

Birding locations in the Illawarra region.

The Illawarra region of New South Wales extends from north of Wollongong, through Shellharbour and Kiama south to the Shoalhaven River. Just a 90-minute drive from Sydney, it ranges from the coast to the top of the escarpment. It boasts a wide variety of habitats including ocean and estuaries, coastal dunes, mangroves, freshwater wetlands, coastal littoral forest, dry woodlands, sub-tropical rainforest, some great parks and open farmlands.

Thanks to its diverse habitats, it is home to over 300 bird species, an amazing array in a small area. Below is a just a sample of locations to get you started in birdwatching. It includes a selection from each of our 3 local Council areas. Most of these are easy walks and are suitable for families.

For a complete list of birds at these locations, have a look at eBird, a fabulous and free online resource – under ‘explore,’ search the hotspots listed. Many of our members are active eBird users, so the lists are current, with a detailed history and many with photos.

Wollongong Council area

- Wollongong Botanic Garden
- Integral Energy Park
- Puckeys Estate Reserve

Shellharbour Council area

- Killalea Reserve
- Bass Point Reserve
- Blackbutt Forest Reserve

Kiama Council area

- Spring Creek Bird Hide
- Jerrara Dam
- Bonaira Native Gardens

For those keen to expand your birding skills beyond the above locations, you are welcome to contact us and join us on a walk. Email: info@illawarrabirders.org

Wollongong Council area

Wollongong Botanic Garden

Access: 40 Murphys Ave, Keiraville

Facilities: Picnic areas, Playground, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Wollongong Botanic Garden, Wollongong

Walk for 20 mins or several hours in beautifully managed gardens. Thanks to multiple habitats, this location holds a wide variety of birds; almost 140 species. There is a large freshwater pond, rainforest and open native gardens. Easy to find birds on the pond include Pacific Black Duck, Eurasian Coot, Dusky Moorhen, White-faced Heron. Then in the rainforest: Satin Bowerbird, Eastern Yellow Robin, White-browed Scrubwren and maybe Powerful Owl and Golden Whistler on the edge. Feeding in the trees in the open areas are multiple parrots and honeyeaters.

Integral Energy Park

Access: Darkes Road, Kembla Grange

Facilities: Picnic areas, Playground, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Integral Park, West Dapto

This well-established park near the NRMA Motor Museum holds a good range of bushland birds. 138 species have been recorded. Crested Pigeon and Bar-shouldered Dove are seen all year. Almost as common are Brown Cuckoo-dove and Fan-tailed Cuckoo. 9 species of Cockatoo, Rosella and Lorikeet are regularly seen – how many can you find? Smaller birds such as Silveryeye, Red-browed Finch and Thornbills are also common. Less common but worth trying for are Grey Goshawk, White-throated Gerygone and White-throated Treecreeper. This is also a reliable place for Dollarbird in the summer.

Puckeys Estate Reserve

Access: Elliotts Road, North Wollongong. Near Fairy Meadow Surf Lifesaving Club.

Facilities: Sports oval, Beach, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Puckeys Estate (Fairy Meadow), Wollongong

Another Hotspot with almost 140 species. A pleasant walk in the dunes behind the beach and along the billabong. Quite a few water birds are found here with Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis (please don't call me a 'Bin Chicken'!). Listen for Eastern Whipbird in the mornings. Watch quietly for a good range of small birds: Red-browed Finch, Superb Fairywren, Brown & Yellow Thornbills and Spotted Pardalote. Black-shouldered Kite and Nankeen Kestrel also appear overhead.

Shellharbour Council area

Killalea Reserve

Access: Killalea Drive, Shell Cove

Facilities: Open Space, Beach, Picnic areas, Cafe, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot names:

Killalea State Park — Killalea Lagoon, Shellharbour ...146 Species

Killalea State Park — River Walk, Shellharbour ... 112 Species

The Lagoon walk is from the main picnic area, walk East down the hill, turn South and then East along the beach, North around the lagoon and back West along the northern side of the reserve. About a 5km walk. Expect a wide variety of bush-birds and a good selection of freshwater wetland birds plus some ocean birds. Also watch the sky for raptors, as many as 6 species have been seen in a single day.

The River Walk is from the Southern end of the road at the car park for Mystics Beach. There are no facilities here. Walk West down the hill to a roughish 4WD track, turn South and follow to the Littoral Rainforest, explore the side tracks to Minnamurra River and then return the same way; about a 1.5 hour walk.

With multiple habitats, there is a very wide selection of bush and estuary birds; have a look at the eBird lists by our members.

Bass Point Reserve

Access: Bass Point Tourist Road, Shell Cove

Facilities: Picnic areas, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Bass Point (Shellharbour), Shellharbour

With good ocean views and rock shelf habitats, Sooty Oystercatchers are common as are Crested Tern and Australasian Gannets. Whilst far less common, 5 species of Shearwaters and 4 species of Albatross have been seen from the view points in the last decade. A surprising variety of birds inhabit the dense littoral forest, including: Golden Whistler, Eastern Whipbird, Satin Bowerbird, both Wattlebirds and Fan-tailed Cuckoos looking for small birds to lay eggs in their nests. A pair of Osprey nest nearby; the Osprey and White-bellied Sea-Eagles are seen fishing.

Blackbutt Forest Reserve

Access: Blackbutt Way, Barrack Heights

Facilities: Picnic areas, Water, Toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Blackbutt Forest Reserve, Blackbutt, Shellharbour

Explore this Reserve for a good selection of 90 species of bush-birds and freshwater birds. Several of our members have seen over 50 species here, including: Lewin's Honeyeater, Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens, Spotted Pardalote and Brown Gerygone in the tree canopy,. Look carefully for Eastern Spinebill and Yellow-faced Honeyeater. The calls of Grey Butcherbird and Golden Whistler are always welcome.

The adjacent Myimbarr Wetland yields a comprehensive list of over 25 species of water birds; from Ducks to Egrets, Herons and Royal Spoonbill.

Kiama Council area

Spring Creek Bird Hide

Access from: GlenBrook Drive, Kiama

Facilities: There is a covered Bird Hide, but no other facilities at this site.

eBird Hotspot name: Spring Creek Wetland, Kiama

A fantastic example of regeneration work by Kiama Council. This used to be an open paddock and is now a wetland and bush walk. It is home to over 140 species of birds at different times. From the bird hide, you will need binoculars to see: all 4 local species of Cormorant, Chestnut Teal, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Australian Swamphen, and Pacific Black Duck. Then in the forest a selection of birds including: Silvereye, Grey Fantail, Brown & Yellow Thornbill, Satin Bowerbird, Green Catbird and occasional Azure Kingfisher. Finally, keep an eye on the sky, as raptors fly overhead.

Jerrara Dam

Access from: Mount Brandon Road, Jamberoo

Facilities: Picnic tables, drop toilet but no water. Parking outside the gate.

eBird Hotspot name: Jerrara Dam, Kiama

Several habitats here yield a bird list of over 170 species. Open farmland becomes subtropical rainforest and then a large dam which used to be the water source for Kiama. The arboretum of rainforest species – planted and named by the council – is a bonus. Birds in the forest include: Satin Bowerbird, Green Catbird, Lewins Honeyeater, Wonga Pigeon, Topknot Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, and less common, Black-faced Monarch, Noisy Pitta, 5 species of Cuckoo. Small birds include: both local Fairywren, Red-browed Finch, Silvereye, Brown Gerygone and both Brown and Yellow Thornbill, White-browed- and Large-Billed Scrubwren. Listen for Eastern Whipbird – is it just a male or a pair? Walking through the turnstile and down to the dam yields fresh water birds including: Australian Grebe and breeding Swans in winter/spring, along with Grassbird and Reed Warbler in the tall sedges around the dam. Finally 11 species of raptor have been recorded in the past 5 years and 3 species of Owl.

Bonaira Native Gardens

Access from: Girrawheen Avenue, Kiama

Facilities: Sports field, lawn picnic areas, toilets.

eBird Hotspot name: Bonaira Native Garden, Kiama

Whilst a smallish park, this pleasant managed public garden has recorded 77 species. It is also a good spot to identify local native plants. It is a relaxing place to view common birds but extend your knowledge beyond the home backyard. Look for White-headed Pigeon, Green Catbird, Red and Little Wattlebird, Australasia Figbird. Grey Fantail and Yellow Thornbill can be seen flitting through the tree canopy. Less common is the stunning-looking male Golden Whistler.