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# CANBERRA BIRD NOTES

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## EDITORIAL

The COG Committee for 1982 stands at 13 members which is equal to the second largest it has been since COG was first formed in 1970. This is a very encouraging sign especially when one considers the range of responsibilities undertaken by the various COG Committee members and their assistants. COG now has office bearers, responsible for Conservation, Education, Publications and Records which early on were not required by COG committees. For the first time we now have a full time Newsletter Editor. All these trends illustrate the point that COG is expanding its role into new areas of ornithology.

We are bringing ornithology and an appreciation of birds and birdwatching to the general public through our activities, annual SGAP shows, Environment Fairs and Botanic Gardens walks, etc. We are expressing an active concern in bird conservation issues through a wide range of official representations to government departments and politicians and participation in investigations of ornithologically important areas. As a group, we are keeping more detailed and methodical records of birds through the regular Water Bird Surveys and Garden Bird Census. COG members are involved in local raptor studies, banding projects and until recently have participated in the RAOU Bird Atlas Project. All these activities have developed at the same time as COG has continued to run and improve monthly meetings, regular local and weekend excursions and publish Canberra Bird Notes.

COG members should be pleased with the new and developing role the Group is taking in many fields and the way in which traditional areas of concern of the group have been reinforced.

Every COG member is encouraged to actively participate in any of the wide range of activities of the Group. Many talents and skills are required to ensure the success of COG's activities and in many cases a detailed knowledge of birds is not necessary. Please contact any member of the Committee if you feel you can contribute.

I would like to apologise for the lateness of the January issue of CBN and the consequent delay in the posting of the April issue. The amount of material to be analysed for the Annual Bird Report has meant that the Records Officer was not able to process the information in time for the usual printing date. It was felt important to keep the January issue for the Annual Bird Report rather than delay the report's publication to a later issue.

BIRDS OF MAC'S REEF ROAD 1975-1979

Rainer Rehwinkel

A record of birds recorded in the area between the Yass River and the range of hills behind Rehwinkel's Animal Park (to the east of the river, along Mac's Reef Road) Sutton, NSW.

The method of recording was by daily notes of birds seen at the Animal Park and along the road and by fairly regular bird walks into the bushland on the hills.

The habitat is varied with much natural bushland which is mainly dry sclerophyll forest with a creek (Donnellys Creek) thickly lined with *Pomadouris* and *Acacia*. The cleared areas have many trees retained (ie. *Eucalyptus maculosa*, *E melliodora* and *E bridgesiana*). The animal park is thickly planted with various grevilleas, melaleucas and acacias making it particularly favourable to honey-eaters. While the Yass River is not particularly attractive to waterfowl there are numerous stock dams in the area, particularly at the Animal Park. The Park, at times, has been a roosting area for large flocks of Sacred and Straw-necked Ibis.

The bird aviaries at the Animal Park attract numbers of parrots feeding at the grain spill and a large flock of cockatoos and galahs make it their roost too. It is interesting to note that the House Sparrow was not recorded at the Animal Park until 1977, but they are numerous there now.

There have been recordings of some rarer birds in the area, notably the Fork-tailed Swift and the Regent and Painted Honeyeater.

The Fork-tailed Swift record was for a large flock on 16 Feb 1977 at the Animal Park.

A small flock (12 individuals) of Regent Honeyeaters was observed at the Animal Park from 4 April to 7 March 1975. Individuals were also seen in January 1979 and also recently in November 1981.

The following table lists the species observed between 1975 and 1979 and the numbers represent the numbers of years out of five (four for the months Sept-Dec) in which the species was observed for that month.

R Rehwinkel, Rehwinkel's Animal Park, RMB 443, Mac's Reef Road, via Bungendore, NSW, 2621



SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Hoary-headed Grebe	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Australasian Grebe	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Australian Pelican	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Great Cormorant	Records from November 1977 to April 1978											
Little Black Cormorant	4	4	2	1	1	1	-	2	1	2	3	4
Little Pied Cormorant	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Pacific Heron	2	-	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	-	-	-
White-faced Heron	4	2	1	1	-	-	-	2	3	-	2	2
White-faced Heron	3	4	3	1	4	2	1	2	3	1	2	3
Great Egret	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Rufous Night Heron	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Sacred Ibis	3	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Straw-necked Ibis	4	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2	1	2	1	-	1	-	4	-	-	1	1
Black Swan	One record: February 1977											
Pacific Black Duck	2	3	1	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	1	2
Average number in flocks =	3											
Grey Teal	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
Chestnut Teal	One record: November 1975											
Australasian Shoveler	One record: September 1975											
Maned Duck	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	4
Whistling Kite	One record: April 1978											
Brown Goshawk	2	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	One breeding record: December 1974											
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Two records: August 1976 and October 1975											
Little Eagle	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	1
Australian Hobby	2	3	2	1	-	-	2	3	1	1	3	1
Brown Falcon	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Australian Kestrel	1	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2	1
All records in 1977 and 1978	2	2	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	2	1

SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Dusky Moorhen	One record: June 1975											
Masked Lapwing	1	1	1	-	1	1	2	4	3	1	2	1
Feral Pigeon	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Common Bronzewing	Three records: January and April 1978 and April 1976											
Gang-gang Cockatoo	2	1	3	2	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	1
Galah	5	5	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	3	4
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	2	2	4
Little Lorikeet	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	2
Australian King-parrot	Two records: April and July 1978											
Crimson Rosella	4	4	4	2	3	3	4	4	2	2	4	4
Red-rumped Parrot	Breeding record in January 1977											
Pallid Cuckoo	2	3	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1
Brush Cuckoo	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	2	4
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Horsfield Bronze-cuckoo	1	3	3	1	1	-	-	2	3	-	-	-
Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Two records: January and February 1978											
Southern Boobook	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	1	1
Australian Owllet-nightjar	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1
White-throated Needle-tail	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1
Fork-tailed Swift	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Laughing Kookaburra	-	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sacred Kingfisher	One record: February 1977											
Rainbow Bee-eater	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	2	3	4
Dollarbird	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Welcome Swallow	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
Tree Martin	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	3
Fairy Martin	Breeding record in November 1975											
Richard's Pipit	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	2	2	3
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	4	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
	4	5	4	3	1	-	1	-	2	2	2	4

SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
White-winged Troller	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Rose Robin	One record: March 1978											
Flame Robin	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	1	1	-
Scarlet Robin	2	5	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	2	1	3
Red-capped Robin	One record: September 1976											
Hooded Robin	-	4	2	1	1	-	-	3	2	2	-	1
Southern Yellow Robin	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	3
Golden Whistler	-	-	3	3	4	2	2	3	4	2	2	-
Rufous Whistler	4	4	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	4
Grey Shrike-thrush	Breeding record in January 1978											
Leadon Flycatcher	3	4	4	2	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	3
	Breeding record in January 1978											
	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	4
	Breeding records for December 1976 and January 1978											
Satin Flycatcher	One record: October 1976											
Restless Flycatcher	2	4	2	3	4	2	2	3	3	1	1	2
Rufous Fantail	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Grey Fantail	4	4	4	3	3	1	1	-	2	2	2	4
Willie Wagtail	Breeding records for March 1976 and December 1975 and 1976											
	5	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	3	1	2	4
	Breeding records for January 1978 and December 1976											
	Two records: December 1977 and January 1978											
Clamorous Reed Warbler	1											
Rufous Songlark	One record: January 1975											
	Additional record December 1974.											
Superb Fairy-wren	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	4
White-browed Scrubwren	3	4	4	2	3	1	2	3	2	2	2	3
Speckled Warbler	4	2	2	2	2	-	2	2	1	2	1	3
Weebill	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	-	1	-	1
Western Gerygone	All records for 1975, 1976 and 1977.											
	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2

SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
White-throated Gerygone	4	4	4	4	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	4
Breeding record for January 1978	3	3	4	2	3	2	4	3	3	1	2	3
Brown Thornbill	4	2	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	2	4
Buff-tailed Thornbill	4	4	4	3	2	2	4	4	3	2	1	4
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Breeding records January 1975 and October 1976											
Yellow Thornbill	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Striated Thornbill	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	4	3	2	1	4
Breeding record: January 1978												
Southern Whiteface	Two records: January 1978 and May 1976											
Varied Sitella	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	1	2	3
Breeding record for December 1977	4	4	4	2	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	4
Brown Treecreeper	4	4	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	2	4
Breeding record for December 1978												
Red Wattlebird	2	3	2	2	4	1	3	4	2	2	1	3
Breeding record for December 1977												
Noddy Friarbird	5	4	4	3	2	-	-	-	3	2	2	4
Breeding records for January 1975, 1977, 1978, November 1975												
December 1975, 1976												
Regent Honeyeater	Three records: March and April 1975 and January 1979											
Noisy Miner	Two records: August 1976 and September 1977											
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	3	3	5	5	3	1	-	2	4	2	2	3
White-eared Honeyeater	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	2	2	4
Breeding record for December 1977												
Fuscous Honeyeater	Two records for August and September 1977											
White-plumed Honeyeater	4	4	3	2	4	2	5	4	3	1	2	4
Breeding record for December 1976												
Brown-headed Honeyeater	4	3	3	2	4	2	1	1	4	2	1	3
White-naped Honeyeater	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Painted Honeyeater	One record: January 1978											



SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Eastern Spinebill	1	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	2	4
Mistletoebird	Breeding records for February 1978 and December 1976											
Spotted Pardalote	3	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	4
Striated Pardalote	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3
Slivereye	Breeding record for January 1975											
European Goldfinch	4	4	4	2	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4
House Sparrow	2	3	4	3	1	1	-	2	2	2	1	3
Red-browed Firetail	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	4
Diamond Firetail	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	-	1	1	1
Double-barred Finch	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Common Starling	3	4	2	2	2	2	4	3	1	2	-	4
Olive-backed Oriole	3	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
White-winged Chough	5	4	4	2	3	3	4	5	4	2	2	4
Australian Magpie-lark	Breeding records for Aug, Sep, Oct 1975, Sep Oct 1976, Apr, Nov 1977, Jan Apr 1978											
Masked Woodswallow	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	5	3	2	2	4
White-browed Woodswallow	Breeding records for Aug, Nov, Dec 1975, Nov 1977											
Dusky Woodswallow	One record: November 1977											
Grey Butcherbird	Four records: November 1977-February 1978											
Australian Magpie	3	3	4	3	1	1	-	1	3	2	1	4
Pied Currawong	Four records: March, April and December 1977; January 1978											
Grey Currawong	4	4	3	2	3	1	5	4	3	2	2	4
Australian Raven	Breeding record for July 1975											
Little Raven	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	2	4
	Breeding record for September 1976											
	4	4	4	1	3	2	4	4	3	2	2	4
	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	-

HISTORICAL RECORDS OF BIRDS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SERIES,  
No 1 ORIGINS OF INFORMATION USED IN MATHEWS ACT BIRD LIST  
*Neil Hermes*

I was fortunate to acquire from a second-hand bookshop in Sydney a copy of the booklet a 'List of Birds of The Australian Capital Territory' compiled by G M Mathews and published in 1943. This booklet was owned by a birdwatcher John de la Valette. Inside the booklet were two typed bird lists. The booklet and the typed lists are of interest for three reasons. The booklet is marked with observations of the addition of new species which appear to have been made by de la Valette in the Canberra area in 1943. One of the typed lists is a record of observations made on 28 November 1943 at a point near the South African embassy on State Circle. The other typed list is a list of 'Birds of the Federal Capital Territory, surrounding Canberra' and appears to be a draft of Mathews' published list. The last mentioned list is the subject of this note and the other two historical records of birds in the ACT in 1943 will be the subject of two other articles in this series.

The list entitled 'Birds of the Federal Capital Territory, surrounding Canberra' is a copy of a typed list. The copy was used by de la Valette on which to record the birds he observed (his notation 'seen by me in ACT'). Hand written on this list were the words "Gregory Mathews' list rec'd 30 June 1943". (The foreword of this publication has the date July 1943.) de la Valette's typed list was almost identical to Mathews' published booklet. The list of native species, its order and the common names used are the same in both texts except for the addition of White-browed Woodswallow to the published list. There are slight differences in the hyphenation and capitalisation of common names. Mathews has also added four introduced species, however these four species and the woodswallow do appear in hand writing on de la Valette's typed list.

It would appear from the evidence above that de la Valette's typed list was a draft or typed prepublication copy of the list published by Mathews. This is of interest because de la Valette's list has a list of credits at the end which does not appear in Mathews' published list. The credits are as follows, 'From notes supplied by Messrs D S Jones (error for D P Jones?), Angus McLeod, David White, Frank Green, Mr Harris, and Dr Cumpston'. There is also a reference to the paper by Charles Barrett in *Emu* in 1921 and one by D P Jones in *Emu* in 1929.

It appears from the evidence above that Mathews' list of birds of the ACT was based on the observations of at least six people and two published articles in addition to his own observations. This throws new light on the statement by Calaby (in Frith 1969) that 'Mathews did little or no field work and the list appears to be in part little more than guesswork'.

Only one of those credited with contributing information to Mathews' list of birds (David White) was referred to in articles published on the birds of the region, either before or after the 1940's (ie. Barret (1922), Jones (1929), Lamm & White (1950); Lamm & Calaby (1950), McKelvie (1957)). Calaby (personal communication) who arrived in the ACT in 1945 was not familiar with the ornithological ability of any of these observers and so there appears to be no new way of cross checking the reliability of Mathews' list.

If this new information indicates that at least some of Mathews' published information in the ACT list was based on field observations perhaps the unusual published information (by today's standards) needs to be examined in a new light.

#### REFERENCES

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Frith, H J (ed) , 1969, *Birds in the Australian High Country*, Reed, Sydney

Jones, D P, 1929, *List of Birds of Canberra, the Federal Territory*, Emu, 28: 252-54.

Mathews, G M, 1943, *List of Birds of the Australian Capital Territory*, Commonwealth Forestry Bureau Leaflet, No 53.

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ODD OBS: SECOND POSSIBLE NUTMEG MANNIKIN SIGHTING IN THE ACT

Joe Barr

On 1 July 1981 while riding along the bicycle path between the Royal Canberra Hospital and Sullivan's Creek I saw a small flock of finches fly into the clump of trees closest to the creek. Stopping and checking through binoculars I saw that one bird was brown with a darker brown head the cut-off line being clear and just behind the head. The breast and flanks carried lighter open rosette markings rather like the spots on a snow leopard. Before I could examine any other birds the flock was startled by another cyclist and flew off towards the ANU. There were 5 birds in the flock and one appeared to have a greenish tinge to the tail. Being new to this game I was unable to identify the birds until a later check with the description in Pizzey (the illustration did not ring much of a bell but it was the closest) and a discussion with one or two more experienced members at the next meeting.

#### BOOK REVIEW

BIRDS OF AUSTRALIAN GARDENS: Paintings by Peter Trusler, text by Tess Kloot and Ellen M McCulloch: Rigby, 1980: Ppl92 Colour, PI 80.

Birds of Australian Gardens is a portfolio of 80 full page paintings of 99 native and introduced birds commonly seen in gardens in ten Australian cities chosen as being representative of various regions. The cities are Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Alice Springs and Perth. Each painting is accompanied by a text which gives notes on the distribution, size, alternative names, nest, voice and general comments for the species depicted. An introductory chapter covers such matters as attracting birds to gardens, artificial feeding, breeding, suburban bird hazards, pesticides and a brief description of essential birdwatching techniques and equipment.

I feel that this book is aimed at the beginner birdwatcher and will be judged largely on the quality of the paintings. Peter Trusler has employed a photographic style when painting his subjects for this book, blurring the background to various degrees to isolate the subject from the background, but still retaining an impression of the entire scene. In using this technique Trusler has succeeded in faithfully portraying the birds depicted and I am unable to take exception with any painting. As a guide for identification, the large size of the plates will be appreciated by those who have tried to use the tiny paintings in some field guides.

I have not read the text for all species, but found it to be factual and interesting for those which I did. It provides interesting snippets of information about the bird rather than presenting a complete treatise for each species. Readers are encouraged to learn more about each species by being questioned on the habits of the bird and through suggestions for future studies.

Invariably, a book of this kind will receive criticism, not for the species it covers, but for the ones which it has not included. The exclusion of Grey Fantail, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush and White-naped Honeyeater is unfortunate, particularly when other less common garden species like Crested Shrike-tit and Masked Lapwing are included. One local beginner was disappointed not to find the Australian King-Parrot illustrated, despite seeing the bird regularly in her Canberra garden.

This is only a small point, however, when the attributes of the book are taken into account, the excellent quality and size of the paintings will be invaluable to those wishing to learn to identify the birds that visit their garden, and the text will stimulate many readers into taking greater notice of the birds around them.

*B Baker*

THE NESTLING AND POST-FLEDGING OF A FAMILY OF COLLARED SPARROWHAWK  
E C Metcalf

I saw my first Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* in Canberra suburbs in October 1980 (CBN (1981) 6:84). On 12 November 1980 I observed another, performing the same 'climbing' motions described in the article mentioned. Almost immediately afterwards, I observed the nest. The male had used a roundabout flapping action to travel from the feeding place towards the nest - losing height at first, then using the nest-tree for support, then gradually reaching the top of the nest. This action was not seen again; thereafter, both male and female flew straight up and down between nest and feeding-place.

#### The Nest and Feeding Places

The nest-tree was a mature pine *Pinus radiata*, one of many around it. The nest itself was small, so much so that the tail of the female stood away half of its length above it, during brooding. Nonetheless, it was not easily seen. I had passed it by three times before locating it. It had been built of thin dry pine-twigs and lined with a few now dry eucalypt leaves. These leaves have some significance, for they were to be moved around once or twice.

The subsequent records refer to various numbers of days after the first observation which was on 12 November 1980. At this stage it is assumed that the hen was sitting constantly, when first seen, and was fed on the nest by the cock; but after two days she went down to the male's feeding-place when he called. She collected her meal and carried it back to the nest. The cock had a place of his own on a tree 20 m from the nest and only 20 m from the ground. This feeding-place was a well-selected bough, 5-6 cm thick, horizontal, stable and well-polished. The male used this feeding-place until the end of brooding and the female used it only for collecting her food. The young did not use this perch at all.

At first the cock was vocal most of the time, but reduced his comments as the brooding proceeded. Mostly he called with a gentle incessant 'chew, chew, chew', until alarmed by other birds when the call became faster and louder and increased to a continuous chatter of noise. The hen, on the other hand, seemed to be content to speak when spoken to, and, in the latter days of the breeding, to talk to the young whilst flying.

#### Caring for the Young

The female was careful with her young. By the 6th day, she had been sitting in the sun for half an hour. The following day the temperature rose to 37°C and the humidity fell to 44%. The hen stayed on the nest. She spread her tail and wing feathers to cover the chicks. In this position she was fed by the cock, and fed the young herself. Similar solicitude was shown when it

rained. Between 12 November 1980 and 2 December 1980 only 6 mm of rain had fallen. Then, on that night and following morning, 50 mm fell. I had noted earlier that the hen had begun sleeping-out at least 6 days before but when I arrived at 0530 hours on 3 December the young were covered and remained so for 2 hours whilst light showers were still falling. It was only ten days before the young were to fledge.

### Feeding the Young

Feeding was the business of the cock. Half an hour after sunrise he caught his first prey and delivered it to his feeding-place, dropping any surplus feathers. He ate the hard bits himself, all the time chattering cheerfully to himself and to his mate. Duly the female received her food on the nest or flew down to collect it for herself and young. The male then flew out to collect another meal, and so it went on. This open-ended method of supply could result in the cock having unwanted food on his hands. He might carry it around for as long as half an hour until finally leaving it in an odd corner. At the height of the rearing-time, the cock provided from five to eight meals a day.

I had often previously seen the sparrowhawk carrying prey in places well away from the nest, but not after 14 November when doubtless the cock was hunting closer to home. I know that he was able to deliver food to the nest and have another piece on hand within 3 minutes. After the 35th day, the feeding programme changed. The female moved into the background and all food to each of the youngsters, girl and boy, passed directly from the male. More significantly, the prey was not trimmed, but was handed out, feathers and all. Indeed, this was the first time I was able to recognise what they were eating. On that day goldfinches were on the menu.

On the 35th day also, the male had brought in the first meal and cached it at the nest-site about 0630. The second delivery of food saw the whole family collected together at 0745. The two juveniles each had their own breakfast, simultaneously, so there was no squabbling. As each youngster settled down to eat, the parents left. After five minutes or so, one of the juveniles left also. The other was a slow eater, and had several choking fits before 'he' flew off. I think this is one of the hazards of life for a young male sparrowhawk - he maybe as little as half the size of his mother and sister, but no allowance is made for it. I had also noticed that his elder brother often fell off his perch on the feeding-place because his feet were too small.

The dowager female was now redundant as a provider of food, but she was very hungry. I did not see her feeding herself or feeding the young again. The young fed singly in any place that the cock chose to offer food to them. They were very hungry and they fought and tried to steal from each other. With the coming of Christmas, the young had learned to catch and eat flying



beetles at the tops of the pine trees. Their father still fed them and the feeding-place still remained the focal point from which he conducted the ceremony but the meal began later each day. On the 22nd day, breakfast had begun at 0600. On the 43rd day, it was 0815. Two days later I saw the last family meal, a fast and angry noise chase mostly over 200 m high and all away from the nest-site. The next day only the two young birds chased around, up and down the plantation, looking lost. The following day they assaulted and nearly killed a bewildered magpie-lark. The day after that they left, but I did get a fleeting glimpse of the young female, on a low bush, 1000 m away.

TABLE 1: FEEDING YOUNG

Time of day	0600-0800	-1000	-1200	-1400	-1600	-1800	-2000	TOTAL
Total no of occasions on which nest was observed	15	8	9	2	3	4	3	44
Total no of occasions on which feeding was observed	12	8	7	1	2	3	2	35

This Table shows that on 44 days on which sightings were recorded, feeding was seen on 35; and that 0800-1000 was when feeding was at its peak. Feeding did not occur on average as frequently between 0600-0800 since the first feeding commenced later as the nestlings grew

#### Learning to Fly

The two young birds had first flown on the 32nd and 33rd day. It has been on the 20th day from my first sighting of the nest, that they had lifted up their heads high enough to show me that there were two of them. At that stage both were able to flap their wings. By the 30th day, the parents were both fully engaged in flying demonstrations whilst the young walked around the nest and on adjacent boughs. The male was regularly seen on the nest from the 30th day which was unusual since he had only been an occasional visitor between day 7 and day 30. Until day 37 both parents were involved in activity around the nest and after this only the male visited the nest and then only on three or four occasions. The parental exercises demonstrated all their skills: slow gliding; flying in and out of the nest-tree; dropping and catching again a piece of prey as they flew slowly by.

When the young first took wing it was all flat gliding - out and back again at about 20-30 m. Their mother sat gloomily in a



high place and supervised their un-imaginative efforts. The pine woods where they were born were dark and shaded and they patrolled the nest area in widening circles until the 45th day when they burst out into the open street and house gardens. They flew there at middle-level, over lower trees and house-tops for two days, darting in and out of the pine wood, never loitering long outside. Then they explored the lower levels of street hedges and shrubs; and on one spectacular occasion they played follow-the-leader, with both parents joining in the rough-and-tumble - the prize being some food organised by father.

Until the 46th day their mother still directed them. She called to them often, in two different voices. By day 47 they were playing with no supervision, and the following day were gone from the area.

#### Relationship with Neighbours

Their area had been one full of birds - many also building and brooding. Within a radius of 100 m I observed the nests of the following species: Pied Currawong (3 nests), Australian Magpie-lark, Red Wattlebird, Noisy Friarbird and Crimson Rosella. The magpie-larks were building their second nest less than 35 m away from the sparrowhawks. The rosellas were a breeding pair nesting 8 m up on a bifurcated pine-trunk; and a further colony of about 20 young crimsons roosted on a bush pine only 20 m from the raptor's nest. There were also Feral Pigeons which owned the local rubbish-bin; and beyond them, a family of Australian Ravens, just flying.

All of those breeding birds were intent upon securing their nests; and, in addition, the currawongs hoped to eat any eggs or young. Suspicion and panic were rife and fighting was constant. This state of affairs continued until the 10th day when for some reason unknown to me, the general melee was over, except for individual alarms, such as the following:

1. On the 20th day at 2020 hours, I was watching in the dusk to see if the female sparrowhawk, then sitting on the tree next to the nest, was going to sit on that tree all night, when a belated parrot blundered into the nest. The female struck it immediately, and it fled, screaming. The parrot disturbed my own vigil.
2. On the 23rd day there was a general alarm of all birds, reason not known at the time. It caused the female sparrowhawk to cover her young. It may have been another raptor, and subsequent observations have made it reasonable to assume it was a Brown Goshawk.
3. On the 43rd day, the alarm was initiated by the male sparrowhawk who moved away three pigeons because he needed more room for his children to play.
4. On the 47th day, the alarm was caused by the children sparrowhawks themselves when they attacked the magpie-lark as previously noted.

Apart from these four main disturbances, all of the birds in the pine woods, after the 10th day, more or less kept themselves to themselves.

#### Copulation After Egglaying

Many raptors are known to mate beyond the actual time of egg production (Ian Newton, 1979, Population Ecology of Raptors, p156) even into fledging-time. I now know that this applies to the sparrowhawk. I noticed it first on the 6th day after finding the nest, and the first occasion by the pair was of a cursory nature. Subsequently, from the 8th to the 32nd day, mating occurred on 15 out of 30 sighting days. It was always associated with feeding, mostly at the feeding-place, and could be before, during or after feeding.

From the first tentative act, it built up from actions of 1-2 seconds to a co-operative action of 5 seconds on the 18th, 19th and 20th days, thence declining to apparent cessation on the 32nd day. This pattern was interrupted on day 40 when the male made a suggestion for which he was angrily rebuked by the female. Twig Arranging at the Nest

On the 6th day at 0900 an odd thing had occurred. The family was full-fed, the male still holding the unexpended portion of the day's rations. He was resting on the feeding-place and his mate was on the nest. Then, she flew from the nest to a third adjacent tree where she sat stretched, preened and ruffled up her feathers for 2-3 minutes before flying out, up and away.

The male did not move a feather. The hen returned in less than a minute carrying a 30 cm long twig of *Eucalyptus rossii* sporting about five green leaves, and sat beside the cock. Both birds made a show of admiring it for a long moment. Then, the female moved along to the farther end of the feeding-place where there were dry twigs, and she began to pull off, measure, and throw them away until she found one she wanted, a dry one; and then, carrying the two twigs, the green and the dry, she flew to the nest. For 5 minutes she worked on the nest, arranging and re-arranging these two twigs. Then she brooded a while.

Awakening, she flew to the same third, pine tree, but higher up in it, well-shaded, and she was followed by the male. There they began a sort of ritual dance, up and down the bough, jumping, flapping, sidling, and once or twice there were suggestions of the traditional mating actions by the male only without encouragement. Often they moved to other busy areas and I would lose them for a while; the whole performance lasted 30 minutes. Then the female returned to the nest and her brooding; and the male, still with his piece of meat, went to the thick end of the feeding-place and slept. I don't know where the meat went.

I saw nothing like this by the female again, but on the male side, similar variations occurred three times and all were significant. The first was on the 18th day. After feeding on the

feeding-place, the pair mated co-operatively for 5 seconds. Then they sat close and still for two minutes, when the male flew close by to the nest-tree, gathered a thin, dry twig of the pine tree and proffered it to her on the feeding-place. She paid no attention. They both sat and did nothing until I had to leave, the male still holding his twig. This occurrence coincided with the time the young birds were first seen by me, flapping their young wings.

The second and third events seemed even more significant, occurring on days 32 and 33. These were the two separate days the two youngsters flew from the nest. At about 0730 on each of these days, after feeding and flying practice supervised by father, he broke off a green pine twig (a dry pine twig on day 33) with his beak. On each occasion he planted it on the nest without ceremony and left.

The following table is a summary of some of the principal events during the observations of this nest.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

Date	Day of	Observation Activity
Date	Observation	Activity
12 Nov 1980	1	Nest located, female incubating
17 Nov	6	First observation of copulation of adults and female brought twig to nest
29 Nov-1 Dec	18-20	Most active period of copulation of adults
1 Dec	20	My first clear observation of two chicks in nest
11 Dec	30	Flying demonstrations began - both adults
13 Dec	32	One chick had first flight - last day of copulation of adults and male brought twig to nest
14 Dec	33	Second chick had first flight and male brought twig to nest
16 Dec	35	Male took over feeding the chicks
26 Dec	45	Last meal of family together and young first left pine wood
27 Dec	46	Last day chicks supervised by adult
28 Dec	47	Chicks attacked a magpie-lark
29 Dec	48	Chick left area completely

*E C Metcalf, 11 Peel Street, O'CONNOR, ACT, 2601*

*In recent years there have been many changes in the attitudes that people have had towards wildlife. Many of these changes have been for the good but some have not been. The following article is reproduced with permission of the author and was published in Wildlife Review, Vol 20, No 7, Spring 1981. This journal is the publication of the British Columbian Ministry of Environment and hopefully describes events in North America which will not be mirrored in Australia.*

## WHO WILL WATCH THE BIRDWATCHERS?

John Duffie

The public's conception of birdwatching has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Once regarded as the genteel pursuit of nature lovers interested solely in the beauty of birds, the hobby has grown enormously in popularity, and this growth has brought with it a new quality of competitiveness. Even the name has been changed from birdwatching to birding, a subtle alteration that has drawn thousands of adherents formerly repelled by the connotations of the old designation.

A new type of birder is emerging, one whose primary interest is in seeing as many species as possible, and the excessive zeal of this small group is tarnishing the image of the vast majority whose aim is the protection of birds. After years of encouraging people to take an interest in ornithology, naturalists are now looking for ways of protecting birds from people.

While the majority of birders are well-behaved, with a protective, even affectionate attitude toward the creatures they study, concern is being felt about the proliferating body of 'life-listers', people whose only concern is the adding of names to the list of birds they have seen in their lifetime. Many of these overzealous observers have no real feeling for or understanding of birds, regarding them not as creatures of beauty and grace, but as statistics in the continuing battle to outscore the competition.

G .Stuart Keith of the American Museum of Natural History has said that 'the new breed of bird watchers are tough, macho young people who burn up the country in a never-ending drive to increase the length of the vital life-list at all costs.' ...

A wealthy businessman in Jackson, Mississippi, set out a couple of years ago to see 700 North American species in 365 days. He spent \$50,000 and travelled 150,000 miles in his quest, and while he broke the existing record of 657, he failed to reach the coveted 700 mark. Two uncooperative rare birds in Florida failed

to make their appearance on 31 December, and he ended the year with 698.

A writer in *Sports Illustrated* describes with open admiration a 24-hour blitz organised by a group of Texans, who set out to smash the record of 288 species in a single day established by a club in Zambia. Starting at 2 am in Houston, they travelled by chartered jet to a point where a rented jeep awaited them, and after working that area made a rendezvous with the jet, which then carried them to the Mexican border. They ended with 183 species, blaming their failure on the pilot of the jet, who had miscalculated fuel requirements. ....

Horror stories abound. *National Wildlife* tells of a grey owl which appeared in Lloyd's Harbour, NY, two years ago. It created a great deal of commotion as more than 500 visitors a day poured into the small town. Hoping to get a glimpse of the owl, some of the visitors shook the tree in which it was nesting while others tried to scare it out by shouting and even throwing rocks at it.

In northern California last year a group of birders organised a drive across a marsh to flush out a rare black rail. One member caught a brief glimpse of the bird and the party surrounded the spot where it had disappeared, one man vigorously poking into the bushes with a stick while other trampled the high grass to force the rail to reveal itself. They finally gave up in frustration, but a good Samaritan stayed behind and eventually found the bird, mangled and dying, having been stomped into the mud by a heavy boot. He picked the creature up to assess the extent of its injury and was thoroughly castigated by his companions for his thoughtless behaviour. One of the rules of birding is that if a bird is touched by human hand, it cannot be added to the life-list....

None of this is intended in any way to reflect unfavourably on the true bird lover, the person who admires the grace and beauty of birds, whose life is enriched by being able to recognise the beautiful creatures that inhabit our gardens and forests. Not only do sincere bird lovers enrich their own lives, but many of them make valuable contributions to ornithology. Amateur observers have made enormous contributions to our knowledge of birds, helping to build a vast data bank about bird population, migration, distribution, breeding biology and other aspects of the science.

But the problem of the aggressive minority is so serious that even the American Birding Association, which did much to foster the new spirit, is having qualms. An officer of the Association is quoted in *Audubon* magazine as saying: 'Apparently we underestimated the ego involvement with which birders would enter the hobby. The sporting quality of birding which we purposely encouraged has brought with it a fervour that in many

cases appears to ignore the rights of fellow humans as well as the rights of the birds themselves.'

The National Audubon Society feels that the basic love and fascination that birders feel for birds will, in the long run, serve to correct the abuses of the overenthusiastic minority. The society suggests that a code of ethics should be adopted, to include such common sense rules as the following:

-avoid the use of taped bird songs, particularly when the birds are breeding;

- observe birds from sufficient distance that they are not disturbed;

- when photographing birds, do not use flash and never damage foliage in the vicinity of nests;

- respect private property and obey posted signs.

Birding is one of the most pleasant, healthful and rewarding of all hobbies, and its followers have made important contributions to our knowledge of birds. Their conduct has been, for the most part, beyond reproach, and it would be sad indeed if the reputations of these dedicated people were to be tarnished because of the actions of an overly-aggressive minority.

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#### AERIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN BROWN GOSHAWK AND AUSTRALIAN HOBBY

*Penny Olsen*

On 27 January 1981 at 1600 hours I was driving through O'Connor and noticed, about 200 m ahead, an aerial battle going on about 6 m above an intersection. An immature, female Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* was grasping a wildly struggling immature (?), female Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis* by the back. Both were facing in the same direction and flying without losing height. The goshawk remained bound to the hobby for about 5 seconds from my first sighting of them. The hobby then freed itself and flew tiredly, but apparently uninjured, in the direction of its nest. The goshawk landed in a busy tree at the edge of the intersection. Late in 1980, Rosemary Metcalf found the nests of a hobby, from which three chicks fledged, and a goshawk, from which three chicks also fledged, within about ½ km of the point of attack. On several occasions from 5 January 1981 the adult female goshawk was seen near the hobby nest, when it contained chicks, and was driven away each time by an adult hobby. A female nestling banded at this nest in January 1982 was found injured (and later died) in Brisbane on 3 May 1981. This is the longest recorded distance travelled by this species.

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COG AND GOULBURN FIELD NATURALISTS SOCIETY TO MUNDOONEN -  
OCTOBER 1981

*Joe Barr*

On Sunday 18 October a small group of 5 COG members led by Alistair Drake met 3 members of the Goulburn Field Naturalist's Society at Mundoonen Ranges for the monthly outing. The day was miserable with intermittent rain and low cloud which appeared to affect the birds as well as other starters.

The party met on a small track which turns right off the Hume Highway just over 12 km north east of the junction with the Barton Highway and about 50 m short of a small pond which is also on the right. The track is almost at the peak of the ranges. Mundoonen Ranges are fairly well wooded and are signposted as a nature reserve. The area was badly hit by the bush fires some 2 ½ years ago which appear to have killed many of the trees. The area is now recovering although birdlife was mainly confined to the lower lying areas.

Many species were seen close to the parking area and some time was spent here before taking a track which led from the old road up over the first hill and down into the next valley. The birds seen or heard in this area included Grey Shrike-thrush, White-throated Warbler, White-throated Treecreepers (numerous), Buff-rumped Thornbill (nesting in a hollow tree), Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Scarlet Robin and Leaden Flycatcher (on our return). Heading up the path we had good views of Rufous Whistler and the numerous Grey Fantails but as we got higher the birdlife disappeared and the only species seen were an Australian Raven flying over and a solitary Crimson Rosella half way through the change to adult plumage. During this period the leader of the Goulburn Society introduced us to a number of the wildflowers and orchids which were showing themselves among the new growth. Moving down into the next valley the birdlife increased again and we were able to see both Rufous and Golden Whistlers and Leaden Flycatchers. Unfortunately, the rain also began to strengthen and by mutual consent the party returned to their cars feeling highly virtuous. A Laughing Kookaburra saw the cars away.

The Mundoonen Ranges would probably merit further visits as the recovery continues. The Goulburn Society advise that there are few visitors except a nearby property owner who has studied the area for some years. For a 'different' half day outing why not give it a try.

(PS: Is there any truth in the rumour that the NSW Drought Protection Board are calling for towns to bid for future COG outings?)

*J P Barr, 1 Lalor Street, AINSLIE, ACT, 2602*

MORE SUMMER RECORDS OF THE FUSCOUS HONEYEATER

Alastair Morrison

During the 1980/81 summer I encountered many Fuscous Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus fuscus* in what may be hitherto unreported localities in the southern ACT and neighbouring areas of NSW. The localities were as follows:

- Parts of the woodland southeast of the Gudgenby Nature Reserve entrance on the old Boboyan Road south of Gudgenby homestead;

The north-eastern slope of Pheasant Hill in the southern end of Gudgenby Nature Reserve;

Two localities on the road running southward from Tharwa along the west bank of the Murrumbidgee;

- A very large population in the woodland skirting the road which runs down Primrose Valley (signposted on the Captain's Flat Road as Woolcara Lane) between The Springs property and where the road, having crossed the Queanbeyan River, emerges on the grassland northeast of Big Tinderry Station.

The Fuscous Honeyeater would seem to be a much more common summer resident in our area than previously supposed. The reason is probably that the summer haunts of the species do not happen to coincide with the localities where Canberra bird observers do most of their work. References:

CBN Vol 3 (11) 20-21, CBN Vol 4 (8) 18-19

A Morrison, 26 Canning Street, AINSLIE, ACT, 2602

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ODD DBS

A FEW LATE BREEDING RECORDS FOR CANBERRA Michael Lenz

The normal breeding season, as indicated in the COG Field List (1974), is given in brackets.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* 23 February 1981, 1 female with 3 pulli about 2 weeks old, Sullivans Creek, ANU, (August-December)

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* 14 February 1981, 1 adult feeding 2 recently fledged young, Mt Ainslie, Pistol Club (October-January)

Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula* 15 February 1981, 1 male feeding 2 fledged young, Mt Ainslie, SW slopes (November-mid January)

Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides* 8 February 1981, 1 pair with recently fledged young, Mt Ainslie, SW slopes (mid August -early January)



## COG EXCURSIONS TO MT JERRABOMBERRA

*Combining reports from David E Planner and  
Bruce Lindenmayer*

The field outing to the lower slopes of Mt Jerrabomberra on 14 October 1980 provided a dozen or so members of COG with a fine opportunity to observe a wide variety of species of birds in a lovely wooded setting. Under the capable leadership of Richard Schodde, the group identified a total of 39 species.

High points of the trip included: (1) an abundance of thornbills and the display of field marks and calls distinguishing the Striated, Brown, Yellow-tailed, Buff-rumped Thornbills and the Brown Weebill; (2) White-throated and Western Gerygone in full song permitting easy comparison between the somewhat similar calls of these two species; (3) close observation of White-winged Choughs feeding young on the nest; (4) good views of the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and the female Leaden Flycatcher.

Other interesting or unusual species seen or heard were: Collared Sparrowhawk; Sacred Kingfisher; and Speckled Warbler.

Identified by the call only were the Pallid Cuckoo, Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Varied Sittella.

A little over a year later on 15 November 1981 Richard lead another outstanding COG excursion to Mt Jerrabomberra. In an area approximately 600 m x 200 m (located east from the turnoff on the Queanbeyan-Cooma Road) we recorded 43 bird species. Features of this trip were: nesting White-wing Chough, White-throated Tree-creeper, Scarlet Robin and Olive-backed Oriole. Species observed included: Diamond Firetail, Double-barred Finch, Little Eagle, Speckled Warbler, Grey Currawong and three species of cuckoos.

## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR COG MEMBER

Dr Richard Schodde has been elected Honorary Fellow of the Americal Ornithological Union in recognition of his contribution to ornithology. Dick is an active member of the Canberra Ornithologists Group and has served on the COG Committee for five years and for three of these years as President (1976-79). He has many publications to his credit including papers on the birds of New Guinea, Arnhem Land and the taxonomic relationships of Australian birds. He has written a reference book with Richard Mason on the Nocturnal Birds of Australia and has a major publication on wrens in preparation. Dick is well known throughout Australia for his work in the compilation of the RAOU's 'Recommended List of Common Names'.

On behalf of all members, the COG Committee congratulates Dick for this international recognition for his work. *Editor*

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