



# Gang-gang

**MARCH 2014**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## MARCH MEETING

**Wednesday 12 March 2014**

**7.30 pm.**

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

There will be three shortish presentations this month.

The first speaker will give a presentation on **an aspect of COG's history** in relation to **COG's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations**.

This will be followed by **Laura Johnson**, an Honours student at the ANU, on '**Koel, Calm and Collected**' – *responses of naive Canberran wattlebirds to an unfamiliar enemy*.

Finally **Geoffrey Dabb** will give the very topical presentation entitled "**A few points about Canberra's Gang-gangs**". As identification is not really an issue with this species, this talk will look at occurrence, evolution, plumages and food preferences. It will draw on images obtained over many years observing the local comings and goings.

## What to watch out for this month

After four months of almost unprecedented reports of special birds, some of them rarely recorded in the ACT before, I guess it was inevitable that, as far as I've been able to ascertain, there weren't any new ones reported in February. I suspect this is due, at least in part, to the drought being severe enough by mid-January to make the ACT no longer the oasis it was earlier in the drying cycle. The most interesting unusual sighting, by Kym Bradley on 10 February, was of nine **Black Kites** to the south of Canberra, easily the most ever seen together here. A lone **Swift Parrot** was also seen in Cook at the end of January, a rare summer record for this winter visitor from Tasmania.

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Swift Parrot

*Photo: Geoffrey Dabb*

**Everyone welcome**

There were still isolated sightings of some of the special birds. On 29 January there were two **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** seen at the same spot in Cook, and on the same day Michael Lenz found four **Black Honeyeaters** near Gundaroo, feeding in flowering mistletoe and hawking for insects. At the end of the first week in February Wayne Gregson reported a single **Painted Honeyeater** still at the Stoney Creek Nature Reserve, and in mid February Steve Wallace located the **Singing Honeyeater** again at the West Belconnen Ponds, including visiting the Kangaroo Paws and other flowers planted around the bordering houses. As I noted in last month's column this is the least nomadic of the above species and therefore may stay around longer, perhaps even until winter.

As reports of these special species dried up, a feature a number of members have mentioned to me has been return of birds to their gardens, with **Satin Bowerbirds**, **Gang-gang Cockatoos** and **Australian King-Parrots** coming in to drink or bringing in dependent young. This has been accompanied as well by a return of smaller birds; in my garden this seems to be related to the lack of the usual aggressive **Red Wattlebirds**, which seem to have been too busy feeding two broods of their own young as well as two separate **Eastern Koel** fledglings to defend their territories, including their favourite feeding plants.

The lack of special/unusual birds allows me to focus more this month on which species have probably by now all departed, those for which a few are still around but will probably be gone by mid-March, and those that will have gone by the end of next month. There have been no reports of the **Brown Songlark** or the **Horsfield's Bushlark** since early January, nor surprisingly of the **Brush Cuckoo**, which usually can still be found during February. January 29 seems to have been an important date for species departing the COG

area of interest (AOI) as this is the last date that I can find for reports of the following three species. At the same spot near Gundaroo mentioned above Michael Lenz found a pair of **Rufous Songlarks**, the female with distracting display and the male singing and warning; no doubt he felt there was a juvenile close by. He also observed a female **White-winged Triller** with 2 dependent young.

Michael also recorded about 20 **White-browed Woodswallows**, including several young close to independence. Interestingly Jude Hopwood reported to me in early February that her **White-browed Woodswallows** left on this same day. She noted there was a dreadful commotion in a group of Tasmanian Blue Gums on her place which turned out to be a **Laughing Kookaburra** jumping from branch to branch of each tree while loads of adult woodswallows protected juveniles. The noise went on ALL day until 4 pm, but she had not heard a sound nor seen a woodswallow at her place since. There was still a pair of birds hanging around that she'd seen further towards Goulburn but that was all.

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Rufous Songlark

Photo: David Cook

## What to watch out for this month—continued from Page 2

These are the last reports I can find from my usual sources but that of course doesn't mean that there might still be some around, particularly the **White-winged Triller**. Indeed in a late report Steve Read still found a male at the Namadgi Visitors Centre on 23 February, as well as possibly a female or it may have been a **Rufous Songlark**. So continue to keep an eye out for these two species, which can be very hard to identify when quiet and/or in eclipse plumage. Other species that leave by early March include the **Dollarbird** which has been reported coming into gardens as they often do post-breeding. **Rainbow Bee-eaters** also often leave by mid-March and can be quite spectacular as they move through, including high over where their call and orange wings are diagnostic. Watch out for these birds as well as the **Sacred Kingfisher**, which also often has left by the end of the first two weeks of March.

Other birds that usually mostly leave by the end of March include **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (also often very quiet this month), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins** and cuckoos. Amongst all the riches it seems it's been a pretty poor season for martins (none reported of either species since mid-January) and cuckoos, with the latest observations for the **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** I can find being 10 January, and 11 January for the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**. This is most unusual (perhaps the dry was too severe for their liking) and a complete contrast to the **Eastern Koel**, another cuckoo which has been

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Sacred Kingfisher

*Photo: David Cook*



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### 2014 tours

Special Plains-wanderer Weekend  
in conjunction with NSW Parks  
Week 8 — 9 March

19 — 26 April  
Alice Springs and  
West MacDonnell Ranges

25 May — 8 June  
Top End including  
Mitchell Plateau/black grasswren option

12 — 27 June  
Queensland's Gulf of Carpentaria  
& Atherton Tablelands

3 — 10 August  
New Caledonia

6 — 25 September  
Strzelecki Track 35<sup>th</sup> tour  
The four states outback expedition

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

10 — 19 December  
SW Western Australia

**Plains-wanderer Weekends 2014**  
25 & 26 October 2014  
6 & 7 December 2014

Please see itineraries, checklists and  
latest news on our website

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



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## What to watch out for this month—*continued from Page 2*

reported widely throughout suburban Canberra, with some people thoroughly tired of it keeping them awake at night and wanting the authorities to take action. It should be gone by mid to late March after another very good breeding season with a large number of young reported (I've had 3 different fledglings in my local patch of Chapman/Rivett), all as far as I'm aware hosted by **Red Wattlebirds**.

As I noted in last month's column **White-throated Needletails** and the less common **Fork-tailed Swifts** are also most often sighted in February and March on their return migration, and the last of them will be seen by the end of the month. There was a cluster of reports, including for some of the latter round the beginning of the month, and then with the rain mid-month, but surprisingly none that I can find with the storms and heavy rain on 19 February.

Some species will be seen in Canberra during March as "passage migrants" as they move north from their breeding sites in the mountains. These include **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail** (one reported at the ANBG in late February) and, rarely, **Cicadabird**. Other species move from the mountains but will stay here, so look out for the first **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler** (also already reported at the ANBG) and **White-eared Honeyeater** in the suburbs in March, and also for the first migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**; this often starts in the last week of the month. The **Flame Robin** usually arrives on the outskirts of Canberra during April but on 23 February John Leonard travelled along Mt Franklin Road and down Bendora Dam Road to the eastern end of New Chums Road and observed an extraordinary number of them (estimated at between 60-80). Interestingly John Brown banding on New Chums Road that weekend saw very few (possibly they were already on the move out of the mountains).

Finally there have already been a number of reports of that autumn phenomenon the mixed feeding flock (MFF), including several small ones in my garden. These can have unusual or unexpected compositions, so watch out for these; nothing in bird watching gives me a bigger thrill than a MFF and looking out for the unexpected species lurking quietly in amongst all that activity.

So watch out for these MFFs forming around your area and the species mentioned above in March. It will also be interesting to see whether the recent rain triggers some autumn breeding or affects the numbers of inland waterbirds, **Freckled** and **Pink-eared Ducks**, **Australasian Shovelers** and **Hardhead** that continue to be reported, as well as **Plumed Whistling Ducks** (41 reported in late February) and **Australian Shelduck** (up to 85 now seen together) that are still at their usual spots near Bungendore. As usual always please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

*Jack Holland*



Cicadabird

*Photo: David Cook*

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# Field Trip Reports

## Sunday 16 February - East Basin/Molonglo Reach electric boat cruise

Under calm, cloudy conditions 19 members and guests joined me on the new and larger electric boat, the EL Gull, for this annual trip to view the darter and cormorant nesting on Molonglo Reach, leaving from Kingston Harbour for the first time. Significant rain the day before allowed us to first explore a long way up Jerrabomberra Creek before we travelled along the east bank of East Basin and into the Reach and along the south bank before tracing our route.

As I feared there were very few **Australasian Darter** nests this year, with only about 4 that still contained 1 or 2 very advanced “dependent young” and a few more where these birds could be seen close to nests. I put this down to the lack of significant rain so far in 2014, with the birds seen the remnant of those nests that were started with or after the last good rain early in December (as reported by Rod McKay and Kym Bradley on the COG chatline in late December/early January). These were only on the south bank, and were the lowest extent of breeding I can recall in 12 years of leading these outings (this was my fifteenth trip since we started in 2003).

Altogether only 33 darters were seen on the day, most of them identified as immature birds by their dirtier plumage, and only 4 males mostly seen close to nests with them, and a similar number of females. I expect the lower numbers (less than half last year’s numbers which were also comparatively low) were caused by the particular dry conditions this summer (at least up to the day before!), but until this trend is confirmed by visits in future wetter years, the evidence still suggests that the clearing of the willows from the north bank has had limited impact to date on **Australasian Darter** presence and breeding.

This drought-related theory is not necessarily supported elsewhere on the lake/river, as Jim the skipper was aware of one nest on the first island off Aspen Island (which he thinks should be easily visible from the shore or the bridge) where the chicks were still very much downy. More importantly, Jean Casburn (personal communication) informed me that darters and **Little Pied Cormorants** are breeding again on the Molonglo River well downstream of Scrivener Dam (west of Tuggeranong Parkway). On Wednesday 12 February she saw 4 adult darters each sitting on a nest there, 3 fluffy dependent young darters close to their nest, 7 advanced young darters and about 4 adult darters flying in the vicinity and perched elsewhere. In addition there was one **Little Pied Cormorant** with 3 black dependent young (yes, they are predominately black) on a nest.

This is the only cormorant breeding that has been brought to my attention, as this year there was further evidence that cormorants no longer nest on Molonglo Reach. While we saw a total of 8 **Great Cormorants**, these were loafing on bare branches close to the water, as were 40 **Little Black Cormorants** where the Reach opens up much wider about 0.5 km west of the first bridge. The latter allowed a very close approach before they took to the water/air, and it was very noticeable that their backs were slate grey in colour with a clear tessellated pattern, and several of them had flecks of white around the head. HANZAB and Pizzey and Knight describe this as breeding plumage, calling it a glossy sheen or bronzed appearance, respectively, but neither I nor any of the other participants had noticed it before. Perhaps it was the closeness of the approach, or the light, but certainly there was no other evidence for breeding. The skipper confirmed the lack of activity again this year at the former significant **Little Black Cormorant** breeding site near the mouth of Sullivan’s Creek/Black Mountain Peninsula.

Only the single **Little Pied Cormorant** was seen on the day but this was made up for by the sighting of a **Pied Cormorant** sitting low on a dead branch over the water in its favoured spot near the mouth of Jerrabomberra Creek on our way to the Reach. On the same branch was a **Great Cormorant** and an **Australasian Darter** allowing a good comparison of their size and different plumages.

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## Field Trip Reports—Continued from Page 5

Other waterbird activity on the creek, river and East Basin consisted mainly of common species seen on the open water and on the banks, with the party of 4 **Greylag Geese** seen on the bank close to where they were last year. Land birds seen included 3 **Dollarbirds**, the same number of **Sacred Kingfishers**, an **Australian Hobby** and a **Black-shouldered Kite**, and well over 35 **Red-rumped Parrots**.

At 49 the total number of species was slightly up from the previous year, with Jerrabomberra Creek and the east bank surprisingly contributing to the higher number of species. Participants again enjoyed the space and viewing conditions in the new bigger boat, and the cover it affords was particularly appreciated when it rained heavily, luckily on our way back when most of the sightings had been made. This eased off and as we approached the harbour we were rewarded by now two **Pied Cormorants** on the same branch as noted above, juxtaposed with two **Great Cormorants**, which many participants, quite a few of them repeat clients, agreed was the perfect way to end a very enjoyable outing. The proximity of good coffee after the trip (or before for those needing it!) is an added bonus for using Kingston Harbour.

*Jack Holland*

### Wednesday 19 February - Queanbeyan Sewage Treatment Works

Thirty members and guests assembled at the works and after signing on and being given a few cautionary words about this being a working site and thus not getting in the workers' way we headed off to the ponds. Before getting to them we spotted **Double-barred** and **Red-browed Finches**.

The plan had been to pass by Pond 2. However, the sight of 4 **Freckled Duck** thereon caused a brief break in proceedings. The 'eternal three' members of the rail family (**Purple Swamphen**, **Dusky Moorhen** and **Eurasian Coot**), plus several of the more common ducks, were also seen here.

Pond 3 was occupied by a large raft of mixed ducks including at least 4 **Australasian Shovelers**, 40 **Hardhead** and 17 **Pink-eared Duck**. A further 4 **Freckled Duck** were sitting on a pontoon in the western end of the pond. I counted 217 **Eurasian Coot** in the main raft.

A good range of other birds was seen in the surrounding area. The most interesting was an **Australian Reed-Warbler** carrying a small fish which it presented to another bird. HANZAB does not record this species feeding on fish. In total we recorded 49 species for the site, of which 20 are usually associated with water features.

Many thanks to Queanbeyan City Council for giving permission for this visit.

*Martin Butterfield*

### Friday 21-Saturday 23 February - Guthega

On Friday evening, 13 members met in Guthega at a ski lodge with beautiful views over the hills and Guthega Pondage. There was time for a pleasant walk around the local area for an hour before dinner. On Saturday morning we drove to Sawpit Creek to walk the 6 km of Pallaibo Track to Thredbo River. We recorded a surprisingly high 48 species in the 5 hours it took to cover the distance. Highlights included **Olive Whistler**, **Crested Shrike-tit**, numerous **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Red-browed Treecreeper** and **Satin Flycatcher**. After a late lunch back at the lodge, we descended to the pondage, crossed the dam wall and walked along the northern side of the Snowy River to a waterfall. It was a perfectly still, sunny day, but in the open heath vegetation with just a few snow gums, bird variety was low but **Brown Thornbill**, **Silvereye** and **Little Raven** were numerous.

Dinner on Saturday night was the feast that we have come to expect on COG weekend outings, with contributions from everybody enjoyed by all. We had delicious casseroles, curries, lasagne and salads accompanied by various red wines, then finished off with desserts and muscat. Yum! A few hands of 500 were enjoyed by four of us, before retiring to our comfortable beds.

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## Field Trip Reports—Continued from Page 6

On Sunday morning we walked the 5 kilometre return trip to the Illalong suspension bridge and back. It was another pleasant outing with good views of **Black-shouldered Kite** and a pair of **Brown Goshawk**, with 9 **Gang-gang Cockatoos** (not one with a red head) back at the lodge. A Copperhead Snake, sunning itself on the stairs down to the road, necessitated a detour to pack the cars.

The bird species count for the weekend was 55, quite an impressive list for the Snowy region.

Thank you Jean for organising the lodge and leading us on such interesting walks; we had a lovely time.

Lia Battisson

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## Future Field 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. 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>

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.

### Saturday 8 to Monday 10 March - Ben Boyd National Park (Canberra Day long weekend)

This trip focuses on birdwatching in the southern end of Ben Boyd National Park. We will camp at the Bittangabee camp ground (fees apply). Be aware that the road to Bittangabee is gravel and can be a bit rough.

We hope to find a variety of birds in various habitats including the heathland and the coastal areas. Possible highlights include **Southern Emu-wren**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** and a chance of **Striated Fieldwren**. We will also spend some time trying for **Ground Parrot** and studying the sea birds off Green Cape. At night we will spotlight for mammals and owls with a chance of Wombat and Long-nosed Bandicoot.

Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email [walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au](mailto:walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au). The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed information will be provided closer to the day.

### Sunday 16 March – Gungahlin Wetlands

This outing is a late celebration of World Wetlands Day which was on Feb 2. Our usual Kelly Swamp outing was cancelled due to lack of water. The outing will begin at Crace Wetlands, followed by a visit to The Valley Ponds and

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### Future Field Trips—Continued from Page 7

Yerrabi Pond. Meet at Crace at 8am. Directions are: enter Gundaroo Drive from the Barton Highway. The first roundabout after the highway is the entry to Crace. Turn right there from Gundaroo Drive into Abena Avenue. Continue to the first roundabout in Crace, turn right into Narden St. Park immediately. You will now be facing Crace Recreation Reserve. Meet at the children's playground.

John Harris and Sue Lashko

### Wednesday 19 March – Kama Nature Reserve

Meet at 8:30 at Kama which is off William Hovell Drive. Parking will be 2.7km north of Coppins Crossing Rd or 1.8km south of Drake Brockmann Drive. I suggest people coming from the south park on the left hand side of the road as it will still be peak hour traffic.

Martin Butterfield

### Sunday 23 March – Narrabundah Hill, Duffy

Narrabundah Hill is a former pine forest area which supports a range of species. Last year in March and April, we saw **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** in migration, thornbills of various types, **Double-barred Finch**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Scarlet Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**, to name a few of the birds present.

Meet at the gate entrance near the Hindmarsh/Eucumbene Drive corner of Duffy. The tank that supplies water for Duffy is in view of the gate. We will probably be out for several hours, so please bring a hat, water and comfortable walking shoes and maybe a snack.

There is no need to book – just turn up by 8am to get an early start.

Leaders will be Jack Holland (6288 7840) and Jean Casburn (02 62883929)

### Sunday 6 April - Nursery Swamp

On this trip we will visit one of the most delightful spots in Namadgi National Park to ascertain which birds may be found in the high country in mid-autumn, and to obtain records for COG's and Birds Australia's Ongoing Atlas Project. We will drive to the Orroral Valley. The first part of the walk is uphill on a good track, then we continue along a valley through Black Saltees to Nursery Swamp, a fen at 1,100 metres altitude containing peat that has been dated to 10,000 years BP. The area is of great significance to Aboriginal people, containing both rock art and tool-making sites. Meet at the Kambah Village shopping centre car park (cnr Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent) at 8.30 am (Eastern Standard Time) for carpooling. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10. We will return in the early afternoon, so bring lunch and water, and be prepared for changeable weather. Registration for this trip is essential.

To register, or to obtain further information, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at telephone (02) 6238 3706 or email [NS2014@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:NS2014@canberrabirds.org.au). Please note that daylight saving ends at 3.00 am on the morning of the trip.

### Sunday 13 April – 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**.

We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with autumn-winter migrants. If the weather is suitable the honeyeater migration can be spectacular at many of the sites. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of

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## Future Field Trips—Continued from Page 8

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.

### Friday 18 to Monday 21 April – Round Hill Nature Reserve

The Easter campout this year is to Round Hill Nature Reserve in central NSW. We should see quite a variety of western birds as there is a big range of habitat types in the area, including mallee, callitris and eucalypt woodlands. Past COG trips have seen **Splendid Fairy-wren**, **Crested Bellbird**, **Major Mitchell's Cockatoo**, **Yellow-plumed Honeyeater** and much more. Depending upon how the season is going (& luck) we could see some of harder to find or unusual species as well.

Round Hill is between Lake Cargelligo and Mt Hope and is 5+ hours drive from Canberra. I expect we will spend most of our time close to camp with perhaps a couple of short drives. It will be a “bring everything in, take everything out” camp. Note: there are NO FACILITIES.

Being a Nature Reserve, permission is required to camp there and NSW National Parks will not give final permission until about one month before Easter once “operational matters” are confirmed. However, my most recent conversation with the ranger was positive. Participants will be required to provide me with their car registration to forward to NSW National Parks.

If you wish to attend, please contact me at [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com) no later than 12 March. Further details, including directions will be emailed to participants.

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In February 2014 Gang-gang, Robert Luton submitted a photo by Wayne Haslam of a **Black-fronted Dotterel** and her eggs. She had scraped her nest in the blue metal verge of a driveway at Sutton Park, Sutton, NSW. Bricks were placed close by the nest to ensure visitors did not drive over it. Two chicks hatched, can you find them in the picture below?



Black-fronted Dotterel, adult and two chicks

Photo: Wayne Haslam

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## Committee News

In January, Jenny Bounds prepared a response to the Draft ACT Trails Strategy. COG advocated this should be considered in the context of an ACT-wide recreational strategy.

In association with the Conservation Council, Jenny has been working on issues arising from the Draft Nature Conservation Bill, which will replace the current legislation concerning biodiversity conservation in the ACT. The Conservation Council is holding a workshop for member groups on Monday 17 February and will be finalising a detailed response then. The plan is to submit comments/views as soon as possible and hope that the draft legislation will be referred to a Standing Committee once introduced in the ACT Assembly in the next couple of weeks. COG and other groups provided comments some time ago on a discussion paper in relation to new legislation, but very little has been taken up in the Draft Bill. Key issues are the need for an ecosystem/whole of landscape approach, the role of the Conservator, monitoring and reporting. The Bill also omits a number of contemporary issues such as connectivity, offsets and off reserve conservation.

COG has been approached by landholders concerned by proposals for the relocation of the RSPCA, and a wind farm next to Lake Bathurst. There is not a lot of information available about either proposal at this stage.

COG has responded to an initial letter about the Bush Stone-Curlew reintroduction project.

**Sandra Henderson**

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## COG Finances and Membership Fees

One outstanding feature of COG's finances is its strong bank balances. Over the last ten years there are three major contributors to these amounts. These were sales of "Birds in Canberra Gardens" (BOCG), various contracts that were organized by Chris Davey and interest on investments.

Offsetting these is the ongoing discrepancy between members subscriptions and ongoing expenses, woodland surveys, donations and various projects including the web site.

The problems we face are that the income from BOCG sales and contracts are declining and cannot be relied on. This leaves the income from investments as our sole reliable income stream and this is subject to the vagaries of the financial markets.

On the expenditure side donations and projects are discretionary expenses but the woodland surveys and members services are not.

We could continue funding these by using income from investments or we can look towards reducing the discrepancy between subscriptions and ongoing expenses.

The only real option here is to increase subscriptions. Subscriptions have remained static for about twenty years. It was also about twenty years ago the \$35 membership for either single or family memberships was introduced.

At its last meeting the Committee decided to make a modest increase in subscription fees and reintroduce family memberships. It was decided that the fees for 2014/2015 will be

a) Single \$40

b) Family \$45

This increase will make a contribution to reducing COG's ongoing operating losses, thus ensuring our long term financial viability.

**Noel Luff** (Treasurer)

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## Gang-gang Cockatoo Survey

Problems have been experienced with registering, sign in, and/or entry of data with the Gang-gang Survey online system during February 2014. If you have had, or are having, any problems with the Gang-gang Survey online system please document them as comprehensively as possible and send them to [ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au)



Hey Gang-gang fans  
You are invited to help  
launch COG's  
"Bird of the year"  
Gang-gang Muster



Lively Gang-gangs in a Farrer home garden

Photo: David Flannery

Join us under the old yellow box tree in Corroboree Park, Ainslie for the  
launch of COG's 2014 Bird of the Year survey project

### The **Gang**-Gang Muster

**Thursday 13 March - 10 am**

Learn more about the survey project from COG's Chris Davey and enjoy a  
few Gang-gang tales told by Canberra's favourite naturalist, Ian Fraser.

A light morning tea will be provided - rsvp: [kathy.eyles@anu.edu.au](mailto:kathy.eyles@anu.edu.au)

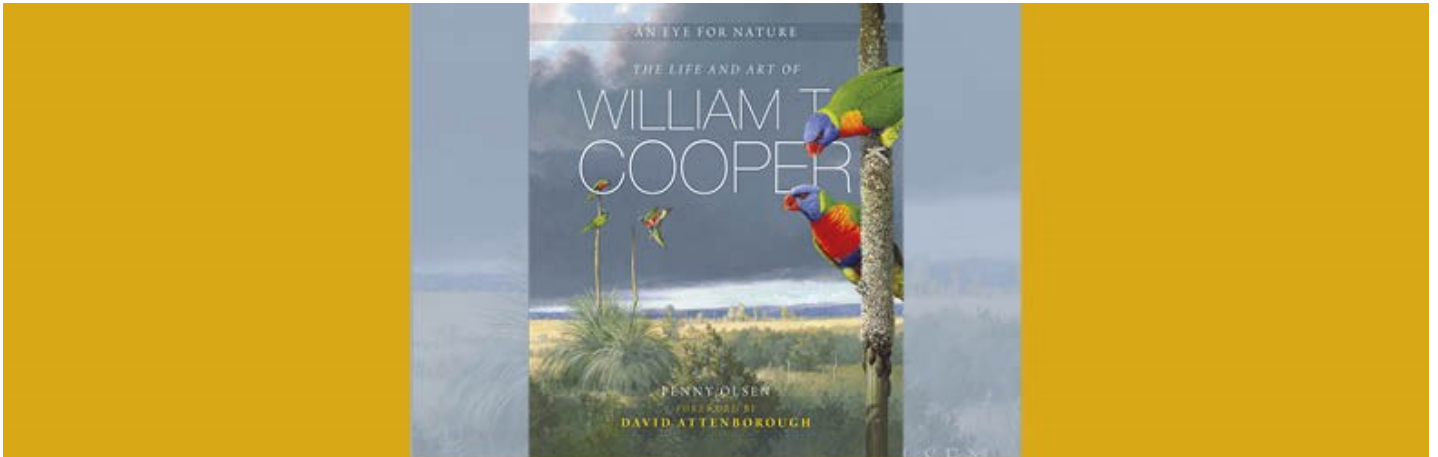
*Corroboree Park is off Paterson St Ainslie - if raining come to the Corroboree Park Hall.*



The Gang-gang Muster is one of series of projects initiated by the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) to  
celebrate 50 years of birding in the ACT. Find out more: <http://canberrabirds.org.au/> Gang-gang survey.

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## Advertisements



### Launch of *An Eye for Nature: The Life and Art of William T. Cooper*

Join author Penny Olsen and William T. Cooper for the launch of this new biography. The book traces the path of Cooper's life and work, documenting his fruitful partnership with wife and collaborator Wendy Cooper and his extensive travels in Australia and abroad in pursuit of his subjects. Including a portfolio of bird and landscape paintings that have never before been published, the book is illustrated with photographs, paintings and sketches, as well as extracts from Cooper's extensive field notebooks which give an insight into his interests and processes.

Thursday 27 March, 6 pm  
Conference Room  
National Library of Australia  
\$10 Friends/\$15 non-members  
(includes book signing and refreshments)  
Bookings: [nla.gov.au/bookings/friends](http://nla.gov.au/bookings/friends) or 02 6262 1698

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Contact: Stewart May 0418 622 597

or [may@webone.com.au](mailto:may@webone.com.au)

#### 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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiry@deuatinhuts.com)

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

Ph 02 4847 1248



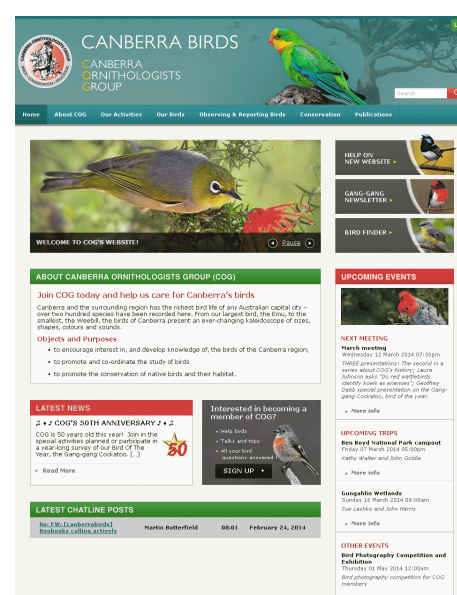


COG's new website will go online this week. Users will notice a new appearance and organisation, though the web address remains the same at [canberrabirds.org.au](http://canberrabirds.org.au) and all the existing content should still be available. Members are encouraged to explore the site, become familiar with the new layout and features, and to report any problems.

Several years ago the Committee recognised the need for a modernised website and embarked on a project to replace our existing site, with the following objectives:

- Modernise the look and feel, given that our familiar (and ever-faithful) site is now over 10 years old.
- Provide the ability for non-technical members to update website information regularly.
- Provide a few new features, and a platform for additional functions later if required.

Provide the capability to restrict some content for viewing by members-only, if required.



All existing information from the existing site will still be available, including the following more popular highlights:

- the complete archive of every CBN ever published.
- easy access to the latest Gang-gang newsletter and complete archives.
- bird-related information from the Birds of Canberra Garden book, including the graphs and descriptions, and some of its helpful pages on making a garden more bird friendly.
- a guide to watching and recording birds, maps and guides to birding locations, information on our publications, a guide to what's available at the COG sales desk, the photo gallery and more.

There are some new features to watch out for:

1. An all-new Bird Finder, a one-stop page from which you can access all COG's information on all our birds — photos, Garden Bird Survey statistics and descriptions from the BOCG book, bird calls, local status and a fantastic page of 'stats and maps' for each species (which won't be available at first, but will be introduced in the next few months).

*Continued Page 14*

## COG's New Website—Continued from Page 13

Regent Honeyeater	Anthochaera phrygia	Honeyeaters		<a href="#">Garden</a>	<a href="#">Call</a>	The numbers of this species have...
Restless Flycatcher	Myiagra inquieta	Babblers, Sittella, Whistlers and...		<a href="#">Garden</a>	<a href="#">Call</a>	Uncommon breeding resident mostly...
Rock Dove	Columba livia	Pigeons and Doves		<a href="#">Garden</a>		Common breeding resident.
Rose Robin	Petroica rosea	Robins		<a href="#">Garden</a>	<a href="#">Call</a>	Uncommon breeding warm weather...
Royal Spoonbill	Platalea regia	Pelican, Egrets, Herons, Ibis,...		<a href="#">Garden</a>		Irruptive, uncommon summer breeding...

2. Automatic display of the next trips, meetings and other events on the home page, and easy-to-access complete lists of all upcoming and all past trips, meetings and other events.
3. A constantly updated feed of the latest chatline (email discussion list) posts. This is really an advertisement for the chatline but can be used as a quick means of accessing the chatline archives or reading individual messages by clicking on a message link. The last five posts are displayed in an endless loop scrolling near the bottom of the screen.
4. The three buttons at the top right of the home page are quick links to often-used pages.
5. Sliding images on the front page are primarily for aesthetics and general interest, but can also be used to publicise issues, answer currently topical questions or (possibly) create spirited controversy. These images can be regularly changed, so if you have a good idea feel free to send suggestions or contributions to the webmaster at the link below.

Naturally there will be teething problems so *please* send details of any faults, broken links, annoyances, suggestions or other comments to [cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au) . Improvements and corrections will be made as possible over the next few months.

Regent Honeyeater	Anthochaera phrygia	Honeyeaters		<a href="#">Garden</a>	<a href="#">Call</a>	The numbers of this species have...
Restless Flycatcher	Myiagra inquieta	Babblers, Sittella, Whistlers and...		<a href="#">Garden</a>	<a href="#">Call</a>	Uncommon breeding resident mostly...
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Julian Robinson 25/2/14

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## THE FUTURE OF BIRDWATCHING ?

In the September issue of Australian Birdlife<sup>1</sup> an unattributed article recounts an incident, in 1935, when a gun was used to 'collect' a bird at a RAOU campout. There was uproar.

The use of guns for collecting was not uncommon. Colin Finney, when commenting on collecting equipment between 1850 and 1900<sup>2</sup> in Australia mentions insect nets, traps and snares, then added, 'the ornithologists substituted a gun'. Alfred Russell Wallace, when in Sarawak during 1854-55<sup>3</sup> 'shot several orangutans'. Doubtless he shot many birds as well.

We have come a long way since then. Tim Birkhead, in a 2008 publication<sup>4</sup> describes netting, in some detail, for collecting a seldom seen species in Poland. At another level recording sightings and activities is moving away from pencil and notebook.

T. Javanica<sup>5</sup>, when reviewing a new application, asked the question: why continue to do this by hand? Reading his article prompted me to consider the history of where we are now in terms of technology and equipment and the probable future.

Interestingly most of the equipment and technology we use has its roots in the development of military requirements. During the creation of radar just before WWII the Brits were concerned by unidentified blips appearing on their screens. These were flights of birds. Put ten Brits in a room and at least one will be a birdwatcher. An article in A Dictionary of Birds<sup>6</sup> describes the subsequent use of radar as an ongoing ornithological tool.

As an aside during that war an unofficial priority of the Royal Navy was the acquisition of Zeiss 7x50 binoculars<sup>7</sup> from the crews of U-boats captured on the surface. Zeiss was the Rolls Royce of binoculars.

Sometime after that war, for civilian and military purposes a global geographic positioning system, GPS, was developed. About the same time unmanned aircraft, drones, became available. These two inventions melded into another ornithological tool. Between 1982 and 1990<sup>8</sup>, with the cooperation of the

Israeli Air Force, drones were used with cameras mounted on them, by a Field Studies Centre in Israel, to track migrating birds of prey.

The accuracy of the GPS is being enhanced by a variation of positioning arrangements carried out by a local firm, Locata<sup>9</sup> at Fyshwick. Positioning accuracy is now down to two to three centimetres.

Inevitably the military will, or may already have done so, develop small drones. Variations of these will flow into the civilian world. Ornithologists will use these for surveys once obstacles, such as trees and other barriers, are overcome. These drones will be capable of identifying birds, photographing them and giving precise locations.

Fantasy? Remember 1969? A man landed on the moon (two of them in fact). Remember when mobile telephones were the size of a house brick with a capacity limited to phone calls?

Due to changes in equipment and technology, birdwatching as currently practised may become less critical to ornithology than at present.

Robert Digan

Email: [digan@netspeed.com.au](mailto:digan@netspeed.com.au)

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1 Australian Birdlife, Vol 2 No3 September 2013. p.10

2 Paradise Revealed – Natural History in Nineteenth Century Australia, Colin Finney, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, 1993. p.134

3 The Song of the Dodo – Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction, David Quammen, Hutchison, London, 1996. p.82

4 The Wisdom of Birds An Illustrated History of Ornithology, Tim Birkhead, Bloomsbury, London, 2008. p.1

5 Gang Gang, Vol 37, No.3, December 2012. p.222

6 Total War, Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, Pelican Books, England, 1974. p.140

7 Blood Tears and Folly in the Darkest Hours of the Second World War, Len Deighton, Jonathon Cape, London., 1993. pp.82-83

8 Raptor Conservation Today, eds B-U Meyburg and R.D. Chancellor, Pica Press (Helm Information Ltd) Mountfield, Sussex, England, 1994. pp.50-53

9 Canberra Times, 20 July 2012, Rosslyn Beeby, p.3

## 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

2013-2014 memberships:

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

## New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

K Eyles, Garran

I Warden, Garran

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for April 2014 edition

**Wednesday 26 March 2014**

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.

## COG information

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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*

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Civic Square, ACT 2608

## 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

*Membership inquiries*—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

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

for changed address or other details

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*Canberra Bird Notes*

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## 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).

