



NSW Bird Atlasers Inc
A group monitoring birds in New South Wales



PO Box 717, WOOLGOOLGA, NSW 2456

Dear Secretary

OUR BIRDS NEED HELP FROM YOUR CLUB AND ITS MEMBERS

Ian McAllan, Chris Brandis, Brian Curtis and I have now completed our epic 3 Volume publication 'An Atlas of the Birds of NSW & the ACT' which is based on over 5.5 million records collected from systematic surveys covering the mainland NSW & the ACT, off-shore islands and the western half of the Tasman Sea.

Many reviewers have acknowledged this Atlas as a milestone because it documents the changing distributions of all birds relying on habitats within NSW & the ACT. The analysis is based primarily on the period from 1976 until 2006 with the data mapped using fine-scale distributions for seasonal, temporal and historic reporting patterns to reveal current geographical ranges, habitat utilisation, degrees of population fragmentation and population dynamics.

Dr Richard Major, of the Australian Museum, expressed the view that this Atlas is an extraordinary achievement: one that is beyond the vision of any government jurisdiction. Sir David Attenborough offered his unreserved congratulations on the publication, commenting especially on the scholarship and fieldwork. Professor Tim Flannery noted that in providing invaluable data on changes in bird populations over time, this Atlas was an essential tool if 'we are to direct our conservation efforts effectively'.

In Volume 3 we summarise some concerning findings -

- i. overall, the habitat of many birds is now so seriously affected that many may not survive over the long term: the outlook for many is bleak;
- ii. our environmental management record since European settlement is poor. More recently, climate change has emerged as an added, serious and all-pervasive threat; and
- iii. of the 573 species are known to have existed in NSW, the ACT and the western Tasman Sea, more than 50% of the land birds are now in serious decline. In our view most native birds are now in a worse circumstance compared to their situation in the 1980s.

We, the authors, have decided that the next step is to review changes for each species by comparing data by decade for each of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, i.e. if we can capture more data until the end of 2020 and gather more records back at least as far as 1970, we will be better able to examine which species are continuing to change their range, increasing in number or being lost to us forever. The current decade, 2011 to 2020 continues for just over 12 months.

This is where **we are hoping your Club and its members will be willing and able to contribute.**

We need as many visits as possible made to grids in 10-minute format (*see below) across the mainland of NSW and the ACT throughout 2020. We would also like to obtain as many records as possible from previous years in this decade or in earlier decades to improve the coverage. The more data we have from as many localities as possible, the better and more robust the statistics will be for these decades and so provide a more meaningful result.

At present, capturing Atlas data at a 10-minute level is still the best way to tell if a moderately common species has altered its range and status.

The challenge before us is best expressed by the attached maps:

- (a) Magpie records from 10-minute blocks over the period 2011 to the end of October 2019; and
- (b) the number of sets of records submitted for each block over the same period.

As can be seen from these maps, there are many areas in NSW from which we need current records and we would especially appreciate your assistance in encouraging your members to collect and submit records from the empty 10-minute blocks.

We know that birds are resilient, and it's not too late to bring them back ... if we act now. I am sure that those who read a copy of Volume 3 of the Atlas will be stunned by the sheer loss in bird populations in recent years. Declines were truly more severe than any of us had imagined. The Atlas findings are a sobering reminder that we must do even more to understand the threats birds face — and the conservation solutions that are urgently needed. Real data will help achieve those goals.

A long-term aim of the New South Wales Bird Atlassers Inc. is to make meaningful changes to help birds back. This is an objective which I hope you support. To this end, we hope your Club and membership will help improve our coverage so that we can produce a meaningful 50 year trend assessment for all NSW/ACT birds.

We ask for the support of your Club and its members to collect and submit as many bird records as possible for the period from 1/1/1970 to 31/12/2020. We are especially keen to gather records for the blank areas on the enclosed decade map, i.e. for the 10 years since 1 January 2011.

Yours sincerely



Dick Cooper

- * 1. Anyone who participates can obtain copies of **NSWBA Bird Record Sheets** and a guide on **How to Complete Bird Record Sheets** from the NSWBA website at <https://www.nswbirdatlassers.org.au/downloads/>
- 2. All records can be emailed to atlas.sheets@nswbirdatlassers.org.au
- 3. Alternately, contributors need simply forward their name, date(s) of sightings (max. period of 1 calendar month), the latitude and longitude (if known), the name of a prominent nearby geographic feature (e.g. mountain, lake, national park, town, suburb) and their bird list to the above email address. etc.)