



# Gang-gang

OCTOBER 2012

## OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday 10.10.2012

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

### 7.30 pm: Annual General Meeting

After the AGM the speakers will be Neville and Jan Lubke giving a presentation on **'Curlewing the Landscape'**. Have you heard or seen a Bush Stone-curlew lately? Unless you have been in Northern Australia recently your answer is probably "No". This nocturnal, ground dwelling bird has steadily been disappearing from our south eastern landscape and is now officially listed as endangered across NSW and threatened within Victoria.

Neville and Jan Lubke, who are members of the Nature Conservation Working Group, have been passionately working to protect and enhance the survival of the Bush Stone-curlew. In 2002, working under a Scientific Licence, they established a successful captive breeding and release program for these endangered birds and to date have released 55 young captive bred Bush Stone-curlews into the wild. Come and hear them present the story and learn more about this iconic, seldom studied bird as you watch their Bush Stone-curlew power point presentation and view an interesting photographic and taxidermy display of the Bush Stone-curlew and their eggs. The display will be set up in the tea room, and members are expected to be able to view it and ask questions both before and after the meeting.

Everyone welcome

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Which birds usually arrive in October?

At this time of year, the arrival of migrants is a hot topic and one to which everyone can make a contribution by submitting records of the arrival dates.

Records currently in the COG databases provide some interesting insights. Over the period 1981 to 2010, only three regular migrants usually arrive in October: **Brush Cuckoo**, **Rufous Fantail** and **Satin Flycatcher**.



Satin Flycatcher  
*Myiagra cyanoleuca*

Photo: Julian Robinson

I have defined 'regular' as being recorded in at least 25 of these 30 years and to be considered as 'usually arriving in October', the species has to be recorded as arriving in October in over 50% of these years. For example, the **Brush Cuckoo** has been recorded in 29 of the last  
(Cont.' page 2)

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 October 2012**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, Deakin.  
(Agenda and Committee nomination form - page 15)

30 years and in 17 (59%) of these years the first records were for October. Data from all observations in the 30 year period, including the Garden Bird Survey (GBS), have been used in these calculations. The **Brush Cuckoo** has arrived in October in 59% of these years, while the **Rufous Fantail** has arrived in October in 73% and the **Satin Flycatcher** is the most consistent October migrant at 87%. The **Dollarbird** just misses the cut arriving in 50% of these years in October, with the arrival in other years being in September (33%) and August (17%).

Other species (not all considered migratory) are regular but display a less defined peak (less than 50% of these years) but are still recorded most often as arriving in October: **Whiskered Tern**, **Brown Songlark**, **White-browed Woodswallow**, **Superb Parrot** and **Royal Spoonbill**. And, just missing the 25 year cut with records for 24 years of the 30, the **Eastern Koel**.

**Table 1 – Species arriving in October – 1981 to 2010**

Type and species	Percentage of years with October arrival
Regular (a) and appearing in October in more than 50% of years	
Satin Flycatcher	87
Rufous Fantail	73
Brush Cuckoo	59
Dollarbird (just out – 50%)	50
Regular (a) and most often arriving in October but not in more than 50% of years	
Whiskered Tern	46
Brown Songlark	40
White-browed Woodswallow	39
Superb Parrot	33
Royal Spoonbill	33
Eastern Koel (just out – records only in 24 years instead of 25 years)	42
May arrive in October but usually arrive in other months	
Rainbow Bee-eater	40
Leaden Flycatcher	33
Rufous Songlark	33
Less than regular visitors (6-10 years) which most often appear in October	
Bar-tailed Godwit	88
Turquoise Parrot	71
Red-Backed Kingfisher	67

Note (a) : Regular is defined as being recorded in at least 25 years in 1981 – 2010

Other species which may arrive in October, but generally arrive in other months, are the **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Rufous Songlark**.

There are also some less than regular visitors (reported in only 6 to 10 of the 30 years) which also appear most often in October: **Red-backed Kingfisher**, **Turquoise Parrot** and **Bar-tailed Godwit**.

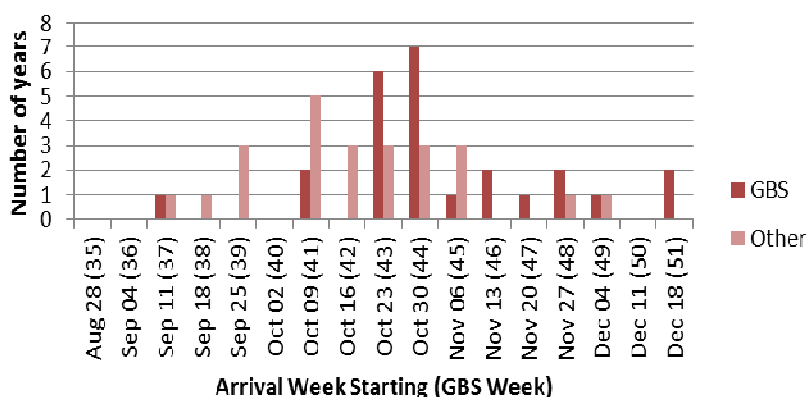
For those wondering what happened to the species reported for 11 to 24 out of the 30 years and most often reported as arriving in October, there are none.

There are some differences in the arrival dates recorded in the GBS and other observations as the graphs below illustrate. They show the week of the arrival date (aligned with the GBS weeks) and the number of years in which the first record appears in that week. For example, the earliest record of the **Rufous Fantail** has been in the week starting 30 October for seven years of the GBS but only three years for other observations.

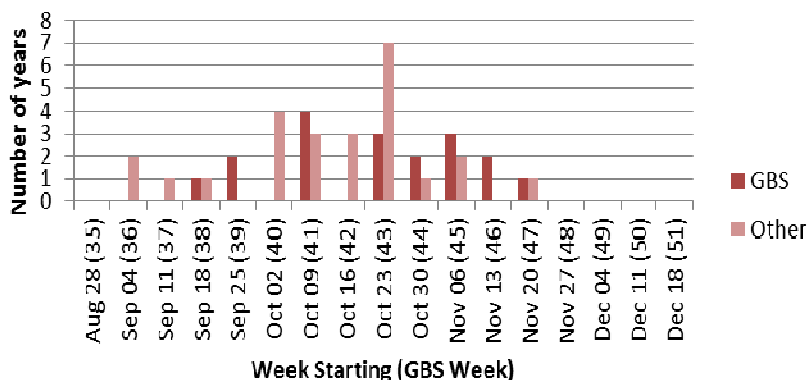
I have been putting information on the chatline to give an insight into some of the information that can be delivered from the databases, with the hope that information on every species can eventually be made accessible to everyone. It is only possible to generate this information because of the records submitted to the COG databases, so I encourage everyone to participate.

**Steve Wallace**

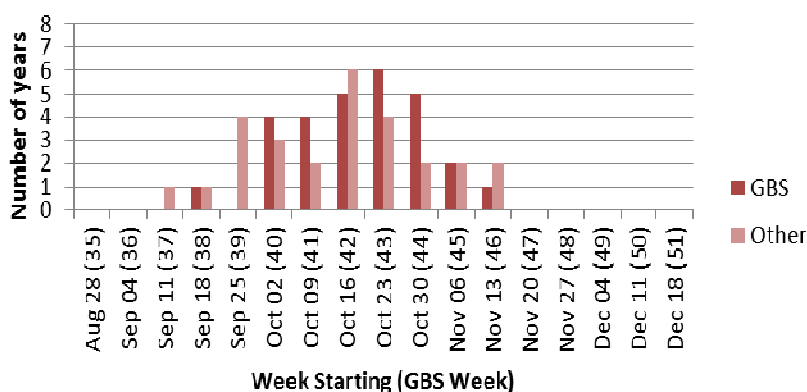
## Rufous Fantail Arrival



## Brush Cuckoo Arrival



## Satin Flycatcher Arrival



**Australian  
Ornithological  
Services P/L**

PO Box 385  
South Yarra 3141  
Victoria  
Tel: 03 9820 4223

[enquiries@philipmaher.com](mailto:enquiries@philipmaher.com)

### 2012 tours

**November: New Caledonia**  
**November: SW Western Australia**  
(a few places left)

### 2012 Plains-wanderer weekends

15 & 16 December  
29 & 30 December  
(a few places left)

### 2013

**February: Tasmania**  
including pelagic & Melaleuca

**Easter Saturday & Sunday**  
Plains-wanderer Weekend

**April: Alice Springs area &  
MacDonnell Ranges**

**July: Top End**  
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine,  
Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau flight

**July: Gulf Country**  
Cairns to Mt Isa, returning via Ather-  
ton Tablelands

**September: Strzelecki Outback**  
Vic, NSW, SW Q'ld, SA, 34<sup>th</sup> tour

**October: Yorke Peninsula to  
Ceduna** (over 60 scarlet-chested  
parrots seen on the 2011 tour)

**2013 Plains-wanderer weekends**  
7 & 8 December  
28 & 29 December

Please see itineraries, checklists and  
latest news on our website

[www.philipmaher.com](http://www.philipmaher.com)

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## Meeting to plan COG-outings for 2013

There will be a meeting on **Thursday 25 October at 5.30pm** at the Conservation Council in Childers St, Civic, to plan the 2013 outings programme. If you have suggestions and/or would like to lead an outing, please come along. We are always looking for new locations, so if you have a favourite spot suitable for a morning, all day, weekend or long weekend field trip, we would love to hear from you. Remember you do not need to be an expert to lead an outing; there are always participants who are willing to help out. If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to contribute ideas, please email me at [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com) with location, very brief description and possible date/month.

## Field Trip Reports

### Sunday 2 September - Mt Majura

Conditions were fine and sunny - ideal for bird watching - when thirteen COGers met at Mt Majura with the main object being to search for **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. A search of various locations in the week prior failed to find any sign of them and that was again the case on this COG outing, although we did see **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**. In total, we recorded a total of 33 species. The highlights were a very good view of a male **Golden Whistler** in full breeding plumage and several **Rose Robins**. At the conclusion of the walk 4 **Noisy Friarbirds** were also seen.

- Terry Munro

### Sunday 9 September – Mulligans Flat

After a week of unfavourable weather the outing to Mulligans Flat turned out to be warm, clear and still - a perfect spring morning. The 10 members and friends gathered at the car park on Amy Ackman St, Forde and headed towards the newly constructed large dam at the southern end of the Reserve via the Snake and Daisy gates and then returned along the Dam Road.

We recorded 49 species but despite the good conditions abundance was low and birds hard to find. Surprisingly, the areas that we covered still appear to be very over-grazed despite the good growing conditions and lack of kangaroos seen. Interesting sightings included a silent **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and two **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** intent on digging up a very large Blakely's Red Gum. Many of the summer migrants had not returned, but breeding observations of **Striated Pardalotes** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** were made. The now completed re-construction of the large dam will add a significant feature to the Reserve although for this outing we only recorded a few **Hardhead**, **Australian Grebe**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **White-faced Heron** and a single **Eurasian Coot**.

- Chris Davey

### Friday 7 to Sunday 9 September – Shore, Rain Forest and Heath with Illawarra Birders

Ten COG members were hosted by the Illawarra Birders for the weekend. Several present had met in February at Wee Jasper when COG hosted the IBs. On Saturday morning we visited the restricted access Tallawarra Ash Ponds. Highlights of the 63 birds seen during the morning included a new bird for the area, a pair of **Rufous Songlark**, heard briefly by Julie McGuinness, queried by experienced IBs, and then chased down by a few keen IB & COG members, who obtained photographic evidence but did not hear any calls. This was just after morning tea on a nicely mown grassy bank out of the strong wind, during which we'd listened to **Little Grassbird**, **Australian Reed-Warbler**, and watched 6 **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, numerous **Chestnut Teal** etc, all of this after spending about 10 minutes enjoying excellent views of a **Baillon's Crake**.



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Lunch was on banks of Lake Illawarra, with excellent views of all cormorants, **Caspian Tern** and, for some, **Striated Heron**.

On Saturday afternoon we walked the Mt Kembla Ring Track. From the lookout everyone had excellent views of a **Grey Goshawk**, and some of the **Scarlet Honeyeater** 3 metres away. On the track, many had good views of **Brown Gerygone**, and a few of **Topknot Pigeon**, but we only heard the **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**. In the evening we shared an excellent Thai meal with our hosts. On Sunday we visited Killalea State Recreation Area as Barren Grounds was closed. There was prolonged discussion as to whether we were viewing a **Masked** or **Barn Owl** as the owl sat and watched us. Without a scope or venturing closer it was agreed to have too little feathering on legs to be a Masked.

We said good bye to our hosts, all agreeing that a couple of other joint trips in 2013 is a good idea. Six COGers then ventured to Barren Grounds, and found some people walking in as the wind had dropped and fire in Budderoo NP was under control. We had a pleasant lunch at the picnic area, good sightings of **Gang Gang Cockatoo** and briefly of a **Pilotbird/Eastern Bristlebird** - the exact ID about which the party is split.

- Michael Robbins

## Sunday 16 September – Woods Reserve and Gibraltar Falls

The day started out foggy at Kambah Village where most of the 17 participants met to car pool, but by the time we arrived at Woods Reserve it promised to be a glorious day. We walked around the reserve, then along the path that went on up the hill, observing 18 species in all. Highlights were good views of **Superb Fairy-wren** and **White-eared Honeyeater** and hearing a **Grey Currawong**, albeit at some distance.

We then drove up to Gibraltar Falls, as the walk from Woods Reserve is impassable as a result of flood damage and regenerated vegetation. We had morning tea there at the brand new picnic tables and stools, after having a look at the falls. We then went to Point Hut Crossing on the way back to Canberra and walked for an hour or so along the track beside the Murrumbidgee River, which goes to Pine Island. One of the first species was a raptor which turned out to be a **Brown Falcon**. It very obligingly sat on the top of a tree for quite some time while the photographers scrambled over rocks to capture it. We had two **Australian Magpie** on nests in very close proximity to each other in the picnic area and just before we left we saw a female **Scarlet Robin** and both male and female **Rose Robin**.

As we were driving off a flock of about 10 **Red-browed Finch** were flitting about, very close to the road. In total, 37 species were observed.

- Lia Battison

## Wednesday 19 September - Illilanga and Strike-a-Light TSR

Twenty members and guests (including Howard and Mary from the East Cascades Audubon Society) gathered at the first site some 9km south of Michelago at about 9am with the fog lifting off the hills. We were greeted by Sandra, an owner of the property to whom our thanks are offered, and strolled off to the northern side of the property before heading back to the creek and the house. We recorded 41 species here and the highlights were **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Brown Treecreeper** and, right at the end, a **Restless Flycatcher**. Breeding records were nest building by **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and display by **Australasian Grebes** on a nearby dam.

After the excellent Anzac biscuits we moved on to Strike-a-Light TSR a few kilometres from Bredbo up the Jerangle road. A total of 43 species were seen along the creek and in the TSR. To some extent highlights here were similar to those at Illilanga with great views of 4 **Diamond Firetails** and 2 **Speckled Warblers**. A good crop of **Fuscous Honeyeaters** appeared, together with at least 2 **White-plumed Honeyeaters**. Crossing the road we found some **Brown Quail** and a **Brown Treecreeper** disappeared into a hollow in a stump earning itself a breeding record. Overall we recorded 57 species.

- Martin Butterfield

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## COG Database

Recently there has been much discussion over the future and direction of the COG database. One outcome of this has been a need to provide more species summary data to the contributors of the Annual Bird Report and to have these data available to the membership.

Steve Wallace, Michael Robbins and Paul Fennell have spent some considerable time looking at the problem. Thanks to Steve's expertise in this area, up-to-date, summary information for each species can now be produced, examples of which many may have seen and provided by Steve to queries on the chat-line. This facility has greatly improved the database and now makes the many queries received by the Database Manager that much easier to answer. It needs to be stressed that the reports are in no way intended as an analysis of species status within the COG area of interest but are rather a report of what is in the database for information and use by members.

**Chris Davey**

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### **Positions Vacant:**

**Sales Desk Manager**

All assistance given to train and support new people.

**Relief lay-out Editor**

Contact [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

***.....still seeking sightings.....***



Photo: Geoffrey Dabb

***If you see this unusual Superb Parrot , please inform Chris Davey.***

For those who receive the Gang-gang newsletter as a black and white print copy, please log into [www.canberrabirds.com.au](http://www.canberrabirds.com.au) , click on the Gang-gang newsletter tag, and open this October edition to see the colour version on page 6.

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## Future Field Trips

Before the start of each trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities. The form reads 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>.

### October long weekend (ACT holiday) - 6-8 October - Currarong

Currarong is a coastal village on the Beecroft Peninsula which encloses the northern end of Jervis Bay and is surrounded by national park. Local habitats include rocky coast, long sandy beaches, headland cliffs and extensive heathland, forest and patches of sub-rainforest. Nearby are Jervis Bay itself, and coastal lakes, lagoons and rivers. Access is via Nowra, and the trip from Canberra takes about three and a half hours.

We will visit a range of habitats and the bird list should include a range of bush, heath and shore birds. **Eastern Bristlebirds** have made their way to the local heathlands from their translocation release sites further around the bay, and on recent trips I've recorded **Grey Goshawk**, **Bar-shouldered Dove**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, **Southern Emu-wren**, etc.

Accommodation is available at the Currarong caravan park. The weekend coincides with the last week-end of the NSW school holidays but is outside of peak season. For further information see <http://www.holidayhaven.com.au/Currarong-Beachside-Tourist-Park.html>

Places will be limited to about 12-15. Contact **Harvey Perkins** at [hdpphd@gmail.com](mailto:hdpphd@gmail.com) or on 043 886 9990 for further information or to register your interest.

### Wednesday 17 October – Uriarra Village

For the Wednesday Walk meet at Uriarra Village, off Brindabella Road near the junction with Uriarra Rd, at 9am. Further details will be covered in an email to Wednesday walkers closer to the date.

### Sunday 14 October K2C bird surveys Bredbo Region

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**, and the spring honeyeater migration will be in full flight. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and add to the property lists. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact **Nicki Taws**. Email: [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com) or ph. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

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## Sunday 21 October – Bellmount Forest and TSR 48

Join Pauline Wickstead and Nick Nicholls for a morning's birding on Pauline and Stuart's property, "Uardry" (5202 on fence), at Bellmount Forest. We plan to spend up to two hours (9:30 to around 11:30 am) exploring the property and then we will go on to a local TSR close by for around another hour before returning to Canberra.

If you wish to carpool from Canberra meet at the car park behind the Dickson Swimming Pool at 8:30 am. For those who wish to drive directly to "Uardry" proceed north along the Federal Highway, take the Gunning/Queanbeyan turnoff and proceed north through Sutton and Gundaroo to Bellmount Forest. The entrance to the property is the second driveway (opp. 100 speed sign) on the right beyond the turnoff to Bellmount Forest which is on the left. A variety of bush birds can be expected and at the TSR we would be looking for groups of Brown Treecreepers.

If you are planning to join us please contact Nick Nicholls (email [aandnicholls@bigpond.com](mailto:aandnicholls@bigpond.com) or telephone 6257 8608) prior to the event.

## Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 October – Bird Blitz (see separate article page 8)

## Saturday 3 November - Yanununbeyan SCA and NP

There will be 6-7 planned stops within Yanununbeyan for general bush birding that will include off-track walking. Common sense appropriate to the Australian bush in summer is required – carry water, sun-screen and a hat. See Martin's blog (<http://franmart.blogspot.com.au/2012/09/trying-again-cog-outing-to-yanununbeyan.html>) for the full day plan, maps of the meeting point and planned route, and a list of birds previously recorded in the area. This list includes a wide variety of honeyeaters, thornbills, parrots, cuckoos and raptors.

Meet at 8:00 am at the Spotlight carpark (off the Bungendore Road) in Queanbeyan for car-pooling. Could someone please volunteer to manage the coordination of the car-pooling (please contact Martin as directed below). Martin will join the group at the junction of Captains Flat Road and Briars Sharrow Road.

To book your place, or for further information please contact Martin Butterfield - phone 62382637 or 0435012840 or email: [martinflab@gmail.com](mailto:martinflab@gmail.com).

## Sunday 11 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past nine years. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, looking for signs of nesting, etc, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to birdwatching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Though every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually is a "hot spot" where most of the nesting occurs.

To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H) by email on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au). Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.



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## Saturday 17 November — Tuggeranong Hill NR — morning

Enjoy a walk on one of the prominent landmarks of the Tuggeranong region. Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve contains a variety of habitats and commands some spectacular views of the surrounding region. There are no particular target species identified for this outing but we will record everything we observe to provide valuable records for the database. Note that medium fitness is required as this walk will cover some sections of steep terrain. Please bring along your own supplies for morning tea, as well as water and sunscreen. If time permits, we may visit the site where 2500 Drooping Sheoaks were planted last year as a future food resource for the threatened Glossy Black-Cockatoo.

Meet at 8am at the Callister Crescent entrance in Theodore, which has ample off-street parking. For further information or to register, contact Matthew Frawley on 6155 1358 (work), 6296 1026 (home), or email: [frawley.matthew@gmail.com](mailto:frawley.matthew@gmail.com).

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### *....the speakers for the October Meeting .....*



Nev and Jan Lubke with one of their breeding Curlews

(Photos from Jack Holland)

2009 release



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## COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2012

A reminder about COG's eighth bird blitz, to be held on the weekend of **27-28 October**. Members are encouraged to adopt a locality, be it one of Canberra's nature reserves, a walking trail in Namadgi National Park, or even a modest local park to survey for birds during that time. Some prize pieces of avian real estate have not yet been adopted, as unfortunately many of the regular blitzers will be away this time. So here is your chance to take on some special survey spots!

**In the north:** Mulligans Flat NR; Goorooyarroo NR; Percival Hill; Black Mountain; O'Connor Ridge; Mullangari NR; Mt Ainslie

**In the east:** Campbell Park; Newline Quarry; Fairbairn Pines; Queanbeyan Sewage Works; Oaks Estate

**In the south:** Orroral Valley; Yankee Hat; Yerrabi; Gibraltar Falls; Smokers Trail; Mt Rob Roy; Tuggeranong Hill; Mt Taylor; Mt Mugga Mugga

**In the west:** Cotter Reserve; Woodstock NR; McQuoids Hill.

You may of course double up on other sites as well, but how about trying somewhere new and different this year, to expand your birding horizons? It is really helpful if you can nominate in advance to me at [blitz@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:blitz@canberrabirds.org.au) the site or sites you intend to survey, so that I can provide updates on the web site and the chat line of sites still awaiting adoption.

The situation about access beyond locked gates to certain fire trails in Namadgi National Park is still unclear and is likely to remain so for some time. I'll be contacting the regulars who normally do those surveys as the position becomes clearer.

**Barbara Allan, Blitz coordinator**

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## ANUgreen Workshop and Spring Surveys

ANUgreen is now preparing for its spring bird monitoring program, which will be the final monitoring for 2012. We hope that COG will continue to support us. Details as follows:

### **Bird workshop 10am – 12 noon Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

*Location: Innovations Building 124 ANU, corner of Eggleston and Garran Road*

*Presenters: Philip Veerman, David McDonald (COG) Tim Yiu (ANUgreen)*

1. *Bird identification (using pictures and online databases)*
2. *Survey methodology*
3. *Field trial*

*\*This workshop is designed to give basic training to volunteers*

### **Bird survey 8am – 11am Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October**

*Location: Innovations Building 124 ANU, corner of Eggleston and Garran Road*

*\*A thank you BBQ will be provided afterwards.*

We are looking for COG members to participate in our survey, where they will be asked to lead a team of 2-3 volunteers. The 2 Hec.-20-min search method will be used, and each team will do a maximum of 6 neighbouring sites. Surveying will take place at ANU and surrounding areas, including the Botanic Gardens, CSIRO, Black Mountain peninsula, and Civic. The whole survey should take less than 3 hours.

Please contact the ANUgreen Biodiversity Officer Tim Yiu ([tim.yiu@anu.edu.au](mailto:tim.yiu@anu.edu.au)) for registration and inquiries.

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## Avlan Whimsy #96

### Flamingoes Down Under

At the exhibition of the work of Sydney Long at the National Gallery recently, I was reminded of his predilection for flamingoes in an Australian context. From 1902 to about 1940 he produced some 30 such works. In the earliest painting he included two studies of Rose Soady (later to marry Norman Lindsay) standing and sitting in the water and contemplating the flamingoes, which don't return her interest. While the flamingoes were painted at Moore Park Zoo (the forerunner to Taronga Park, to where it moved in 1917) Rose was painted in the studio; given her lack of even informal apparel, it is unlikely that Long would have got away with doing the whole painting *in situ*!



Flamingoes 1902 oil on canvas

101.3 (h) x 197.2 (w) cm

signed 'SID LONG' lower right.

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

purchased 1902

(And before I go any further, I should point out that the Australian Oxford lists both 'flamingoes' and 'flamingos' as correct plurals; I prefer the first, even though my spell-checker doesn't and a web search throws up more than twice as many flamingos as flamingoes. So you'll have to relax and put up with it, I fear.)

Long was interested in the artistic possibilities of flamingo colours and necks, rather than them as birds per se. (In fact a gallery commentary includes the opinion that "he always thought of it [the painting] as a political act rather than a work of art", but without elaborating; any assistance with that one welcomed!) However, maybe he had some sort of 'continental memory'; a mere couple of million years earlier and he could have painted them (and Rose, had she had the day off) in the wild in inland Australia. Flamingoes have been part of the Australian landscape for at least 30 million years; we had a diverse group of six known species in four genera, including the endemic genus *Phoeniconotius*, plus the Greater Flamingo, which still lives in Africa, southern Europe and southern Asia. (One of these unexpectedly dropped into the Cocos Islands, south-west of Christmas Island, in 1988. Perhaps it was doing some family history.) Only the great drying associated with the current ice age, from some 2 million years ago, destroyed their habitat and ultimately them.

I think we're unlucky in this – flamingoes are truly wonderful creatures. They are an ancient group whose relationships are hidden by the distance haze of time; some smart money now is on a connection with grebes, but ducks, shore waders, ibis, storks and herons have also been proposed. Perhaps the point is that with such age, relationships with many other groups are inevitable.

We do know many Fascinating Flamingo Facts however, many connected with feeding. Uniquely, they feed by holding their head upside down, and their bill nearly horizontal. (A brief contemplation of this will suggest why no-one else has opted for it as a lifestyle choice.) Unlikely as this sounds – even seeing it doesn't help much to believe it! – it's apparently an effective way of straining shallow waters for a variety of food items including algae, invertebrates and small fish. Flamingo mouths evolved to separate water and unwanted muddy particles from food items using a large, fatty, highly sensitive tongue with numerous fleshy protuberances, complemented by a keeled bill also fringed with fleshy lamellae. The tongue is



used as a pump which beats from five to 20 times a minute to suck in beakfuls of muddy water and wriggles and to expel unwanted gunk via a complex set of movements.

Baby flamingoes start life a dull grey, in stark contrast to their gorgeously hued parents. If you're a flamingo, you definitely are what you eat. In particular the red of a flamingo relies entirely on diet; the carotenoid proteins which make their feathers red are taken by flamingoes from the shrimps and blue-green algae that they eat. A captive flamingo deprived of this will fade in time; zoos add canthaxanthin to their diets. This occurs naturally in mushrooms, algae, bacteria and some fish and is used in (mostly illegal) 'tanning pills' (by people, rather than flamingoes). Sydney Long wasn't the first to be struck by this colouring; the ancient Egyptians used a flamingo-shaped hieroglyph to indicate red.

Another item of food-related flamingo lore refers to the fact that among all birds, only flamingoes and pigeons have invented 'milk', generally regarded as solely the province of mammals. Both produce a protein, though in each case both parents can do so, an area where male mammals fall sadly short. The source is a system of glands in the digestive system – the crop for pigeons, throughout the upper digestive tract for flamingoes. Flamingo milk has more fat and less protein than that of pigeons.

For all these reasons and more, I Long, like Sydney, for the return of the fabulous flamingoes.

Ian Fraser [calochilus51@internode.on.net](mailto:calochilus51@internode.on.net)



**Flamingoes** c.1907 oil on canvas  
30.6 (h) x 61.0 (w) cm  
Signed lower right 'SID LONG'  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
NGA 2006. Acquired with the assistance  
of the Masterpieces for the Nation Fund  
2006

## COMMITTEE NEWS

Members are reminded that the first item of business at the October meeting is the COG AGM. Minutes of the 2011 meeting, which need to be confirmed at the 2012 AGM, are now available on the COG website, on the Meetings page.

- A few printed copies of the minutes, the agenda and other documents will be available at the theatre door ahead of the meeting.

Lia Battisson has done data entry for around 6000 old observation records given to COG relatively recently. These are now being checked before addition to the database.

Members' attention is drawn to the current study of noisy miners being undertaken by the Dept of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Comments are due by 12 October. Details can be found at :

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ktp/exclusion-of-manorina-melanocephala.html>

COG will be undertaking a Superb Parrot survey in Throsby for the ACT government.

**Sandra Henderson**

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# Australia's Environmental Protection Laws are Under Threat

Samantha Vine, Head of Conservation, BirdLife Australia.

Federal and state governments have recently announced an aggressive plan to wind back the country's system of essential environmental laws in the name of reducing 'green tape'.

This announcement presents a grave threat to hard won environmental protections for our threatened birds. There are three parallel threats:

1. A package of damaging legislative amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) to be introduced to federal Parliament this year;
2. Fast-tracked negotiation of EPBC Act bilateral approval agreements between federal and state governments, which will transfer important approval functions to the states, by March 2013;
3. Parallel and equally damaging changes to state and territory laws, including amendments aimed at accelerating the approval of major development projects.

## Commonwealth Protection Works

Federal oversight on matters of national environmental significance provides critical protection for Australia's threatened species.

History has shown us that state governments do not assess development proposals with the national interest in mind—only the Federal Government can provide national leadership on national environmental issues. States are inherently conflicted because they directly benefit from the projects they are assessing through royalties and political gain. When it comes to mining and major infrastructure projects states are more likely to prioritise short-term profits and political interests over the environment.

In the past the Federal Government has stepped in to stop State approvals for:

- Oil rigs in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.
- Cattle grazing in the Victorian Alps.
- A dam blocking the majestic Franklin River.
- Sand mining on historic Fraser Island.
- A new coal port in pristine Shoalwater Bay.
- Traveston Crossing Dam blocking the Mary River.
- Major road through the pristine Tarkine Rainforest.

(Cont.' over page)





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## Why Environmental Laws Matter

Environmental laws protect our most endangered species and our most iconic places from inappropriate development. Specifically our system of environmental laws:

1. Seek to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
2. Protect the community's right to be informed of, and participate in, decision-making processes that affect the environment;
3. Ensure that a science-based assessment of environmental impacts is applied in the decision-making process;
4. Provide enforcement mechanisms where environmental laws are breached; and
5. Ensure that our international environmental obligations are upheld.

## What You Can Do

Sign our petition at [www.Placesyoulove.org](http://www.Placesyoulove.org) and call, write or email Prime Minister Julia Gillard and your federal MP.

As the head of COAG, the Prime Minister is responsible for implementing this plan. Express your concern that the Federal Government is seeking to wind back environmental protection laws to save big business a bit of paperwork.

Tell our leaders Australia needs stronger not weaker environmental laws and the Federal Government should not be handing over matters of national environmental significance to the state governments.

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<b>Christmas Island Bird &amp; Nature Week</b> <i>7 Night Accommodated Tour - Departs 1st September 2012</i> Join scientists on their field trips to see unique island birdlife.	<b>Costa Rica Wildlife Safari</b> <i>17 Day Accommodated Safari - Departs 3rd November 2012</i> See the highlights of the world's most environmentally friendly country.
<b>South West Birds &amp; Botany</b> <i>15 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 20th October 2012</i> Experience the biodiversity of W.A.'s famous South West region.	<b>Lord Howe Island</b> <i>8 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 3rd November 2012</i> Join LHI expert Ian Hutton to see unique & diverse island wildlife.

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## 2012 COG AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 October 2012**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

### Agenda

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Opening                                      | 8. Appointment of auditor for 2012-2013   |
| 2. Apologies                                    | 9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (see nomination form in this issue, and forms will also be available on the night of the AGM) |
| 3. Confirmation of minutes of 2011 AGM          | 10. Other matters for which notice has been given.  |
| 4. President's report                           | 11. Close of meeting  |
| 5. Adoption of president's report               |   |
| 6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts |   |
| 7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts     |   |

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### COG Committee Nomination Form

**I hereby nominate** .....

**for the position\* of** .....

*(\*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)*

**on the 2012 COG Committee.**

**(Name):** .....

**(Signature):** .....

**I second the nomination.**

**(Name):** .....

**(Signature):** .....

**I accept the nomination.**

**(Name):** .....

**(Signature):** .....

Nominations can be mailed to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608, or submitted by hand prior to the AGM. Mailed nominations **MUST** reach the mailbox by 3 October 2012.



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patricia.walker@bigpond.com  
phone 02 6251 3136

[www.visitnsw.com.au](http://www.visitnsw.com.au) (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

## New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

M Bomford, Fraser

J Whitten, Hughes.

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for the November edition**

**Wednesday 31 Oct. 2012**

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

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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 and welcomed.

## COG info

**President**—Chris Davey  
6254 6324

Email: [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

**Vice President**—Alison Russell-French

Email: [alisonrf@iinet.net.au](mailto:alisonrf@iinet.net.au)

**Treasurer**—Noel Luff

Email: [noelluff@hotmail.com.au](mailto:noelluff@hotmail.com.au)

**Secretary**—Sandra Henderson  
6231 0303

[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

### Address for correspondence

The Secretary  
COG, PO Box 301  
Civic Square, ACT 2608

### Newsletter distribution

Brian Fair and helpers

### COG membership

2012-2013 memberships:

- Individuals, families and institutions: \$35
- school students (under 18): \$17.50.

### Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson  
6231 0303  
[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:membership@canberrabirds.org.au)  
for changed address or other details

### 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 website

[www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au)

### COG library

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

### 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](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au)

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

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