

Friday, 20th October 2006

Migrants return to Kooragang at the rate of Knots

Milhams Pond at Kooragang Wetlands was awash yesterday, with a species of migratory shorebird that is on the NSW vulnerable list, the Red Knot.

When Ann Lindsey, Conservation Officer for the Hunter Bird Observers Club went looking for another rare bird, the Painted Snipe early Wednesday morning she thought she would just check out an area of mudflat and saltmarsh that had recently been cleared of mangrove seedlings with funding from Envirofund and Newcastle City Council.

'At first when I looked, I thought all these little mangroves were growing back.' Ann related. 'Then I had a closer look and realized they were not mangroves but Knots, Red Knots in fact, a whole 1669 of them!'

'This is most exciting news, as it is the largest number of these birds recorded in the Hunter by the Hunter Bird Observers Club in their 20 years of recording' Ann elaborated.

Four birds were sporting small orange flags indicating they had been tagged in Victoria while several others had flags that were too indistinct to identify their origin.

All of the birds were vigorously feeding on the mudflats. 'We are not sure how long they will stay in the Hunter estuary before taking on enough fuel (food) to continue their journey, Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project manager Peggy Svoboda added. 'Maybe it will be two or three days, maybe a week. Whatever it is, it is clear that Kooragang Wetlands is an important staging point for these birds on their annual migration along the East Asian Australasian Flyway.'

ENDS

For more information contact KWRP Communications Officer Sue Rostas phone (02) 4964 9308, mobile 0419 019 662, or Ann Lindsey, HBOC Conservation Officer, phone (02) 4951 2008.

Major contributors to the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project currently are:

Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
NSW Department of Natural Resources
Newcastle City Council
Port Stephens Council
NSW Department of Primary Industries
NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
Port Waratah Coal Services
EnergyAustralia
Landcare/PriceWaterhouseCooper
Banrock Station

