

## HISTORY OF ACTIVITIES AT STOCKTON SANDSPIT

*Reference: Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project. Updated 27/9/04.  
(Summary currently being reviewed by Hunter Bird Observers Club and NPWS)*

Date	Action	Personnel	Comments
Pre-Stockton Bridge 1801	Oyster banks lining the Hunter Estuary	Quote from Lt. Col. Paterson to Governor King	<i>The quantity of oyster shells on the beaches inland (from the mouth of the Hunter River) is beyond conception: they are in some places for miles. These are four feet deep (later recorded to be up to 18ft deep) without either sand or earth.</i> (Turner in prep)
1808-1822 1935-1945	Oyster banks mined for cement production Oyster banks dredged for cement production Location of oyster dredging and oyster leases in vicinity of what was to be Stockton Sandspit Free flowing river through current site of Sandspit; reports from fisherman are that there was a deep gutter along the eastern edge of the river where boats used to be moored		Turner, in prep Turner, in prep Check with Fisheries for this information  May 1946 photograph; confirm if gutter existed; if it did, was it as a result of dredging oyster shell banks?
Post-Stockton Bridge Nov 1971	Stockton Bridge formally opened; sandspit was formed during bridge construction from dredge material from the river	NSW Dept. Main Roads	Stockton Bridge: new crossing of Hunter River at Newcastle, booklet produced by Department of Main Roads, New South Wales
1970's	Sandspit as bare, shelly sand is used as a roost by thousands of waders	Bird observers (CJ Clarke, Fred Van Gessel, others?)	
Thousands of waders using Sandspit	1983 Gazettal of Kooragang Nature Reserve 1984 KNR listed as a Ramsar site		Managed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Wetland of International Significance, especially for migratory waders

1980's

Sandspit becomes overgrown by introduced plants: bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) and Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*); mangroves (*Avicennia marina*) are becoming established around edge, blocking waders' line of sight to river; value of site to waders being reduced

Use of Sandspit by waders severely reduced

1993	<i>Waders of the Hunter River Estuary: threats to habitat and opportunities for habitat restoration</i>	D. Geering and G. Winning (Shortland Wetlands Centre), report for Hunter Catchment Management Trust and NSW Public Works Department	Report identified the Sandspit as a priority area and recommended removal of mangrove seedlings, removal of bush and spiny rush and establishment of a lagoon; removal of mature mangroves was not included in recommendations
1993	Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project launched		Collaboration of NSW Dept Public Works - Estuary Program (switched to DLWC; currently DIPNR), Hunter Catchment Management Trust (now H-CRCMA), Newcastle City Council, NSW Fisheries and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service; Port Stephens Council joined in 1994; KWRP administered by Trust/H-CRCMA
Jun 1994	<i>Habitat enhancement of Stockton Bridge sandspit for shorebirds</i> (site plan)	PWS	Wader rehabilitation site detail and contour plan (94/1921)
1994	Landscape plan of Sandspit produced	KWRP	Plan based on recommendations in Geering and Winning (1993) and PWS site plan
1995	<i>Review of Environmental Factors Stockton Bridge Sandspit - Migratory Shorebird Habitat Rehabilitation</i>	SWC Consultancy (G. Winning; D. Geering) report for KWRP	Includes concept plan; based on earlier report; mangrove seedlings to be removed; mature mangroves retained
26/6/95-4/9/95	Civil works for excavation of the lagoon	KWRP; Brambles (in kind sponsorship to KWRP); NPWS dozer	Brambles; NPWS; KWRP
Increased wader use of Sandspit by an order of magnitude (10's to 100's)			
14/8/95-4/9/95	Western weir - rock gabion	KWRP	P. Lochrin (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)
1996	<i>KWRP Management Plan</i>	KWRP	
1996	Vehicle bollards and cabling	KWRP; LEAP team	R. Hemmings (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)
1996	Weir No. 2 constructed (removed in 2003)	KWRP; LEAP team	R. Hemmings (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)

1996	Access road sealed; carpark formed and sealed	KWRP	S. Ellery (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)
1996	Planting along path and carpark	KWRP; LEAP team	KWRP
1997	Bird hide construction	KWRP; PWCS sponsorship	S. Ellery (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)
	Disabled access path to bird hide	KWRP	S. Ellery (KWRP Works Sup., seconded from NCC)
1998	<i>Kooragang Nature Reserve and Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve Plan of Management</i>	NPWS	
2001	<i>Kooragang Nature Reserve: rehabilitation of wader habitat on the Stockton Sandspit (REF) Stage 1</i>	NPWS produced REF	Collaboration with HBOC; support from KWRP
8/06/2001	Meeting of stakeholders on Sandspit to discuss mangrove removal; support given to plan from both recreational and commercial fishers and others at the meeting.	HBOC and KWRP	
15/06/2001	HBOC submitted Coastcare application to remove mangroves: <i>Rehabilitation of a migratory shorebird roosting site</i>	Implementation by HBOC, KWRP & NPWS	Support letters from NSW Fisheries, Birds Australia
Oct 2001 - Apr 2002	Young mangroves removed from Sandspit	KWRP LEAP team (David Jenkins, sup.)	Support from HBOC with mangrove removal and bird observation
Apr-02	HBOC Coastcare application unsuccessful NPWS approached to remove mangroves	NPWS funded removal through LHERP	
9/9 - 4/10/2002	Approx. 0.5ha mature mangroves removed from edge of Sandspit	NPWS; DC; HBOC	KWRP support with communication
Immediate increase in wader use of Sandspit by an order of magnitude (100's to 1000's)			
24/9 - ?/10/2003	Sand replenishment of back beach and replacement of rock gabion weir with rip rap	NPWS; DC	DC monitored rip rap opening intermittently for 6 months
28-30/10/2003	Back beach breached at peak of tide after series of very high tides		11:30am - watched breach form
2003	Bitou bush sprayed on top of riverbank opposite carpark	NCC	
2003	Planting native trees in dead bitou bush; rubbish removal	KWRP; Green Corps (Emma McGloin, sup.)	
2004	Removed and mulched acacias which were growing too close to lagoon	KWRP; Green Corps (Kara Williams, sup.); HBOC	
30-6/07/2004	Excavation of shelly beach and construction of sand levee across flyway	DEC-proponent; Commerce-proj. mgr; Daracon-contractor	Also removing mangroves on Sandy and Smith islands
Sep 2004	Weed tank placed on Ash Island and holding Sandspit type green weed bait for fishers		Trying to reduce weed gathering from lagoon; trialling different techniques for weed production

Sep 2004	Rubbish collection; small bitou bush removal	KWRP; Green Corps (Grant Vote, sup.)
2005	Planted carpark garden	HBOC; NCC Coastcare
2005	Sprayed bitou bush along remainder of riverbank and beneath bridge	NCC Coastcare
2005		

**On-going activities**

Weekly weeding, bird observing and email newsletter	HBOC
Monthly estuary wader counts	HBOC
Brush cut around carpark and paths; maintain birdhide	KWRP caretaker/volunteers
Rubbish removal	KWRP; HBOC; NCC
Planting in dead bitou bush along riverbank, road embankment & around birdhide	KWRP; HBOC; NCC

Abbreviations:

DC	NSW Department of Commerce
DEC	NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
DIPNR	NSW Department of Planning and Natural Resources
DLWC	NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation
HBOC	Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
H-CRCMA	Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
KWRP	Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project
LEAP	Landcare and Environment Action Program (Commonwealth training program)
NPWS	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
PWS	NSW Public Works and Services
PWCS	Port Waratah Coal Services

---