



Hunter Bird
Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
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ABN 62 415 889 446

NSW State Government
Major Projects

Re: Stockton Sand Quarry Dredging

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) has concerns about aspects of this project and its assessment. HBOC objects to this development in its current form and to the paucity of credible avifauna surveys.

The survey effort for avifauna was token—two diurnal surveys carried out in winter on successive days for two hours each. No surveys were conducted in spring when migratory species would be present. No nocturnal bird surveys took place to ascertain the presence of large forest owl species. It is not surprising therefore that, as a result of this poor effort, no threatened species were detected.

The list of bird species in Table 14 (Environmental Impact Statement) generated from Bionet Atlas 10 km radius and EPBC Act Protected Matters Search contains species either not possible on or not relevant to the site. The assessment of several of these species by the consultant leaves much to be desired and contains many inconsistencies, e.g. Australian Painted Snipe is assessed as having a “moderate” likelihood of presence whereas Masked and Powerful Owls are assessed as having a “low” likelihood of presence. It is quite possible that the latter could hunt in the area whereas there are no wetlands on site to support Australian Painted Snipe. In NSW Red Goshawk - critically endangered (possibly extinct) - is assessed as having a “moderate” likelihood of presence whilst the endangered Little Tern which has bred within a 10 km radius is assessed as having a “low” likelihood of presence.

It is clear that the consultants had little appreciation of or knowledge about local avifauna despite their claim:

“Five categories for ‘likelihood of occurrence’ (Table 13) were attributed to species after consideration of criteria such as known records, presence or absence of important habitat features on the subject site, results of the field surveys and professional judgement. This process was completed on an individual species basis.”

The final landform is to be an open pit called a “freshwater pond” approximately 37 hectares in area with a depth of 15 metres below sea level with a 1 in 3 batter. It is highly unlikely that this deep water body would attract bird species as most waterbird species forage in shallower water and, in addition, it is doubtful if suitable aquatic vegetation would grow in such deep water.

To leave this deep water body with steep sides in the middle of a woodland area is not an appropriate outcome. HBOC can find no reference in the documents available about ongoing management of the site.

Ann Lindsey – Conservation Coordinator for Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. 9th April, 2020

References:

Stockton Sand Quarry Dredging Biodiversity Development Assessment Report 21 February 2020
Prepared for Boral Resources (NSW) Pty Ltd

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was established in 1976 and currently has a membership over 350 members. Although the Club is based in Newcastle NSW membership includes members from other areas in NSW and from interstate.

Aims of HBOC:

to encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat and
to encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity.

Activities include monthly regular outings, evening meetings, camps and field studies. HBOC promotes systematic field studies which include regular surveys by volunteers from the membership:

Surveys of waterbirds in the Hunter River estuary, Port Stephens and Lake Macquarie
Surveys for woodland birds in the Hunter Valley and Manning Valley
Surveys of Broughton Island off the coast of Port Stephens
Surveys of Worimi Conservation Lands

All data gathered from field studies are entered into the national database, Birddata, administered by Birdlife Australia. Data are used to underpin conservation issues.

HBOC has a long history of working in collaboration with local councils, national parks, industry and schools.

HBOC major publications include:

an annual journal, *The Whistler*, of which there are now 13 volumes. It provides a platform for regionally significant observations and findings.

an annual bird report which summarises the status of avifauna in the Hunter Region of NSW. This publication is now in its 26th year.

brochures which show self-guided birding routes of which there are now fourteen covering most of the Hunter Region.

For more information about HBOC go to www.hboc.org.au