



Gang-gang

JULY 2014

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

Wednesday 9 July 2014

7.30 pm.

*Canberra Girls Grammar School,
Multi-media centre, corner Gawler Cres
and Melbourne Ave, Deakin*

There will again be three shorter presentations at the July meeting.

The first presentation on an **aspect of COG's history** in relation to **COG's 50th Anniversary celebrations** will be by **Michael Lenz** on "**History of COG's waterbird surveys: Lake George and Lake Bathurst**".

Next **Geoffrey Dabb** will give one of his unique Bird of the Month presentations, entitled "**A few points about Governor King's Parrot**".

The final presentation will also be by **Michael Lenz** on "**Roost flight observations at Mt Majura**".

A number of species of birds roost communally outside the breeding season. Examples of this behaviour can be readily observed in Canberra. For example, all our **parrots, Welcome Swallows, Crested Pigeons, Pied Currawongs,**

Continued Page 2

What to watch out for this month

Despite the continuing mild winter, during the first week of June it appeared that the winter was going to be a very quiet time for observing birds in Canberra, as judged from the low level of reporting on the COG chatline. This was changed by one very significant post on 9 June, that by Duncan McCaskill of an **Australasian Bittern** on Ginninderra Creek. This bird was subsequently seen by a number of observers on this creek and associated ponds, with others dipping out but recording an **Australian Little Bittern** instead. Over the next couple of weeks both were observed; in fact it seems clear from photos taken that there were at least two Little Bitterns in the area. The **Australasian Bittern** was also later reported at the AIS pond several kilometres away, but whether there were actually two remains unclear.

Continued Page 2



Australian Little Bittern

Photo: Christine D.

Everyone welcome

Common Starlings, and **Common Mynas** go to sleep in groups. However, even for common species, we often have only limited information on aspects of their roosting habits and associated behaviours. In this short presentation, Michael will present his observations on roost flight for five bird species.

What to watch out for this month—continued from Page 1

The significance of the first observation cannot be underestimated; indeed it could be the first authenticated record for the ACT rather than COG's area of interest, or at least the first photographed one here. Steve Wilson's book *Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change* includes two records, both from the 1940s, and which were the subject of discussion in *Canberra Bird Notes* in the 1980s, with only one of them subsequently accepted as likely to be this species. Interestingly it also seems that the **Australian Little Bittern** is our official first winter record, with all previous records being from October to March. Whether this is an artefact is unclear to me; in fact, it is possible either species could be present at any time but due to their cryptic nature they are overlooked, with the best way of finding them wading through the water. Not many bird watchers would be keen to do this, especially in winter.

Chatline posts pointed out that a major reason may be the proliferation of constructed wetlands in the northern part of Canberra, with lots of them providing the shelter which species such as these (and crakes) require, which not that long ago was only afforded by Kelly Swamp and associated wetlands. However, they don't seem to be the reason why a number of the inland open water duck species, such as the **Australian Shoveler**, **Hardhead**, **Freckled** and particularly the **Pink-eared Duck** (including in places where they are seldom seen such as Lake Tuggeranong), are still being reported, despite the relatively wet conditions to the west of the ACT.

The other unexpected species has been the **Musk Lorikeet**, which too has been observed at two locations, Wanniasa/Kambah and Hughes, where they have been present since early June, sometimes in the presence of the **Rainbow Lorikeet**. Interestingly John Leonard reports that there seems to be very little flowering in Hughes to attract them. The former was also present in Canberra last winter but, as I noted then, there were only about 25 previous formal records on the COG database, scattered throughout the year.

Of the spring/summer migrant species the **Dusky Woodswallow** seems to have stayed over in larger

numbers this winter than the previous few, as does the **White-naped Honeyeater**, with a few **Grey Fantails**, **Yellow-faced** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** also overwintering. The **Superb Parrot** also still seems to be present in reasonable numbers, especially around the AIS. There have been fewer reports of the **Olive-backed Oriole** and the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and, apart from a single report of the **Mistletoebird**, none that I can find of other spring/summer migrants during June. Overall, despite the mild winter so far, it doesn't appear very large numbers of spring/summer migrants are overwintering, so please keep a special watch out and report any observations of these species.

Of the winter altitudinal migrants the **Flame Robin** still seems to be present in only low numbers close to suburban Canberra, and not was seen in my local patch in June. Surprisingly I can find only a couple of records of the **Rose Robin** from the ANBG early in June, and there still don't seem to be any reports of the **Pink Robin**. However, there have been two reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, and several of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, which some observers have noted are fewer than usual this winter. I have heard one calling loudly at the same spot in Chapman a number of times during June, but it hasn't been recorded in my GBS site, less than 200 metres away. The **Brown Gerygone** was confirmed from the ANBG in the second half of June, but there have been no further reports of the **Swift Parrot**, and I expect the vast majority of them will be at the South Coast again this year.

Mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) were still being reported in June, though increasingly in smaller numbers. These will break up with the commencement of breeding, such as by the early starters like the **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**. Reports of bush bird breeding in June seem to be confined to a pair of **Australian Ravens** pulling branches out of one old nest to repair another old nest nearby. However, there have been further reports of very young **Australian Wood Ducklings** as well as **Purple Swamphens** during June, and the **Black-shouldered Kites** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands were reported as raising two juveniles by the end of the month. On the last full weekend in June a **Masked Lapwing** was flushed

off a nest near the pool in a backyard in Percy Crescent Chapman on three successive mornings. As it was off during the rest of the day (though still nearby) I suspect it may have been egg laying. This species has nested here most years since the 2003 fires, though colder weather after similar behaviour at the same time last year stopped breeding activity for a month. So keep a lookout for any winter breeding, as well as further MFFs.

One very conspicuous winter phenomenon again this year is of flocks of birds, with Leo Berzins reporting a flock of thousands of **Galahs** aggregating in a paddock near the Molonglo River in Fyshwick. Geoffrey Dabb posted that the thousands of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** around South Canberra at the moment are feeding on capeweed *Arctotheca calendula*, noting that recent conditions have produced a lush crop of these, and that the plant is uprooted and the fleshy root eaten completely. Given that they are a weed they might be performing an environment benefit, with Martin Butterfield posting a photo of the level of tillage they had created in a paddock in the Snow Gums area below Aranda Bushland. While flocks of **Little Corellas** and **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** have also been reported, winter flocks have not been limited to cockies, with Lindell Emerton reporting between 60-70 **White-winged Choughs** seen on the Royal Canberra Golf Course.

With the much shorter days another phenomenon which is easier to observe in winter is birds flying to their roosts, as well as roosting. In preparation for Michael Lenz' presentation on this at the July meeting, please look out for this behaviour with any species in your GBS etc, to see if they coincide with those Michael has been observing. So while July may be mid winter there are still plenty of things to look out for, whether they are unusual species, spring/summer migrants overwintering, altitudinal winter migrants, MFFs, the first bush birds to commence breeding, or aspects of birds roosting behaviour. As usual please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Australian Little Bittern

Photo: Julian Robinson



Australian Ornithological Services

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2014 tours

3 — 10 August
New Caledonia

6 — 25 September
Strzelecki Track 35th tour
The 4 states outback expedition
(1 place left)

30 September — 8 October
NSW Central Coast. Gloucester Tops
NP, Barren Grounds NR,

10 — 19 December
SW Western Australia

2015 tours

31 January — 7 February
Tasmania birding & mammal tour

February/March
New Zealand: South & Stewart Is-
lands & North incl. Hauraki Gulf pelagic

18 — 25 April **Alice Springs**

24 May — 7 June **Top End**
Part 1: Darwin to Katherine
Part 2: Katherine to Kununurra
Part 3: Mitchell Plateau

July **Iron Range & Atherton Tablelands**

September: **Strzelecki Track outback
tour**

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

CONSERVATION COUNCIL ACT REGION

The Conservation Council is a non-profit, non-government organisation and a peak body for more than 40 natural history, environment, conservation and landcare groups in the Canberra Region. As such, it is continually involved with governments on a wide range of issues, including protecting biodiversity and national environmental laws, promoting sustainable energy and action on climate change.

COG, is a long term associate of the Council, and several COG members, including Jenny Bounds (currently) and I (during past decades) have served in senior positions on the Council Executive and working parties, dealing with numerous issues and programs of vital importance to the protection of our region's native birds and their habitats.

Over many decades, the Council has had financial support from the Commonwealth and ACT Governments.

Unfortunately, the May Federal Budget withdrew the Commonwealth's previous \$50,000 grant, representing a loss of more than 20% of the Council's annual funding.

Council leadership and support over decades has led to favourable outcomes for numerous important regional bird habitat areas including Namadji National Park, Jerrabomberra Wetlands, and especially Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves. Following detailed environmental studies in 2013 involving the Council and ACT Government contracted consultants, these latter two reserves are to be extended by an additional 800 ha, which will include the protection of breeding habitat for the threatened Superb Parrot on Throsby Ridge. **This is an outstanding result.** The combined reserves will soon comprise one of the best preserved habitats for woodland birds in Australia. Nature parks in Gungahlin will now extend from Hall all the way along the N.E. ACT/NSW border to the Federal Highway.

The Council and COG are continuing to co-operate on the protection of environmentally significant bird habitats in the developing Molonglo urban area (such as Kama and the river corridor) and have been successful in promoting policies for cat containment in suburbs adjacent to nature reserves.

CANBERRA'S NATIVE BIRDS NEED THE CONSERVATION COUNCIL: THE COUNCIL NEEDS YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT. IT'S TAX DEDUCTABLE.

Donations can be made to: **Executive Director**
Conservation Council ACT Region
14/26 Barry Drive Canberra ACT 2601
GPO BOX 544 Canberra ACT 2601

or use their online donation facility at <https://conservationcouncil.org.au/support-us/donate/>



Paddy's River Travelling Stock Reserve

Photo: Gail Neumann

Committee News

The Conservation Council has written to the ACT Government about the [proposed relocation of the RSPCA](#) to a site on Narrabundah Lane next to Callum Brae Nature Reserve. The Council, as well as COG and some other groups, were contacted by local landholders, and share some of their concerns about the development. Bushfire management, noise, traffic, dog exercise areas and woodland connectivity are among the issues raised.

Members are reminded that a **photographic exhibition** and competition is being held in the Legislative Assembly Building 30 June to 5 July. You all know we have some fantastic photographers in COG - this is a chance to see some of their work and vote for your favourites.

On the final day of the exhibition a **free public forum 'Landscapes for Birds - conserving and enhancing their habitats'** is being held in the Reception Room of the Legislative Assembly. You can register for the Forum on the COG website - see the Latest News section on the home page. Only 100 places are available, and speakers at the Forum include Veronica Doerr from the CSIRO, and Adrian Manning from the Fenner School.

Sandra Henderson

Field Trip Reports

Friday 9 to Monday 12 June - Drama at the Big Hole, Deua N.P.

Well, to be more exact, crossing of the swiftly flowing Shoalhaven River on a cold frosty morning, barefoot, knee-deep in icy water is something that we all will remember.

A group of 12 COG members, travelling birders if you like, had a really enjoyable June long weekend staying at the Deua Tin Huts on the doorstep of Deua National Park.

The accommodation, three separate well-appointed cabins, was warm and cosy and certainly well worth a visit either in a group or on a separate independent basis. Our genial hosts were new COG members, Carole and Andrew Kavanenko, who accompanied us on most of our wanderings, as did another new member Libby who also lives in this area and has invited COG to visit her rural property.

Apart from early cold, wintry conditions, the weather for first two days was very good allowing for wanderings near and far in search of our elusive prey. Birds, however, were in short supply, as could be expected at this time of the year. For 2 1/2 days searching we ticked off 54 of the more common species including Scarlet Robins and the largest flock, numbering 50-60 birds, of Buff-rumped Thornbills that any of us had ever seen.

Cloudy, overcast weather conditions on the Monday morning did not deter our intrepid group from heading off towards the Wyanbene Caves area. Whilst walking along an undulating track in a heavily timbered area we were continually entertained by several competing **Superb Lyrebirds**. Then, a highlight occurred as we approached a cleared, rocky area: no less than 5 **Spotted Quail-thrushes** in close proximity, which was a rare sighting for most and a very first for Jean Casburn. At the same site a family of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** and a pair of **Eastern Yellow Robins** made an appearance.

Not a high bird count, but who cares as the ones we did see were all beautiful, recorded and well-remembered. As a group we enjoyed each other's company, splendid accommodation, good meals, exploration of new country, great scenic views and new friends. Terry B. won the scrabble.

Terry Bell

Continued Page 7

Saturday 14 June Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve- Superb Lyrebird Survey

The eleventh annual survey of the Superb Lyrebird, designed to provide an index of population numbers since the 2003 bushfires, was run under perfect conditions with a cool morning, no wind and clear skies.

The nine COG members and friends were all assembled at the car park by 8.00 am and after breaking up into teams soon started to survey the five main walking trails. The Gibraltar Rocks track was surveyed clockwise along the relatively new alignment and back to the car park along the original fire trail.

Taking a minimum count, 25 individual **Superb Lyrebirds** were recorded within the Reserve compared with 6, 14, 12, 12, 19, 19-20, 20, 13, 22 and 21 in previous years (Gibraltar Rocks-3, Devil's Gap-4, Fishing Gap-2, Ashbrook-4, Camel Back-12); see Figure 1 which may indicate a continuing increase in numbers.

During the survey 38 species were recorded, similar to previous years, with the number seen depending very much on the trail walked: Gibraltar Rocks-24, Devil's Gap-20, Fishing Gap-22, Ashbrook-14, and Camel Back-10 with, as usual, a greater number of species being recorded from the dryer western facing slopes. Including the **Superb Lyrebird**, there were 7 species reported from all trails: **White-throated Treecreeper, White-browed Scrubwren, Striated Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**.

Species seen from one track only included the **Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Striated Pardalote, New Holland Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Crescent Honeyeater, Pied Currawong, Spotted Quail-thrush, Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Red-browed Finch, Bassian Thrush, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Grey Currawong, Rufous Whistler, Golden Whistler, Australian King Parrot** and **Gang-gang Cockatoo**.

Of interest was the small number of honeyeaters despite 7 species being recorded. Also noticeable was the small number of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Pied Currawongs**. Two **Gang-gangs Cockatoos** were observed on the Camel Back Trail.

Many thanks to the participants and to the authorities for waiving the entry fees.

Chris Davey

Questabird

[QuestaBird](#) is a fun new adventure app for mobile devices that gets kids (and adults too!) outdoors and experiencing the environment. Players join quests to photograph birds, earn gold, buy supplies, gain levels, build their collection and become Australia's highest-rated adventurers. The game uses real bird data, with all the known Australian species, along with GPS location tagging. Verified sightings are submitted to the Atlas of Living Australia to help protect our biodiversity.



As part of the COG's 50th anniversary, [QuestaBird](#) will include a special COG-sponsored "Gang-gang Cockatoo Quest" for the Canberra region, with special prizes, bonus gold, and the sightings coming directly to COG for follow-up.

To find out more log onto <http://www.questabird.com/>

Note: The game is currently available only on Android devices, with an iPhone version expected soon.

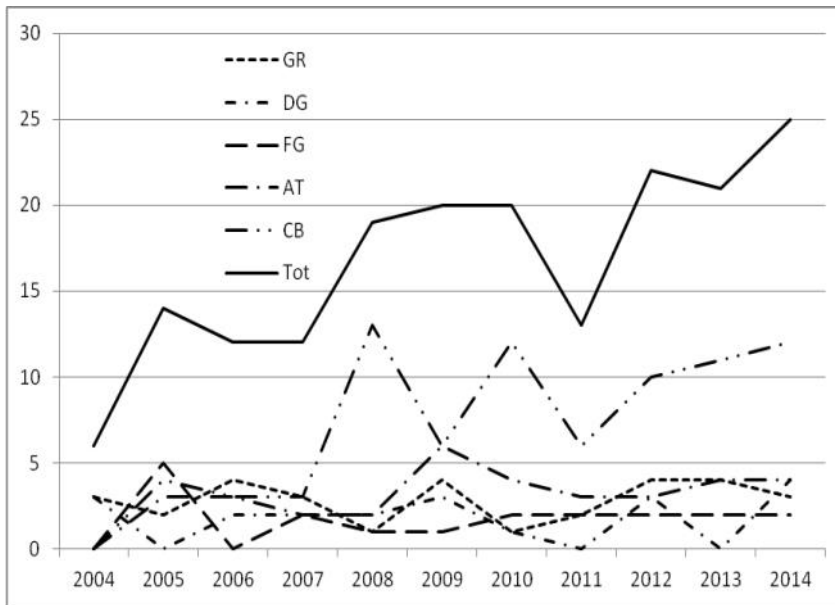


Figure 1. Numbers of Superb Lyrebirds recorded from walking trails at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, 2004-2014. GR-Gibraltar Rocks, DG-Devils Gap, FG-Fishing Gap, AT- Ashbrook Trail, CB-Camel Back, Tot- Total number of birds.

Wednesday 18 June – Lyneham Ridge, McKellar Pond and AIS Ponds

Thirty-two members and guests arrived at the designated point adjacent to Lyneham Ridge. As far as I could see through the fog we just about filled the western side of the street! We were fortunate to have the guidance of Michael Lenz who has visited the area frequently in recent times.

The fog possibly concealed some birds, but soon after starting **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** were recorded. They were initially quiet but a flock of 4 called as they left, followed by another flock of 6. **Scarlet Robins** and **Golden Whistlers** were also evident through the mist. A small feeding flock was examined closely and 2 **Speckled Warblers** were identified. Moving on to some tall timber we were somewhat surprised to note 6 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** in the canopy. A grassy hillside was hoped to contain more mixed flocks but they didn't eventuate. Our total for this site was 28 species.

We then moved to park in Giralang and walked along Ginninderra Creek towards McKellar Pond. A resident **Eastern Great Egret** gave good views en route. Arriving at the pond we soon identified Julian Robinson who had located an **Australian Little Bittern** on the far side of the pond. The bird put on a great show climbing up on top of the reeds on occasion and flying right across the pond. A **White-necked Heron** flew by and we totalled 18 species here (but didn't find an Australasian Bittern).

Most of the group moved to the final destination, the wetlands at the Australian Institute of Sport, where we were hoping to find the

Nature Lodge Optics

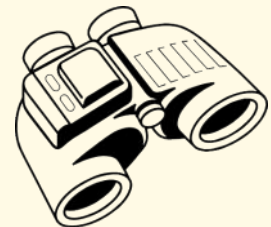
Nature Lodge Optics, a family owned business based in Huskisson, Jervis Bay, has been supplying quality binoculars to customers in the Canberra region since 2007.

Originally established in the UK in 1946, the owners established a branch in Australia several years ago and have become the region's leading independent binocular store.

Open 7 Days, the store always has over 100 pairs of binoculars in stock with a particular emphasis on Birdwatching products.

Major brands such as Steiner, Zeiss, Bushnell, Nikon & Pentax are represented together with smaller hi-tech brands like Weaver, Vortex, Forest Optics, Visionary and Vanguard.

A selection of Spotting Scopes, Night Vision & Tripods are always available.



As a family business and NOT a franchise the owners Daniel and Joanna Payne will always be happy to source the specialist or unusual products that individual customers require having established a global network of suppliers.

The store also specialises in polarised eyewear with brands such as Maui Jim, RayBan & Oakley to name just a few.

The helpful and informative website www.binoculars4u.com.au is regularly updated but is no substitute for personal service and recommendation which is always on hand.

Australasian Bittern found there on the weekend. We were unsuccessful in doing this. These ponds were rather quiet with only a few common waterbirds present. After the formal visit finished I went for an unsuccessful hunt for **Superb Parrots** around the main car park. However, 4 **Rainbow Lorikeets** were doing their noisy thing in a tall flowering eucalypt at the south end on the basketball arena.

For the entire morning 45 species were recorded.

Martin Butterfield

Friday 20 to Sunday 22 June – Moruya

The weekend started on a pleasantly social note, as twelve Coggies met at the Moruya Heads Caravan Park on Friday evening, before heading off to the Moruya Golf Club for a most enjoyable and convivial dinner. Following an early start on a crisp Saturday morning we found ourselves on a stunning rainforest walk off Wagonga Scenic Drive, just north of Narooma. Birds were hard to see in the gloom but we did get good views of **Brown Gerygones** and several **Large-billed Scrubwrens**. The forest was alive with the sounds of **Superb Lyrebirds**, **Wonga Pigeons**, **Lewin's Honeyeaters**, **Brown Cuckoo-Dove** and an **Eastern Whipbird**, and a **Pink Robin** was heard but not seen. As we climbed out of the gloom some saw a squadron of **Topknot Pigeons** zoom by, and **Bell Miners** greeted us as we returned to our cars.

Our next stop to the north was the Scenic River Walk to Mummaga Lake. Highlights included excellent views of two **Azure Kingfishers**, two **White-bellied Sea-Eagles**, and numerous **cormorants** (**Pied**, **Little Pied**, **Great** and **Little Black**). **Eastern Great Egrets** interspersed with **Little Egrets** clearly showed up their differences. The walk back through the forest yielded many **honeyeaters** (**Yellow-faced**, **Yellow-tufted**, **White-naped** and **Little Wattlebird**), **Satin Bowerbirds** and a single **Varied Sittella**. We then headed on to Brou Lake where we met up with Helen and David from the Eurobodalla Natural History Society (ENHS), and walked around the flooded shoreline. Some of the birding highlights included several thousand **Eurasian Coots**, more **honeyeaters** including **Crescent**, **Brown-headed**, **White-eared** and **New Holland**, a **Collared Sparrowhawk** and, somewhat surprisingly, an **Emu**.

After lunch we headed along Congo Road to a lovely coastal walk through grassy woodland in Eurobodalla National Park. Interspersed with scenic views we had fine views of a male **Rose Robin**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, several **Golden Whistlers**, **Red-capped Plovers** and a **Sooty Oystercatcher**.



COG at Moruya

Photo: Geoff Alves

After a scrumptious BBQ dinner we headed off for some spotlighting with Julie Morgan, also from the ENHS, to her wonderful 640 acre property along South Head Road, surrounded by the national park. Tramping through stunning old growth forest we missed out on the promised **Greater Gliders** but did see **Common Brushtail** and **Ringtail Possums** and a **Swamp Rat**. The screech of a **Masked Owl** was heard close-by several times but it did not show itself, with a more distant one showing this is a good site for the species.

Sunday saw us back up South Head Road walking around Little Pedro

and Pedro Swamps. The birding was fairly subdued but we did get **Red-browed Finch**, **Australian King-Parrot**, **Grey Butcherbird** and **Variegated Fairy-wren**, while **Little Lorikeets** darted overhead. We then visited a huge **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** nest – while the parents weren't in residence we did hear them call as we walked off. We also saw two more **Azure Kingfishers** and two juvenile male **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, while some dainty Large Mosquito Orchids (*Acianthus fornicatus*) lined our path.

A creditable 105 bird species were recorded for the weekend. Our thanks go to Sue Lashko for recording our sightings, Julie, Helen and David for their local knowledge, and to Chris 'Musk Duck' Davey for his enthusiastic leadership and for helping us to discover some great new birdwatching sites in the Moruya area.

Kathy Cook



COG at Moruya

Photo: Lia Battisson

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BINOCULARS BEFORE YOU BUY

Subscribers to the chatline often seek advice on buying binoculars.

Birdlife has produced a useful information sheet which can be found at

http://birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Best-binos.pdf

MUDBRICK COTTAGE—MALLACOOTA

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental. It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531, or
barbdebruine@hotmail.com

DEUA TIN HUTS (Via Braidwood)

Comfortable accommodation on the door-step of the Deua National Park at Krawarree via Braidwood NSW. Three cosy huts accommodating up to 14 people.

A short walk into the Deua National Park, the Big Hole and Marble Arch, walks in the beautiful Shoal haven Valley. Reasonable rates, hampers on request.. Group booking discounts.

Email enquiry@deuatinhuts.com www.deuatinhuts.com

Ph 02 4847 1248

Future Field Trips

COG Trips

At the start of each trip, and before proceeding on the trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form, which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities as follows:

- I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.
- I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.

Changes to trips are notified on the trips page of the COG website

<http://canberrabirds.org.au/>

and on the COG chat-line at:

[http://
bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/
archives/html/
canberrabirds/2012-03/
index.html](http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html)

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give preference to members for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people.

Sunday 6 July - Bird Watching by Bike – Mulligan's Flat & Goorooyarroo

Bird watching by bicycle is a great way to explore larger areas and to find those winter mixed feeding flocks. Come and explore the trails of Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves by bike, some of the best woodland habitats in the Canberra area. You will need your own off-road capable bike (mountain bike or similar) and a reasonable level of fitness. Off road cycling ability is essential. Bird watching expertise is optional. The trails we will explore are all vehicular management trails which are mostly in good condition and gently sloping although there are a few short steeper sections and some rough parts.

Meet at the car park at the main entrance to Mulligan's Flat, Amy Ackman St, Forde at 8:00am. To participate, please contact Duncan McCaskill by email at: duncan.mccaskill@gmail.com

Wednesday 16 July – Farrer Ridge

July's Wednesday walk will be at Farrer Ridge reserve, where we should see some robins, which like the grassy slopes there. There are some steps on the track to the top of the ridge, but it's not too strenuous. Meet at 9am on Sulwood Drive, between the Sainsbury and Gaunson roundabouts on Sulwood. There's a gate into the reserve and I'll make sure I'm lurking in the vicinity. Park off the side of the road, but take care because it can be busy.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 19 July – Percival Hill and Ginninderra Creek

Meet at 9.00 am for a guided walk on Percival Hill and surrounds. People coming from the south should enter Gundaroo Drive from the Barton Highway. In about 500m you come to the Crace roundabout. Go through the roundabout and IMMEDIATELY mount the kerb to the left before you reach the information sign. Go down the dirt track and stop near the little concrete bunker just ahead of you. (Coming from the north on Gundaroo Drive, go round Crace roundabout and do the same thing.) If you prefer to park in Crace, it's only a short walk back across Gundaroo Drive.

We will walk around the forested areas of the hill and descend to Gungahlin Pond, cross the dam wall and return to the cars along Ginninderra Creek. If time and inclination permit, we could make a short detour to Gungahlin Pond if there are interesting water birds. There's a good new coffee shop in Crace.

John Harris

Saturday 9 August – Lake Ginninderra Beginners' Outing

This is the second of our bird walks for 2014 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close

Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

Sunday 24 August – Lake Tuggeranong

The circuit around Lake Tuggeranong is around 7km, all quite easy walking. Meet at 9am at the bitumen car park on Mortimer Lewis Circuit (off Drakeford Drive) between the dog park and the houses. There is a children's playground and covered BBQ shelter close to one end of the car park, and one of the lake's beaches (Nguru) right in front of the car park. Apart from waterbirds, Lake Tuggeranong often has a nice selection of little bush birds. No need to book. Contact Sandra Henderson if you need any more information (shirmax2931@gmail.com).

Sunday 31 August - Late winter mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Aspects are expected to be the same as previous trips of this kind; ie transport will be by two 12-seater buses (cost approx. \$20 provided both buses are full), the point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am and it will run until mid-afternoon (bring morning tea and lunch), but to keep it fresh we are again looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we again plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and where we will be able to see some good birds. This would depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

Saturday 6 September - Kelly Road - morning walk

Kelly Road runs parallel to the Monaro Highway south of Williamsdale. This morning walk in early spring should produce some of the early migrants. Meet for carpooling at Kambah Inn (corner of Marconi Crescent and Drakeford Drive) for a 7:45am departure to arrive at Kelly Road at 8:30am. People who prefer to drive themselves there could meet us on-site [first exit to Kelly Road, about 2km south of ACT/NSW border] at 8.30am. Bring morning tea.

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 September – Eden pelagics

COG has booked the weekend of September 6 and 7 for two one-day pelagic trips. The outings leave from Eden Harbour in the early morning (time to be confirmed), and return mid-afternoon. Each trip can accommodate 12 people, and the cost per person per trip will be \$100.

Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but there may be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Friday and Saturday evenings. As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip.

This trip is currently full, with a waiting list. Sometimes there are cancellations so if you wish to be added to the waiting list, please book with Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com) and indicate which day you prefer (Saturday or Sunday).

Campaign for a research documentary: The Macaw Project

A scientific research project of the ANU is being implemented in the Tambopata-Candamo region of the southeastern Peruvian Amazon. The researchers study the breeding biology of large macaws and are developing new genetic techniques for their conservation. Researchers now want to reach beyond these aims and to communicate their findings. Nowadays most scientific research is only available for a very narrow academic audience by publishing in scientific journals. Often the reality of the field-based research, which underpins these journal articles, is the most interesting part and worthy of communication to a much broader audience by documentary movies.

Thanks to the voluntary work of the researchers, they already have a repository of suitable full-HD footage that requires professional editing to produce a 26-minute documentary of their macaw conservation research in the rainforest of Peru. The documentary will be used to direct public attention towards the problems these birds are facing in their habitat and the importance of scientific conservation research on the future of macaws in this region.



“Public awareness is an important goal of any conservation research, and documentary films are great tools to accomplish this,” says George Olah, a PhD scholar of the ANU and leader of the research team. “This documentary will differ from others because it was filmed from the perspective of researchers,” he continues. “We will explain the newest techniques of this field of research and show up-to-date findings in a comprehensible way in a spectacular movie. To be able to accomplish all this we will also need your help.”

If you interested in this crowd-funding campaign, please visit the following site:

<http://igg.me/at/macawmovie> or contact the researchers at george.olah@anu.edu.au



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

**FOR THE BEST BIRDWATCHING
IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND**

Self-contained Units,
Bunk Rooms & Campground

www.birdwatchers.com.au

sootyowl@bigpond.com

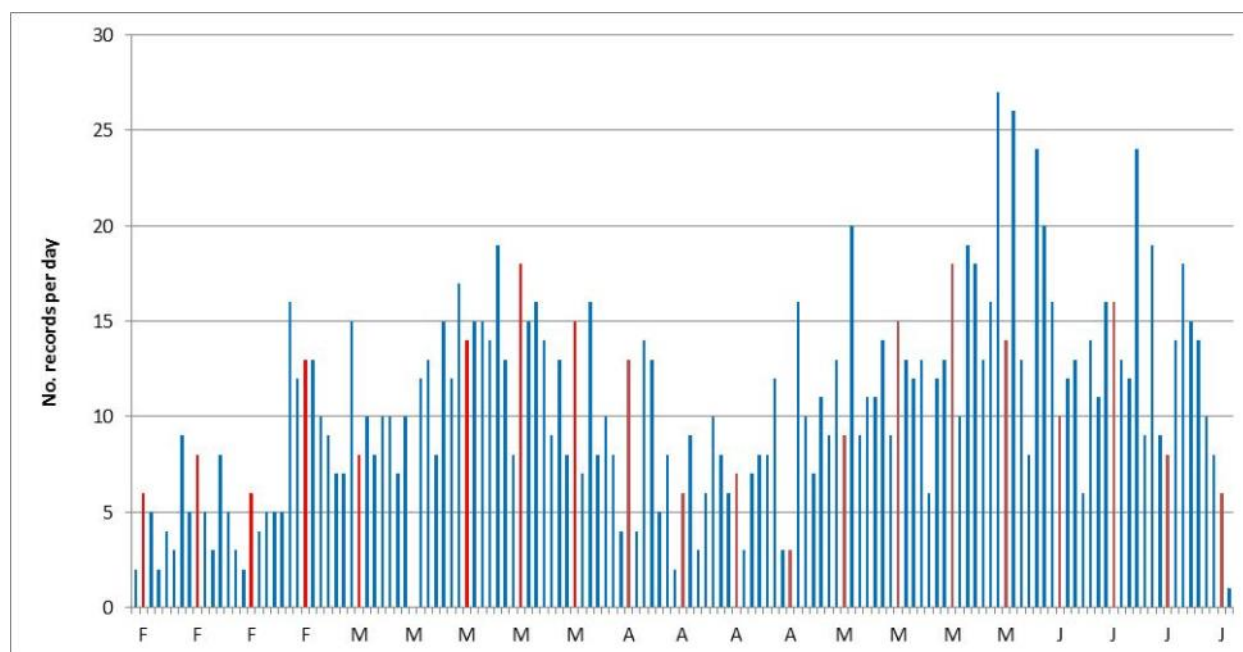
<http://kingfisherparkbirdwatchers.blogspot.com/>

Ph: 07 40941263

Gang-gang Cockatoo Project Update—May 2014

Sightings

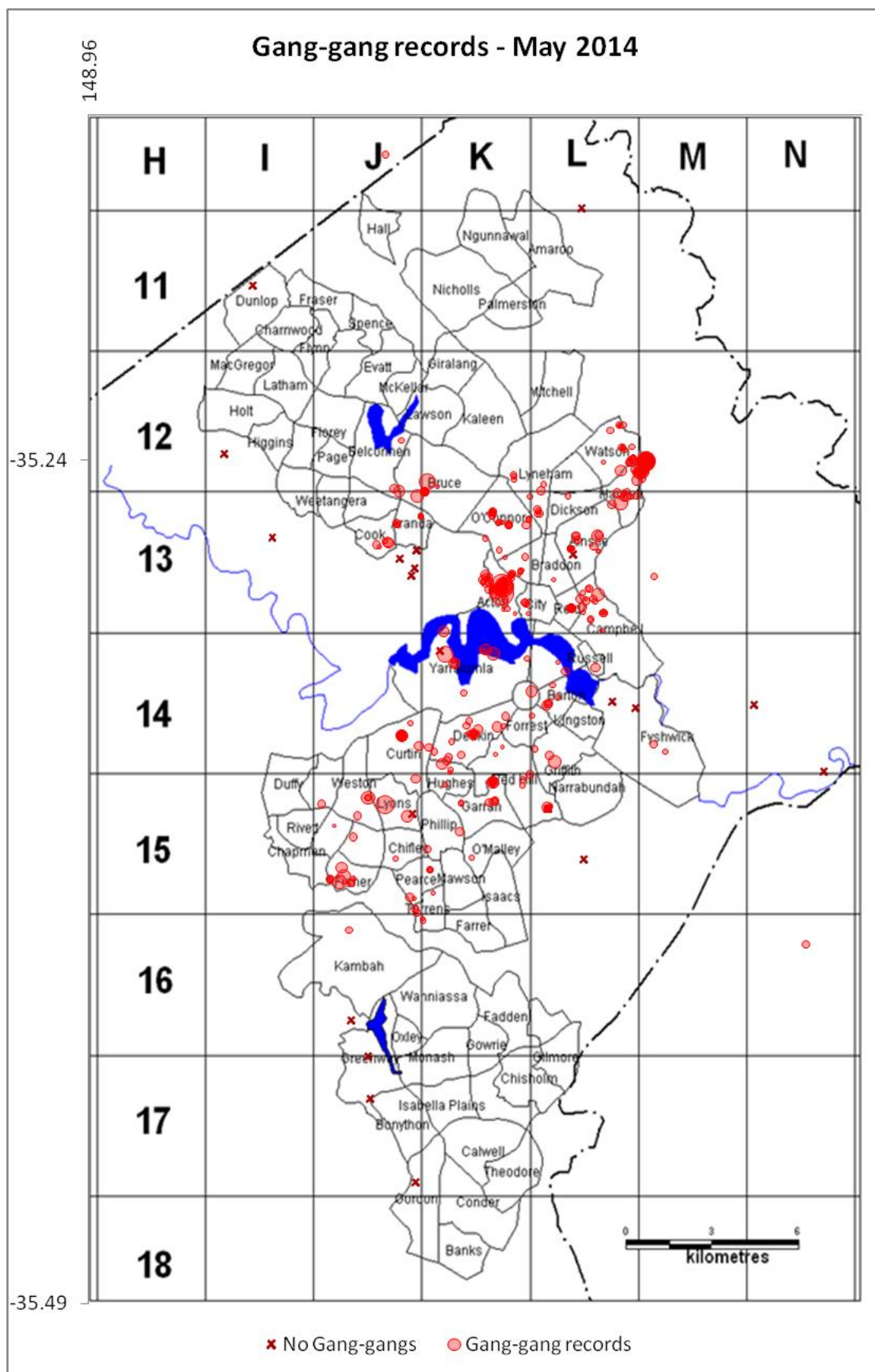
Many thanks to all contributors for another great month of records. Thanks also to Anne Carrick for data entry of general observations and to Michael Robbins for the entry of the Muster observations. At this stage (23 June) the number of online observations is similar to that for April (263-April, 278- June). The month of May ended up with the largest monthly input with 492 records, no doubt due to the interest caused by the Muster at the end of May. There are now 336 registered online users who have recorded 1628 observations. The number of daily online records is shown below. With no COG meeting at the usual venue in June the Red Box was unavailable and many paper forms are still to be included in the overall count.



The number of daily on-line records between February and June 2014. The red bar indicates Sundays. (Note: this will only be visible on the web version of the newsletter).

Again, with thanks to Steve Wallace for plotting the observations and to Nicki Taws for providing the base maps for the distribution of urban records for May which is shown below. Each point represents an observation; the larger the dot size the greater the number of birds observed. It should be noted that the intensity of the dot colour increases with additional records from the same point. Muster records are not included.

A feature for May was the Muster which ran from 21-27 May. To date, 69 site observations on paper forms and 55 online site observations have been received. Observations were received from 52 suburbs with 68% of sites recording no Gang-gangs over the seven-day period. The Muster survey confirms the overall picture obtained from the general survey with areas such as Acton, O'Connor, Ainslie, Garran, Pearce and Deakin reporting birds virtually every day. The largest number of birds reported on any one day was 34 in Deakin, 29 in Pearce, 18 in Campbell and Ainslie and 16 in Hackett. Within suburbs there was some variation. For instance, in Acton there were eight sites of which three did not record any Gang-gangs, in Ainslie nine sites of which four did not record any, in O'Connor six sites of which four did not record any, possibly indicating restricted distribution with particular suburbs at that time of the year.



The allure of the Gang-gang has spread beyond our region. Tim the Yowie Man's blog in the Sydney Morning Herald encouraged a birding reader to take the trip from Sydney to Canberra over the June long weekend to spot some Gang-gangs. We helped out by directing this keen birdo to a hastily devised Gang-gang trail along Dickson Road ANU and up to the ANBG. Our Sydney birdo sighted 40 birds in this Gang-gang 'hotspot' and the records have been entered into our survey database.

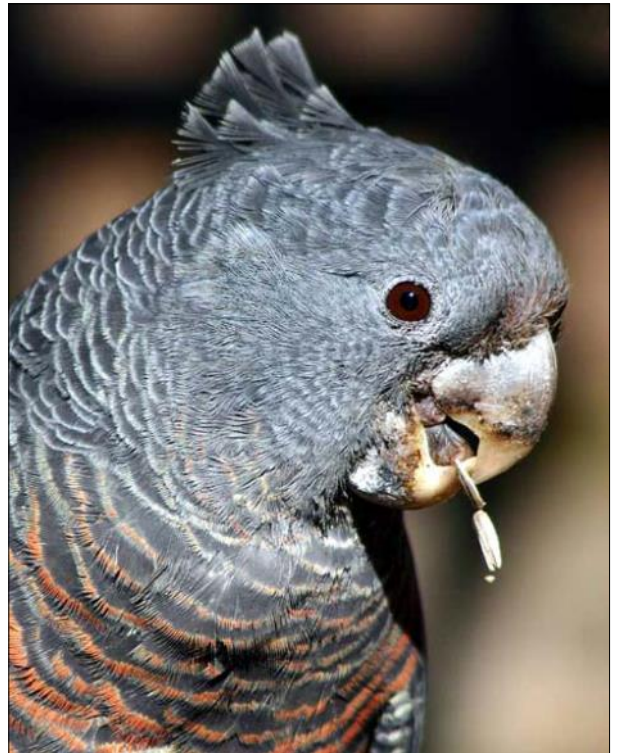
As we move into the breeding season, we are working to engage people who spend a lot of time outdoors, including our Urban Park Care and Landcare volunteers working in urban nature reserves, PCS rangers and rural landholders in the COG area of interest. Observers of breeding behaviour and/or nesting activity are asked to send in these sightings via ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au.

Presentations have been made at the June meeting of the ACT Park Care and Landcare Coordinators and to the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) Partners forum and K2C Landholders Connectivity Workshop: Landscaping for Birds, both held in Queanbeyan on 20 June 2014. The landholders had lots of questions and anecdotes about the Gang-gang and interest in its habitat requirements and we secured a few more recruits for our August Gang-gang Muster.

We will be looking to ramp up media interest again ahead of the August Muster where we want as many people as possible involved in our winter count. This Muster will be of particular interest given the expected movement of birds from the mountains to the plains. A revised hard copy data form has been developed to provide room for observers to record information about feeding and bird interactions.

If you are unsure how to participate in the Gang-gang survey details of how to contribute can be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/gang-gang-survey/>. If you have any queries please email to ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au.

The GG survey project team



Gang-gang Cockatoo, female

Photo: Peter Fullagar

UNDERSTANDING BIRDS

Learn to think like a bird!

An ANU Centre for Continuing Education course with COG member and former 'Avian Whimsy' author Ian Fraser



Six two-hour sessions covering evolution, structure, ecology, behaviour, habitats, bird-watching tools and techniques.

For beginners and experienced birders, *lots* of slides.

Discussion of the issues encouraged! Thursdays, 6.00pm, 21 August - 25 September.

Also two 3-hour field trips.

For further details and booking, contact the CCE on 6125 2892 or enquiries.cce@anu.edu.au



*Friends of
Grasslands*

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

Celebrating 20 years of
conservation and research for
grassy ecosystems
1994–2014

www.fog.org.au

'Grass half full or grass half empty? Valuing native grassy landscapes'

A forum organised by Friends of Grasslands (FOG) to celebrate grasslands and grassy woodlands
— their beauty and complexity, ecology and productivity, science and management.

Thursday 30 October – Saturday 1 November at CSIRO Discovery Centre, ACT

Talks and discussions and posters,
and field visits to local grasslands and grassy woodlands.

To express interest in attending one, two or all three days, and/or to offer a poster or paper, contact
president@fog.org.au, or check www.fog.org.au/forum2014.htm for more details.





*Friends of
Grasslands*

Supporting native grassy ecosystems

Celebrating 20 years of
conservation and research for
grassy ecosystems
1994–2014

www.fog.org.au

'Grass half full or grass half empty? Valuing native grassy landscapes'

A forum, organised by Friends of Grasslands (FOG) to celebrate grasslands and grassy woodlands — their beauty and complexity, ecology and productivity, science and management.

Thursday 30 October – Saturday 1 November at CSIRO Discovery Centre, ACT



We invite landholders, researchers, policy makers and other people in government and the community: Come and share your knowledge and perspective on native grassy ecosystems.

There will be talks and discussions, field visits to local grasslands and grassy woodlands, and a poster display. The proposed program is overleaf.

Call for expressions of interest in attending: Please contact president@fog.org.au and indicate your interest in attending one, two or all three days.

Call for papers or posters: The proposed format for talks is given below. To offer a paper or poster, please send a short summary (½ A4 page, 200–300 words) to president@fog.org.au by c.o.b. Thursday 31 July. Further information is available from president@fog.org.au, and will be posted at www.fog.org.au/forum2014.htm

We invite all potential presenters to provide a written paper or summary to be included in the forum proceedings. Papers will be also published on the FOG website.

Proposed format for talks

Talks will be 15 minutes in length, with an extra 5 minutes for questions. There will be open discussion at the end of the talks on days 1 and 2.

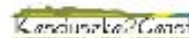
Each speaker, in their area of expertise, will be asked to consider the following:

- How are we applying what we know?
- What are the outcomes (expected and achieved)?
- Where are the strengths?
- What is happening that can be used elsewhere — any innovative lessons?
- How can we help each other?

...Continued overleaf



Office of the Commissioner for
Sustainability and the Environment





Friends of Grasslands
Supporting native grassy ecosystems

Grass half full or grass half empty? Valuing native grassy landscapes

Friends of Grasslands forum 30 October – 1 November 2014

www.fog.org.au/forum2014.htm

Proposed program

Day 1. Thursday, 9.00 – 5.00

Governance, conservation, productivity and development

Possible topics for talks:

- Values and strategies related to grassland conservation
- Perceptions of the community
- Community group experience: advocacy for grassland conservation
- Land use planning for conservation
- Changing priorities in recovery; how to get the most out of government policies
- Management for production and conservation
- Managing the urban edge

Day 2. Friday, 9.00 – 5.00

Science and community involvement in land management

Possible topics for talks:

- Restoration of grassy ecosystems
- Management for floristic diversity
- Management for conservation of fauna
- Experience with Indigenous land management practices
- Community involvement in grassland management
- Weed strategies and practices

Where have we got to and what next?

- Evaluation of efforts, outcomes and strategies

Day 3. Saturday, 9.30 – 4.00, all-day field trip to local sites

Demonstrating innovative restoration and conservation projects



Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG membership

2014-2015 memberships:

- Singles: \$40
- Family: \$45
- Institution: \$40
- School student (under 18) \$20

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

G Andrews, Isaacs
K Dawes, Fraser
L Appleton, Yarralumla
L Collis, Hackett
A Clynes, Narrabundah

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for August 2014 edition

Wednesday 30 July 2014

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc. to the Editors at:

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au Or

c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips) except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged.

COG information

President—Alison Russell-French

0419 264702

Email: president@canberrabirds.org.au

Vice President—Neil Hermes

0413 828 045

Email: hermes.neil@gmail.com

Treasurer—Noel Luff

Email: noelluff@hotmail.com.au

Secretary—Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary

COG, PO Box 301

Civic Square, ACT 2608

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on 6254 6520

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

membership@canberrabirds.org.au

for changed address or other details

Gang-gang Newsletter

Editor: Sue Lashko

Email: gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Newsletter distribution:

Dianne Davey

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'.

Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to;

canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au

The subject is 'subscribe' (without the quotation marks).

Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

