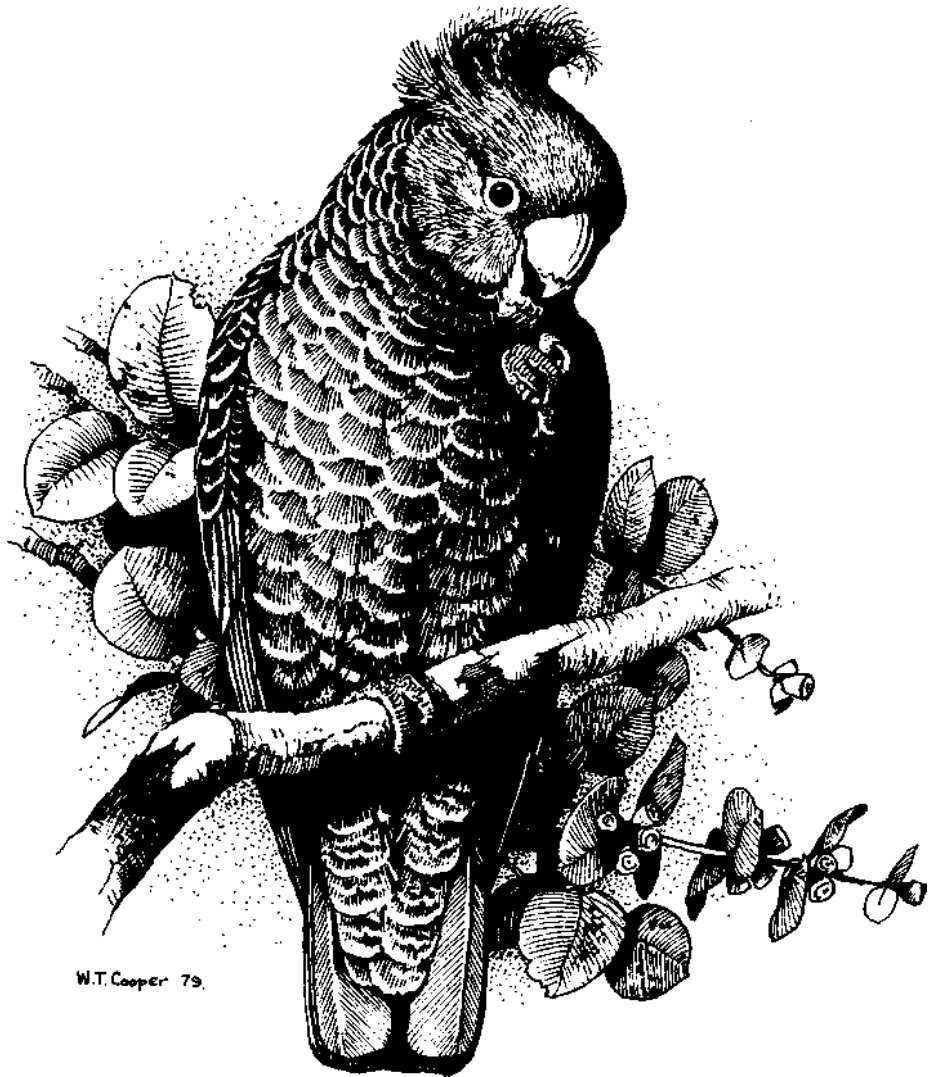


CANBERRA BIRD NOTES

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Annual Subscriptions for 1992 are: Student (18 years of age and younger) \$8.50; Individual \$17.00; Family \$20.00; Institutions \$20.00. All receive one copy of *Canberra Bird Notes*.

HELP WANTED

From time to time we need people to assist with the entering of records from, our various projects into the COG Database. If you have a personal computer that runs on a DOS operating system and would like to assist please contact Malcolm Fyfe Ph. 254 3310. We will provide the necessary input program and data sheets.

Many thanks.
Projects Subcommittee

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LOCAL BREEDING AND "NEST OWNERSHIP" OF GALAHS

Steve Wilson

An ancient and large specimen of Blakely's Red Gum *Eucalyptus blakelyi* stands on the property next to ours in suburban Kambah. The tree is so large that from our back door all of its head is visible over the roof of the next house. At the base, the diameter of its trunk exceeds 1 m. Twice in the early years after we moved here in May 1981 the tree was heavily lopped because of the danger to the house from overhanging branches. I saw the branches that were removed and they were all very rotten in the centre with a layer of sound wood not more than 10 cm thick below the bark. Regrowth commenced quickly and now the tree has a vigorous growing crown with long vertical branches.

The hollows in all the large main branches and the dense regrowth provides excellent breeding sites for Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. but I have watched one particular hollow which has been successfully used by a pair of Galahs *Cacatua roseicapilla* for the last seven breeding seasons.

We who are interested in ornithology quickly learn that a nesting site is not in any sense a home even though some species may re-use sites over many years. The strange thing about this nest hollow is that the "owners" visit the site most days of the year. The other species mentioned have been seen to enter the nest occasionally and one wonders whether the constant visits throughout the year are a means of deterring occupation by those introduced species.

The birds are not marked or banded. I have identified the pair by their behaviour. e.g. attendance at the nest hole or the area within about 1 m from it - or by their resting on nearby powerlines in particular places from which they fly back and forth to the nest.

This was not originally a planned study, but in 1985 I became aware of a pair of Galahs clearing all growing twigs from the lower part of the canopy facing our home. Some twigs were taken to a hollow but lots of others were dropped when they were chewed off. In October 1985 I became aware that young Galahs were being fed in the nest hollow. On 17 November 1985, a fledgling was seen to fly from the nest at 7.20 p.m. From then on, in my daily listing of birds, brief notes were made as to whether the adults were at the nest and other interesting behaviour.

I have had no access to the nest hollow; my interest lay in the constant attendance of the pair at the nest. I can see the hollow clearly from a distance of 20-30 m and it is approx 10 m above the ground. opening at about 15° to the vertical, facing south on a main branch which, at this point, is estimated to be .75 m in diameter. Once the flyway to the Galah's hollow was cleared there was little regrowth on that part of the tree and that was easily cleared away by the birds; regrowth was concentrated above the hollow.

Over the years birds were seen to fledge from the nest as follows:

17 November 1985	- 1 bird
23 November 1986	- 1 bird
7 November 1987	- 2 birds
14 November 1988	- 1 bird
20 November 1989	- 1 bird
21 November 1989	- 1 bird
24 November 1989	- 1 bird
20 January 1991	- 1 bird
23 November 1991	- 2 birds

As my observations could not be continuous it is likely that others fledged from this nest.

The January 1991 fledging was unusual. My notes show that I thought young were being fed in late October 1990 but obviously something happened and a new clutch was laid.

The nesting period of Galahs is a long one. Rowley (1990) dealt with the biology of the western race in wonderful detail and working from his data one can assess the average times of the breeding cycle as follows:

Lining of the nest	35 days
Laying of the clutch	10 days
Hatching	24 days
Period of fledging	49 days
Dependency after fledging	<u>4.5 days</u>

Total nesting and dependency periods 163 days

As can be seen from the above, the average period for laying, hatching and fledging, as calculated by Rowley, is 83 days. In 1990-91 the period between my last note of possible feeding of young in the hollow in late October and fledging on 20 January was 92 days so it is unlikely that the first nesting attempt was successful and that the fledging on 20 January 1991 was the result of a new clutch. Rowley reports that the western race of the Galah raises a single brood annually but that re-laying may occur under various circumstances.

Again working from Rowley's data, with a commencement date of 1 July for the lining of the nest, the parents would end the feeding period of the young on about 10 December so a second successful clutch would not be possible.

From these limited data it would seem that our local birds of the eastern race of the Galah also raise a single brood.

My wife and I are often away from Canberra during the cooler period of the year which coincides with the early part of the breeding cycle; we are seldom away during the warmer weather. One would expect the birds to be at the nest hollow daily during the long breeding cycle but my experience is that the nest site is also visited by both birds on the majority of days outside of the breeding season. Visits are often of several hours duration.

In 1991, the nest site was checked by spotlight about 10 p.m. during the breeding season and after. One bird roosted on the rim of the hollow every night during the period after hatching until the date of the fledging. This behaviour was not reported by Rowley.

On the night of the November 1991 fledging, both parent birds roosted in the tree about 1 m above the hollow but did not roost in the tree after that. In Rowley's experience the parents spent much of the day with the juveniles and returned to the nest tree to roost.

It is not known whether the same pair was involved over these seven years of successful breeding. On the basis of behaviour I suspect that there was one change of partner as in the first three years one bird would sit on the nearby power lines 1 m from the post while the other was in the nest but later the nesting bird would not be in a constant position but could be in the tree or be anywhere on power or telephone lines.

Many other aspects of behaviour reported by Rowley have been observed including aerobatics which he hesitates to call "play" as it does not explain the behaviour. Obviously the birds enjoy such incidents. In one recent case the birds were indulging in aerobatics on the power line immediately beside the hole. One bird was hanging upside down when the other moved to a position immediately above it, preventing it swinging up. There was an amiable pecking at one another for about 30 s until the lower bird swung up, dislodging the upper one and both moved to a position 2 m away to rest.

Another aspect not seen here but reported by Rowley is the scarring of the nest tree by the breeding pair. Certainly the nest tree here is a much larger and older specimen than shown in Rowley's photographs and this could be a reason for the absence of this behaviour.

One aspect reported by Rowley and observed with all the fledglings is the small amount of exercising of the wings before the first flight. In all cases the young took off after encouragement by the parents and in flight one could not distinguish which was the young. The young did not return to the nest.

The young have been observed to take food from the parents for about a week at the nest opening with the upper half of the bird being in view. In all cases here, except one, that was the only view of the world the fledgling had before launching forth. The exception was on 22 November 1991 when one young bird climbed from the hole to a point about 1 m above it. At that point it faced into a dense re-growth tangle and

despite constant excited action from the parents for about 4 hours it stayed there while another was visible at the entrance. It spent that night in the nest and both flew next day.

Forshaw (1981) analysed 150 cards from the RAOU Nest Record Scheme and gave 20 December as being the latest date for chicks in New South Wales and 12 January as the latest date for chicks in South Australia. By comparison the fledging date of 20 January 1991 which I observed, is rather late.

To me it has been a most interesting exercise to follow the behaviour of these Galahs and to note their continued breeding success over seven years, especially since the tree is infested by aggressive introduced species of birds.

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S J. Wilson, 56 Harrington Circuit, KAMBAH ACT 2902

COG RESEARCH GRANTS

In order to encourage the study of birds, the Canberra Ornithologists Group has made available a sum of money to provide small research grants to people undertaking studies relating to the birds of Canberra and district.

These grants are administered by the Projects Subcommittee and preference is given to COG members seeking grants of up to \$100 for studies relating to the birds of Canberra and district.

Application forms can be obtained by writing to:

The Secretary,
Projects Subcommittee,
COG,
P.O. Box 301,
Civic Square, Canberra, A.C.T. 2608.

POSSIBLE SIGHTING OF A LOGRUNNER IN THE COG AREA OF CONCERN

Noel Luff

In November 1986 I sighted what I now believe to be a Logrunner *Orthonyx temminckii* in the Marble Arch area of the upper Shoalhaven valley east of Captains Flat, NSW. Following the recent extension of the COG Area of Concern, the location of this possible sighting now comes within the area (in grid Y24).

I have submitted this as a possible sighting because of the long time (five years) that has elapsed since the event, and because of the considerable range extension that would result for the species. This has been discussed with the Rarities Panel who have agreed that publishing it as a possible sighting will alert other bird watchers to the likelihood of seeing the species in the area. This may then result in a confirmed sighting.

On 15 November 1986 I was bushwalking in the area of Marble Arch and camped the night on Reedy Creek (reference 434446 on the Araluen 1:100000 map).

About 4 p.m. whilst bird watching in wet sclerophyl forest with (as far as I can remember) about 80% canopy cover, I sighted a bird with which I was unfamiliar. It was standing on top of a decaying log with its tail "stretched" down touching the log. It could have been using the tail to support itself as it scratched the surface of the log. I observed it for possibly one minute with binoculars at a range of 10 m before it became aware of me and scurried into the undergrowth.

From memory the bird was chunky in build and slightly smaller than a Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica* giving the impression of a round bird. It appeared overall rusty orange and the feet looked a bit big for the size of the bird. It had a white throat.

At the time of the observation I had a lot of trouble identifying the bird. The only field guide I had (Pizzey 1980) contained an illustration which, to me, did not look much like the bird I saw. However, since then I have seen other illustrations and have now reached the conclusion that the bird I saw was probably a male Logrunner.

The significant aspect of this sighting, if it can be confirmed, is that it extends the previously known range of the Logrunner (a bird that is regarded as sedentary (Pizzey, 1980)) by over 100 km to the south.

North (1901) gave the range as occurring "where similar favourable vegetation flourishes at Port Hacking, Bulli, Wollongong, Kiama and as far south as the Shoalhaven River, where, in the latter neighbourhood, Mr J.A. Thorpe procured several specimens". In this context North obviously meant the area of the mouth of the Shoalhaven River rather than the upper Shoalhaven. By 1981 the known range had not been extended further. Morris (1981) gives the range as "south to Cambewarra

Range...; west to ... Robertson". this is just north of the Shoalhaven River mouth. Similarly Blakers et al. (1984) gives nothing further south than breeding records in the one degree square 34° S. x 150° E. which is the square that contains the mouth of the Shoalhaven. Both Pizzey (1980) and Slater (1986) give the range as being south as far as the Illawarra area.

If this sighting can be confirmed it will mean a considerable extension of range for the species. It is possible that there could be Logrunners between the mouth of the Shoalhaven and this area as the terrain involved is on the eastern escarpment and relatively inaccessible. It also contains suitable habitat or, as North (1901) put it "similar favourable vegetation".

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Noel Luff, 20 Bunny Street, WESTON ACT 2611

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GARDEN BIRD SURVEY CHART

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1991

Dear Members,

It has been a great honour for me to again serve COG as President in 1991. Having retired from full-time work in December 1990, it has been most stimulating to find so many of my days now filled with COG activities.

1991 was indeed a busy year, and one in which COG made good progress on a number of fronts. However, let me start with the bad news! Regrettably, we did not complete the ACT Bird Atlas in 1991. Heavy work commitments on the part of some members of the Atlas Editorial Sub-committee have delayed the vetting of the text. I'm pleased to say that at the time of writing this report we had almost completed the review of the second draft and I hope that from now on it will be plain sailing. COG has been most fortunate in having financial support for the Atlas Project from the National Capital Planning Authority and ACT Parks and Conservation Service, as well as sponsorship from its own members and the 1990 ACT Heritage Grant. Cumulatively these sums will cover most of the costs of preparation and printing. The document will be published in 1992, it will look attractive, and the text will be accurate, interesting and informative. It will be a document of which COG and co-author and consultant, McComas Taylor, will be justly proud.

As a sequel to the Atlas, COG has embarked on a Database Project which will ultimately store and process current and historical records for all of COG's bird surveys. COG has engaged the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology as a consultant, to develop and manage the Database and to purchase a new computer and software. This work, which is being done by Ian Baird, is due for completion in September 1992.

Other projects undertaken in 1991 include Bird of the Year, in which Bill Graham managed a detailed study of the Hooded Robin, and the commencement of work on the updating of the local field list. I would like to thank Bill and the many COG members who worked on the Hooded Robin study, which will make significant contribution to the understanding and hopefully the conservation of this beautiful but uncommon species. Chris Davey completed and reported to COG on a city-wide study he undertook on the spread of the Common Myna in Canberra.

The Projects Subcommittee is under the highly competent stewardship of Malcolm Fyfe. Malcolm also organised a number of outings and has now taken on the task of COG Records Officer. The hard work and careful attention to quality in all of Malcolm's work deserves special recognition from COG. A more detailed report of the Projects Subcommittee has been submitted to the Committee.

Conservation issues and appraisal of Government policies and plans, are becoming increasingly important roles for the Committee. These issues were handled by the Conservation Subcommittee and the Executive. Issues dealt with included:

- opposition to the trail-bike track in native woodland at Mt Stromlo (to be relocated in 1992)
- a detailed submission to the House of Representatives Committee on Biological Diversity
- appraisal of the latest plan for Jerrabomberra Wetlands
- the potential impact of a proposed (but now shelved) international motor racing complex on the Molonglo Gorge Reserve
- a proposal (now withdrawn) to stage a major rock concert immediately adjacent to Ingalba Nature Reserve (just west of Temora)
- comment on the impact of grazing practices in the ACT
- preservation of rural roadside vegetation (paper prepared for local councils by Michael Rowe)

COG is also working closely with several other groups on a major submission aimed at protecting a splendid piece of bird habitat at Mulligans Flat which is threatened by urban development in Gungahlin.

With the gazettal of the additional portions of Namadgi National Park in 1991. 52% of the area of the ACT is now protected in nature reserves. As a result. the conservation of alpine and mountain habitats and the birds they support is quite satisfactory. Unfortunately, the conservation status of lowland eucalypt forest, open woodland, and native grassland remains poor throughout the whole region. This is a matter of concern to COG, and the focus of many of our submissions to government bodies.

I would like to thank members of the Conservation Subcommittee. and especially Jo Vandermark who, I regret, is stepping down from the conservation role this year. Jo's Conservation Sub-committee report has been submitted to the Committee.

COG works closely with other groups in pursuing its goals. We have a close association with the Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra, and have three representatives on the Council. The Council is continually, and often critically, short of funds and COG Committee agreed to a range of measures aimed at helping to keep the Council viable.

Chris Davey and I represented COG at a weekend seminar in Newcastle sponsored by the newly-formed NSW group of the RAOU. The main item on the agenda was the preliminary planning of a state-wide survey of waterbirds, for which the RAOU is seeking corporate sponsorship.

COG has continued to attract interesting speakers for its monthly meetings, and it is most pleasing to record attendances regularly in the 100 to 150 range. In addition to her onerous task of editing and producing the monthly *Gang-gang*, Barbara Allan also took on the often frustrating job of arranging speakers, not to mention her role as tea attendant at monthly meetings. Barbara's sheer efficiency, her wise counsel and capacity to produce the goods has for too long been one of COG's best kept secrets!

David Purchase and Grahame Clark continued their good work on *Canberra Bird Notes* which is now up to date.

The ACT Birdwatchers Hotline, set up and operated for several years by McComas Taylor, is now run by Richard Thomas. The Hotline has continued to attract good support from COG members and the general community. Given its success in Canberra, the concept is likely to spread to other cities.

COG continued its past practice of being represented at stalls at environment and community fairs.

The current committee structure of COG has been an item of some concern. With 18 people on the committee, communications and organisation of programmes and activities has been more cumbersome than it needs to be. Following the excellent models of the way projects and conservation issues are handled in COG, the retiring Committee (at a recent meeting) decided to recommend to its successor, the setting up of a new structure with fewer committee positions, but with several non-committee working groups and individuals who will organise the range of activities now handled to a large extent within the committee. COG will have a plenary meeting of all representatives once or twice annually, to tie up any loose ends. I hope that this reorganisation will make the group more effective in 1992. However, ultimately we have to depend on the voluntary efforts of few motivated helpers. With a few exceptions these people have busy careers which limit the time they can give to COG. Naturally, this results in delays such as we had with editing the Atlas in 1991.

Well, I have come almost full circle. It remains only for me to thank those other members of the Committee who have not been mentioned above: Our able Vice-President, Jenny Bounds, Noel Luff who once again has performed splendidly as Treasurer, Sue x 2 (Armstrong and Webb) who we will miss in the Secretarial positions, Barbara de Bruine, Graham Browning, Tony Lawson, Richard Schodde, Joan Price, Ann McKenzie, Michael Lenz, Cedric Bear, Bryan FitzGerald and the Rarities Panel. I am pleased that many of these people have agreed to offer their services to COG again in 1992.

Bruce D. Lindenmayer, 11 March 1992

OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

In the last issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* I asked when the authorities were going to ban the use of lead shot for shooting waterfowl. It has been brought to my attention that the use of lead shot by hunters has in fact been banned at Bool Lagoon in South Australia since 1987. This ban followed a major lead poisoning episode in 1986 when at least 80 Magpie Geese died as a result of swallowing lead pellets from the bottom of the lagoon while feeding.

It is good to see that at least some authorities are aware of the problem and are doing something positive about it. If the shooting lobbies are so interested in conserving wild life as they say they are, they should also be taking a stand on this issue - perhaps by asking their members not to use lead shot or by lobbying the manufacturers to stop its production. Do any of my readers know if the shooting lobbies have made a stand on this issue?

A book titled "Bird Population Studies - Relevance to Conservation and Management" was published in 1991 by Oxford University Press, Oxford. It is edited by C. Perrin (*Director, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, University of Oxford*), J. - D. Lebreton (*Directeur de Recherche, Centre d' Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive, CNRS, Montpellier*), and G.J.M. Hirons (*Ecologist, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*). One of the chapters is written by Ian Rowley and Eleanor Russell and discusses the demography of passerines in the temperate southern hemisphere. It is an interesting article that highlights the differences in breeding strategies between southern and northern hemisphere passerines.

The article points out that longer life, lower reproductive rate and delayed sexual maturity appear to be characteristics of temperate southern hemisphere passerines, unlike northern hemisphere birds which have a shorter life and higher reproductive rates.

This has very important implications for the management strategies applied to passerine populations. Management strategies developed in the northern hemisphere will not be applicable in the southern hemisphere.

The importance of this as far as fire regime management is concerned cannot be over-emphasised. Burn-offs need to be patchy so that adequate cover for nesting remains and that minimum interference with nesting is achieved. Available evidence suggests that while adults and even independent juveniles can survive an intense fire, its effects on the population may only become obvious several years afterwards.

Any manager devising burn-off strategies for large areas would be advised to read the book.

In a recent "Out and About" I mentioned the value of Travelling Stock Reserves for flora and fauna preservation. Other areas that can be useful for preservation are old churchyards and cemeteries. These are often shielded by old trees and are not always immaculately mown. Such areas can provide an oasis in the middle of the surrounding cleared properties. If you are a genealogist visiting country churchyards and cemeteries, don't forget to observe the birds as well as the gravestones.

During the period data were being collected for the RAOU's Atlas of Australian Birds, a member of COG was married in one of the local country churches. The church had been disused for many years and was rehabilitated specially for the wedding. It was also a very small church and could not accommodate all the congregation. Two other members of COG, who shall be nameless, arrived too late to be accommodated in the church and had to join the overflow congregation outside of the church. This didn't unduly worry them as they spent the period of the service undertaking a survey of the birds in and around the churchyard. On one occasion, the sanctimony of the occasion was interrupted by an excited cry which came from just outside a window near the altar "Quick, bee-eaters!"

While on the subject of atlassing, it is good to see that the area covered by the COG database project, which has replaced the Atlas of the ACT, has been increased to cover our local region and not being restricted to an artificial political boundary. This way COG can help in conservation by harnessing the efforts of bird watchers to identify the avifauna of our local area. This will help in the long-term management of our environment. If you have not yet filled out a COG Data Sheet, please do so. It is one way even the beginner can help to increase our knowledge. Further details from Malcolm Fyfe, or other members of the Project Subcommittee at meetings, or write to Malcolm c/o PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

The Canberra Ornithologists Group has produced a very useful cassette tape entitled "Bird Songs of Canberra" that contains recordings of the more common birds in our district. It has deservedly been an excellent sales item as these days more and more people are listening for birds as well as watching them. In talking to beginners who are trying to learn the calls of birds, I feel that there is need for another tape that puts similar calls together and highlights the differences. For instance the calls of the White-cheeked Honeyeater and Yellow Robin, the Eastern Spinebill and treecreepers, the Spotted Pardalote and similar call of the Crimson Rosella, and the Olive-backed Oriole and Grey Butcherbird. There are numerous other examples that can be mentioned. In other words a true field guide to bird song is needed. Perhaps the COG committee could initiate the development of such a tape.

REVIEW

A Garden of Birds: Attracting Birds to Australian Gardens by Graham Pizzey (1991). Published by Collins Angus and Robertson: Sydney. Pp 304. \$29.95.

This book was originally published in 1988 by Viking O'Neil under the title "A Garden of Birds: Australian Birds in Australian Gardens". As well as the change in publishers and title, there have been a number of other changes, the most obvious being:

- i) the replacement of chapter 17 "Bird Gardens of Coastal South-eastern Australia" and chapter 18 "The Escape of Garden Exotics" with a new chapter titled "Creating a Garden in the Bush";
- ii) the replacement of two appendices, "Common and Botanical Names - Native Plants" and "Common and Botanical Names - Exotic Plants" with a new appendix titled "Native Plants Attractive to Birds"; and
- iii) the exclusion of the drawings by Richard Weatherly used on the title page and chapter headings.

Other than for these and a few smaller changes, it is basically a reprint of the book published in 1988. Indeed, except for the absence of Richard Weatherly's drawings, pages 4 through to 244, including the photographs, appear to be unchanged.

The book is divided into 17 chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the basic principles behind the planning and construction of a bird-garden, including means of attracting birds by the provision of food such as nectar and "bird pudding". Chapters 2 to 6 trace the history of gardening in Australia from its roots in neolithic Britain. They also describe how the evolution of Australia from the time it separated from Gondwana provided the environment that it has today. Chapters 8 and 9 cover the vexing subject of acclimatisation societies that were formed in the 19th century and provide brief accounts of 14 exotic bird species that are now firmly established in Australia. Chapter 10 describes the physiology of plants from the root system upwards and the importance of providing the right conditions in which plants can grow. Chapter 11 looks at a few of the insects that exploit native trees, some of which in turn become food for birds. Chapters 12 to 15 discuss birds and the relationship that they have with plants and how this relationship can point the way in the planning and development of native gardens. Chapter 16 provides the reader with a tour of the author's garden at Mt Martha on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, and some of its inhabitants. Some years ago this home and garden were sold and the Pizzeyes went in quest of a block of land on which they could develop a large native garden that was surrounded by natural habitat. Chapter 17 describes this search and its successful outcome, the preliminary work already undertaken on the 40 ha block, and the plans they have for the future.

In addition to the 17 chapters there are six appendices. These are titled: "Notes and References"; "Further Reading"; "Societies for Birdwatchers"; "Native Plant Societies"; "Common and Zoological Names - Birds"; and "Native Plants Attractive to Birds". There is an adequate index.

Reading this book not only gave me pleasure, but also increased my knowledge. However, I cannot recommend it to people who simply want to know what plants are suitable to grow in their gardens to attract Australian birds. In the appendix "Native Plants Attractive to Birds" lists of plants are provided for ten cities, but they are not extensive and the author recommends that the choice should be guided by the advice of local growers. No information is provided on the cultivation of these plants, the size to which they grow, or the use made of them by birds. The 40 plants listed for Canberra is largely predictable but contains some surprises including the New South Wales Waratah *Telopea speciosissima* which is extremely difficult to grow in Canberra.

The strength of this book lies in the information it contains on the natural history of gardens that utilise Australian plants. An understanding of this natural history is a great aid to the development of gardens designed to attract Australian birds. The appendices "Notes and References" and "Further Reading" are a particularly valuable resource for anyone wishing to pursue the subject in more detail. Although it does not provide answers to those people who simply want detailed information on particular plants, it is a book that can be read with enjoyment and profit by anyone wishing to gain a better understanding of the natural history of native gardens and how to make them more attractive to Australian birds. It can also be read with profit by people who are planning a garden designed to attract birds.

My biggest disappointment in the book is the continued use of bird names which are now long out-of-date and rarely used in ornithological publications. The continued use of these names does a disservice to ornithology as it can only lead to confusion amongst neophyte bird watchers.

David Purchase

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CASUAL OBSERVATIONS - FRASER ISLAND

16 December 1991

During the first week of October my family and I spent a week on Fraser Island. Whilst on the island I was able to observe a number of different birds in the bush and on the beach. My parents were particularly entranced by pairs of Rainbow Bee-eaters *Merops ornatus* and were amazed to find that they nested in the ground. We observed four different pairs working the banksia. The banksia were shared with a number of White-cheeked Honeyeaters *Phylidonyris nigra*.

There were a number of raptors patrolling the ocean beach in what appeared to be pairs. My favourite was the Brahminy Kite *Haliastur Indus* which I think suits its other name of Red-backed Sea Eagle far better. There appeared to be five or six of these birds on a twenty kilometre stretch of beach. I had some difficulty identifying the other raptors but I believe they were mostly Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*.

I was surprised to find a number of Masked Lapwings *Vanellus miles* scattered up and down the beach but later realised their home was in the fresh water marshes behind the foredunes. Also on the beach were flocks of Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* which would take a pilchard on the wing if one was thrown near them. There were many pairs of Pied Oystercatchers *Haematopus longirostris* observed probing for molluscs in the damp sand. We also observed a pair of White-breasted Woodswallows *Artamus leucorhynchus* with a nest, surprisingly, in a lonely dead stick (tree) in the middle of a big sand blow only one and a half metres off the ground.

A number of times whilst driving through the forests we glimpsed the Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* with its beautiful green wings.

As I am only new at ornithology I really enjoyed knowing or finding out the different types of birds on the island and was able to get our friends interested in bird watching.

Another reward whilst out with the binoculars was a glimpse of a pair of whales as they passed by the island.

Cathy Loudon

(We would be delighted to receive letters from any of our younger members who may care to share their bird watching experiences with us. eds)

RARITIES PANEL NEWS

The most interesting sighting is the Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis* seen in a suburban garden at Page. Normally these birds only appear in the most eastern part of the COG Area of Concern. Very rarely a bird turns up in Canberra for a day or two, presumably on migration.

During summer the east end of Lake Burley Griffin and the nearby Fyshwick sewage ponds are good places to go bird watching. In this list there are records of Freckled Ducks *Stictonetta naevosa*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, and a Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida*.

The observation of a Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* from Taemas Bridge on the Burrinjuck Reservoir probably indicates a previously unknown territory of this species.

Records of Little Corellas *Cacatua sanguinea* at Holt show there is at least one group surviving throughout the year in Canberra and possibly breeding. These birds regularly eat from feeders in gardens and it is interesting to speculate how much this feeding helps the birds to survive. When will the first breeding record be reported in Canberra?

RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST No 32

Category 3

Buff-banded Rail

1; 8 Dec 88; M. Clayton; CSIRO Gungahlin

Glossy Ibis

1; 8 Dec 91; I. McMahon; Kelly's Swamp

Freckled Duck

2; 6 Jan 92; J. Nicholls; Fyshwick Sewage Ponds
5; 26 Jan 92; I. McMahon; Kelly's Swamp

Blue-billed Duck

1; 8 Dec 91; B. Lepschi; Roses Lagoon

Whistling Kite

.1; 27 Feb 92; B. Lepschi; Taemas Bridge, Burrinjuck Reservoir

Black-faced Monarch
1; 3 Dec 91; B. Allan; Page

Red-capped Robin
2; 30 Dec 91; B. Lepschi; Near Gunning

Masked Woodswallow
1; 3 Dec 91; M. Fyfe; Castle Hill
6; 16 Jan 92; B. Allan; Lake Ginninderra Peninsula

Possible Escapees

Little Corella
1 to 7; Aug 90 to Jun 91; G. & R. Elliott; Holt
1; 8 Dec 91; M. Fyfe; Weetangera
2; 2 Feb 92; C Davey; Holt

Long-billed Corella
13; 7 Dec 91; G. & R. Elliott; Holt

Escapees

Peaceful Dove
1; 31 Jan 92; B. Lindenmayer, Fyshwick Sewage Ponds

Zebra Finch
1; 22 Dec 91; M. Fyfe; Weetangera

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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 Australian Capital Territory and surrounding area (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 258 2252).

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