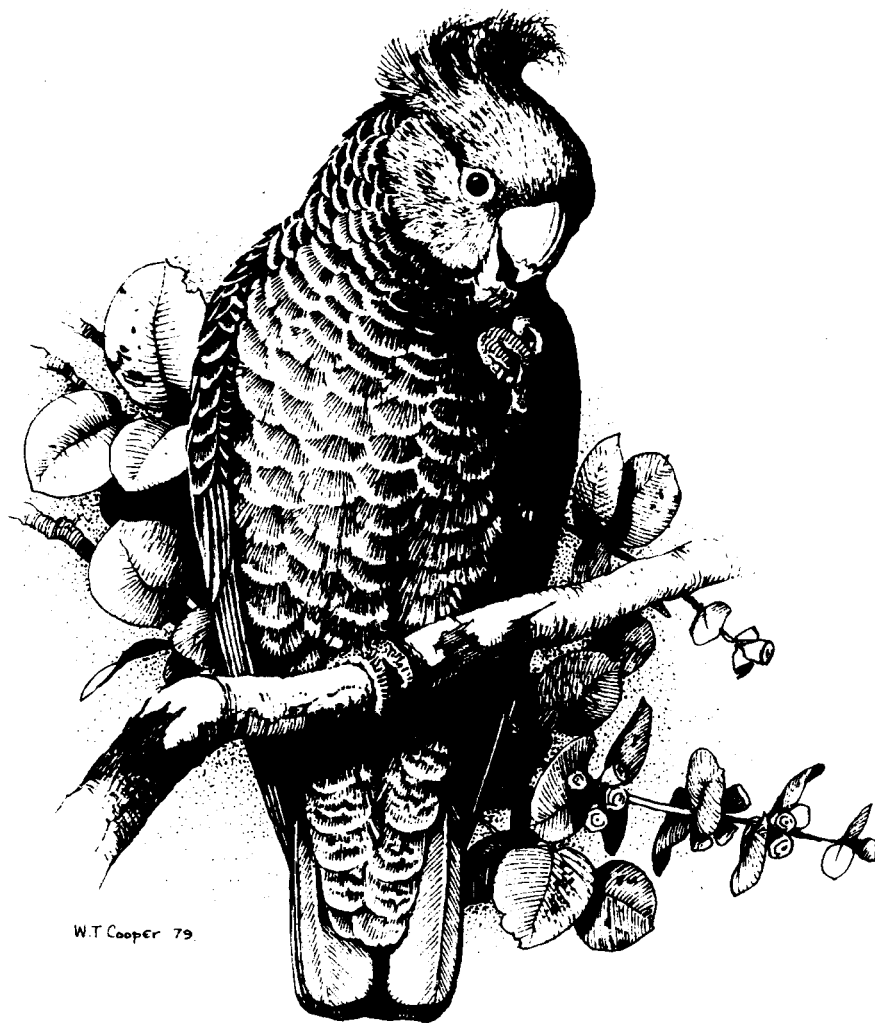


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**POST-FIRE BIRD ACTIVITY IN THE NORTH-WEST PART OF CHAPMAN
DURING 2004-05, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO BREEDING**

Jack Holland

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The fires of 18 January 2003 burnt and seriously damaged much of the country to the immediate west and south-west of Canberra, including the Narrabundah Hill pine plantation and most of Cooleman Ridge along the south-west edge of Chapman. It also burnt our house of 27 years, and completely destroyed our garden, which had been designed and developed to attract birds, and had been a Garden Bird Survey (GBS) site continuously since the inception of this scheme in July 1981.

The following account is of the bird life in this area in the first year of our return. Unfortunately this did not occur until nearly 18 months after the fires, and for a variety of reasons I was not able to keep records in this intervening period, so the opportunity to detail the bird life in the potentially very interesting and valuable period immediately after the fires was missed.

We moved back to our rebuilt home in Chapman on 1 July 2004, just in time to commence the 2004-05 GBS chart. The amount of bird activity observed since then has been surprisingly impressive, particularly the extent of nesting in areas that were affected by the fires. Below is a short summary of this activity, followed by an annotated list in taxonomic order of the most important observations. By necessity this has had to be somewhat selective, and for those species not included the presence or

activity did not vary significantly from that before the fires.

The first few days after our return confirmed impressions gained from shorter visits during the rebuilding phase that bird activity around our block was still surprisingly high, and at least equivalent to the two places in the Inner South (Griffith and Yarralumla) where we had lived since January 2003. One reason may have been that we were still very much on the edge of suburbia and our former GBS site was not totally destroyed, with about 40% estimated to have been left intact. Birds were also very much easier to see as many of the previous trees, shrubs and fences were gone. Possibly due to the fewer trees, birds roosting or going to roost were also much more obvious throughout the year. A sheltered Chinese elm in my neighbour's garden was particularly favoured by Eastern Rosellas *Platycercus eximius*, Magpie-larks *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* and Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes*, though this was by no means the only spot. Many species also still seemed to have retained their daily pattern of movement in and out of the suburbs during the mornings and evenings, despite the generally devastated landscape to the west.

Despite my initial impression, I never recorded more than 30 species in a week in my GBS site compared with up to 40

(or sometimes over) recorded pre-fires, where the Dusky Woodswallows were with the most obvious missing element clearly breeding. being the numbers of smaller birds (thornbills, whistlers, honeyeaters etc) which were either not present or were so in much reduced numbers.

During August bird activity in my resumed GBS site dropped noticeably. There were a number of reasons for this, one of the main ones being that a neighbour moved and was no longer feeding birds in his backyard, hence the numbers of Crested Pigeons, Galahs *Cacatua roseicapilla* and Common Myna dropped significantly. Also the parents of the Red Wattlebird chick *Anthochaera carunculata* were very aggressive towards smaller species, and invariably chased them away.

Flame Robins *Petroica phoenicea*, well known early colonisers after fires, which had been present in larger numbers than ever seen previously, also left for the higher country and I was resigned to a much quieter bird life after the initial burst of activity. However, this all changed in early October when I discovered Dusky Woodswallows *Artamus cyanopterus* for the first time in the horse paddocks at the foot of the slopes at the extreme western end of Cooleman Ridge. This was soon followed by significant numbers of White-winged Trillers *Lalage sueurii*, which had been very infrequent since the severe drought of 1982-1983, and, by the end of the month, Rufous Songlarks *Cincloramphus mathewsi* which had also been only very rarely recorded over the past 20 years. Over the next three months most of the activity was centred in this area, in a very small patch of woodland no bigger than one hectare,

Why this particular patch was so popular, given that visually it couldn't be distinguished from other recovering woodland nearby, is unclear to me. By around Christmas / New Year this 'magic spot' was alive with birds. On one morning 25 species were recorded within a 100-m radius in less than an hour, including my first record ever of a Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata* in the area (though they are known to be present at 'Bibaringa' about 2 km away). However, when breeding for the Dusky Woodswallow was finally confirmed by the presence of dependent young, this area quietened down within a couple of weeks, to be replaced by a rather mobile feeding flock which again seemed to be triggered by the Dusky Woodswallows (including juveniles) and the Red-rumped Parrot *Psephotus haematonotus*. This phenomenon too suddenly vanished with no woodswallows seen after the end of February. The highlight after this was the continuing presence of the Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata*, with many more sightings than the combined total for the previous 28 years. Often the firetails occurred together with Flame Robins which had returned in even bigger numbers from the middle of April with over 30 birds estimated within one hectare in mid-winter.

Perhaps it was because I was paying more attention, but breeding activity seemed much higher than ever before, with over 15 species confirmed breeding or attempting to breed. Breeding activity was recorded for the first time for a number of species, i.e. Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus axillaris* (multiple events),

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*, Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*, Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae*, Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*, Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala leucopsis* (also the first records for this species) and Dusky Woodswallow.

Below follows a more detailed account of selected individual species in taxonomic order.

Australian Wood Duck

Chenonetta jubata. This continues to be the duck species most likely to be seen in the area. However, given the general lack of suitable trees remaining, it was a surprise to record a pair with ten very young ducklings on the large dam on the edge of the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation on 6 November. This group stayed in the area for the next fortnight.

Stubble Quail *Coturnix pectoralis*.

Pre-fires this species was occasionally seen or heard on Cooleman Ridge. However, one to two birds were fairly regularly flushed or heard from August to mid-November 2004, mainly from the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation area. After this, calling/sightings increased significantly and reached a peak towards the end of January early February 2005 when for a period of about two weeks 10-15 birds could be heard giving their 'pippy-wheat' call. These appeared to be from well spaced single birds, particularly along the south-west side of the western end of Cooleman Ridge. Calling then stopped abruptly, with no sightings after four birds were seen on 14 March until a single bird was seen in the grounds of

Chapman pre-school in the last week of June.

Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora*. As for the Stubble Quail, this species used to be occasionally seen or heard on Cooleman Ridge pre-fires. Apart from some calls in November (which were not positively identified at the time), calling also did not start until late January when, on investigation, I flushed a single bird giving its very loud 'tu-weee' call next to the dam at the end of Kathner Street. This was followed by the flushing of about six birds on a number of occasions in March, and eight birds on 8 May. These observations were of silent birds, and always close to one of the local farm dams. Despite a reasonable familiarity with both these species I still have difficulty in identifying birds put to the wing, even the heavily streaked stubble quail can look pretty dark and uniform if the light is not optimal.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus axillaris*.

This species was relatively common in the area for a year or two pre-fires, with one or two birds seen regularly. Following a report on the chat line from the Field Naturalists about the number of raptors at the western end of Cooleman Ridge seen on their outing on 8 August, I saw my first post-fire Black-shouldered Kite there on 15 August. Sightings were common from then, culminating in two very vocal pairs within 500 metres of each other at 7:30 h on 21 August, three of the birds briefly interacting. At the time this was the biggest number of this species I can recall seeing together in the area.

Sightings continued into September, when I started to see a single bird on

what appeared to be sentry duty. Suspicions increased on 27 September, when again I saw three birds interacting, one of which then flew straight at my head from over 100 m away, forcing me to drop to the ground. This focussed my attention on a different tree from the one I had been searching for a nest, and on 4 October I found the nest, with a bird sitting very tight, amongst a largely dead mistletoe in a relatively small Red Box *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*. The tree was flowering profusely at the time and was only 25 m from the main public path along the north-east side of the ridge. Regular checking revealed this bird always sitting low in this nest up until 24 October, when two birds interacted on a nearby branch, one of which then flew to the nest.

In the interim another pair of birds was seen taking sticks to a tree about one kilometre away on the south-west side of the ridge on both 29 September and 4 October, where the birds continued to be seen but the nest site could not be discovered. Persistence finally paid off on 24 October when after some searching I suddenly saw a bird leaving the nest. Again, this was in a different tree (also a Red Box) about 50 m from the one in which I had suspected the nesting. This nest was built in the outer branches and was in a more open position and was relatively easy to see from the track 50 m away. Unfortunately this was the last time the pair of birds was seen at this site, and after a number of further inspections over the next month it was clear that the nest had been abandoned.

It was also clear, however, that chicks had hatched in the first nest, and with

this the behaviour of the parents changed significantly. Late in the afternoon of 30 October one bird flew off the nest to its mate and then, again from more than 100 m, flew straight at my head forcing me to duck for cover. As there was a very strong south-west wind blowing it pointed into this 20 or so metres above me and swooped me again several times as I beat a hasty retreat, each time making audible noises as it passed within a metre of me. This made watching the nest a much more hazardous task, in fact a number of people in the area remarked to me that they had been swooped in the same fashion while innocently walking along the path. However, late on 13 November I took up the challenge and for the first time I was able to discern a brownish shape in the nest from about 100 m away, despite being swooped several times. Late on 27 November I again ran the gauntlet but was rewarded for the first time with seeing a fledgling, typically much duller and with extensive orange around the head and upper breast, sitting in the top of the tree about 5 m from the nest.

On the morning of 3 December a chick was again sitting near this spot, but there was a second fledgling about 50 m away. A similar sighting was made on the evening of 11 December except one of the young was then about 150 m from the nest. The parents seemed to divide up the feeding by taking one young each, and by the end of the year I concluded that both young had fledged successfully as they were harder to find.

For about a month Black-shouldered Kites were not much in evidence, but on 27 January three birds, which interacted briefly, were again seen at the western

slopes of Cooleman Ridge, about 500 m from the nest tree. Birds were then seen regularly on the ridge, and increasingly in the area of the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation, culminating in two typically orange fledglings being seen there on 25 April. I had been alerted to a nest previously but had not been able to locate it. A posting on the Canberra Birds chat line by Marg Millard on 2 May indicated she had been watching a pair near here. In February she had seen nest material being taken to a large gum tree, and two weeks later had seen a bird flying to what appeared to be a nest, which was very difficult to see, however, because of the distance and thick foliage. This clearly represented a second successful nesting in the area.

The species continued to be seen regularly over the next two months. On 10 May, three very vocal juveniles (appearing to be recently fledged from their very orange appearance) were seen together in the top of a gum near the trig point about 1 km from the western end of Cooleman ridge - two adults were also nearby. While I cannot be certain, I suspect these birds were not part of the Narrabundah Hill group. Birds also continued to be seen at Narrabundah Hill until mid July 2005, with a maximum of five birds together on 7 June (unfortunately I had no binoculars so I couldn't tell if any were juveniles).

On the afternoon of 22 May I saw two birds interacting (attempting to copulate?) about 400 m from the spring/early summer nest tree. Their behaviour (further copulation attempts and a bird sitting on sentry) lead me to believe further breeding may be taking place, but I was unable to locate a nest.

However, on 3 July 2005 I saw a juvenile bird (again appearing to be recently fledged) sitting in a dead tree about 50 m away, and an adult nearby. A second adult then flew to the dead tree with a mouse in its talons which it began to rip into strips. Unfortunately I did not see actual feeding despite watching for about ten minutes from a safe distance. Checking of the suspected nest tree revealed the possibility of a nest in a live mistletoe. Though this was hard to see the presence of faeces below it suggested it was probably where the breeding had taken place.

All in all this represented a very successful breeding period for the Black-shouldered Kites in this area during 2004-05, with up to five separate events. The majority were in the autumn, noted in the ACT Atlas (Taylor and Canberra Ornithologists Group, 1992) as the minor breeding season for this species in the ACT, the main breeding season being in spring. Unfortunately I couldn't tell with any confidence whether juvenile birds seen at Cooleman Ridge and Narrabundah Hill (separated by 1.5 km) were the same or different birds.

The presence of a mouse plague in the rank grasses of the regenerating areas following the fires, particularly in the autumn, no doubt contributed to the extent and success of breeding activities. Jerry Olsen (pers. comm.) indicates that this species can feed almost exclusively on the house mouse. While in his recent paper (Fuentes and Olsen, 2005) Jerry located only three occupied territories for this species in 2002-03 (the year of the fires), during his presentation to the COG meeting on 10 August Esteban Fuentes indicated that there was

considerably more breeding in 2004. Interestingly the birds disappeared from the area in mid-July and have not been seen since, mouse numbers having dropped considerably in June.

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*. This was probably the most frequently seen raptor in the area before the fires, but was certainly not common, with generally only a few records of one or two birds most years. After our return, the first sightings were of single birds at the western end of Cooleman Ridge. However, on the afternoon of 10 October two birds were seen copulating on a spout in a fire affected gum in the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation near the big water tank off Eucumbene Drive. One bird then entered this spout where it stayed for a couple of minutes while the other settled in a tree nearby. On returning home I was surprised to read that spouts/tree hollows are one of this species' favoured breeding sites [the spout observed was very similar to that shown on p. 365 in Morcombe (2000)]. One or two birds were seen regularly in this vicinity until 30 October, with copulation again seen in a neighbouring tree on 29 October. The only further sighting in the area, despite regular checking until Christmas, was of a bird seemingly on sentry duty on 7 November, and I concluded that the birds had abandoned the presumed nest. This species was not seen again until a series of sightings at the western end of Cooleman Ridge during March 2005, with a maximum of three birds interacting very vocally on 26 March. Only 3 more sightings were made until the end of June 2005.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*.

This species was moderately common in the area pre-fires, most often seen in the vicinity of the boggy ground in the horse paddocks at the end the open drain off Kathner St, and over the years there were a number of breeding records. Nevertheless, the four birds seen together off Percy Crescent on 17 July was significant, as was a rare observation on a still-vacant block within my GBS site on 23 July. Birds continued to be seen from mid-September, including regular sightings of two birds in Percy Crescent. Their behaviour led me to suspect they were nesting. This was confirmed with a bird sitting on a nest on a front lawn on 3 October, and 3 eggs were observed in the nest on 7 October. The birds remained in this area until 10 October when it appears the chicks hatched and were moved to the horse paddocks over 100 m away. One reason I suspected this was that my daughters were very vigorously swooped near the gate leading to these paddocks mid-morning of 10 October, and the birds were absent from Percy Crescent after this.

On 16 October I heard reports of people being swooped near the large dam on the edge of the horse paddocks and the former Narrabundah Hill pine forest. Over the next few weeks I investigated this a number of times hoping to see chicks. The birds seemed to move around in an area of roughly 0.5 x 0.5 km covering both the horse paddocks and the burnt pine forest. They were very wary and did not allow a close approach, always raising the alarm well before I could locate them and then swooping me very vigorously. Despite some thorough searches the only possible sighting of the

young was on 30 October when I saw, from about 500 m, what seemed to be a half-size and very white bird. This kind of behaviour continued until the end of November and on 17 December four adult-sized birds were seen together for the first time. Sightings were less frequent in the new year, though four birds were seen together several times, including one sighting near the nest site in late June.

A further nesting, in a different spot on the same lawn, by two birds (one on the nest, the other always on sentry duty nearby) occurred in July, with 2 eggs seen in the nest on the morning of 31 July. However, this nest was not successful and the birds abandoned the area about 13 August.

Crested Pigeon *Ochyphaps lophotes*.

These birds were an increasing presence in my garden pre-fires, and were shown to breed all year round (Holland, 2000). Post-fires numbers have increased dramatically and the species is now the most numerous and readily observed species in my GBS site. For the first couple of months after our return they were mainly seen on the wires surrounding a neighbour's feeding area with a maximum of 23 birds late in August. Numbers declined when the neighbours moved and food was no longer left out, and the tree which held the feeding tables was subsequently removed. However, numbers picked up again towards autumn when birds often moved through en masse or congregated on wires for a time. The maximum number of 33 together in early June typified the numbers of this species that could be seen in the general area, including in the regenerating burnt open

spaces and grasslands away from the houses.

Year-round breeding by this species was further confirmed. On the first weekend of July we located a bird on a nest in a *Melaleuca armillaris* (which seems to be a favourite nesting shrub) above our driveway. The neighbour said he was pleased it had moved from a hakea above his pool! Brooding continued but the bird was clearly sitting much higher in the nest on 24 July, indicative of chicks under. On the afternoon of the next day two well-formed but smaller replicas of their parents, with incomplete crests, could be seen sitting on the nest. They fledged late on 26 July and the four birds were seen preparing to roost in a bush about 7 m away, where they were again seen huddled together the next morning and evening.

They continued to roost near here for several weeks but by mid-August a bird was back on the nest and the only interruption they had was when the shrub was cut down during mid-incubation (early September). Undeterred, they relocated and built a nest in a hakea/banksia rose complex within 15 m, where four successive breeding events occurred with dependent young fledged and nesting restarted towards the end of October, December and February as well as mid-April. My observations of the Crested Pigeon indicate that it is a surreptitious feeder of young in the nest, as they tend to keep brooding and you don't really see the young until they're about ready to leave, with the only sign being the raised height of the sitting parent. Also they fledge as an almost exact though somewhat smaller replica of the adult, complete with crest and

soon become indistinguishable. This no doubt helps explain why they have been so successful.

By the end of this time the nest was rather massive for this species. Young were not seen from this last brood, but at the end of May a new nest was seen being built in the same set of shrubs about 2 m lower and more towards the centre. A bird was sitting on (and often called from) this nest but at the end of June it was abandoned and a new nest was seen being built a few metres away. This was not followed up, however, and in July/August 2005 for the first time in a year I was not aware of any nesting by this species within my GBS site.

This was not the only nest within the GBS site, where at one time there were two other nests (plus several others nearby). A feature of these nests were that they were built in eucalypts and more closely resembled the typically untidy Red Wattlebird nests rather than the flimsy stick platforms typical of the Crested Pigeon.

Common Bronzewing

Phaps chalcoptera. For the last few years before the fires this was an increasingly common bird in my GBS site all year round and up to a dozen were often seen in the semi-natural area within Chauvel Circle, or round the feeding area in a neighbour's place. One interesting feature was their habit of sitting on the local rooves before moving down to feed. They could also be found in smaller numbers in the former Narrabundah Hill pine forest.

Small numbers could still be seen in the GBS site while we were rebuilding and

for the first two months of 2004-05. However, after this they were much scarcer, with only six sightings of single birds and one observation of two birds. Numbers were also low in the general area. There was one attempt at breeding recorded (not necessarily fire-related). A bird was seen sitting on a nest in a planted gum in the grounds of Chapman pre-school after Christmas (it was built almost as soon as school broke up), but the nest, with one broken white egg beneath it, was abandoned early in the new year. However, a neighbour told me that a bird built a nest and successfully raised young over the summer of 2003-04 in a patch of shrubs that escaped the fires on the edge of my GBS site. A feature had been the regular walking in of the fledglings each evening for a drink in their bird bath. Unfortunately this phenomenon was not repeated over the summer of 2004-05.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus funereus. For the five years or so pre-fires this was an increasingly common bird, particularly in the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation where up to 150 birds could be seen feeding or moving through on the way to their roost site most months of the year. The loss of this habitat, including Stromlo Forest, and the subsequent movement of the cockatoos into the suburbs of Canberra is a well known event, though sadly not yet properly documented. Their prevalence throughout Canberra was one of the most visually obvious signs of the impact of the fires on the local bird populations.

While the species has still been seen in the Chapman area since the fires, it has been in low numbers, with most birds

simply moving through. January and February seemed to be the peak time, with up to seven birds, including dependent young, seen together.

Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea*.

This was not an uncommon species in the years immediately pre-fires, generally being seen or heard flying over. On our return it was surprisingly common, particularly in July and August, when up to 13 birds were recorded. They can be heard from a long way off as they fly over towards the Cotter and back to Mt Taylor. This phenomenon continued and up to eight birds were recorded every week until mid-January. Since then they were recorded in only six of the weeks up to the end of June.

Long-billed Corella

Cacatua tenuirostris. It is very likely that individuals of this species may have been mixed with Little Corellas recorded flying over, but I have difficulty in separating them by call and even by sight when they fly over low. The only positive identifications were of single birds perched on wires or on the ground, over a six-week period from October to December. The species had also been seen in spring/early summer of 2003 while rebuilding. A neighbour told me he had seen one regularly in his mature Red Box which had survived the fires unscathed (this species seemed to be the least flammable local gum). He claimed it was nesting but the tree does not contain any hollows.

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo

Cacatua leadbetteri. A surprise while in the latter rebuilding stages (May to June 2004) was seeing this species fly

overhead several times. This pattern continued over 2004-05, with sightings of this bird over 22 weeks evenly spread over the year. Most sightings were of the bird flying overhead, often in the company of corellas, where as a slower flier it typically lagged behind, but several were of it perched. The most notable of these was on 11 June when it sat on wires in Darwinia Terrace for over an hour in the first rain for two months. The next day it settled briefly in the gum outside the study window. This bird is probably the same one that had been seen in the vicinity of Mount Taylor for several years previously. It is highly likely an escapee, but has adapted very well and is very independent and free flying. It also seems to be well tolerated by other birds except for one morning in late January when it was flying very low and almost collided with me with an Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* in hot pursuit.

Gang-gang Cockatoo

Callecephalon fimbriatum. This species was rarely seen in the five or so years pre-fires, with usually only a handful of records per year. Given its preferred habitat it was a surprise to see it regularly (38 separate records) between the end of August and mid-March with a maximum of ten birds seen on 21 December. However, there were no further sightings.

Australian King-Parrot

Alisterus scapularis. While this species has still been regularly recorded, numbers are considerably lower than pre-fires. The spectacular morning and evening roost flights over Chapman and Duffy during autumn and winter do not appear to occur any more.

Red-rumped Parrot

Psephotus haematonotus. This species was not common in the area pre-fires, though it was sometimes relatively abundant, usually in December, when the grasses seemed to be seeding. It was not recorded after our return until a single bird was seen on 4 September, but then sightings and numbers of birds increased with a maximum of seven seen together before Christmas. Numbers increased much more significantly in the new year, when it was often seen together with the post-breeding feeding flocks of January and February as described earlier in this article; indeed their presence was often the first sign of a mixed feeding flock.

While walking the dogs at the corner of Hindmarsh and Eucumbene Drives at 6:30 h on 1 February I counted 34 birds in three groups flying south-west out of the suburb of Duffy in the direction of the Chapman horse paddocks and the western end of Cooleman Ridge. On 8 February the number of birds at this spot was over 70, with 40 flying out (to feed?) and the remainder staying in the trees on the edge of the suburb. Similarly, on 11 March at 6:50 h, 40 birds flew into the roadside trees along Eucumbene Drive where they stayed for at least 5 minutes. During this period smaller numbers were often at this spot, and may have been the remnants of larger groups as it seemed to be a matter of timing, with the birds flying out just as the sun was coming up. Getting there at exactly the right time was difficult as sunrise was changing rapidly. Birds continued to be seen in the area until the end of 2004-05, though always in much smaller numbers.

Southern Boobook

Ninox novaeseelandiae. Investigation of strange cricket like calls in our backyard around 22:00 h on 21 January revealed three immature Southern Boobooks, identified by their very dark eye-patches and very light colouring under. They were present for at least 30 minutes and were surprisingly tame, often sitting in exposed positions such as the overhead wires and the neighbour's cyclone fence, repeatedly making the trills which seemed to be contact calls (no traditional calls were heard). They seemed to be fully grown (if not rather larger than expected), though they flew rather clumsily. Their eye-shine was red.

In over 25 years of pretty serious birdwatching I have never come across this phenomenon before. The most puzzling aspect was that I had only recorded this species calling twice before this time, and only once in our GBS site, on 6 November (typical for pre-fires). Jerry Olsen (pers. comm.) suggested that the father was likely nearby and that breeding is likely to have taken place within a kilometre or so, and noted they do call throughout the breeding season. Following this there were only three more aural records, one in February and two in March.

Tawny Frogmouth

Podargus strigoides. The only time this species was seen regularly previously was post-drought in the winter of 1983, when one to three birds were often in our GBS site, as well as nearby. The first post-fire record was of a dead bird on the corner of Nelumbo and Diselma Place, Rivett, on 23 August.

Following a report from a work colleague **I** found a bird on 12 October calling at 21:40 h from a large tree in Monkman Street. It was sitting on what appeared to be the start of a nest on a horizontal branch. The nest grew in size over the next days and the bird was again seen calling from this spot at 20:20 h on 15 October, with a second bird calling from up the ridge. Surprisingly, this tree also contained an active Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* nest but on checking HANZAB **I** discovered this was a favoured combination. Though the nest continued to grow in size the birds were not seen again. After some very strong south-east winds on 29 October the nest was found on the ground. Neighbours indicated that the species had nested here the previous spring.

On 7 May **I** found a bird sitting as a rounded ball on a neighbour's fence, right out in the open, and seemingly oblivious to workmen nearby. The following day it was discovered in a neighbour's tree. After that it was often seen roosting in the tree outside our study, initially in the most open of positions, but gradually it selected perches that offered more cover. On 27 May **I** discovered it sitting in a neighbour's tree above our carport. From then on it could be found there every day until the end of June, always facing in the same direction (north-west into the afternoon sun). It would leave soon after dark to feed but was always back well before light. During this time **I** never heard it call.

White-browed Scrub-wren *Sericornis frontalis* and **Brown Thornbill** *Acanthiza pusilla*. For the ten years or so before the fires these two species were

regular in our garden all year round. Not unexpectedly, given the many bare spots and the lack of cover, there have only been three records of the former (ironically one of them - a pair of birds - being in the first week of our return) and no records of the latter in the area for 2004-05. On the other hand there does not appear to be any real change to the abundance of the **Superb Fairy-wren** *Malurus cyaneus* with records both within my GBS site (up to six birds, including dependent young), and at Cooleman Ridge and the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation.

Southern Whiteface

Aphelocephala leucopsis. **I** had never recorded this species in the area, and therefore it was a surprise to see a bird sitting on the top of an isolated 1.5-m high boxthorn bush in the paddock off the main south-west track along Cooleman Ridge early on 10 October. On the afternoon of 24 October there were two birds on this bush, one of which appeared to be carrying food. A search for a nest was unsuccessful, but a similar search on 30 October flushed a bird from a surprisingly small nest about 1 m off the ground deep in the prickly bush. The bird returned to the top of the bush soon after. Early on 7 November a bird was seen approaching within 30 cm of the nest with a large morsel of food, but it flew off without entering the nest. No birds were then seen in weekly visits until two were again seen near the nest on 11 December. This bush remains the only spot **I** have seen this species, with two possible further sightings in March and May, though without binoculars it is hard to positively identify this rather drab species.

Red Wattlebird

Anthochaera carunculata. The biggest surprise on the second weekend after moving back was to find Red Wattlebird nesting in full swing in the one gum tree that had been retained on our block. We were initially alerted by the bird's repeated return to the same spot, and inspection revealed a nest there. We were unsure what stage the nest was at as one bird seemed to be on the nest for periods of time, though it was also often seen flying to it without noticeably carrying nest building material or food. We dismissed the possibility of young already in the nest as a quick check of the literature indicated this was clearly too early, even though the bird seemed to be feeding and we thought on a couple of occasions that we could hear chicks calling (which we dismissed as contact calling between the pair).

The puzzle was solved the next weekend (17-18 July) when the parents were returning to the nest even more frequently, with a surprisingly large chick rising well out of the nest each time a parent arrived. All this could readily be seen through our new study window, less than 5 m away, throughout the cold and very windy weekend. That the chick survived this inclement weather was clear the following weekend as it could easily be seen at the top of the nest, still downy though with well formed wing feathers. The nest was empty late on 26 July and we thought the chick had perished, but we found it again in the same tree amongst the leaves about 3 m from the nest the next morning. It was still very downy and had an extremely short tail, but later that day it was seen being fed on the ground or flying low and clumsily round the

garden. This would appear to be one of the earliest records of successful breeding in Canberra, with nest-building likely to have taken place in late June.

The chick survived and stayed around our garden until early September, noisily begging for much of that time. The big downside of all this was the extreme aggression of the parents to all smaller birds, in particular other honeyeaters such as the Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* and Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*, which were pursued vigorously whenever they ventured into flowering grevilleas or banksias.

On 18 November the birds appeared to be rebuilding/renovating the same nest, with a bird sitting until 8 December when it was sitting very high. Feeding commenced the following day. A chick could first be seen on 12 December and two young fledged on 19 December, with dependent young remaining in the garden until about 20 January.

Crescent Honeyeater

Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera. This was a regular winter visitor to my garden for at least 20 years pre-fires, being present in varying numbers from late April to about September. So it was good to hear it nearby on 3 July, record a pair in my GBS site on 17 July, and observe them for the following few days until they were hounded away by the aggressive Red Wattlebirds. From the end of August its calls were very conspicuous from a cluster of about three gardens centred around 30 Monkman Street where it remained until mid-December. In the last month or so of this period, in addition to hearing it regularly, I also saw a male

bird there several times, the last time being on 16 December when flowering in these gardens came to an end. Thereafter it was still heard in the general area for a few days. There were no further records until the end of April when it was again regularly recorded both in my GBS site and in the Monkman Street gardens for about a month, but much less frequently in June.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*.

This potentially threatened species was present in small numbers in the area pre-fires, with one to two records from the GBS site per year, usually in April or May. Therefore it was great to record a male in a burnt-out neighbour's garden on 7 August 2003, only just over six months after the fires. It was also good to record on or two birds in July and early August 2004 after our return to Chapman, with the last sighting of a pair only about 400 metres from our garden on 2 August. The birds returned on 20 March, with two males seen on the main north-east track along Cooleman ridge on 3 April. Fairly regular sightings were made from then until early June.

Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*.

This was a common species on Cooleman Ridge and the Chapman horse paddocks in autumn and winter during the late 1970s and early 1980s but numbers in recent years had dropped significantly, and observations of any numbers together were rare. Since it is well known as one of the earliest colonisers after fires, it was no surprise to record at least 11 birds, three of them males, along the edge of the former Narrabundah Hill pine forest and the Chapman horse paddocks on 14 July. Sightings here and on the north-west

slopes of Cooleman Ridge were common from then on, with a maximum of 17 birds (only three were males) within a 1-km stretch on 7 August, and the last record of six birds on 17 August, both on the former pine forest edge. Birds were first recorded again here on 17 April, with the first males on 6 May. Observations were regular but numbers variable both here and on the slopes of Cooleman Ridge (maximum of eight along the south-west track on 10 May) until at least 30 birds (eight males) were seen in about a hectare of bare horse paddock on the edge of the former pine forest on 2 July. This figure easily surpasses the maximum number 1 have ever seen in this area.

Rose Robin *Petroica rosea*.

This species had been an increasingly frequent visitor to my garden over the 20 years pre-fires, towards the end of this time often staying for several days or even weeks at a time. Both males and females/immatures were seen. It comes as no surprise that it has not been seen in my GBS site or the general area since the fires.

Golden Whistler

Pachycephala pectoralis. Again, this species was a regular and very conspicuous autumn/winter visitor to our gardens - usually immature or female birds, but sometimes males and sometimes for considerable periods. Again I did not record it in my GBS site or the general area throughout the first year of our return.

Rufous Whistler

Pachycephala rufiventris. By contrast with the Golden Whistler this was never

in the general area, with most observations in the former Narrabundah Hill pine forest. While it hasn't been seen there again, a male was seen calling next to our yet-to-be-demolished house on 17 March 2003, only two months after the fires. A female was recorded (on one occasion accompanied by a male bird) in the feeding/breeding group on the extreme western slopes of Cooleman Ridge from October to December, but there have been no records since.

Grey Shrike-thrush

Colluricincla harmonica. This was also never a common bird in our GBS site, but was much more regular in the then Narrabundah Hill pine forest. I have no records of the species in the area post-fires.

Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta*. There were only a few records of this species in the area pre-fires, with very few in the years immediately pre-fires. Therefore it was a surprise to record it within the breeding/feeding area on the extreme western slopes of Cooleman Ridge on 29 December, and an even bigger surprise to hear it on the evening of 1 January and then see it after 20:00 h on 2 January in my neighbour's garden (one which had survived the fires). It continued to come in regularly (seen doing so from the south-west on a couple of occasions) most evenings over the following week (from about 19.30 h). It would hawk for insects for a while around the bird feeder and then, I suspect, settle down to roost (I heard it at 6:10 h on 6 January). It was last recorded on 10 January. It was surprisingly tame, often allowing me to approach to within a metre, showing off a lovely lemon-

yellow wash in the white of the lower throat/upper breast.

Records of single birds were also made at the large dam along the south-east edge of the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation on the morning of 1 May, and the afternoon of 21 May. This was the only time I heard it make its scissors grinding call, from low among some dead branches. Interestingly my neighbour had seen one in her garden a couple of hours earlier. I'm not aware of any particular association of this species with fire, but these records are about equal in number to the total of previous sightings in the 28 years we were here pre-fires.

Magpielark *Grallina cyanoleuca*.

This species was always present in the area pre-fires, though it didn't seem to keep any territories and had not regularly bred in my GBS site since the early to mid-1980s. It was thus a surprise to find a pair of birds busy starting to build a nest in the one gum tree remaining on our block outside the study window on the morning of 6 November. This was about 20% complete by evening and further hard work by the pair resulted in a pretty complete nest by the evening of 10 November. The expected laying and brooding never seriously commenced, however, and though the pair were often around the nest, they were very seldom on it. This continued right up until mid-January when they finally seemed to give up the idea, though the incessant attacking of our front windows by the male bird, especially early and late in the day, continued right into autumn (though much less regularly in the later stages).

Previously, on 30 October, **I** had seen another pair carrying food to a nest about 150 m from our house, where several young were fledged on 6 November, the day the nest in our yard was commenced. This pair had a second brood in this nest, fledging three more young around 5 February. The young were seen regularly in the area for several weeks thereafter.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*. This species had become noticeably less common in the years pre-fires after having bred in my neighbour's large Red Box in the early 1980s, so **I** was pleased that it seemed to be more common on our return to Chapman. Regular sightings culminated in a half-completed nest being found on 26 September in a tree off Darwinia Terrace, about 50 m outside my GBS site. This was complete on 2 October with a bird consistently on it for the rest of the month. While there were some signs of chicks being hatched in late October, nothing seemed to come of it and by 12 November it was clear that a second sitting had begun. By the end of November the parent was off the nest again, and by 3 December three nestlings could be seen in the nest. There seemed to be a constant battle with the local marauding Pied Currawongs and as the nest was empty from 11 December, **I** assumed that breeding had again been unsuccessful. However, on 19 December the family of five birds was found in the nest tree, with the young appearing to have survived by keeping very quiet and out of sight. They were seen again several times over the next couple of weeks but by 29 December a bird was on the nest again where it remained until 19 January, when it was sitting pretty high, suggestive of brooding chicks. However, by 28 January it was clear that the nest

had been predated and the birds finally gave up their breeding attempts for the season, though they remained in the general area. One feature of May and early June was the regular recording, either very early in the morning or late in the evening, of a single bird which was clearly roosting in the area but leaving early to feed elsewhere.

Two birds were also seen on 17 October building a nest in the horse paddocks at the extreme western end of Cooleman Ridge in a tree next to where the Dusky Woodswallows were suspected of nesting (see below). This nest was complete by 25 October, two young could be seen in the nest on 12 November, and the young were out of the nest and being fed nearby on 22 November. The birds did not appear to use this nest again but on 29 December another two dependent young were being fed in the same tree, so it was assumed a second nesting had occurred nearby.

White-winged Triller *Lalage sueurii*. Very few of this species had been seen in the area since it was observed breeding in a red box in my neighbour's garden several years in succession during the drought years of the early 1980s. Therefore it was a thrill to hear this recently-declared vulnerable species calling at the extreme western end of Cooleman Ridge and see a male in the distance on 9 October. This was followed by several similar sightings in this area in October, including two male birds on 25 October. However, five birds together, including one female often in pursuit near the tree where the Dusky Woodswallows were suspected to be nesting, and another two birds within a kilometre, really took the cake. Seven

birds within such a small area is certainly the maximum I've seen in Canberra. An even bigger thrill was to find a nest in the same tree as the suspected Dusky Woodswallow nest with male and female birds appearing to switch sitting several times on 3 December.

Unfortunately this nest could not be relocated, though sightings continued over the next month, including a bird along the main south-west track about 1 km from the western end. But it was again a surprise, especially since I walked past this spot regularly while checking the birds in the area, to see a female on a nest in a gum beside the dam at the end of Kathner Street on 29 December. On 1 January two chicks could be seen in this nest being fed by the mother. The nest area was quiet on 7 January though a male was still singing softly nearby. Several further sightings in January included a male calling on 19 January. The last breeding observation was of two females feeding two similarly coloured young in a feeding flock which included about ten Dusky Woodswallows along the main south-west track about 0.5 km from the western end of Cooleman Ridge on 27 January. A bird was suspected to be calling near here on 9 February but was not verified. It is interesting that in this area this species was only associated with the western end of Cooleman Ridge, though otherwise in the ACT it was much more visible for the second year in a row.

Dusky Woodswallow

Artamus cyanopterus. The only records (no more than a handful) of this species pre-fires was of birds moving through in late April and early May on migration. It

was never even a temporary resident despite there being areas which seemed to be suitable habitat. So it was a surprise to hear them at the start of the slope at the extreme western end of Cooleman Ridge on 2 and 3 October, and again on 9 October. This was confirmed visually when two birds were seen copulating here on 11 October, followed by four birds and a suspected nest (well hidden among leaves and branches) on 25 October. It was about this time that this patch of horse paddock woodland, no bigger than 1 hectare, started to attract a number of migrant and other species and was, for less than three months, a 'magic' spot. Though up to four birds were regularly recorded here and showed signs of breeding behaviour (ie swooping an Australian Magpie and me quite vigorously on one occasion) the actual nest site was never located. This contrasts with my previous experiences when this species' nests have often been easy to locate. However, breeding was finally confirmed on 7 January when three dependent young were seen being fed by adults at this spot.

This also was the last record of the species at this spot and signalled a significant drop in numbers of all bird species here. Meanwhile, on 1 January, another bird was seen building a nest in a large gum adjacent to the dam at the end of Kathner Street about 0.5 km away (same as for the White-winged Triller nest). Again the nest site was well hidden and despite regular visits over the next month, when a single bird was often seemingly on sentry duty and harassing other birds that came near, I was unable to confirm breeding here.

That breeding had been more successful (at least in the general area) than I had been able to record was confirmed by the formation of mixed feeding flocks towards the end of January that were very conspicuous and would stay in one spot for several days and then be found nearby. From 26 January to 23 February Dusky Woodswallows were a key component (they seemed to be the trigger) of these flocks and comprised between six to eleven birds about half of which were juveniles. After this the mixed feeding flock suddenly disappeared and the Dusky Woodswallows were not seen in the area again. This despite regular reports on the COG chat line of this species elsewhere, often in good numbers and right into the winter period.

The above certainly represents the first time I have known this species to be resident over spring and summer in nearly 30 years of living and observing birds in the area. I'm pretty certain this must be related to the fires. Alan Ford has told me that he also found this species quite common, over an even greater area here, in the first spring and summer after this event.

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*. Not surprisingly this species was common in the garden pre-fires, and for the previous two or three years had nested in the mature Blakely's Red Gum outside our bedroom window. A feature used to be the large numbers flying very obviously and noisily from their roost site in the Stromlo Forest early in the morning, and returning later in the evening during winter, but that was already much less noticeable for the years preceding the fires as they seemed

to take a more northerly path through Rivett.

Despite the fires there were many Pied Currawongs nesting around Chapman in the spring of 2004. I was aware of at least six different sites close to our GBS site and all young seemed to leave their nests, remarkably synchronously, in mid-November. This included the young in a nest in a Blue Gum just outside our front yard. While pretty obvious once located, this nest was only discovered on 22 October when the chicks were already quite large, exemplifying how surreptitious Pied Currawongs can be when nesting.

On 26 November I found one of the parents dead on Darwinia Terrace, obviously hit by a car, and by evening there were at least four other currawongs flying around calling loudly in the tree where the fledglings had been. They were at it again well before dawn the next morning (the typical loud winter call as they congregate), and up to six of them stuck around and continued calling all day until 20:30 h. I thought they might have been answering distress calls, or perhaps they were looking for a meal - though they didn't seem particularly aggressive towards the young. Anyway it did flush the chicks out by about late morning on 27 November (they'd been keeping pretty quiet up till then) and I was surprised to see two rather than the singleton I'd been seeing previously. My experience is that many species split feeding duties and perhaps in this case the surviving parent had picked up the double responsibility, as I saw the chicks being fed late that day. Alternatively, an unrelated adult may have taken responsibility for feeding the orphans.

On reporting this to the Canberra Birds chat-line Michael Lenz suggested a different interpretation: that a group of non-breeders (younger birds) had entered the territory. Normally the territory-holder would chase these birds away, but with the male dead this didn't happen and the youngsters had a field day. Michael indicated they will rob and destroy the nest of breeding currawongs, at least while the nest contains eggs and small young. Once young are larger and already out of the nest, they probably would be left alone by the intruders, but the latter may still examine the young closely.

This activity continued for at least a week before gradually dying down. I still wonder how the other currawongs knew so quickly, and where they came from. There had hardly been a Pied Currawong around for the couple of weeks beforehand. It was also amazing that as far as I could tell the young did not attempt to find food for themselves, despite their size.

White-winged Chough

Corcorax melanorhamphos. Prefires, this species was commonly seen, often in large groups, in the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation, with occasional forays into the suburbs including into my GBS site. However, it has not since been observed in the fire-affected sites, with the closest sighting being near Stirling College on 11 February, about 1 km away from the edge of the fire.

Satin Bowerbird

Ptilonorhynchus violaceus. Since our return, the most notable absentee from my GBS site has been the Satin Bowerbird. Both the bower in my

neighbour's garden and the area of the roost site on Chauvel Circle were destroyed. However, I have seen and heard a male close to an active bower nearby in Monkman Street. The bower is now in the front garden as the rear garden, where two bowers were built previously, was destroyed in the fires. In contrast, the former bower site in Burgan Place, Rivett, appeared abandoned, though surprisingly it was 75% intact with several blue objects over Easter 2004. There was some activity at the bower early in August, but the area which was once relatively secluded was made much more open following a 'clean up' of the garden and there has been no activity there since. The bower in Monkman Street was also destroyed in mid-August.

There was excitement on 21 August when a bird could clearly be heard giving its 'I'm above a bower' call somewhere near our GBS site. A male was seen, then a fully constructed bower discovered under bushes in the front garden of a house in Toona Place, but this too lasted only a week or so. During September and October quite a few Satin Bowerbirds were seen or heard but most of these were much deeper in the suburbs. There were fewer birds over the summer period and I had not recorded any birds within my GBS site since my return until a green bird was seen flying through on 12 February. The first actually to settle were two birds on 16 April. In all I recorded this species for only four of the 52 weeks of the 2004-05 GBS year. This differs significantly to the pre-fire situation when it was recorded every week, if not every day. Needless to say, the bower in my neighbour's garden has not been rebuilt

and there is still no roost site in the area of 26 Chauvel Circle. Although the houses have returned, the gardens are still too immature to allow this to happen, if it ever does again.

Diamond Firetail

Stagonopleura guttata. Pre-fires, I had only a handful of records of this species, always single incidents of one or two birds, which could not be relocated. Therefore it was a thrill to record a single bird calling in a feeding flock about a third of the way up the slope on the western end of Cooleman Ridge on 9 February. Even more so to find three birds (including an adult carrying nesting material - possibly for a roosting nest), and another, an immature bird, again in a feeding flock close to the dam at the end of Kathner Street on 23 February. A further surprise was to record at least six birds on the southern boundary of the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation and the Chapman horse paddocks. Several more sightings were made in this area, and Ken Freeman reported on the chat line that he had seen about a dozen here about 10 April, the first he'd seen there since the mid-1990s.

My daughters then reported about ten birds about 0.75 km along the main south-west track of Cooleman Ridge on 1 May. I recorded them too in this area, including calling on two occasions (7 and 13 May), but numbers were hard to gauge without binoculars. I saw at least six birds close to the large dam on the southern edge of the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation on 20 May, and recorded them several more times in this area, the last being a bird calling on 6 June. Two birds were later seen near this location during the COG 'robin

twitchathon' excursion on 17 July, and six birds were seen along the fence-line on 22 July.

These occurrences outstrip by far the number of previous records from the area. Whether this is fire-related is unclear, though the birds certainly seemed to be generally much more common in the first half of 2005 than for many years judging by the reports on the chat line.

Rufous Songlark

Cincloramphus mathewsi. There were only a handful of records of this species from the area pre-fires, most of them well before this event happened, so it was a pleasant surprise to here three separate birds calling on the western slopes of Cooleman Ridge on 30 October, and then observe two birds near the dam at the end of Kathner Street on 1 November. Over the next two months this species became increasingly conspicuous in a wider area than both the Dusky Woodswallow and White-winged Triller, ranging over a couple of kilometres from the former Narrabundah Hill pine plantation, through the Chapman horse paddocks along Kathner Street, to about 1 km along the south-west track of Cooleman Ridge. It was, however, most often recorded near, or associated with, the 'magic spot' on the extreme lower slopes at the western end of the ridge. At one stage in December it was estimated there were at least ten birds calling along this 2.5 km stretch.

After the new year the species' behaviour seemed to change. Some birds continued to give their well known calls as they flew between tree tops, others were quiet, while others gave a very

different call, including one for a week or so which was quite obvious near the dam at the end of Kathner Street in the second half of January. During territory advertising birds were generally single or interacted in small groups. On a couple of occasions quiet birds were seen associating in groups of up to six together on the ground, fallen logs etc, acting rather like Richard's Pipits. The last calls, surprisingly still those associated with territory advertising, were heard on 5 February, and the last quiet birds (three together) were seen in a feeding flock on 9 February. Despite all this activity no confirmed breeding was recorded, but nesting of this ground-nesting species is notoriously difficult to observe.

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CRESTED PIGEON NESTING, SUMMER 2005*Harvey Perkins**42 Summerland Circuit, Kambah, ACT 2902*

Through January and February 2005 I was fortunate to have a pair of Crested Pigeons *Ocyphaps lophotes* nesting in a bottlebrush *Callistemon citrinus* growing beside and overhanging my driveway. This event is not unexpected, either in occurrence — the Crested Pigeon has become a common breeding resident in Canberra over the past decade or so - or in timing - Crested Pigeons will breed readily at any time of year given suitable conditions - and I provide this account simply to furnish some detailed information on the event and nest construction.

The breeding event

I was first aware of the nest being built on 18 January, when a bird was seen plucking live needles from a casuarina tree *Casuarina cunninghamiana* on the other side of my yard and carrying them to the bottlebrush. On inspection, the nest was nearly complete and the casuarina needles were evidently being used as lining material. The following day a bird was seen sitting on the nest. I continued to monitor the nest while trying to keep disturbance to a minimum. Two eggs were present in the nest on 22 January with no further eggs being laid. On 4 February the two eggs were still unhatched, but on 5 February the first nestling had emerged. The contents of the nest were not checked again until 14 February when two nestlings were present. This disturbance caused the parent to leave the nest and perch on

nearby power lines for almost an hour before returning. As the nestlings grew they were more easily observed from a distance and without direct disturbance if the sitting parent briefly left the nest, and were seen within the nest on the morning of 21 February. By that afternoon they had both left the nest and were perched, together with the parent, on branches about 1.5 m from the nest. The following morning they were in the same position, but had moved to about 3 m from the nest by that afternoon. After that I never saw the nestlings again.

In summary: the bird was on the nest for three days before the two eggs were observed, though it is unknown exactly when eggs were laid; incubation of eggs is likely to have taken somewhere between 15 and 18 days; and 16 days elapsed from the first egg hatching to the nestlings first leaving the nest; giving a total nesting time from first sitting to vacation of the nest of 33 days. These times are entirely concordant with previous observations of 17-20 days for incubation and 14-19 days for young to leave the nest, including young beginning to sit on twigs near the nest when 15-16 days old (HANZAB).

The nest

The nest was constructed in the dense and fairly spiky foliage of the *Callistemon*, about 3.5 m above ground level. This placed it about two thirds of the way up the tree and about 1 m in

from the outer foliage. It was built into the angle of the stump of a previously cut-off vertical limb about 7 cm in diameter and two small near-horizontal regrowth branches. The resulting nest had an extreme outer diameter of a little over 300 mm, but the substantial part of the nest, of roughly triangular shape, was approximately 220 x 220 x 160 mm and about 40-50 mm thick. The shallow depression of the bowl was about 100 mm in diameter and approximately 20 mm deep.

As the tree was getting close to the overhead telephone and electrical wires and needed fairly severe pruning, several weeks after the breeding event finished I removed the nest from the tree and made notes on its construction.

It was a fairly substantial nest, not the 'frail platform of twigs' typical of many pigeon nests. It was well worked into the branches of the tree and took quite a bit of careful manipulation to remove intact. The nest was then measured, weighed, and dismantled. Taking the nest apart also took time as the twigs, most of which were twisted, angled or branched, were intricately interwoven so that the structure held together very tightly.

The total nest weight, including built-up faecal matter, was 67 g. As much as possible of the faecal matter (which was quite dry) was removed (21.2 g) giving a total stick weight for the nest of 45.8 g.

A total of 137 twigs were used in the construction of the nest, with 14 casuarina needles used as lining. The longest individual twig was 340 mm in length, the smallest being in the order of 75 mm, with the majority of twigs being

in the range 150-200 mm. The heaviest twig weighed 1.59 g (being 245 mm long), the five next heaviest being 1.0 g, 0.98 g, 0.96 g, 0.83 g and 0.76 g. The majority of twigs were in the range 0.2 – 0.8 g. Twig diameter was typically in the range 1-2 mm, the thickest twig being 4 mm.

Twigs used appeared for the most part to be either *Callistemon* or eucalypt, and were presumably sourced from the host tree (Crested Pigeons frequently use host tree material in their nest construction - HANZAB) and the Brittle Gum *Eucalyptus mannifera* 25 m away.

In almost all respects this event is entirely typical for the species. Timing, incubation and fledging duration, nest site selection (height, placement in dense prickly foliage), and the use of host material are all well documented characteristics of Crested Pigeon nesting (HANZAB). The somewhat larger nest size and its solid construction are the only features of this event which seem less typical. HANZAB states 'Average diameter 20.3 cm', with one nest measuring '15.5 cm diameter and 5 cm deep, with depression 8 cm diameter and 1.5 cm deep'.

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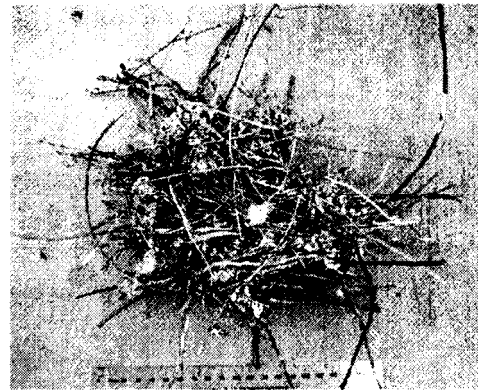
Two eggs in the nest on 4 Feb 2005



The first chick hatched on 5 Feb 2005, blind and covered in light-brown down.



Chicks developed rapidly and soon resembled their parents in miniature, complete with crests.



Well after the chicks had vacated the nest, it was removed from the tree and measured, weighed, and dismantled.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2004-05

It is a pleasure to provide my second President's report, this time on COG activities for the period November 2004 to the present.

Though I feel there have been more demands on my time, looking back over the past 11 months there seem to have been fewer notable achievements compared with those for the previous year. The reasons for this are unclear, perhaps it's because I'm now better known both to members and those outside of COG. I have also remained very mindful that, while we are a big organisation, it is very easy to overstretch what is possible to be done with largely volunteer work. Therefore I've continued to be cautious to ensure that before we embark on anything new it is carefully examined, particularly the likelihood whether COG can deliver in a timely and professional way.

So it's best described as having been another year of consolidation. When I became president COG was already a very active club, and as can be seen by this report our commitments remain very high with many members, both on and off the committee, continuing to work hard, selflessly and tirelessly. Our work on conservation matters remains very demanding, and continues to be shared by two committee members, with me personally also taking on some of the load. We need to remain vigilant against proposals that often come out of left field, with very short time frames to respond or take action. There appeared to have been no major campaign losses this, as compared to last year, but only yesterday there was the announcement of

the approval of the water skiing trial in East Basin, dressed up as part of an overall "breathing life into the lake" policy, with wide support and diluting our main issue of the potential impact on birds and the Jerrabomberra wetlands.

A definite highlight has been the Woodland Birds seminar held in early June, which attracted an audience well beyond that normally reached by COG, and was very successful in raising the issues. Another major event in June was the relinquishing of COG's office in the old Griffin Centre. The COG committee deliberated long and hard about this decision, but in the end a combination of the cost and location of the accommodation offered in the new Centre and the fact that the office had not been operating as a shopfront for some years forced the decision.

The Pocket Guide: The Birds of Canberra, published just before last year's AGM as part of a joint initiative between COG and Birds Australia, has been very successful as an introduction and a de facto identification guide for local species for ACT residents (and also in attracting new members to COG). The CD of calls and songs of ACT birds launched at last year's AGM has also been very popular and has sold well. Both of these have been reprinted during the year. *The Pocket Guide*, with additional text drafted by Tom Green, has also been mounted on the COG website, allowing visitors wanting to do some birding in Canberra to access it by electronic means or in hard copy.

I reported last year on a project of University of Canberra students to

enable bird observation data to be entered electronically to our database. Unfortunately we were unable, for technical reasons, to proceed with this data input system. After much deliberation I am pleased to report that the committee is now considering a proposal from a professional consultant. I am optimistic that this will be accepted and I hope operational in the course of the next year, as I'm sure that many members will welcome the opportunity to lodge data in this way.

Anyone reading this report will have to be impressed by COG's range of activities and the sheer volume of effort expended by our members. Still there are many things that COG continues not to do. For example, we still have not been able to regularly partake in exhibitions, and it remains a very sad fact that COG continues to do very little specifically to attract younger members, including in the areas of education. This year we have received an increasing number of requests for COG members to talk to interested groups, to lead walks, and to assist students in their bird-related projects — my thanks to Anthony Overs, Chris Davey and Nicki Taws for their assistance in this area. Whether we can increase our profile in these areas in 2005-06 will depend on whether there is some-one to co-ordinate these activities.

Committee

I have again been very well supported by the Committee over the past year. Most committee members are standing again, which is very pleasing, though I remain concerned that we continue to fail to attract "new blood" with fresh ideas and new enthusiasm, as most

members who joined at the last AGM, were co-opted during the year, or who are joining now being "recycled" in the sense that they have previously spent time on the committee.

I would like to especially thank those members who are retiring from committee. For many years Joan Lipscombe has done an excellent job as Treasurer and our Public Officer, but with her husband Trevor is leaving Canberra. On behalf of everyone I'd like to offer our sincere thanks for all the work they have done for COG, including leading trips and campouts, and to wish them all the best for the future. Tanya Rough, who has been the editor of *Ganggang* for the past three years, is also stepping down from this role. Again I'd like to give my sincerest thanks to Tanya for the work she has done so diligently.

Membership was 371 at 30 June 2005, 8.5% up from the same time last year.

Again many members not formally on the committee have helped COG in its daily activities, making a huge contribution to the success of the organisation. It is not possible in this report to individually thank all, and I apologise to those I have inadvertently, or for reasons of space, neglected to mention.

Conservation

COG plays an active role in local bird conservation issues, with Jenny Bounds and Julie McGuinness sharing the workload as Conservation Officers. Jenny also contributes to bird conservation issues through the Conservation Council for the SE Region

and Canberra. This year, we have continued to focus on impacts on birds from various developments, including wind farms, urban developments in and around woodlands and reserve areas, and also the increasing pressures on birds from human activities, such as like water skiing on Lake Burley Griffin near bird breeding areas and the Jerrabomberra wetlands. An emerging issue is the Molonglo Valley, which has a prolific birds of prey population (13 species/11 species breeding) due the mix of habitats around the river corridor, has been identified by the ACT Government as potentially urban and studies are under way to identify areas for future housing. If housing development is to occur there, the COG committee believes this should be limited to the footprint of the burned pine forest areas and should not occur in the remaining woodlands, grasslands and rural lease areas, as this would minimise the impacts on the raptor population and the large assemblage of other birds which occur in the Valley.

Jenny Bounds, with input from Julie McGuinness, drafted a new Conservation page on the COG website, featuring grassy woodlands and threatened birds conservation, and the COG Woodland Bird Monitoring Project, and includes photos of birds of interest/concern by Helen Fallow. This has already proven to be a useful resource for school projects etc, and we propose to add to this page over time.

During the year, COG provided submissions or other input to the following:

- The ACT Planning and Land Authority - Planning System Reform Project: this is a review of the planning and environmental assessment processes in the ACT. COG commented particularly on the failure of the system to protect important woodland bird habitat, and the need for improved environmental assessments.
- The ACT Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and the Environment - Inquiry into Urban Vegetation and Wildlife Corridors: this included comments on the Draft Variation to the Territory Plan in relation to East Gungahlin and the borders of Gorooyaroo Nature Reserve. A key point of concern is the residential development proposed for a neck of land between Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo Reserves (proposed suburb of Throsby) which would intrude into the reserve and create a very long edge effect. COG's view is that this area should not have housing, and if it cannot be incorporated into the reserves, should be used for other purposes as a buffer to the reserves, such as community facilities or a regional botanical garden. COG also recommended that the final planning outcome and reserve boundaries, should be informed by the research project in the reserves which is about to be commenced by ANU/CRES and

the ACT Government. Jenny Bounds for COG briefed the MLAs on the Committee on an inspection of the area and we are hopeful of a good conservation outcome.

- Water Skiing Trial on Lake Burley Griffin: COG wrote to the National Capital Authority expressing concerns about impacts on birds and wildlife in areas proposed, near **Black Mountain** and in turn the East Basin near Jerrabomberra wetlands when the proposed venue moved. COG also met with staff at the NCA to discuss this, opposing the six months trial without a full and public environmental impact assessment.
- Draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan: This raised concerns about impacts on birds at the interface between bush and reserves, impacts on threatened birds, and impacts on species which are largely ground dependent for feeding or nesting or which require a complex ground structure. COG put the view that asset protection zones/ fire protection zones should be outside woodland reserves (like Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo), not within them.
- Impacts on Birds from Wind Farms: COG developed a policy to guide responses on proposals / issues relating to wind farms and bird impacts, and also provided some bird data to inform the assessments. In relation to the proposed Molonglo Range wind farm closest to Canberra COG wrote to the proponents, raising the issue of possible land clearance on some ridges and impacts on Wedge-tailed Eagles near the southern end of Googong Dam. COG expects to be able to visit the site when environmental assessments are more advanced.
- COG wrote to the NSW Government in support of the Goulburn Field Naturalists' efforts to better protect the woodlands around Kenmore Dam just out of Goulburn, which COG members have visited on field trips.
- COG wrote to the NCA following media reports about possible proposals for development around the shores of Lake Burley Griffin (the Griffin legacy), indicating that environmental values needed to be a theme alongside other themes, and that high quality native grasslands and woodland areas on the lake shore needed to be protected.
- Draft Action Plan No 28 - ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy: COG put in a submission on the Draft Strategy, and although there were few bird issues, COG pointed out the importance of connectivity of grasslands with

other ecosystems, some issues for Latham's Snipe which utilises wet grasslands, and the need for cat containment provisions for urban areas abutting new grassland reserves.

- COG communicated with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service regarding their proposals for gradual removal of willows from Jerrabomberra Creek and Kellys Swamp, to ensure this would be sensitive to bird roosting and breeding.
- Proposal for the Tennant Dam in the Naas Valley: COG met with officials from ACTEW to discuss bird issues in the Naas Valley, and the impact of a new dam on woodlands and woodland birds there. COG also provided bird data from its database. COG is pleased that ACTEW/the Government has implemented other more cost effective and environmentally acceptable measures to secure the ACT's water supply for the foreseeable future.
- Jerrabomberra Valley quarry site wetland: COG provided a letter of support for a grant application to prepare a management and rehabilitation plan for this site. COG also agreed to undertake bird surveys at the site.

The above is not fully comprehensive but does give a very good picture of the very broad range of conservation issues

COG faces, with our views often being actively sought.

Field trips

We have continued to run a very active program of field trips, which continue to be very well patronised. I have retained overall responsibility for management of the COG Field Trips, and the 2005 program was devised with the assistance of the Field Trips Team (Jenny Bounds, David McDonald and David Rees). The aim of the program, to offer a wide range of opportunities so that there would be at least some trips that appeal to each member, has continued. The policy of having at least two trips per month, usually a shorter local one followed by one further afield later in the month, supplemented by long weekend campouts etc and some more opportunistic trips arranged flexibly as these arise, was also maintained.

Highlights included the Ben Boyd, Goonoo State Forest and Riverina camp-outs, the accommodated trips to Wee Jasper and Jervis Bay, and the bus tour attempting to locate in one day all seven robin species that occur in Canberra. Some new places were visited such as the overnight camp-out at Frogs Hole Creek at Frogmore and the local Cuumbeun Nature Reserve. We continued our links with like-minded organisations, holding another outing with the Goulburn Field Naturalists and a very successful joint trip to Brooks Hill Reserve with the Canberra Field Naturalists. We have also continued to run the very important and popular beginners' walks. We continue to be very fortunate in that as far as I can recall in my four years that

I've been involved with the field trips program we have never cancelled due to inclement weather. The closest we came this year was the birding by bike tour of Lake Burley Griffin, which a hardy few completed despite the heavy showers and the leader having to cope with successive punctured tyres.

My commitment to the program for the past four years, including managing it for three of these (two of which I have also been President), is testament to my view of the importance of field trips in the spectrum of COG's activities. They help members learn about birds, visit places that they otherwise may not get to, and are important social events that also emphasise conservation aspects. My thanks again to all those who helped lead and organise outings during the year and who wrote up reports of trips for *Gang-gang* and on the chat line - we look forward to your continued assistance,. However, after four years I feel it is time for some new blood and fresh ideas to take over this role. I am finding it increasingly hard to wear the two hats. and are strongly of the view that my priorities should be to leading this organisation in what I expect will be my final year as President.

Communications and publications

Tanya Rough continued to do a wonderful job editing and publishing our newsletter, *Gang-gang*, and Lia Battisson and her team of helpers continued to wrap and mail it. Thanks to all involved for ensuring that the major vehicle for COG communication was prepared and distributed in such a timely fashion.

Harvey Perkins and Barbara Allan continued to edit our quarterly journal, *Canberra Bird Notes*. This has included some very topical articles about birds in our region, including the Glossy Black-Cockatoos on Mt Majura, the Lewin's Rail in Commonwealth Park, the influx of swift parrots into the ACT and raptor breeding in the Canberra region Thanks again to all those who contributed to CBN.

David Cook maintained, updated and considerably expanded COG's web site w h i c h i s n o w <http://www.canberrabirds.org.au>. The website presents information about COG meetings and field trips as reported in *Gang-gang*, together with other useful information about COG and its activities such as maps of some of our most visited places. The electronic *Gang-gang* is no longer emailed to e-subscribers but is instead available for download from the website, or alternatively viewable as web pages. Recent additions include an annotated electronic version of the pocket guide "*The Birds of Canberra*", and a section on "Caring for Woodland Birds". Further enhancements include a summary of recent bird sightings around Canberra and an online COG records database for entry of sightings and searches. Thank you David for providing such an excellent service.

The website's Photo-gallery (<http://photogallery.canberrabirds.org.au>), where subscribers can submit and view a range of images of birds from our region, including topical local rarities, continues to expand . We have had over 20 requests from as far afield as the Royal Parks Service in the UK for the use of some of these images.

Feedback I've had is that people find these useful as surrogate field guides.

COG's email discussion list 'canberrabirds', managed by David McDonald, continued to operate effectively throughout the year. The subscriber membership has been fairly steady at about 180 subscribers, a 12 per cent increase on last year, and averages about five messages per day, providing a very useful forum for members and friends of COG to discuss topical issues relating to birds and birding in the Canberra region. It continues to serve as an excellent way to rapidly disseminate reports of interesting sightings in the local region. I must again congratulate all subscribers for keeping the list so free of the personal vitriol that seems to characterise some other similar lists.

Atlas, Woodland Survey, Garden Bird Survey, Waterbird Survey, Databases

COG runs a number of bird monitoring projects, some of which have been operating for many years. I would like to thank all those who have continued to contribute data to these projects. As part of Birds Australia's Ongoing Atlas project, COG members are still encouraged to collect records for COG's area of interest, especially at regular 2-hectare sites. While the effort continues to be lower than when the data was being collected for the Atlas published in 2003, it remains very important to collect these data over time. I hope to raise the profile for atlassing in 2005-06, including through the introduction of the well-publicised blitz during Bird Week this October. Development of a system to

allow electronic submission of data should also help in this regard.

Woodland Bird Monitoring Project: COGS Woodland Project which monitors birds in grassy woodlands is now officially in its eighth year, although systematic surveys have occurred at Mulligans Flat NR for ten. We now have thirteen locations with 126 monitoring points in the three key woodland corridors in the ACT, with another site, Kama in the Molonglo Valley south of Belconnen, recently added to the Project. This is an important site on the western fringe of urban Canberra, with several threatened/of concern bird species. COG has been able to secure ACT Government funding for this Project since its inception in 1998, and was successful in its application for \$13,150 for 2005-06; these funds enable COG to employ specialists such as a statistician and consultant to analyse data and provide reports and for other specialist advice. During the year, COG commissioned an analysis of data for 61 species of birds, and a final report is expected soon from the consultants (Alison Rowell and Ross Cunningham). This long-term Project is starting to provide important data on the state of our woodland birds from common to threatened species. Some material from the current data analysis has been prepared for the Birds Australia State of Australia's Birds series to be published soon on woodland birds. Jenny Bounds (Convenor), Jack Holland and Nicki Taws manage the Project.

In June 2005, COG in collaboration with the ACT Government's Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit and the

Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CRES) ANU, hosted a public seminar, funded through the Woodland project grant, entitled 'Woodlands for Wildlife - Recovery for our Birds' at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, Black Mountain. Jenny Bounds coordinated this very successful event in celebration of World Environment Day, attracting around 190 attendees, to promote awareness of ACT and regional woodland birds issues and current research. We received very good publicity for the event and woodland birds issues in the Canberra Times. COG's Woodland Bird Monitoring Project featured amongst the presentations, as well as speakers from CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Birds Australia, and ANU/CRES. One of Australia's leading ornithologists and COG member, Dr Richard Schodde, chaired the Seminar, with the Panel Discussion chaired by the ACT Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Rosemary Purdie.

I'd like to thank David Rosalky who has taken on the task of managing the Garden Bird Survey with Martin Butterfield's departure. Also my warm thanks go to Kay Hahne for continuing to enter the data, a huge task, especially as the number of chartists increases. This major project is now in its 25th year and is our longest running monitoring project. It is used increasingly by researchers and its results used to support policy submissions. Charts for 2005-06 have been distributed, mainly at COG monthly meetings, and last year's collected. The numbers and coverage of the charts is expanding slowly. The Review of the Survey foreshadowed last year, and which is aimed at ensuring that

it keeps up with developments in technology and science, is expected to get underway in the coming year once David has worked his way through his first GBS input for the Annual Bird Report.

Thanks go to Paul Fennell and David Rosalky who continue to manage COG's databases, as well as those members who assisted with data checking during the year.

The Rarities Panel continued to meet quarterly to consider, and endorse for publication where appropriate, records of unusual species seen in COG's area of concern. It also continuously reviews the status of birds in our area and periodically issues a revised list of 'unusual' species. This year the Panel appointed two consultants, Dick Schodde and Penny Olsen, while Nicki Taws was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Panel.

Annual Bird Report

Many thanks to Barbara Allan, Martin Butterfield, Grahame Clark, Malcolm Fyfe, Ian McMahan, Harvey Perkins, David Purchase and Nicki Taws and others who produced the 2003-04 Annual Bird Report in time for publication in the March issue of CBN. Many thanks are also due to Martin Butterfield and Paul Fennell who retrieved and collated the data for the authors. I would like to congratulate the team for putting it all together despite one potentially major hiccup. It is very important that the ABR is published as soon as possible after the reporting year has finished, in order to allow feedback to contributors and to provide the earliest indication of any

trends or changes in the ACT's bird populations.

Monthly meetings

Barbara Allan has again organised an excellent program of presentations for our monthly meetings. These included well-attended presentations on raptor breeding in the ACT, on owls of the world and on research into the eccentricities of the Pheasant Coucal. My thanks again go to all speakers. The reports in *Gang-gang* and on the COG website written by Sue Lashko every month attest to the quality of our presentations at meetings. Special thanks also to Carol Macleay and her numerous helpers for running the monthly stall and raffle at COG meetings, and to Barbara Allan for organising the refreshments.

COG administration and the COG office

COG relinquished its office in the old Griffin Centre in June. It had served a useful purpose, particularly as a repository for our records and equipment, but was no longer being used as a drop-in centre, and a move to the new Griffin Centre was beyond our reach, financially. Our office now operates from a separately-accessible room in our secretary's home, where our records, library and some equipment are stored. Access is by arrangement with the secretary, or any of the COG executive in her absence. Our camping and display equipment and archival records are held in storage in Belconnen and again, may be accessed by arrangement with any of the executive. Many thanks to the many COG members

who assisted in cleaning out the office and relocating it on a very wet Sunday in June

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

The Canberra Birds Conservation Fund is able to receive tax-deductible donations from COG members and the general public, and uses the donated money on activities that help to achieve COG's environmental objectives, especially promoting the conservation of the Canberra region's native birds and their habitats. Members give generously to this fund and are encouraged to continue to do so. Ms Suzi Bond was the Fund's second grantee. Her study has been completed and some of its findings were presented to COG's 2004 'Woodlands for Wildlife: Recovery for our Birds' seminar. Her presentation was titled 'Bringing breeding birds back: a study of birds breeding in re-vegetation sites'. She has also given seminar presentations on this work and is currently preparing a paper for publication, based on her Fund-supported project. The Fund's Committee of management is currently assessing two new applications and developing a strategy to more actively solicit donations from members of the public.

Conclusion

would like to thank everyone else who has provided me with assistance over the past year and look forward to another active year guiding this very worthy organisation.

Jack Holland, 12 October 2005

CANBERRA BIRDS CONSERVATION FUND REPORT

The Canberra Birds Conservation Fund (CBCF) was established for the purpose of supporting the Canberra Ornithologists Group's environmental objectives by receiving and disbursing tax deductible donations. COG's environmental objectives are 'to promote the conservation of native birds and their habitats', with particular reference to the native birds and their habitats in the Canberra region.

The specific environmental objectives of the Fund are:

1. to encourage interest in, and develop knowledge of, the birds of the Canberra region;
2. to promote and co-ordinate the study of birds; and,
3. to promote the conservation of native birds and their habitats.

The Fund has a Committee of Management the members of which are Geoffrey Dabb, David McDonald and Dr Penny Olsen. A fourth member will be appointed soon to replace one who has resigned.

The Committee of Management is very pleased with the extent of attainment of sound environmental outcomes as a result of Fund activities. Its standard conditions of grant are specifically designed to promote these by including the following conditions:

- the grant be acknowledged in any publications based on the project to which the grant makes a contribution;

- grant recipients undertake to make a presentation to a monthly meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group; and,
- grant recipients agree that the Fund may, in consultation with recipients, refer to its support of their projects in the Fund's fund-raising activities.

These conditions help to disseminate the outcomes of funded activities and stimulate further environmental and conservation activities as a result.

The Fund's first grant recipient was Adrian Manning of the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University. The grant he received supported his doctoral research into the Superb Parrot in the Canberra region. Many COG members will have heard about the progress and results of his research as presented to COG monthly meetings. Adrian has recently been awarded his PhD and has been active publishing, consulting and giving lectures — both scholarly and to lay people — on the outcomes of his Fund-supported research into the habitat needs of the endangered Superb Parrot.

During the year Adrian made a significant input to the ACT Government's new Woodlands Strategy, with respect to the Superb Parrot, an important environmental outcome of his Fund-supported research. Furthermore, he has participated in a number of consultations and planning activities, run by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, regarding Superb Parrot conservation.

The activities of the Fund's second grantee, Suzi Bond, have also contributed to valuable environmental outcomes in line with the environmental objectives of the Fund. The grant supported her Honours research and her degree has been awarded. In June 2005, Suzi participated in COG's public seminar, held at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, Canberra, titled 'Woodlands for Wildlife: Recovery for our Birds'. Suzi gave a presentation on 'Bringing breeding birds back: a study of birds breeding in re-vegetation sites'. This is the project supported by the Fund. It was an excellent way to promote to the interested public and the media lessons learned about revegetation outcomes.

Suzi has also given seminar presentations on this work at ANU's School of Resources, Environment and Society, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems and COG, and is currently preparing a paper for publication based on her Fund-supported project.

The Fund has recently resolved to make two additional grants. One is to Chris Davey to support his and colleagues research into the re-establishment of the Superb Lyrebird in the Tidbinbilla

Nature Reserve following the destruction of their habitat in the January 2003 bushfires. The other is to Dr Janet Gardner of the School of Botany & Zoology at ANU to support the publication of important new research findings concerning the Speckled Warbler in the ACT.

The Fund welcomes applications for financial support of projects that fall within its environmental objectives detailed above. Two grants of up to \$1,500 each will be available between now and June 2006. Applications that meet all three of the Fund's conservation objectives will be particularly favoured, especially those with a focus on the Canberra region.

Furthermore, members and friends of COG, and the wider community, are encouraged to make donations to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund. These donations are tax deductible. For further information, please contact the Fund's convener, David McDonald, phone (02) 6231 8904, email conservation.fund@canberrabirds.org.au.

David McDonald, CBCF convener,

October 2005

CD REVIEW

Four Seasons of the Bush Capital — a four-CD set

Compiled and presented by Ian Fraser; published by ABC Audio Enterprises [2004]. \$40.95.

Name a bird that sometimes winters in New Guinea, digs a 90-cm long nesting burrow, and uses young helpers for breeding. It eats dragonflies as well as other insects, and closes its eyes when swallowing its prey so it doesn't get venom in them. It was once declared a noxious pest in Queensland and one of its folk-names is 'Gold-digger'.

If you don't know the answer, you can find it in these CDs, along with a whole lot more varied and fascinating information put together and presented by Ian Fraser.

For the last 13 years, Fraser, a local naturalist well-known to most COG members, has been appearing fortnightly on ABC local radio 666 to offer information and answer listeners' questions about all aspects of natural history in our region.

In recent years, in addition to this record feat, Ian has also written and produced 160 episodes of 'Around Your Bush Capital', an irregular series of natural history snippets, broadcast by 666 at odd moments of the day.

The unpredictability of these 'airings' has made fans of the series long for them to be more accessible. And the ABC finally obliged late last year, gathering a collection of the snippets into this four-CD set, available from ABC shops and

bookshops including the one at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The collection comprises one CD for each season of the year. On each CD are approximately 20 segments, chosen by the ABC from a possible 40 for the relevant season. Each segment deals with a different topic: goshawks, say, or scorpions, or kangaroo grass. Just under half the segments are about birds; the rest cover mammals (including marsupials and bats), reptiles and frogs, insects and spiders, as well as trees, flowers, grasses and fungi.

Fraser has the ability to put over his material in such a way as to be accessible to the novice and informative to the enthusiast, yet to still hold some interest for the expert. This is at least in part due to his wide-ranging interests, his 'Renaissance man' way of looking at his topics. If his topic is lilies, for example, he will describe in detail the local beauties. But then he will also give the lily origins of words such as 'florin' and 'bourse', and tell of the phenomenal buying power of a single tulip in 16th century Holland or of the strike by workers in Ancient Greece over onions. Similarly, when he tells you about cormorants, you hear not only about the different species, their appearance and habits, the derivation of their name, and why they need to dry their wings, but also about the history of their economic usefulness as working birds in Britain as well as China, and as producers of guano, not just in Peru but in Shark Bay, WA.

The duration of the items ranges from just over two minutes to just over five, and if you're wondering how the range of information mentioned above can fit into such short time-spans, you may also be fearing that it will be a case of too many words spoken too fast. Not so! — Fraser's style of delivery is measured, clear and very easy to listen to. His enthusiasm does occasionally trip him into speeding up, but never so much that clarity is sacrificed. His cheerful and expressive voice is heard against a background of birdsong, bush sounds or flowing water, and these are successful in creating atmosphere without being intrusive.

There are very few things to criticise. I could complain that the birdsong recordings are not long enough, but that might be unreasonable for a series trying to make the most of a very short time. I could say I came to dread the guitar music that heralds the end of most segments, but that was only because I didn't want the segment to end. Nitpickers immune to Fraser's sense of humour might say he almost lapses into anthropomorphism at times, but he does it in an inoffensive way that engages and entertains and is part of the charm. My only major disappointment was that the recording offered of the White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea* did not quite convey that typical gorgeous cascade of notes.

I also had some slight reservation about the current accuracy of some of Fraser's descriptions of the flora and fauna to be found in the local ranges, given the devastation caused by the fires of 2003, and the fact that these recordings were originally made before that time.

However, in view of the regeneration we have witnessed in the springs and summers since then, perhaps that reservation is, or will very soon be, unfounded.

Those familiar with the series may be a little disappointed by what is *not* on the CDs. Topics covered in the original broadcasts included other aspects of natural history, such as fire, geology, conservation and some history of exploration and discovery in Australia. The South Coast region was also originally included as being of great interest to Canberrans. Sadly, the ABC has chosen to limit the selection to animals and plants of the ACT.

Having said all that, these are minor issues compared with the excellence of the whole. Like all good science educators, Fraser informs, enthuses and inspires his listener, with a wealth of information and a gentle sense of humour, and his snippets very much repay repeated listening.

So, if you're already a fan of these little programs, this collection should delight you. If, like me, you find that the need to earn a living often interferes with your ability to listen to interesting radio, they are a worthwhile investment. And if you have relatives or friends who take an interest in things biological and entertaining, what better Christmas present?

And by the way, did you get Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*?

Jeannie Gray

10 Wybalena Grove, Cook, ACT 2614

COLUMNISTS' CORNER

The views expressed in these columns are those of the columnists, and do not necessarily reflect the views of COG.

Canberra for non-Canberrans: a birder's-eye view

The local birdwatching community has a fair old output of written material, what with *Gang-gang*, *Canberra Bird Notes*, COG's website and email chatgroup, and a stream of contributions to other publications. It has occurred to Stentoreus from time to time that some non-Canberrans might get from this only a hazy idea, if any at all, of what 'Canberra' is, from a bird point of view so to speak.

To begin to understand this, two other geographical concepts must be put to one side. First, Canberra is in — almost bursting out of the northern corner of — something called the 'Australian Capital Territory', a curiously shaped area of 2,432 square kilometres, its boundaries originally conceived for reasons of water supply. The ACT has no particular significance to bird observing except to persons who like to tick or sort birds on the basis of their occurrence within arbitrary political boundaries.

Then there is a much larger area, including — but several times larger than — the ACT, known as the COG 'area of interest' (AOI. To be frank, this, politically, is mainly New South Wales, but is used by COG as a matter of convenience for bird reporting and recording purposes.

Neither the ACT nor the COGAOI is 'Canberra'. As there are no fixed city

limits of Canberra, one way to look at it would be to say that Canberra is the northern corner of the ACT that happens to be built on. A difficulty with this is that there are several areas that are not built on, such as Lake Burley Griffin, the sweeping expanse in front of the National Parliament, and Royal Canberra Golf Course, that most people would think were definitely part of Canberra.

The extremities of the built area of Canberra extend about 36 km north to south and 15 km east to west. If superimposed on Sydney, for example, it would stretch from Hornsby to Sylvania Waters and from Campsie to Bondi. However, the city is not a filled-in rectangle, but a shape difficult to describe, perhaps a folded ink-splodge with the fold lying along Lake Burley Griffin and the east-west course of the Molonglo River.

The built area is made up of many quite small tracts designated, perhaps a little bravely, as 'suburbs'. All parts of the built area of Canberra are within one suburb or another, except Capital Hill where the Parliament House is. The Governor-General lives in a suburb called Yarralumla, which is also the name of his house. The Prime Minister would live in a suburb called Deakin, if he lived in Canberra.

However, the suburbs do not constitute the whole of Canberra because they do not include the larger reserved areas,

some densely wooded, that lie between and next to them.

To indicate distances, the home of the National Parliament (PH) might be taken as a central point. The following birdy spaces are within a mere 7 km of PH:

- all of Lake Burley Griffin (LBG) and its contiguous open spaces, e.g. Commonwealth Park and Weston Park;
- Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the floodplain at the head of LBG, including a semi-permanent pond called Kellys Swamp - about half-way between PH and the airport;
- Fyshwick Sewage Ponds (FSP);
- the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) on the lower east slopes of Black Mountain;
- several hilltop and hill-slope 'nature parks': Campbell Park and the adjoining Mount Ainslie Park, Black Mountain, Aranda Bushland, Red Hill, Mount Mugga Mugga, most of the Isaacs-O'Malley Ridge, Callum Brae (until recently a grazing lease);
- 'Newline' - a woodland/grassland beneath the Canberra airport flight path, being former holding paddocks of a defunct abattoirs and now mainly under grazing licence.

Some of those bushland areas, and some further afield, are regarded as so integrally part of Canberra, as the national capital, that they are 'designated' as under the overlapping control of a national agency (the 'National Capital Authority') as well as of the ACT Government. To non-Canberrans, this might seem like bureaucratic extremism, but Australians seem to like complicated administrative

arrangements, perhaps because they live with a complicated federal system.

Now, to the practical implications of an undefined 'Canberra': to say *This is the first sighting of a Crested Chat in Canberra* is not only imprecise about where the bird was sighted, but fails to disclose the precise area where no other Crested Chat had been seen previously.

The expression 'Canberra region' could mean anything. The following statement appears on COG's own website: 'Canberra and the surrounding region has the richest bird life of any Australian capital city — over two hundred species have been recorded here.' In that context, it doesn't matter much what 'Canberra' is, because with the even vaguer 'surrounding region' it forms something incapable of meaningful comparison with any other 'Australian capital city', however that other city chooses to define itself. There is no way that the Guinness Book of Records would put up with this kind of sloppiness.

Ad hoc area definitions are to be encouraged in the interests of clarity, but surely it would be possible to have an off-the-shelf definition of geographic Canberra, at least for the limited purpose of documenting what bird life occurs within it.

There are several possibilities. One, unlikely to appeal to the politically disaffected, would be to use an area within a specified radius of PH, say 10, 15 or 20 kilometres. Another would be to use, as a boundary, lines joining the outermost limits of existing and planned suburbs. The latter approach,

unfortunately, would leave out some significant contiguous areas, including the northern reserve known as Mulligans Flat, a favourite nature park of many Canberra birdwatchers; that sits like a precarious cap on the burgeoning suburbs of Gungahlin.

An issue that must be faced is whether the New South Wales city of Queanbeyan should be included. Canberra-Queanbeyan (like Albury-Wodonga) is treated as one population centre for certain purposes of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and Queanbeyan is closer to PH than Canberra suburbs in the extreme north and south. Moreover, a detached Canberra suburb, Oaks Estate, adjoins Queanbeyan, being separated only by a railway line.

However, Queanbeyan is under a different administration for environment and other land-use purposes, and just how far, and in what direction, Queanbeyan's own housing sprawl is likely to extend is anybody's guess. Therefore, my geographic Canberra will be limited to the ACT. Having regard to various factors that it would be tedious to list here, I would demarcate it as follows:

Canberra is the northern part of the ACT, bounded as follows:

- in the south-west by the left bank of the Murrumbidgee River (only 13 km from PH at its nearest point, and 22 km at the furthest relevant point) [That demarcation will take in a facility with the Canberraesque title of 'The Lower Molonglo Water Control Centre'. This, the sewage works, while rather fortress-like and

not as bird-friendly as most of its kind, might be thought of as essentially part of Canberra as a community];

- in the south by latitude 35° 30' S (just south of the historic Lanyon homestead and north of the patently rural Tharwa village); and
- in the east by the Queanbeyan-Sutton Road (east of the airfield and starting just 10 km east of PH).

That area would take in all presently planned suburban development. It is entirely coincidental that it is roughly the shape of Greenland, although rather smaller, being about 40 km along the longer (north/south) axis and 30 km along the shorter. It includes a remarkable range of habitats, although the only wet forest is an artificial, but bird-attracting, fragment in the ANBG.

It is still a smallish area by comparison with many cities. But it is a place, dear non-Canberran and other-capital-city-dweller, from which the bustard might have vanished, but where the Wedge-tailed Eagle nests, and where, even within those DESIGNATED AREAS UNDER THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PLAN, the Regent Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater and Glossy Black-Cockatoo have done so within recent memory.

A. stentoreus

Birding in cyberspace, Canberra-style

Over the October 2005 long weekend COG visited, among other places, the wonderful Fivebough Swamp on the outskirts of Leeton, NSW. This wetland, managed by the Fivebough and

Tuckerbil Wetlands Trust appropriate

<http://www.fivebough.org.au/> is a Ramsar site.

(source: [http://www.ramsar.org/about/about_info pack 2e.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/about/about_info_pack_2e.htm)).

What, some readers may ask, is a Ramsar site? The answer is provided at the web site of the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** <http://www.ramsar.org/>. There it is explained that 'The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources'.

The site contains 'The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance' of which 64 are found in Australia. There is one in the ACT, the Ginini Flats Subalpine Bog Complex which was added in 1996. Others reasonably close are Fivebough and Tuckerbill Swamps as mentioned above, added in just 2002, and Blue Lake in Kosciuszko National Park, added in 1996. The scope of the treaty is quite wide, not restricted to waterbird sites as I initially understood.

The official name of the treaty — *The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat* — reflects its original emphasis on the conservation and wise use of wetlands primarily to provide habitat for waterbirds. Over the years, however, the Convention has broadened its scope to cover all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognizing wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation in general and for the well-being of human communities. For this reason, the increasingly common use of the short form of the treaty's title, the 'Convention on Wetlands', is entirely

The **Wedge-tailed Eagle** is Australia's largest bird species, with a wingspan of 2.3 m and weighing up to 4.2 kg. A magnificent sight at any time (so long as they are not full of lead and wired to a fence!), seeing them up close is something special. Steve Clark from Hamilton, Vic., a correspondent on the national email-based birding announcement and discussion list Birding-Aus, recently told of a close encounter:

I've rarely been out lately for various reasons but took the opportunity yesterday to check a few of my regular spots in the Victoria Valley (Grampians, western Victoria). At Bryan Swamp there were three Wedge-tailed Eagles on the lake shore that took off as I walked towards the water. Two soared off into the distance but one repeatedly flew over me at close range. Only about 2/3rds of the bird fitted into my 8x binocular view so someone clever might be able to figure out how close it was. It was eyeballing me the whole time but wasn't threatening - just curious I guess. Quite a sight.

Your columnist is not a bird taxonomist, but nonetheless tries hard to remember the official English language names for bird species, and their spellings. As a result, I am fascinated by the outbreak of appearances on the web of the **Hooded Robyn**. Now, the Hooded Robin is a species of special interest in the ACT, being classified here as 'vulnerable'. But the Hooded Robyn? Environment ACT has a fact sheet on this species, found online at

<http://www.environment.act.gov.au/Files/hoodedrobiniinformationssheet.pdf>. Apparently this species is also found at Chiltern, Victoria,

<http://www.tourisminternet.com.au/chbirdo1.htm> - Particular%20Species and an American web site,

<http://www.gobirdwatching.com> also mentions it. A new species for our lists?

On a more serious note, it is worth reporting on a changing of the guard at **Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge** <http://www.birdwatchers.com.au/> near Julatten, Far North Queensland. Although distant from the Australian Capital Territory, it has been for many years a favourite spot for Canberra birders to visit, especially when it is time to escape our winter for a few weeks in the wet tropics. In June this year Ron Stannard, the Park's operator, a fine birder and generous host, advised Birding-Aus subscribers that he was calling it a day:

G'Day All,

It is with a tinge of sadness that I write this to say that I intend to retire this year, mainly to spend more quality time with my family, plant trees, watch birds, cook meals, do the housework and hopefully fit in a trip or two. My two very good friends, Keith & Lindsay Fisher will take over the reins from me in July 2005. For those of you that do not know Keith & Lindsay I will give you a brief outline. Both these people have been actively involved with Birds Australia Nth Qld for many years, in fact they are the driving force behind the Nth Qld group, they are very experienced bird watchers and photographers, have travelled extensively throughout Aust birdwatching and are excellent guides. Keith finished a degree in ornithology

last year so has a lot of scientific birding information available if needed. In leaving I would like to thank all the wonderful people that have visited Kingfisher Park, the long lasting companionship and friendship of the birdwatching fraternity, and for all those on Birding-aus for their postings, reports, humour and data. For all of the reasons above this is what has made my presence here these last 10 years so enjoyable. My home is directly behind the Park so please call in, the billy is always on. I thank everybody and hope to see you all again in the near future, either on the wallaby or at the Park when I am helping out.

Safe Trips, Good Birding and please stay healthy, Regards, Ron Stannard

The end of one era and the beginning of another at Kingfisher Park.

It is true that your columnist is somewhat obsessed (hmm, an oxymoron?) with digital technology. So when I heard about this one I began to twitch. Yes, friends, the **Song Sleuth Digital Birdsong Detective** is now on the market; details at

<http://www.wildlifeacoustics.com/songsleuth>. This is what it does.

Song Sleuth is the most exciting birding aid to come along ever. It's the only device that lets you identify birdsongs in the field in real time. Just power-up and aim Song Sleuth in the direction of a birdsong. In seconds, the software analyzes, identifies and rank-orders the prime suspects and displays the results...There's never been a birdsong detective like Song Sleuth. It's not a mere birdsong dictionary or flashcard pack. It's a totally new high-tech tool for birders at all levels (source: *loc. cit.*).

The web site contains, among other things, videos demonstrating the Song Sleuth in operation. They show that you do not need to see the bird, just point the Song Sleuth in the direction of the call and *voila*, the readout tells you the three most likely suspects. You can download different song files with the species covered by geographical area or in group of families. The only downside that I could see (apart from the price, 'starting from US\$400') is that it covers North American birds only.

A **Birding-Aus** correspondent,

commenting on this new must-have item, reminded us of **Roberts' Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa: PDA Version**

<http://www.sabirding.co.za/rmm/pda.htm>

It is described thus:

This PDA version of Roberts' Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa is the ultimate electronic field guide. In the palm of your hand are all the essential modules, functionality and multimedia data of the PC version. Included are family pages, bird pages, bird calls, bird lists and personal lists, identification of birds, sounds, nests and eggs, and details of over 270 birding spots and lists. Price R 6 0 0 (s o u r c e : <http://www.sabirding.co.za/rmm/pda.htm>)

The Birding-Aus correspondent said that 'it runs on a Pocket PC running PC2003...and plays bird calls very effectively; it is fantastic in the field'. I wonder if anyone is working on a similar PDA-based (i.e. hand-held computer-based) field guide to Australian birds? It would be a simple matter, one would think, to convert the *Simpson & Day's CD birds of Australia* to a PDA version.

Birders often discuss **handedness**, especially with respect to cockatoos. 'Handedness' is defined as 'the preference for using one hand over the other', according to the first result from googling 'define:handiness'. 'Footedness' is a term also used in this context. Queenslander Chris Anderson recently raised handedness cum footedness on Birding-Aus:

I recently spent a week on private property near Bourke NSW. I don't see too many Major Mitchell Cockatoos here in Warwick Qld so I was comfortable with 'wasting' part of an afternoon observing a group of 11 feeding on the ground. They were feeding by picking up the trefoil burrs with their beaks, then transferring the burr to their claw so they could then pull the spiral burr apart to get at the seeds. Without variation, each one held the burr in its left claw. For about an hour I observed them and I saw no evidence of right handedness in any of the birds. Are they natural lefties or could they be a family group where the technique is passed from one generation to the next?

Alan Gillanders responded that 'Swamphens are about 98% left-footed, Lumholtz's Tree-roos are all left-footed and Green Ringtail Possums are about 80% left-footed'. John Reidy usefully complicated the issue (watch it, your columnist is a post-modernist) asking 'Are the marsupials front left footed or rear left footed? Humans might be mostly right handed, but mostly left footed?'

Another correspondent drew our attention to a recently-published article on the topic: Snyder, P.J., Harris, L.J., Ceravolo, N., & Bonner, J.A. (1996), 'Are Psittacines an appropriate animal

model of handedness in humans?', *Brain and Cognition*, 32, 208-11. The abstract reads:

Past studies have suggested that parrots may be unique among animals in showing limb preference (footedness) that is similar to human handedness. Most of these studies, however, have relied on relatively small samples of genera from different zoographical regions, and few have sought to control for certain variables that could influence foot preference. We therefore employed a standardized repeated-measures method for assessment of footedness and collected data on 522 parrots from several species. After controlling for several potential modifying variables, our results indicate that, at the population level, only Australasian parrots may provide a true animal model of human handedness.

From time to time a book appears that is a must-read. You may nominate Penny Olsen's *Feather and brush: three centuries of Australian bird art*, CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2001, but my target for this year's Christmas stocking is, without doubt, what people are calling '**Doors book**': Dooley, S., *The big twitch: one man, one continent and a race against time - a true story about birdwatching*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2005. It is described by the publisher thus:

One man's quest to realise a boyhood dream and break a national record.

Sean Dooley seems like a well adjusted, functioning member of society but beneath the respectable veneer he harbours a dark secret. He is a hard-core birdwatcher (aka 'twitcher').

Sean takes a year off to try to break the Australian twitching record - he has to see more than 700 birds in twelve months. Travelling the length and breadth of Australia, he stops at nothing in search of this birdwatching Holy Grail, blowing his inheritance, his career prospects and any chance he has of finding a girlfriend.

Part confessional, part travelogue, this is a true story about obsession. It's about seeking the meaning of life, trying to work out what 'normal' is, and searching for the elusive Grey Falcon (the bird, not the car). Sean's story of how he followed his childhood dream of becoming a national champion is both inspiring and ridiculous. Could this be the most pathetic great achievement in Australian history?

Surely there is no Australian birder who would not love to receive a copy of this volume as a gift? It will appeal to both those of us who get a real thrill from adding just one more species to our life lists, and to those who abhor our obsession with that one more tick. You can say 'tsk, tsk!' Read for yourself how Dools deals with this conflict.

Have a great time birding in our wonderfully damp, green, drought-broken Canberra spring!

Details on how to subscribe to *BirdingAus*, the Australian birding email discussion list, are on the web at <http://www.birding-aus.org/>. A comprehensive searchable archive of the messages posted to the list is at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus>.

To join the *CanberraBirds* email discussion list, send an empty email message to

canberrabirds-subscribe@canberabirds.org.au

The list's searchable archive is at

<http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds>.

RARITIES PANEL NEWS

As the more astute among you will have noticed, the Rarities Panel secretary included a number of endorsed rarities in Endorsed List 64 for the second time. What she had intended to do was to include *the other half* of the missing endorsed list. She has included them, on this occasion. Humblest apologies to all concerned. Your records are valuable and, if initially not included, will always be picked up in subsequent checks. If for any reason you have submitted an unusual bird report and have not heard

from the Panel within a reasonable time frame, please contact the secretary.

The Little Button-quail is clearly the most extraordinary of this group of 'unusuals', being last reported in 1988. It was found by Mark Clayton's daughter, injured under a window in Amaroo, some several hundred metres from farmland and was briefly caught by a cat. After Mark inspected it and determined it was probably a female, the bird was released at the back of Holt.

ENDORSED LIST 65

(The catch-up list)

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

1; 9 Aug 98; Peter Marsack; Kellys Swamp GrL14

Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris*

1; 31 Oct 03; Jack Holland; Chapman GrI15

Turquoise Parrot *Neophema pulchella* escapee

1; 13 Nov 03; Mike Arthur; Queanbeyan GrN15

Chestnut-rumped Heathwren *Hylacola pyrrhopygia*

1; 27 Apr 03; Marnix Zwankhuizen; Tinderry Rd GrN24

Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*

1; 26 Oct 03; Eric Meijaard; ANBG GrKI3

Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta*

1; 22 Nov 03; Jenny Bounds; Caloola Farm, Naas Valley GrJ23

(The current list)

Little Button-quail *Turnix velox*

1; 22 Mar 05; Mark Clayton; Edith Place, Amaroo GrL11

Black Falcon *Falco subniger*

1; 6 Apr 05; Steve Holliday; Barton Hway, Murrumbateman GrI06

1; 2 Jun 05; Jack Holland; Narrabundah Hill GrI15

Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris*

1; 19 Aug 05; Richard Allen; Peacock Place, Curtin GrJ14

Yellow-crowned Parrakeet *Cyanoramphus auriceps* escapee

1; 23 Dec 04; Jean Geue; Juwin St, Aranda GrJ13

Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis*

1; 25 Nov 04; Tom Green; Goorooyaroo NR GrN 12

Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis*

1; 3 Sep 05; Richard Allen; Peacock Place, Curtin GrJ14

COG has closed its office in the Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, Civic. Office functions are now carried out at the secretary's residence. Access to the library and equipment loans can be arranged by emailing cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au or by telephoning the secretary on 6254 6520.

Canberra Bird Notes is published by the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc and is edited by Harvey Perkins and Barbara Allan. Major articles of up to 5000 words are welcome on matters of the distribution, identification or behaviour of birds occurring in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding area. Contributions on these topics should be sent to Harvey Perkins, 42 Summerland Circuit, Kambah ACT 2902, or via email to cbn@canberrabirds.org.au. Short notes, book reviews and other contributions should be sent to Barbara Allan, 47 Hannaford Street, Page ACT 2614 or to the above email address. If you would like to discuss your proposed article in advance, please feel free to contact Harvey on 6231 8209 or Barbara on 6254 6520.

Please note that the views expressed in the articles published in *Canberra Bird Notes* are those of the authors; they do not necessarily represent the views of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Responses to the views expressed in *CBN* articles are always welcomed and will be considered for publication as letters to the editors.

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