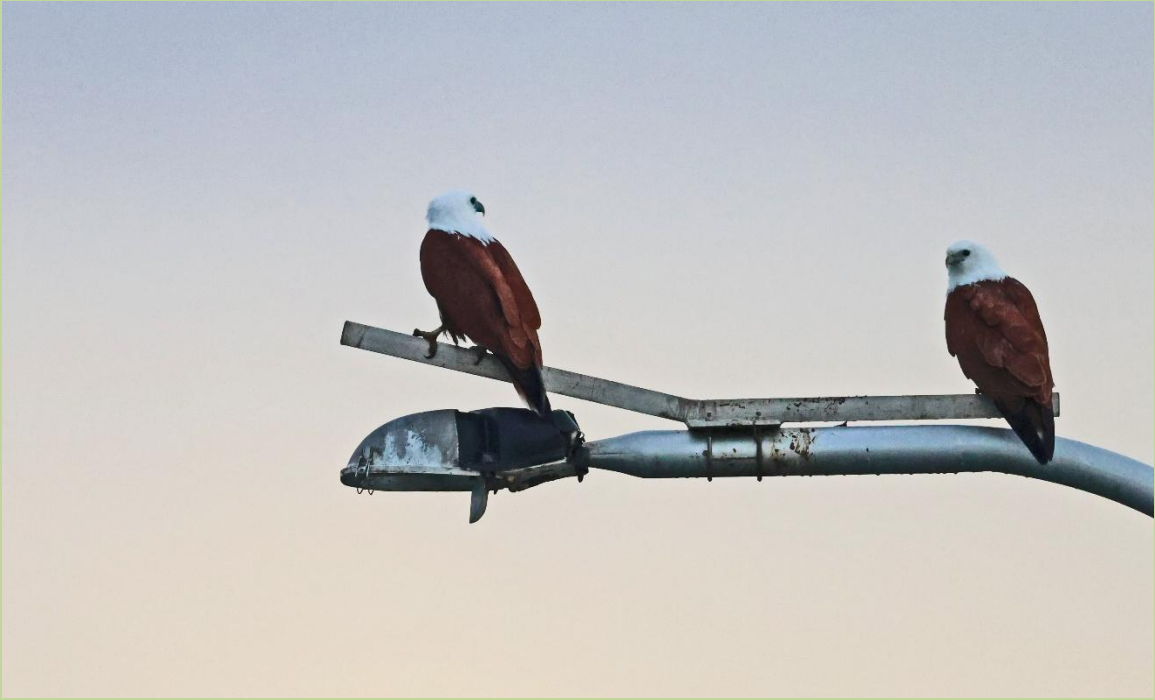


Spangled Drongo





Osprey at Crowdy Bay



Brahminy Kites





Black-shouldered Kite





White-headed Pigeon



Thursday 24th July 2025

After we put off Dennis and Pam for visiting us this evening – Faye was insistent that she should follow medical directions and not mix with people – we drove to Laurieton and then out to Kattang Nature Reserve!

It's one of my favourite places!



It is a combination of littoral rainforest, heath and themeda grasslands on a stunning peninsula.



Looking south to Diamond Head in Crowdy Bay NP





Looking west into the Camden Haven River



And looking NNE: we saw one Humpback Whale cruising close to shore



White-cheeked Honeyeater



Dooragan (North Brother)



We had lunch of grilled fish and chips bought from my favourite fish shop in Laurieton before then driving south to the Cattai Wetlands. We opted to sit a little distance from the fish cleaning table where we would have had friends!

Of course we saw a car on the side of the road and stopped and said hello to Jan Mohandas and Margaret! They were also here to visit the wetlands and had been in Laurieton, seeing Alan Morris! If that's not a small world, I should also note they are staying here in the same caravan park as us!

The Cattai Wetlands were badly hit by the floods and were technically closed. Some of the raised boardwalk was destroyed but we snuck under the fence, walked in and managed to complete the entire circuit, adding an amazing number of birds to the trip list for this visit along the way. Our tally is now 74 species! The Mid North Coast is very rich for bird diversity.



Apart from Red-necked Wallabies, we also saw two Swamp Wallabies!



Eurasian Coots in abundance

While I never photographed them, my favourite sightings here were of an Azure Kingfisher and a Yellow Thornbill but I should also mention the Tree Martins! I am partial to Martins and Swallows!



And with that, we headed back to base!

Friday 25th July 2025

Last night was exceedingly cold! Apparently, it was also cold in Engadine! I am glad that I brought my dressing gown, glad that I have my QATAR PJs and glad of my slippers. I am also glad I added an extra blanket to the bed last night!

Once we did head outside and onto the road, we drove over to Coopernook and checked out the wetland off the highway where we found a pair of Pied Stilt and a very cooperative Great Egret!





The remains of the old bridge, now totally removed, that used to form part of the Pacific Highway

Coopernook was clearly badly hit by the floods, especially those houses on the flats on the back road to Lansdowne but there had also been a clean-up and the village continues.

Meanwhile, we did follow that road through to Cundletown and on, via Chatham, to Wingham. Once we arrived, we discovered that there is a new high level bridge being built into town, and that the floods had trashed the Wingham Brush NR and river flat and all was closed. No access! Oh well, I did drive down the road where Robin Fletcher and I walked alone one night after a party and, well, became an “item”, a relationship that lasted several years! Vale, Robin!

We then returned to Taree and looked at the Taree Garden along the river bank and of course that, too, had been trashed by the floods but so much work had been done to clean it up! Thankfully, we didn't try to go via Tinonee! That bridge out of Wingham is totally destroyed!

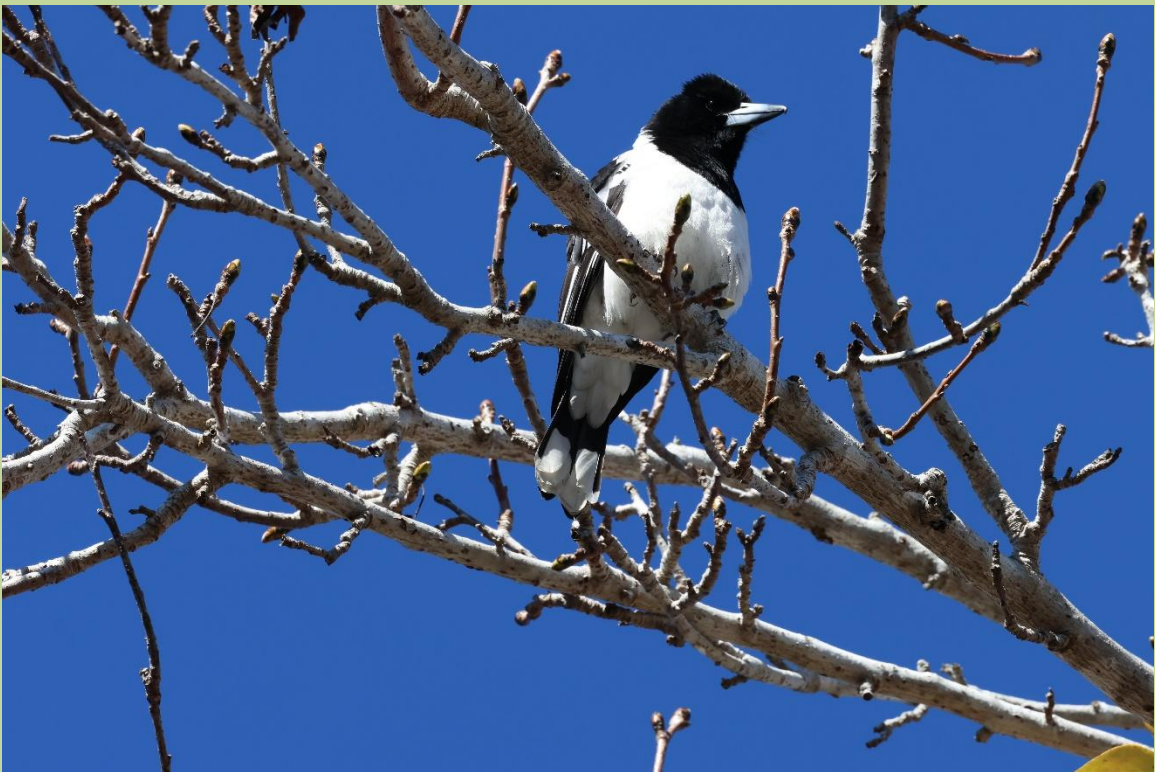


Bad hair day for a Greater Crested Tern





Male Australasian Figbird



Pied Butcherbird



Looking south down the Manning River in Taree



We then had our picnic lunch at Saltwater National Park! We were not alone!



On the way home, we dropped in to look at Croki. This was once a river port. There is no chance now of reviving that coastal steamer trade. So much silting has occurred as the countryside was cleared for agriculture. Even if coastal steamers could cross the bar – a big if, even at high tide – the river has so many shallows. It's time also to mention that Harrington has a street called Maianbar! Now there was a coastal steamer called Minimbar. It broke its back crossing the bar, had its engine and boiler removed and that was fitted into its new, replacement sister steamer called Maianbar that resumed service on the same run. The TSS Maianbar was built in Ardrossan in Scotland in 1910 and eventually ran aground off Newcastle on Nobbys Beach in 1940. I am not sure if it is linked to the suburb near Bundeena! These steamers were part of the North Coast Steam Navigation Company.

I am amazed that it was still standing. The properties on Jones Island must have been swimming! But Croki was the site of the ferry over to Mitchell Island! It was still operating when I was a child. It's also the link as to why the Mitchell Island Anglican church was, and still is, part of the Coopersnook Diocese. The churches within that cluster are Moorland, Coopersnook, Lansdowne, Upper Lansdowne, Harrington and Mitchell Island. When the ferry was withdrawn, the distance from Mitchell Island to the other churches made for a lengthy drive! The rector had difficulty getting from one service to another in time!



The ferry landing on the northern side near Croki



It serviced this old Manning River Dairy Co-op! Long since closed but an amazing relic of the dairying days and of the Co-Op movement



After we returned home, had afternoon tea and rested for a while, Faye and I repeated the walk through the littoral rainforest strip near the caravan park and we struck gold!





Yes, the most cooperative Noisy Pitta I have ever seen!



We were in extremely low light and the ISO in the camera had to be cranked up to its maximum to get even these shots. There must be considerable “noise” but I have never had a chance to shoot one of these birds in the wild with little obstruction from vegetation! Despite the blaze of colour, they are perfectly camouflaged in dabbled, low lit rainforests!



I can't top that! Good night!

Saturday 26th July 2025

Sometime in the early hours of the morning, strong winds arrived and I developed a sore throat! The winds and the sore throat both left by breakfast time but the winds were replaced by rain! It set on and during the morning we were confined to base, sitting on our balcony, overlooking the caravan park and accompanied in our reading by the soundtrack of rain hitting the tine roof! Outside, in the caravan park, all is quiet. Despite the influx of people over the course of the last two days, the rain appears to have them mostly hidden indoors.

Many in this caravan park appeared to have permanent “cottages” or on-site caravans, complete with flower gardens and fixed furniture. Many of the “residents” also know each other. It’s hard to know if they live here permanently or, as I suspect, they pay for the site permanently and use it as a “holiday home”!



Some are interesting characters. There is an old guy next door who seems to feed the birds – Crested Pigeons and Rainbow Lorikeets – but every so often throw a broom in their direction and scatters them. I have yet to work out if this is random or if there is a particular bird he does not approve!

After it stopped raining and after I arrived at the farm for the shared birthday party for Dennis and Bec (70 and 40), Faye managed a walk in the dry, found the Spangled Drongo and added to our bird tally two more species: Far Eastern Curlew (either overwintering or early returnees and 2 individuals) and Striated Herons. We have now

reached 88 species for the trip; a count that stops when we arrive at Bulahdelah tomorrow.

I took it slowly to get to Moorland, going via some significant sites in Coopernook and Moorland and noting places that have already been referred to!



No longer on a navigational river port and not even on a highway but going strong!



Coopernook Parish Anglican Church



Cooperbrook School of Arts Hall: in my childhood, apart from dances, it was the site for the Harvest Festival! A function was in full swing!



The old Moorland Union Church – used by a variety of denominations



I always thought this was a memorial hall but the 1912 date makes me wonder.



Juhles Mountain



Home!



Booragan (Middle Brother) from the side verandah!

Brian Everingham