

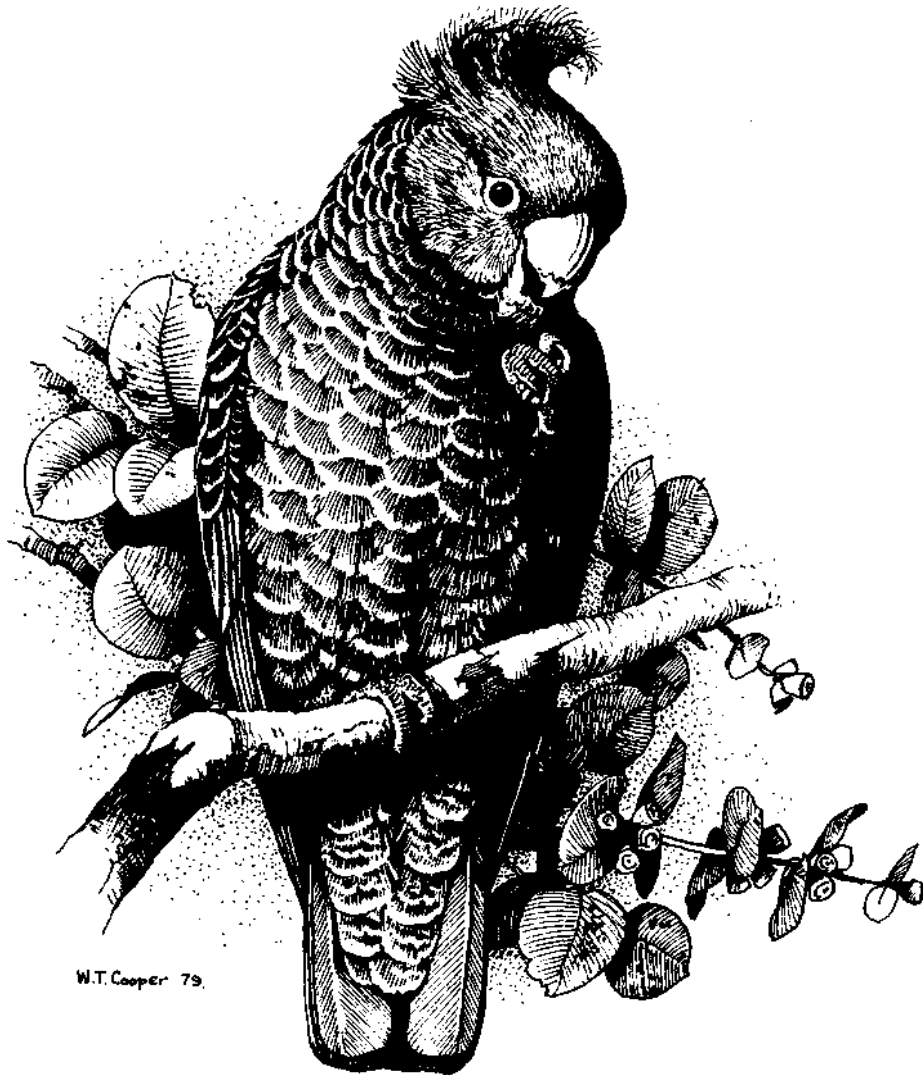
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# CANBERRA BIRD NOTES

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## CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC.

PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2902

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The following people represent Canberra Ornithologists Group in a variety of ways but are not formally on the Committee:

<i>ACT Atlas Co-ordinator</i>	Ian Taylor	494668	476315
<i>Starlings Co-ordinator</i>	Isobel Crawford		375155
<i>Barren Grounds Representative</i>	Lyndal Thorburn		978507
<i>Conservation Council Representative</i>	David Pfanner		477572
<i>Conservation Council Representative</i>	Jack Holland	741476	887840

#### Rarities Panel

Bryan FitzGerald (Secretary - Ph 485140), Barry Baker, Graeme Chapman, Grahame Clark, Mark Clayton, Alistair Drake, Neil Hermes, Richard Schodde.

Annual Subscriptions for 1989 are: Student (under 18 **years** of age) \$7.50; Single \$15.00; Family \$18.00; Institutions \$18.00. All receive one copy of Canberra Bird Notes.

## FROM THE EDITORS

Since the production of its first issue in July 1968, by Graeme Chapman and David Purchase, *Canberra Bird Notes* has had eight editors (or editorial partnerships) - we are the ninth.

When they took over the helm, five of these editors produced editorials defining the type of publication they envisaged *Canberra Bird Notes* to be. We are doing the same.

All agreed that *Canberra Bird Notes* was a regional publication. They also agreed with the original concept that it was "intended purely as an informal medium of communication and does not constitute a recognised journal." This means that it is not intended to compete with national journals such as the *Australian Bird Watcher*, *Corella*, and *Emu*. When he was editor, Steve Wilson described *Canberra Bird Notes* as a "chatty, unpretentious magazine reporting on the local scene for local readers" (*Canberra Bird Notes* 5(2)). We will endeavour to retain that philosophy. The "local scene" will be the same as defined by Neil Hermes in his editorial of April 1981 (*Canberra Bird Notes* 6(2)) "areas on the New South Wales coast as far north as Jervis Bay and areas to the west into the Riverina". Unless they have some relevance to the birds of this region, major articles and notes concerning the distribution and behaviour of birds from other regions are unlikely to be accepted.

When we looked through a set of *Canberra Bird Notes* we realised how well served it has been by its editors. Each successive editor appears to have contributed something that improved the publication. As a result, editing and production have reached high standards. We hope we can maintain these standards and also add something "extra". In addition to a few changes in format, some of the things we will be doing, or hope to do are outlined in this editorial.

First of all, we are delighted to welcome the return of *G. Tibicen* as a columnist ("Out and About") to the pages of *Canberra Bird Notes*. We thought he had migrated to some foreign shore or had been "taken" by an enthusiastic museum worker and his remains made into a study skin. It was, therefore, the reason for some editorial celebration when we found his apparent absence from the local bird fauna was nothing more than an illusion brought about by the cryptic behaviour which he adopts when engaged in post-nuptial activities. He last wrote for us in 1982 "Who will watch the birdwatchers?" (*Canberra Bird Notes* 7(2)).

We would be delighted to receive "Letters to the Editors" that can be printed - especially those that are thought-provoking, perhaps a little controversial, and written with a sense of humour. For example, see the letters

written by Doug Ross in 1982 and 1983 (*Canberra Bird Notes* 7(3) and 8(2)) on introduced species. Indeed we may go as far as to start a feature called "What I think is ..." (or something similar) in which we invite people to write a short article on a subject that would generate some thought and discussion.

These days there is a tendency for observations to be turned into statistics and appear only as figures in the Annual Bird Report, or in surveys such as the Atlas, Waterbird Survey, and Garden Bird Survey. This is a pity as many of these observations are of historical value and should be more fully documented. Therefore, after an absence of nearly six years, we will reinstate "Odd Obs" to cater for these and other observations. Contributions should be short and to the point - preferably no more than 300 words in one or two paragraphs. These articles will not only increase our knowledge of local birds, but also provide neophyte authors with a chance to get their name into print without too much effort. If required, we will even provide help to write short articles! So please check your notebooks for suitable material.

While on the subject of observations, it has been decided to publish the Reports of the Rarities Panel in *Canberra Bird Notes* together with a discussion on the relevance of the records.

A feature we would like to reintroduce is "Where to Watch Birds". The last one was written by Jean Armstrong in October 1982 (*Canberra Bird Notes* 7(4)). If you know a good spot to watch birds and would like to share it with your fellow members, please write it up and send the manuscript to us. Bird-watchers are notoriously itinerant and to cater for those members who may wish to travel further afield this feature could include spots anywhere in Australia, or even overseas.

Philip Veerman will continue to collate and edit the Annual Bird Report for publication in *Canberra Bird Notes*. This is a momentous task that requires attention to detail and a great deal of painstaking checking. It is also the most important document published by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Anyone who takes on this task deserves a medal and the gratitude of all of us. Thank you Philip.

We aim to produce *Canberra Bird Notes* for the enjoyment of members of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. If you have ideas on how it may be improved, please let us have them. Above all, please send us some material that can be published. *Canberra Bird Notes* cannot be produced without this material.

*David Purchase and Grahame Clark*

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## A COMMENT ON DECLINING NUMBERS OF MUSK DUCK IN CANBERRA

*Chris Davey*

In Australia the endemic Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* is widespread with a southern distribution, being uncommonly reported north of latitude 30 deg.S (Blakers et al. 1984). The Canberra area is located centrally within the range of the eastern population. During the five years from 1977, when data were collected for the Atlas of Australian Birds, the reporting rate within the Canberra area was high with over 40% of data sheets containing observations of Musk Duck. The Musk Duck is a conspicuous bird with its unique silhouette, call, and display. The bird's presence is therefore unlikely to be missed during waterbird surveys.

The ideal habitat for Musk Duck is deep permanent water with dense vegetation (Frith 1977). Frith's analysis of gizzard contents indicates that the diet is almost entirely of animal origin. The commonest animals found were insects, freshwater crayfish, snails and mussels. Musk Duck have been seen swallowing frogs although there were none present in the samples studied. Musk Duck occasionally eat the young of other waterbirds (Frith 1984). Laboratory white mice were routinely fed to captive Musk Duck at the Serendip Wildlife Research Station, Vic. (pers. obs.) and at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, ACT (B. Lambie pers. comm.). Mice were taken so enthusiastically that the person feeding the Musk Duck had to take care to avoid being pecked or scratched by the birds in their aggressive attempts to gain control of the food. The Musk Duck occupies the position of a secondary carnivore in the trophic hierarchy found in the food web of deep permanent waterbodies.

Data from waterbird surveys run by the Canberra Ornithologists Group since July 1980 provide a wealth of information on the numbers and distribution of waterbirds on the major waterbodies within the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding district. Lake Burley Griffin and Lake Ginninderra, both artificial, deep and permanent waterbodies, with well vegetated edges, and Lake Bathurst, a natural, permanent, relatively shallow, waterbody with non-vegetated edges, have been regularly surveyed since 1980. The numbers of Musk Duck on each lake have been recorded during these surveys (see Table 1).

The population of Musk Duck on Lake Burley Griffin and Lake Ginninderra before July 1980 was high with each lake holding about 30 birds (Davey 1982). Since that time the number on both lakes has declined dramatically. On Lake Burley Griffin between 1981 and 1984 the numbers remained reasonably stable at about 25 birds, but since then there has been a decline and in 1986-87 only one observation of a single bird was recorded. A

similar decline is seen on Lake Ginninderra but the timing is different and there has been a slight increase since 1985-86. If Musk Duck populations had decreased within eastern Australia during the survey period a similar pattern of decline might be expected for the two artificial lakes and Lake Bathurst. This is not the case. The reduction in numbers on the two artificial lakes is not synchronous and there is no decline seen at Lake Bathurst.

**Table 1.** Maximum and average number of Musk Duck seen during the waterbird surveys of Lake Burley Griffin (LBG), Lake Ginninderra (LG) and Lake Bathurst (LB)

	from 1979 to 1987. The number of surveys are shown in brackets.		
LBG		LG	LB
1979-80	39;32(6)	44;32(6)	- ; -( 0)
1980-81	35;24(6)	18;13(6)	130;33( 5)
1981-82	44;27(6)	14;11(6)	63;30( 5)
1982-83	36;26(6)	12; 8(6)	160;43(12)
1983-84	31;20 (6)	5; 2(4)	47;21 (11)
1984-85	19; 9(6)	4; 2(5)	295;56(12)
1985-86	2;.6(6)	11; 6(5)	219;74(12)
1986-87	1;.2(6)	10; 7(6)	44;14(12)

A report made available to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service presents evidence of a decline in species diversity and breeding activity of waterbirds on the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The report attributes this to a decline in the "quality of Jerrabomberra Wetlands", although the ACT Parks and Conservation Service "is also aware of a comprehensive body of data which suggests a different conclusion" (Anon 1988).

Any changes in numbers or distribution of birds indicated by long-term surveys must be treated with caution. Bias can be brought about by the ability of different observers and by changes in visibility. The survey technique has remained the same and the constantly changing experience of observers makes it unlikely that this would have influenced the survey results. Musk Duck are very conspicuous and difficult to mistake and any changes in the edge vegetation has not been sufficient to influence the visibility of the birds. It is therefore unlikely that changes in Musk Duck numbers are a result of observer bias.

Both artificial lakes appear to provide "ideal" habitat yet there is little doubt that numbers on both have declined. This decline is not reflected at the nearby natural lake.

The decline in Musk Duck numbers may have been caused by an increase in disturbance brought about by a greater use of the artificial lakes for recreational purposes. It is also possible that the decline reflects the biological state of the artificial lakes through the introduction of competitors or other agents. It is known that certain substances accumulate at successive trophic levels with increasing concentration (Suthers and Gallant 1973). This process of biological magnification in the food web can cause substances to reach toxic levels for organisms at the highest trophic levels.

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*C. Davey, 24 Bardsley Place, HOLT ACT 2615*

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## CRIMSON ROSELLAS FEEDING ON CHRISTMAS BEETLES

*Chris Davey*

Having attempted to instil into my children the value of being inquisitive, I was pleased to be asked by one of them "what eats Christmas beetles?" Confidence in the father figure quickly crumbled when they realised that I did not know. While pondering this fact late one evening in the garden (1905hrs 29/12/88) my eye was drawn to a neighbour's Eucalypt (species unknown) that was being severely attacked by a very large number of Christmas beetles. The tree was nearly defoliated and covered with beetles that were busily mating and feeding.

As I watched, a Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans* in adult plumage landed in the tree and started to feed on the beetles. For the next 23 minutes the bird fed continually before flying off of its own accord. During this time the bird removed individual beetles from the leaves by carefully grasping the underside of the insect with its bill. It then held the abdomen in its right foot and removed the beetle's front end with one bite and dropped it to the ground.

The soft abdominal contents were then shelled and eaten. In typical parrot fashion not all beetles were eaten, many being bitten in two and both halves dropped as a more (tasty?) individual was sighted. In this way 28 beetles were killed during the 23 minute feeding bout, with the bird taking between 0.5min and 1.15min to eat a beetle.

If the beetles were mating then the top (male) individual was removed by the parrot with a flick of its head and the insect then flew off, although it is possible that its genitals could have been severely injured, as anyone who has pulled mating beetles apart will know. The remaining beetle (female) was then eaten. Although the rosella had no trouble obtaining a beetle from a leaf many individuals let go and flew off as the bird approached. It is possible that mating females were more likely to be taken as copulating pairs were less likely to release their hold on the leaf.

On examination of the ground under the tree I was able to find 15 front ends and 12 back ends. The front end consisted of head, thorax, two front pairs of legs and wing covers. The rear end consisted of 1 pair of back legs and an empty abdominal shell.

Bridgewater (1934) examined the crop and stomach contents of Crimson Rosellas from around Mansfield in Victoria which were collected at monthly intervals for a year from August 1932. Apart from fruits and seeds large numbers of insect larvae including those of psyllids, termites, aphids and beetles were found.

An analysis of the stomach content of Crimson Rosellas by Lea and Gray (1935) from samples sent to them around the early 1930's showed a similar diet.

To my knowledge there is no specific reference to adult Christmas beetles being taken by Crimson Rosellas. This is not surprising for if the feeding method that I describe is commonly used no external parts would be found within the gizzard for identification.

From this one observation there is no doubt that there was a preferential predation pressure on fecund female Christmas beetles.

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- C. Davey, 24 Bardsley Place, HOLT ACT 2615  
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## ODD OBS

### SUNBATHING BY AN AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE

*Brendan J. Lepschi*

At around 1530hrs on 12 November 1988, J. Bounds and I observed a single adult male Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* sunbathing by the Gundaroo Road on the ACT/NSW border. The temperature at the time was approximately 25 deg.C, and the bird was lying prostrate on its belly on the road verge with its tail and both wings fully spread (not in the "characteristic pose" of one wing and half the tail opened as described by Welty (1979) *The Life of Birds*, Saunders College Publ.: Philadelphia) with its beak open, panting. It was apparently undisturbed by passing vehicles. and only when we stopped for a closer look did it take flight.

The function of sunbathing in birds is as yet not fully understood, although it may assist in plumage maintenance, increased heat causing greater mobility among external parasites, therefore making them easier to remove through preening (Welty *op. cit.*).

*Brendan J. Lepschi, 24 Fullwood Street, WESTON ACT 2611*

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1988

The Bicentennial year has been an exciting time of new developments and growth for the Canberra Ornithologists Group.

We had a full year of monthly meetings of a great variety of interesting main presentations. From slide talks to detailed research reports; from matters of local interest to international matters. Talks ranged from some of the most intimate details of courting Superb Fairy Wrens to the conservation of Hooded Plovers. For the first time we had regular meetings with guest speakers in all months including December and January.

Our excursion program was efficiently managed with a great range of local and regional outings. In addition to many of the old favourites, two new features were added to the program in 1988. Firstly, a highly successful joint campout with four other bird groups (Hunter, NSW Field Ornithologists Club, Cumberland and Illawarra) was held at Back Yamma State Forest. It is hoped that joint events such as this will become a regular feature of future programs. Secondly, a new innovation was the start of mid-week excursions. The first of

these was held in February 1989 and proved popular. This excursion time may be of particular interest to many people including retired members.

The Gang Gang newsletter has brought members up-to-date information on meetings, excursions, other activities and matters of interest. Very few comparable clubs or organisations have such a comprehensive and informative newsletter which is posted every month. The group's main journal *Canberra Bird Notes* has fallen a little behind, however all editions due out in 1988 should be issued by March 1989 and it is hoped to have issues come out on time by June 1989. The problems of *Canberra Bird Notes* have been caused by the large workload in the production of the journal, especially the Annual Bird Report. The 1989 Committee has been restructured to relieve the editorial load.

A feature of 1988 was the release of the Canberra Bird Call tape. This has been a resounding success and is already in its third production run. It has created great interest and its professional production is a great credit to the group.

Surveys and studies of one kind or another have been a major part of the group's organised activities during the year. The Bird Atlas was in its penultimate year and has continued to attract strong support from members. The Atlas will, in years to come, be a major reference on the status of birds in the Territory, and the enormous effort in its production will be amply rewarded. The Waterbird Survey and Garden Bird Survey also continued to provide valuable information on bird numbers and fluctuations within the city and on the region's wetlands.

Contributions were made to a number of published planning documents, the most important of these being the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Plan and the Murrumbidgee Corridor Plan. COG's involvement with the Jerrabomberra plan goes back many years with the group's active participation on various advisory groups. This level of involvement signifies the group's major concern over the appropriate management of this important wetland. The plan suggests that further involvement may be possible in the future and the group eagerly awaits developments in this area.

Government House was the location for the launch of the COG Bird Watchers Hotline. The Governor General Sir Ninian Stephen was the first to use the service and dialled 475530 to hear a prerecorded message containing information on current doings in the bird world in Canberra. The Governor General and Lady Stephen undertook the task with enthusiasm and demonstrated their not so limited knowledge of the birds of the vice-regal gardens. The event received some useful media coverage and the hotline has proved to be much more popular than anyone (other than Ian Taylor) predicted.

In concert with the festive nature of the year, COG made a big impact at a number of community festivals and events. With a new display, exhibitions were held at the Botanic Gardens during Bird Week, and the Recreation Expo. The group also supported the Science in Schools week and in a competition received about 24 entries on bird subjects.

To divert from the successes of the year, I would like to take this opportunity to make some observations on my perception of the changing role that COG is having within the broader ACT community.

In recent years the group has increasingly been approached by politicians and government departments seeking our views on a variety of issues. With the coming of self-government and the high profile of environmental issues this involvement of COG is likely to increase. This is an exciting prospect and one which the group deserves through years of carefully reasoned responses to such requests. I believe the group has a highly respected position in the eyes of politicians, officials and the wider community.

The ACT community is likely, under self-government, to vigorously debate environment issues in a way which has not been seen before. There are also now more opportunities for issues to have extensive media coverage. On their own these changes are good news. There are, however, difficult choices for a group such as COG. The group can choose to preserve its role as being strictly interested in bird and bird conservation issues or it can broaden its interests into wider environmental issues. Often the difference between these two roles will be difficult to separate. To make a broad over-generalisation, COG can choose to be Canberra's RAOU or take a role like the ACF. Neither role is right or wrong but each gives advantages and disadvantages. My observation is that with increasing debate of local environmental issues, COG will be under greater pressure to increasingly take one role or the other. The new COG committee, future committees and the general membership should carefully weigh the opportunities to become involved in political and public forums. Of course the highly regarded professional approach that the group has carefully built up over 25 years should be preserved whatever role it decides to take.

I would like to warmly thank all those committee members who contributed to the group's activities in 1988. Without the considerable commitments of all members of the committee, COG would not be the diverse and active organisation it is. I would also like to thank all other members of the group for their support during the year. Three committee members deserve particular thanks. Ian Taylor who is continuing as Atlas Coordinator has retired from the committee after what must rank as one of the most lengthy continuous contributions (perhaps only challenged by Mark Clayton). Doug Ross has retired as Treasurer and his highly professional service to the

group will be sorely missed. Finally, COG has lost the services of our very active secretary Jack Holland. Jack tells us he is not retired but "resting" which augurs well for future committees! To all those retiring committee members and especially Ian, Doug and Jack go the sincere thanks of the whole group.

Finally I would like to welcome the new 1989 committee which is a capable and enthusiastic group who I am sure will serve COG professionally and with good humour. I look forward to another exciting year of growth, new challenges and good birding.

*Neil Hermes, February 1989*

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## **OUT AND ABOUT**

*G. Tibicen*

The new editors have dragged me (creaking and groaning owing to my lack of recent activity) back to the jaundiced pages of *Canberra Bird Notes* to collate and disseminate the more interesting and unusual aspects of ornithology to my reader. It was readers but I am sorry to say the other one died some time ago. Obviously my cryptic camouflage was not sufficiently good enough to continue hiding me from two aggressive and unfeeling editors.

May I take this opportunity to repeat a request made many years ago when Out and About started. For this column to survive and prosper it needs appropriate materials from a variety of sources. If you see or hear something you believe should be shared (whether apocryphal or not) please let me know via PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT, 2608. I can then share it with everybody - with or without attribution as you prefer.

The following statement was brought to my attention recently. It is reputed to have come from a document that fell off the back of a truck somewhere near the West Belconnen Landfill Area on 1 April 1989:

"In England they refer to an "unkindness" of ravens, an "exalting" of larks and a "chirm" of goldfinches. After two hundred years of white settlement it is desirable that Australia emanates its own meaningful collective nouns for birds. The MCNAB\* Working Group was originated to target this aim. After an indepth investigation it articulated the following proposals: a "striding" of emus, a "cacophony" of cockatoos, a

"mirth" of kookaburras, a "tintinnabulation" of bell miners, and a "carving" of butcherbirds."

\*MCNAB = Meaningful Collective Nouns for Australian Birds.

Is this document an idea left over from the Australian Bicentenary Authority? Or is it a further attempt to create an Australian identity? If you can think of other collective nouns for our birds please send them to me.

One of the major changes in the environment in the years since my last article has been the growing social acceptance of bird-watching as an "o.k." pastime. Once bird-watchers were identified by the two brown paper bags they carried - one containing their binoculars, the second for liquid supplies to ensure survival when their car got bogged or suffered serious damage on a sheep grid. These days they travel in air-conditioned four-wheel drive comfort and look like mobile hat stands for all the latest paraphernalia (bins, telos, tapeos, etc). Their numbers include ethno-musicologists, left-wing politicians, sociologists, and even journalists(!). How the moral standard has fallen. Still, the inclusion of all those intellectuals must have raised the IQ of the average bird-watcher.

Talking of journalists, perhaps the person who schedules "Bird of the Month" could arrange one on the Fan-tailed and Brush Cuckoos. This may ensure that our press retains its reputation for veracity.

If you want to get away from the above mentioned intellectuals, the following notice, which appeared in the December issue of the Australian Bird Study Association's newsletter, may be of interest to you:

#### THE RAOU AUSTRALO-PAPUAN MIGRATORY BIRD PROJECT

"This project is looking for volunteers to spend one or more, three month periods working in Torres Strait as part of a 5 year project to commence in early 1989. The focus for the project is Booby Island, a small, rocky, lighthouse island on the western side of the Torres Strait. Volunteers will be working with the lighthouse keepers in activities including bird banding, radar observations of high altitude migrants, and moon watching for migrant birds. Couples are preferred but all interested persons will be considered. All living expenses and transport to the island from Townsville will be covered by the project. In addition a small rent or mortgage subsidy is available if required. For further details write to: Andrew Taplin, 1/5 Cleveland Terrace, Townsville, Qld, 4810 or telephone reverse charge 077 72 7215."

And finally a quote to reflect on from Christoph Imboden (in "The Captive Breeding Controversy" I.C.B.P. World Birdwatch, Autumn 1987):

"The biblical Noah must surely have been the first practical conservationist. Confronted with a serious environmental threat posed by rising floodwaters, he gathered two of each animal species, kept them safe on his ark, and released them again to repopulate the world after the waters had receded. (By sending out the dove to look for land, he was in addition the first to use a bird as an environmental indicator.)"

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## REVIEW

SCANNING FOR OPTICS. Bonney, R.E. and Baringer, J. (1988). *Living Bird Quarterly* 7:18-21.

Twenty-seven binoculars from eight manufacturers (aus Jena, Bausch & Lomb, Brunton, Jason, Mirador, Nikon, Swift, and Zeiss) were tested for: optical performance; field of view; minimum focusing distance; water resistance; focusing; weight; comfort; and quality. The methods used for these tests are described.

Five models were given special mention. The most highly rated was the Zeiss Dialyt 7x42 B/GA T CF (price US\$1 030). The Nikon 9x30 DCF Execulite (US \$540) was considered to be a "beauty" at half the size, and half the price, of the Zeiss Dialyt. The best value for money was considered to be the Swift Audubon 8.5x44 BWCP (US \$318). The Bausch & Lomb Birder 7x35 (US \$66) was an excellent budget binocular. Finally, the Bausch & Lomb Custom Compact 7x26 (US \$294) was described as a mini-wonder - it out-performed several full-sized binoculars yet weighs just 320g and can be put in a pocket.

Many of the binoculars referred to in this paper are not readily available in Canberra and would be beyond the financial resources of most birdwatchers. Nevertheless, there may be members of COG who are in the market for a pair of quality binoculars and to whom money is not a major constraint. If you are one of these lucky people, then it would be worth your while to read this paper.

*D. Purchase*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INVASIVE WOODY WEEDS

*April 12 1989*

With our latest issues of *CBN* we received a copy of the COG pamphlet "Attracting birds to your garden". We were alarmed to see the inclusion of various invasive woody weeds under the heading of "Berry and nut bearing plants". All the species in this list (with the possible exception of *Malus* spp. and *Sambucus nigra*) are in the process of becoming, or already are, serious weeds. Their spread, which is facilitated by birds, threatens our native plant and animal communities.

*Pyracantha* spp. and *Cotoneaster* spp. have already invaded bushland around Canberra (for instance Mt Ainslie), while an extreme example of *Cratageus monogyna* invasion can be seen on the hillside north of the Apollo road turnoff near Naas. In the areas dominated by these woody plants, native vegetation often cannot persist, and the resulting monospecific exotic stands are poor habitat for most wildlife. *Pyracantha* spp., *Cotoneaster* spp., and *Cratageus* spp., all have the potential to become weeds as serious and damaging as *Rosa rubiginosa* (Briar Rose). To avoid permanent damage to our natural ecosystem, long-term effects on our bird populations, and expensive weed control programs, we suggest that you do not plant these exotic bushes in your garden.

Unfortunately there are few Australian natives that produce sufficient quantities of fruit to attract large numbers of fruit-eating birds. However, the fruit-eating birds of the Canberra area happily survived on the fruits and seeds of local native plants before we arrived. We believe that well chosen local native plants will attract as many species of bird to your garden as any exotic.

*Brendan Lepschi, 24 Fullwood Street, WESTON, ACT 2611*  
*Hugh Possingham, 19 Burdekin Street, DUFFY, ACT 2611*

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## OBITUARY

*Mr David E. Peters*

David Peters, who was killed tragically in a motor accident in Melbourne on 2 October 1988, will perhaps not have been known to, or remembered by, many members of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. However, he deserves our tribute because he played an enthusiastic and useful part in the late 1960's when the Canberra Branch of the RAOU (the fore-runner of COG) was

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*B*

*March 1989*

developing. Though I cannot find details, he came to the Australian National University to take a PhD in chemistry probably about 1966-67 and his enthusiasm, promptness and reliability soon attracted attention and he became a valued member of the Committee, perhaps until about 1970, when he went to Melbourne to work with CSIRO. He was particularly interested in distributional and atlassing matters. His help with such aspects of the Handbook of the Birds of Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica will be sadly missed.

*S. Marchant*

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### **RARITIES PANEL NEWS**

This list is a mixed one without any outstanding trends evident. Probably the major highlight was the Black-necked Stork *Xenorhyncus asiaticus*. Another interesting one was the Little Button-quail *Turnix velox* which is rarely recorded in our area, although it may be more common than generally realised.

For a couple of years now Common Koels *Eudynamis scolopacea* have turned up in the Canberra area over summer, and this year is no exception. Perhaps a breeding record will eventuate one day.

There have been very few Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia* records - the future of this species must be in some doubt. In this context it would be helpful if observers could submit records of this honeyeater from anywhere in Australia - the records will then be passed on to the task force working on the distribution of this species. Details of behaviour and habitat should be noted - the COG Bird Report Form is a good guide for the details required.

One of the less well-known and potentially rewarding local birding areas is the Gundaroo/Gunning/Yass triangle. Some "western" species creep into our area this way when the breeding conditions out west are good. For example, this list includes Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis*, Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis*, and Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis*. The coming winter and spring may produce even more such species in this area.

In other parts of Australia the Grey Butcherbird *C. torquatus* appears to co-exist with "civilisation". Around Canberra, however, it still stays away from the town and sticks to the bush area. It would be interesting to discover why. Has anybody any ideas why?

Endorsed List No 22 follows:



## RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST No 22

### Category 3

- Little Bittern  
1; 18 Dec 88; N. Luff; Acacia Inlet
- Black-necked Stork  
1; 10 Feb 89; C. Mahony; Murrumbateman area
- Black Kite  
1; 9 Jan 89; B. Lepschi; Murrumbateman area  
1; 3 Feb 89; B. Lepschi; Gungahlin
- Whistling Kite  
1; 14 Jan 89; P. Veerman; Uriarra East  
1; 4 Feb 89; G. Clark; Sturt Island area  
1; 23 Mar 89; B. Lepschi; Capricorn Homestead
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle  
1; 11 Nov 89; F. Watson; Old Kowen  
2 imm; 22 Jan 89; C. Dow; Uriarra Crossing
- Spotted Harrier  
1; 12 Mar 89; B. Lepschi; Ginninderra Park Homestead
- Brown Quail  
1; 30 Dec 88; J. Bissett; Kambah Pool Road  
3; 7 Jan 89; J. Bissett; Isabella Pond  
1; 8 Jan 89; J. Bissett; Castle Hill area
- Little Button Quail  
1; Oct 88; B. Martin; Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
- Pectoral Sandpiper  
2; 20 Nov 88; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
- Diamond Dove  
1; 8 Jan 89; C. & M. Dow; East of Cotter River (Gr 72)
- Rainbow Lorikeet  
2; 29 Jan 89; J. Bissett; Allen's Creek
- Cockatiel  
3; 4 Dec 88; J. Bissett; Red Rock Gorge area
- Black-eared Cuckoo  
1; 26 Feb 89; H. Possingham; O'Malley (Gr 53)
- Common Koel  
1; 28 Nov - 6 Dec 88; W. Martin; Red Hill  
1; 30 Dec 88; E. Tulip; Kangaroo Creek, Corin Dam  
1; 4-5 Jan 89; J. Clyde & F. Watchorn; Campbell
- Singing Bushlark  
6; 13 Nov 88; J. Holland; Lake Tuggeranong area  
1; 26 Feb 89; J. Holland; Lake Tuggeranong silt trap area
- White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike  
1; 28 Aug 88; D. Fletcher, Monaro Highway near  
Cunningham's Hill

Little Friarbird  
 1 juv; 28 Dec 88; B. Lepschi; Mulligan's Flat  
 Red-capped Robin  
 1 male; 16 Apr 89; G. Clark; Scullin  
 Regent Honeyeater  
 2 + 1 juv; 4-14 Jan 89; S. Edgar; Garran  
 2; 26 Feb 89; M. Clayton; Urimburra  
 Masked Woodswallow  
 2; Oct 88; B. Martin; Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve  
 Pied Butcherbird  
 1; 12 Mar 89; J. Bounds & B. Lepschi; Gundaroo Road by  
 Ginninderra Park

## **Category 2**

Great Crested Grebe  
 1+2 juv; 11 Mar 89; J. Langmore; Sullivan's Creek/Lake  
 Burley Griffin  
 Crested Pigeon  
 2; 20 Mar 88; T. Daukus; Holt  
 4; 20 Nov 88; M. Coley; Mt Jerrabomberra  
 Hooded Robin  
 2; 15-23 Oct 88; M. Coley; Mt Jerrabomberra  
 Grey Butcherbird  
 1; 1 Apr 89; B. Baker, Farrer Ridge

## **Possible Escapees**

Spotted Turtle-Dove  
 1; 26 Oct 88; G. Elliott; Holt  
 Peaceful Dove  
 1; 7 Apr 89; M. Clayton; Gungahlin

## **Escapees**

Little Corella  
 1; 26 Oct 88; G. Elliott; Holt  
 Budgerigar (blue)  
 1; end Dec 87; M. Moncur, Melba  
 Cockatiel  
 1; Jan 89; P. Veerman; Kambah  
 1; 12 Mar 89; B. Lepschi; Weston  
 Lovebird sp  
 1; 4 Mar 89; B. Lepschi; Weston  
 Chestnut-breasted Mannikin  
 1; 19 Dec 88; J. Holland; Lake Tuggeranong

## **FOR SALE**

The following are available from Canberra Ornithologists Group, PO Box 301, CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608:

### **A POCKET LIST OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS**

This booklet lists the names of all bird species recorded in Australia. Alongside the names are ten columns that can be used to tally the species seen in different localities or on different days. It greatly simplifies the recording of field lists.

Price 50c

### **A FIELD LIST OF THE BIRDS OF CANBERRA AND DISTRICT**

This booklet lists the bird species found in the Canberra region with indications of the frequency of occurrence, time of breeding, preferred habitat, localities where they may be found, and nest details. It is designed to provide supplementary local detail to larger publications which need to be consulted for identification.

Price \$3

### **BIRD SONGS OF CANBERRA**

This cassette contains the songs and calls of 73 birds that are commonly heard in Canberra gardens and parks. The majority have been recorded in Canberra or the surrounding area. Seasonal variation in songs have been included where appropriate.

Price \$10

### **ACT BIRDWATCHERS HOTLINE**

An up-to-date five minute recorded message with news on rarities, meetings, outings, and bargains for birdwatchers in Canberra. Twenty-four hour service up-dated every Thursday.

Telephone 47 5530

*Canberra Bird Notes* is published quarterly by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Contributions are welcome. These should fit into one of the following categories: major articles (up to about 3000 words); short notes and "Odd Obs" (up to about 300 words); reviews of books and articles up to about 500 words; and where to watch birds (up to about 800 words). The articles and notes should cover matters of the distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in the Canberra region (i.e. New South Wales coast north to Jervis Bay, and west to the Riverina). Contributions can be sent to the editors c/o David Purchase, 5 Orchard Place, Melba, ACT 2615 (Tel 582252).

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