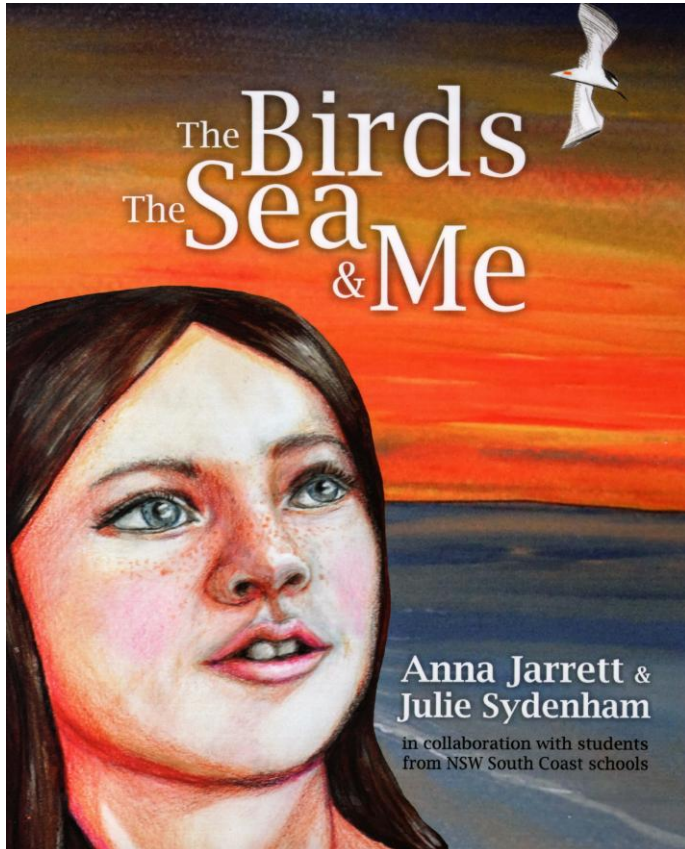


The Birds, the Sea and Me

- book review by Chris Grounds

A highly productive collaboration of National Parks and Wildlife with Shoalhaven schools, an artist, an author-story teller and a local publisher has resulted in a wonderful portrayal of the shorebird story of our coast, "The Birds The Sea and Me".



The story line is authentically south coast: "Rikki loves to explore the beaches and learn about the birds that live there while her dad goes for his morning surf. She watches the shorebirds find homes, make nests and try to raise their chicks in the wild coastal landscape that is often as harsh as it is beautiful."

Jodie Dunn [NPWS] describes this book as "a beautiful collaboration. The Birds, The Sea and Me is an inspiring and informative story for children and families. It makes a powerful creative tool for environmental education and community-based shorebird protection programs".

The Hooder Plover, Pied Oystercatcher and Little Tern are the principal bird characters and iconic sites like Shoalhaven Heads, Lake Wollumboola, Berarra Creek, Lake Conjola, Racecourse Beach and Narrawallee testify to the geography of our coast.

The book is a very nicely balanced mix of environment, literature and art, which speaks to the creative talent of Anna Jarrett as Creative Director and Writer and Julie Sydenham as Artist and Illustrator.

Jodi Dunn and Simon Tedder of the NPWS Shorebird Recovery Project steered the project to fruition for the Office of Environment and Heritage on the back of an Environmental Trust Grant. The Shorebird Recovery volunteers also contributed, made critical support and were thanked at the very successful launch on July 9 at the Ulladulla Library. The south coast touch was completed with publishing by Harbour Publishing House based at Ulladulla.

A truly impressive and noteworthy element of the process was the participation and engagement of primary and high school students around the Shoalhaven.

The schools involved were Milton Public School, Sussex Inlet Public School, Culburra Public School, Shoalhaven Heads Public School, Ulladulla high School and St. Mary's Star of the Sea at Milton. The students involved at these schools and their teachers are to be congratulated.

The speech by local school teacher Jessica Marks at the launch was testimony to the degree and intensity of involvement required of both staff and students, as were the words of both Anna and Julie.

The experience of being involved and then seeing such quality literature portraying such an important conservation story of their home will be a memorable life-long experience for the students.

The book is an authentic Shoalhaven / South Coast production with a powerful message directed at the whole community. Perhaps Shoalhaven Council and their Tourism section might use this story for their "Unspoilt Shoalhaven" promotions.

As the book's main character Rikki concludes "I feel so lucky to be living here in this wild place . . . I want everyone to know about these special endangered birds. The more we know, the more we can help to care for them."

The book is a steal at \$20 and is available from NPWS Offices and all good bookstores.



Julie Sydenham, Jessica Marks, Anna Jarrett, Jodie Dunn