



# Gang-gang

April 2006

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

8 pm Wednesday

12 April 2006

*Canberra Girls Grammar School  
corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne  
Ave, Deakin. The meetings are held in  
the Multi-media Theatre at the School.  
Enter off Gawler Crescent using the  
school road signposted as Gabriel  
Drive. If that car-park is full, enter  
using Chapel Drive.*

Our first speaker will be former COG president and long-time member, Bruce Lindenmayer. Bruce will help us distinguish between the calls of a suite of birds likely to be encountered on forest surveys – the Rufous, Golden and Olive Whistlers, the Grey Shrike-thrush and the Pilotbird.

Our second speaker will be Chris Tidemann, a Visiting Fellow with the School of Resources, Environment & Society at the Australian National University. He has recently retired from teaching undergraduates to pursue full-time research, and is presently studying the roosting ecology of mynas in Canberra and Cairns. Chris's topic is, "What are the prospects for myna control in the ACT?" He will review possibilities for myna control, discuss current research and answer frequently-asked-questions about controlling mynas.

Everyone welcome

## What to watch for this month

March has been very warm and dry (at least to the time of writing) and the mixed feeding flocks I wrote about last month don't seem to have formed to the same extent as I predicted (I've hardly seen any round Chapman since mid February). However, continue to keep an eye out for these, which often can be a very pleasant and surprising birding experience.

Birds also seem to have been migrating to warmer climates very quietly with very few reports of the **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **White-throated Needle-tail** passing through/over, or of other March passage migrants through gardens such as the **Rufous Fantail** and **Satin Flycatcher**. These species and the **Dollarbird** should have left by now, and any sightings from now should certainly be recorded and provided for inclusion in the COG database. At the beginning of April it is time to start looking/listening for migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, which can be seen in large numbers, particularly on still days after a cool crisp night. Towards the end of April the **White-naped Honeyeater** will be amongst these flocks, and will predominate towards the end of the migration. While these are the most spectacular as they are the most numerous, other honeyeaters such as the **White-eared** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** often get caught up with the movement, and **Red Wattlebird**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Noisy Friarbird** also migrate, as do both species of **Pardalote**.

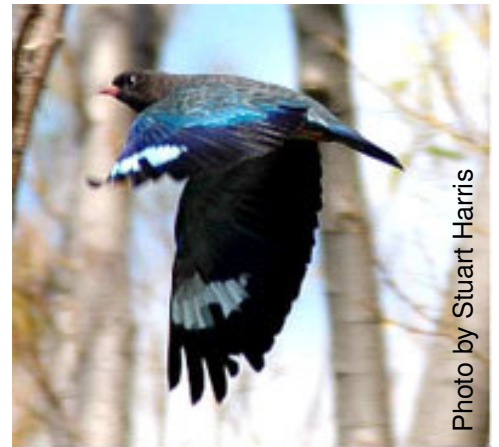


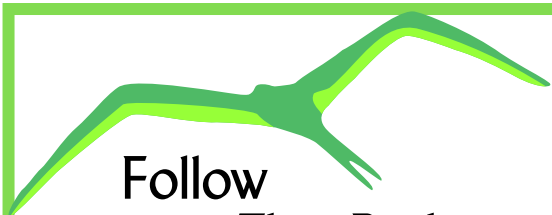
Photo by Stuart Harris

Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

To learn more about the honeyeater/autumn migration, take part in our surveys in April; spots are still available.

Jack Holland

**Vale Nonie Wilson** COG members will be saddened to learn of the death on 19 March of Nonie, wife of COG life member, Steve Wilson OAM. Nonie will be remembered fondly as the behind-the-scenes support for Steve's long-term banding studies in the Brindabellas and, more recently, for her role in the production of *Birds of the ACT: two centuries of change*. Our most sincere sympathies go to Steve and his family.



## Follow That Bird

— Sydney's birding company

The following small well serviced bird watching tours have pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre. All include three star accommodation and all meals. Please contact us for an itinerary for any of these trips.

### May 2006

8-14 **South-west Queensland** \$2,190

### July 2006

10-16 **Emerald Fiji** Start & End Suva

Dion Hobcroft Guiding \$3,005

22-26 **Comboyne & Crowdy Head**

Start & End Canberra \$1,495

### August 06

9-23 **Eyre Peninsular** \$3,440

### September 06

14-19 **Coffs Harbour** \$1,475

Start & End Canberra subject to min Participants

### November 06

10-13 **Barrington Topped** \$1,310

28- 3 Dec **Tasmania Takes Over...** \$2,330  
Start & End Hobart

### December 06

14-18 **Christmas Island** \$2,330

Start & End Perth

**For more Information visit our website,  
telephone/fax us on the numbers below**

## Follow That Bird

Birds and Camaraderie

3/59 Central Rd, Avalon, NSW, 2107

Tel 02 9973 1865 Fax 02 9973 1875

Email: [tours@followthatbird.com.au](mailto:tours@followthatbird.com.au)

Website: [followthatbird.com.au](http://followthatbird.com.au)

## Field Trip reports

### COG goes south of the border 24-27 February

On the now regular late summer camp, 29 COG members led by Martyn Moffat, went south to Cape Conran Coastal Park in East Gippsland, Victoria.

The weather was mixed, initially warm but with a front passing though bringing rain and cooler temperatures. In spite of that, about 90 species of birds were seen from a variety of habitats in this unspoilt bit of Victoria.

There were several highlights. On the heathland near the camp the group had great views of a family of **Southern Emu-wrens**, all huddled together on a grass tree stem. Also seen nearby was a **Brush Cuckoo** and several dark phase **White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike**. Nearby a lone **Musk Lorikeet** was observed being harried by a colony of **Bell Miners**. At camp the **Laughing Kookaburras** helped themselves to meat off plates and bathed in unattended washing up bowls!

A visit was made to the Cabbage Palm Flora Reserve. There we saw **Pilotbird**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Brown Gerygone** and **Rufous Fantail**. A **Rose Robin** was heard but not seen.

We travelled towards Marlo and stopped at French's Narrows. There we saw numerous water birds and had good views of an **Azure Kingfisher** doing what they do best, fishing! Further along towards the mouth of the Snowy we saw some **White-fronted Chats**. At the Snowy mouth, various waders and water birds were seen including **Hooded Plover**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Red-capped Plover**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Eastern Curlew**. Among the **Crested Terns** and few **Caspian Terns** was a single **Little Tern**. Along the beaches and rocky headlands were seen **Pied Oystercatcher** and a single **Sooty Oystercatcher** together with **Pacific Gulls**. A dark phase **Eastern Reef Egret** was also spotted skulking about the rocks.

Overhead daily were hundreds of **White-throated Needletails** interspersed with some **Fork-tailed Swifts**. While night birds were looked for, none were seen, however the camp contained a very healthy population of Ring-Tailed Possums.

*David Rees*

### Wadbillaga National Park/Tuross Falls, 18-20 March 2006.

Whether it was the prospect of a weekend's viewing of the Commonwealth Games or its wedging between the popular post school holidays and Easter camp-outs is unclear, but relatively few members/guests joined me for this outing at the lovely Cascades camping ground alongside the Tuross River within the Wadbillaga National Park. It's a relatively unknown area, which COG doesn't seem to have been to previously, and offers a wide variety of interests in addition to bird watching.

With the tall ribbon gums and the proximity of river and bush there was plenty of bird life without having to go far, and over the weekend about 55 species were seen or heard. Within the campsite itself, the **Australian Owlet-nightjar** was heard on a number of

occasions, including during the day, but could not be located. Likewise the **Superb Lyrebird**, **Pilotbird**, **Eastern Whipbird** and **Crescent Honeyeater** could be heard across the river, but were not seen, though a female **Satin Flycatcher** with one not quite independent young showed themselves briefly one morning, but were later seen in the camp. However, the undoubted highlight were several **Red-browed Treecreepers** which very obligingly showed themselves along the track to Tuross Falls (well worth a visit), allowing all participants very good views. Other good sightings were about a dozen **White-throated Needle-tails** hawking at the top of the Divide (my only sighting of this species this summer), while in the adjacent paddock there was a mixed feeding flock mainly comprising a group of about 10 female/immature **Flame Robins** as well as a female **Scarlet Robin**. The former species proved one of the most common in the area, and surprisingly was also often seen in quite dense forest as well as in the campsite. Several **Olive-backed Orioles** were found alongside the Wadbilliga Road (we never made it to Wadbilliga Crossing due to a lack of sufficient 4WDs) and only Sylvia and Brian were lucky enough to see three **Spotted Quail-thrush** on the track in.

Besides birds, the park offers other interesting wildlife, and while having our BBQ on Saturday evening two Greater Gliders, one light and one dark, suddenly appeared high in the trees above us. They proceeded to feed in these for at least an hour, on one occasion one gliding to an adjacent tree. Unfortunately no Powerful Owls were heard. A Platypus and an Eastern Water Rat were seen in the river, and a very large Lace Monitor was often seen slinking through the camp site. Many plants were also examined and identified, including the rare Kybeyan gum. Participants, most of whom were visiting for the first time, enjoyed the lovely ambience, and agreed it would be a good spot (only 2 hours from Canberra) to visit mid week when it was less popular.

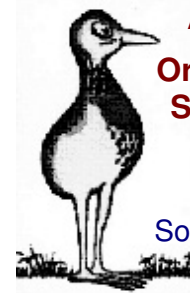
*Jack Holland*

### **Taylor's Creek Sunday 12 March 2006**

If the farmers of Taylor's Creek Landcare Group were hoping that the COG visit on 12 March would be a repeat of their rain-bearing performance of 18 months ago they were to be disappointed. The first bird survey by COG of the Taylor's Creek area ended in torrential rain, but the 2006 survey was held during a hot dry autumn spell. Despite the Canberra forecast of a windy 33 degrees, 22 members partook in the survey and the total of 82 bird species for the morning was surprisingly good given the conditions.

The survey has been designed to provide an inventory of the Landcare group area, and to monitor the birds of specific habitats such as remnant woodlands and tree plantings. The survey also provides COG with a snapshot of this area to the east of Lake George that is otherwise rarely visited by birdwatchers and it affords us a wonderful opportunity for access to private land. Surveys were conducted on 7 properties with additional sightings made along roadsides and homestead gardens.

Some highlights for the morning included two sightings of **Diamond Firetail**, several records of **Southern Whiteface**, groups of **White-fronted Chat** including one flock of 20 birds, and a sighting of a **Singing Bushlark**. One group had excellent close views of an **Owlet-nightjar**, and the larger dams had plentiful waterfowl with 8 species of duck recorded including **Pink-eared**, **Musk Duck** and **Australasian Shoveler**. Despite the absence of Spring migrants such as woodswallows, triller, cuckoos, oriole, the morning's total of 82 species was not far behind the 2004 total of 90 species. This time there were a few different waterbirds and a few more raptors around. A definite highlight



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

### **2006 Birding Tours**

**23—30 April 06  
Central Australia birding tour**

Alice Springs, Uluru, Glen Helen. Accommodated

**15 — 30 May 06  
Top End - Darwin, Kakadu NP,  
Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau,  
Lake Argyle. Accommodated.**

**1 — 8 August 06  
New Caledonia birding tour**

**15 August – 2 September 06  
Strzelecki Track Outback  
Tour**

Accommodated. Check website for availability.

### **2007 Birding Tours**

**7– 24 April 07—Thailand**

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

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of the morning was the post-survey barbeque provided by the Landcare group at one of the historic homesteads of the area. Thankyou to everyone who participated and to the Landcare group for hosting us again.

Nicki Taws

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It was a great pleasure to be asked to survey several paddocks on "Willeroo" station along with Julienne, Barbara and John and the owner George Grundy, whose family have been on the property since 1894.

Our first two paddocks had vegetation dominated by massive centuries old Scribbly Gums. Things were relatively quiet in the currently grazed paddock, but in the adjacent one (ungrazed since 1984 - and with intact native understorey) highlights were many **Striated Pardalotes**, **Weebills**, **White-throated Gerygones**, **Rufous Whistlers**, **Grey Fantails**, and a pair of **Leaden Flycatchers**. Highlights in a third paddock (where the predominant eucalypts were broad-leafed peppermint), were a flock of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, a **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Tree Martins** and a female Scarlet Robin. On the way out we recorded a **Brown Goshawk** and a small flock of **Red-rumped Parrots**.

A more distant broad-leafed peppermint paddock on Taylor's Ck Rd was very quiet indeed, with **Brown Thornbills**, a few **Rufous Whistlers**, a **Nankeen Kestrel** and a pair of quail (flushed too quickly for identification).

Back to "Willeroo" homestead for the last survey before lunch, we were overwhelmed by a massive flock of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, flocks of **Welcome Swallows**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Laughing Kookaburras** and several others.

It was a great outing and wonderful hospitality from George and Erica and local landcarers.

Bruce Lindenmayer



Yellow-faced Honeyeater  
(*Lichenostomus Chrysops*)

Photo by Rhonda Abbott

## Future Field Trips

### East Basin/Molonglo River; Sunday 2 April – Electric boat cruise

The postponement of the Honeyeater outing/survey to 8 April has allowed the opportunity to fit in an autumn electric boat trip up the Molonglo Reach. When we last went in January a number of people missed out or indicated they would like to go again. So here's your opportunity (note this has already been advertised on the chat line as it was not known whether the April *Gang-gang* will be out in time):

For the final time in 2005-2006 there will be an outing/cruise on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet". As members will be aware this boat

allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The main objective will be to view any late nesting, with three species of cormorant and darters known to breed there, but the area is also rich in other waterbirds.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)). As the boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers it will be on a first in best dressed basis. Note that the point of departure is now from the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the new Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way).

### Honeyeater migration; Saturday 8th April - morning survey

Note this was listed for Sunday 2 April in the 2006 COG Field Trips Program but the COG committee has decided another survey rather than an outing should be conducted in order to examine changes in migration routes since the 2003 fires, in particular the effects of the felling of the dead pines at Angle Crossing, which previously provided a major route.

The autumn movement of thousands of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** from the mountains to the coast and further north is a feature of the Canberra birdwatching calendar. Some of the best locations to count the migrating birds are along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. COG has conducted several surveys in the past where observers are located at various points along the MRC on the same day to count the number of honeyeaters passing though. The last honeyeater survey was held in the autumn of 2003 after the bushfires, and we are organising the survey again for this autumn.

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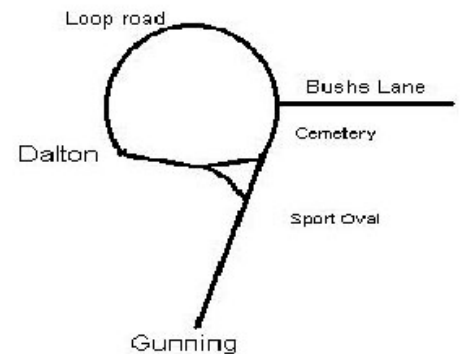
Two survey dates have been set to cover the expected peak of the migration season, to allow for inclement weather, variations in the migration pattern and the availability of observers. Anyone is welcome to participate, inexperienced observers are teamed up with experienced watchers, and it's a great way to learn about our honeyeaters, plus the other birdlife you might see along the river. There are still some places available so please register your interest with Nicki Taws 6251 0303, 0408 210 736, [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com), so that we can form teams and allocate sites.

### **Oolong/Dalton; Sunday 9 April – day outing**

COG has visited the Oolong Sanctuary near Dalton in 2002 and 2003. Gianni the owner has kindly agreed to another visit from COG this year as part of a community day where the local community will also be invited to participate. The property has a dam, some pleasant woodland, some wet soaks, open cleared land and for the energetic there is the option of a walk up the hill at the eastern part of the property that provide excellent views of the district. There are lots of opportunities for a wide range of bush birds. Gianni is keen to develop the property for wildlife and birds, as can be seen from the website [www.pcug.org.au/~gianni](http://www.pcug.org.au/~gianni).

Alistair Bestow (Ph 6281 1481) will lead this outing. We'll meet the Shell Service Station on the Federal Highway, Watson for some car pooling at 7.30 am, for a 7.45 am departure. Please bring a hat, binoculars, good walking shoes and your lunch. The property is on a slight slope, but most walking is on level-ish ground. There are, however, options to walk on steeper slopes.

To get there, we'll drive along the Federal Highway as far as Sutton, and continue through Gundaroo to Gunning. From the town of Gunning, on the old Hume Highway, proceed towards the village of Dalton for about 10 km., leave the bitumen road at the Loop road. The sport oval and the cemetery are on the right. Proceed on the gravel road for about 200 m to the Bush's Lane street sign. Bush's Lane is to the right opposite a hay shed. Proceed on this lane. The entrances to "Dalton Park" and the Oolong Sanctuary are about 1km from the Bush's Lane sign. Please park your car on the parking area near the entrance.



### **Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve Friday to Monday 14-17 April; Easter long weekend campout**

The COG Easter camp-out for 2006, usually the most popular camp-out for the year, will be at the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve, 35 km north east of Mudgee, about 5.5 hours from Canberra. Through the NSW NPWS, COG has been able to secure a very good campsite for this trip; it's off the road, large, shady, and with a toilet. However, we will need to take everything else, including water and firewood. Munghorn conserves sandstone pagoda country, and forms a transition zone between the SE, NW and western parts of the state, so that a variety of coastal, western and northern birds occur there. 164 bird species have been recorded, including Regent Honeyeater, and a wide variety are resident in the well forested reserve. Other interesting areas, such as the Goulburn River National Park, are in the vicinity.

A very big thank you to Sue Lashko who has agreed to organise and lead this important camp-out, with the on ground help of a number of other members. If you haven't done so already, please indicate your intention to participate to Sue on 6251 4485 or [Susan.Lashko@cogs.act.edu.au](mailto:Susan.Lashko@cogs.act.edu.au)) and she will arrange to provide the info pack, including maps and a bird list.

**Honeyeater migration; Sunday 23 April morning survey – see details above.**

**Tallaganda State Forest; Saturday 29 April - evening owl search**

**Note this has been moved from its original published date of Monday 24 April**

This will be an evening field trip in search of the Powerful Owls that inhabit the gullies in this area. We will spotlight and play calls from about 8 pm till 10 pm or when owls are seen. Some walking on roadways in the dark will be required. We will depart from the Spotlight carpark in Queanbeyan at 4.30 pm to get to Tallaganda State Forest by dark. The road through the forest is rough and dusty so please carpool. Participants must be able to walk on a rough road in the dark and must stay with the group. Hopefully we will be home by 11pm. More details at the April meeting. Participants must book with Tom Green (Ph 6247 0630 or [tomgreen@netspeed.com.au](mailto:tomgreen@netspeed.com.au).)

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### **Botanic Gardens; Sunday 14 May – Bush Birds for Beginners morning**

This morning walk will be the first for 2006 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for several hours from 9.30 am, meeting at the bus shelter. Please book your place with Anthony (6254 0168, or by E-mail on [anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au)), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please also don't forget to bring your binoculars and field guide.

### **Jamberoo Valley/Barren Grounds NR; Friday night - Sunday, 26-28 May: week-end accommodated**

The accommodation for this trip to a past favourite COG spot will be at Ben Ricketts Environmental Reserve with self-catering cabins about 1 km from Barren Grounds. They are nicely furnished, with the majority of beds being bunks, but very open plan. Be aware that cabins may need to be mixed genders. For those with web access the address is [www.benricketts.org.au](http://www.benricketts.org.au) if you want to look at photos of the cabins. We will explore several marked walking tracks on the property, which pass through rainforest, very tall eucalypts, creeks and a waterfall, offering opportunities to see the rich variety of native plants and animals. We will hopefully do some spotlighting as **Sooty Owls** are sometimes heard at night.

We will also visit Barren Grounds and neighbouring areas where there are a range of walks from easy to medium difficulty. Barren Grounds Reserve is in the Southern Highlands about 2 – 2.5 hours drive north of Canberra. It is famous for its specialty birds as well as its flora - flowering heath in spring and summer, and banksias in winter. The reserve is rich in bird life. On the heath, we are most likely to come across various honeyeaters and possibly Southern Emu-wrens. If we're lucky, we might even see a **Ground Parrot** or **Eastern Bristlebird**.

This trip will go ahead and a deposit has been paid. Due to the gender mix the total number of participants has been capped and the cost is \$50 per person, at the upper limit of that advertised. All intending participants have paid, but a waiting list has been opened in case of any cancellations. If you want to be placed on this list, or for any other information, please contact Kathy Walter or John Goldie on (H) 6241 7639.

### **Eurobodalla Nature Coast; Saturday–Monday 10-12 June long w/end caravan park/camping Broulee**

COG will be visiting a number of birding spots on the Eurobodalla Nature Coast during the weekend, with members of the Eurobodalla Natural History Society, including the Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens (very good for birds in winter), a mangrove boardwalk, coastal and forest areas. There are also other attractions (distractions!) like the popular Moruya markets on Saturday morning (close to Broulee). Jenny Bounds (Ph 6288 7802) and Tom Green (Ph 6247 0630) are sharing the job of organising the accommodation and activities for this weekend, with assistance from local birders in ENHS.

COG will be based at the Broulee Beach Holiday Park, 6 Lyttle St, Broulee (Big 4 Holiday Park). This is a small park in a quiet area of the coast, north of Moruya, adjacent to Broulee Island and a long, quiet beach/foreshore. COG has booked a couple of 2 bed-room units next to each other in a quiet part of the park, from Friday to Sunday night inclusive - 3 nights. Units are spacious and have all facilities including crockery, cooking and eating utensils, stove, microwave and dishwasher, ensuite bathroom and balcony/outdoor seating area, plus barbecue area. A queen bedroom for 2 people is available in each, with a single bed and bunk bed in the second bedroom for 3 people. For details of cost and to reserve a room/bed in the units, phone Jenny Bounds - 6288 7802. Powered sites in a grassed area adjacent to the units are available for those who have camper trailers, caravans or tents - please phone the Holiday Park direct (Ph 02 4471 6247) to reserve a powered site (COG has not booked these). Early booking for both units and powered sites is recommended.

All participants on this weekend are asked to please register with Jenny Bounds, phone above, including those staying privately in other accommodation, or at the Holiday Park in powered sites. As usual on COG weekends, we will arrange shared/communal meals on Sat and Sun nights - one night a barbecue.

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## Wednesday walk – 19 April – Kelly Road

The mid autumn outing will be a visit to the woodland at Kelly Road, which runs parallel to the Monaro Highway just outside the ACT border about 10 km north of Michelago. The “magic mile” along the road from just before the start of Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) 36 should provide a good mix of grassy woodland birds with **Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreepers, Restless Flycatcher, Diamond Firetail, Southern Whiteface, Dusky Woodswallows** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** very distinct possibilities.

Meet at the Williamsdale Service Station at 9.00 am, for car pooling etc prior to the 5-10 minute drive down to the start of this outing. The main part will involve a 1-1.5 km easy walk along this quiet road and is suitable for all members. Bring morning tea.

## Other Surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

NPA(ACT) is organising a **Symposium, Caring for Namadgi - Science and People. 5-7 May 2006** at Vikings Town Centre Club (the old Tuggeranong Sports Club), Cnr Athllon Drive and Rowland Crescent, Tuggeranong, near the bus exchange. The Symposium aims to involve the general public and to bring together scientists and historians from different fields and organisations to deliver papers which will stimulate discussion about scientific research relating to Namadgi and its management. The Symposium will cover several themes including the park's natural history, its water supply, bushfire management, climate change, Aboriginal and European history, and the challenges that lie ahead. The theme "nature reserve or theme park" will also be considered. Speakers include local identities, Ian Fraser, Matthew Higgins, scientists, Alec Costin, Roger Good, staff from Environment ACT's Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit and from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. NPA is funding the symposium and the daily registration fees are set at \$10/person. You can register online for all or part of the Symposium and pay at the door. You can access the registration site as well as the draft program of speakers on the NPA website, [www.npaact.org.au](http://www.npaact.org.au).

**The National Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater survey** weekends for 2006 are on the **20-21 May** (3rd weekend in May) and the **5-6 August** (1st weekend in August). Survey forms can be obtained from Debbie Saunders, Swift Parrot recovery officer, ([debbie.saunders@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:debbie.saunders@environment.nsw.gov.au), ph: 1800 66 57 66), or David Geering ([david.geering@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:david.geering@environment.nsw.gov.au), ph: 1800 62 10 56) or from the Birds Australia Swift Parrot web page (<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/birds/swift.html>). Volunteers are asked to contact either Debbie or David to nominate the areas they wish to survey or to get some survey area suggestions. COG does not have any organised activity on the first weekend, so why not get some friends together, enjoy the late autumn weather and survey some sites?

## Celebrate World Environment Day – Environment Benefit Dinner - Saturday 3 June 2006

Celebrate this important event with like-minded friends, and help to support the work of the Conservation Council to achieve the highest quality environment for the ACT region. This is the Conservation Council's major fundraising event for the year. Last year's dinner was a sell out, so early bookings and payment are suggested. The dinner of four courses will feature locally produced and organic food, on an Asian theme, prepared by Consensus Productions. \$45 a head for i-members or early bird payment by 5 May; otherwise \$50 a head. Bookings can be made at the Conservation Council office, phone 6247 7808. Member groups of the Conservation Council are being encouraged to book a table or tables - I have booked a table (of 10) for COG members - if you would like to attend the dinner, phone the Council office (6247 7808) to book and mention you want to sit on the COG table. Alternatively, you can book your own table for 10 or individual seats on an unallocated table.. Local wine will be available for purchase by the glass or bottle. The dinner will feature a guest speaker. Please make payment by credit card on booking. Note: For early bird rate, payment must be made by 5 May. Jenny Bounds (ph 6288 7802)

Details: World Environment Day Dinner, 7pm to 11pm, Function Room, Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, Civic. This is a large and modern function room, on the second floor, above Canberra Museum and Gallery, in London Circuit – enter from Civic Square opposite the fountain. There is car parking nearby.

## From the Committee

In addition to its routine business, your committee considered the following matters at its March meeting. Please ask any committee member for more details if you are interested.

- We continue to pursue further information about the review of the water-skiing trial on Lake Burley Griffin East Basin.
- Following members' continuing interest in action to deal with the explosion of Common Mynas, the committee has invited Chris Tidemann, pest species expert at the ANU, to speak at its April meeting.
- Environment ACT has announced it will erect signs discouraging people from feeding waterbirds (and bread dumping) in Orana Bay.
- Subscription renewal notices will go out in the June *Gang-gang* this year, though the subscription rate is yet to be set. New members who join after 1 April may pay a part-year rate of \$15 plus the following full-year subscription.
- Following the interest shown in the Ducie collection of First Fleet watercolours by George Raper, recently acquired by the National Library of Australia, COG is arranging a special viewing for COG members later in the year. Numbers will be strictly limited, so watch this space!

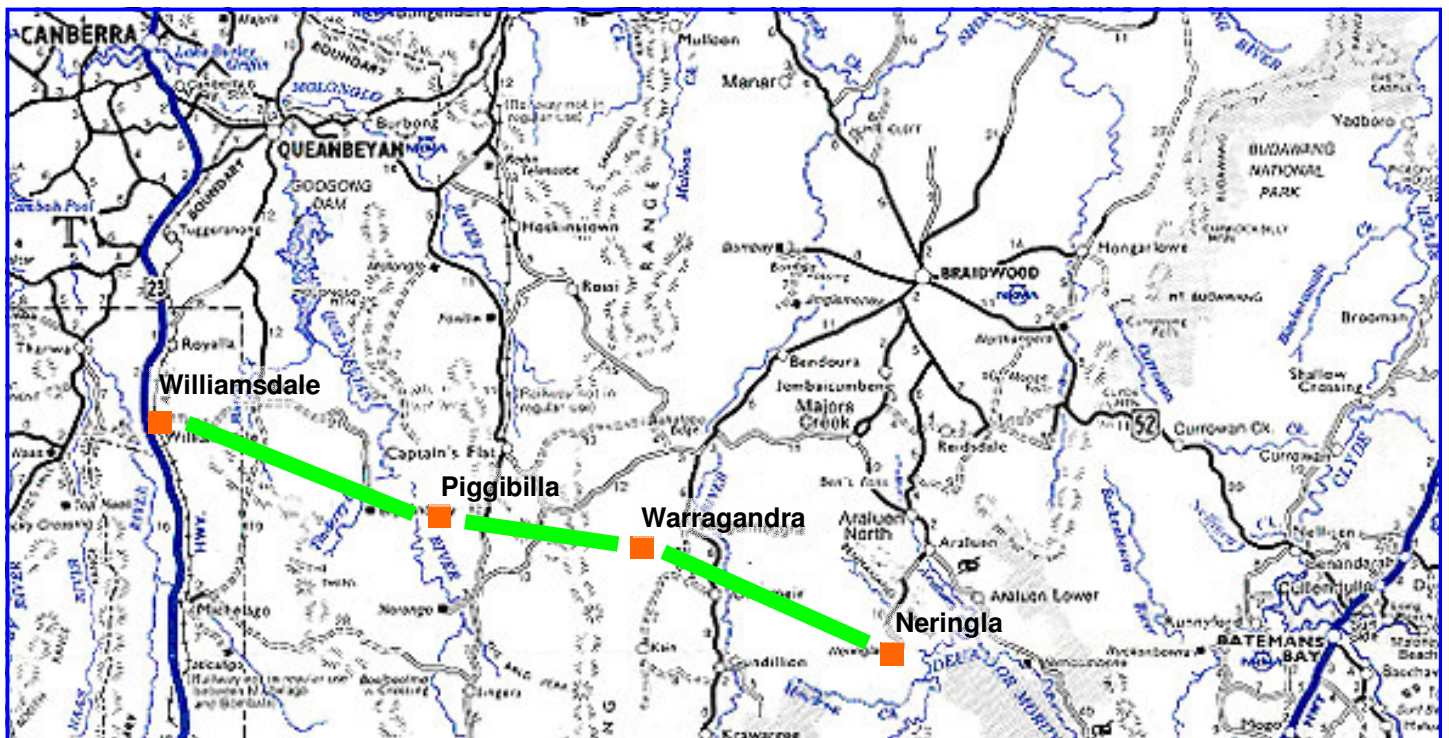


Figure 1—A specific route for Honeyeater migration out of Canberra



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## A SPECIFIC ROUTE FOR HONEYEATER MIGRATION OUT OF CANBERRA

Muriel Brookfield (Brookfield 2000) reported the movement of large numbers of Yellow-faced and other honeyeaters through an area on Jerrabattgulla Creek beside Warragandra Homestead, on the back road from Braidwood to Kain (Fig 1). They were flying across open ground from Tallaganda State Forest, resting briefly in willows and poplars along the creek before continuing in an easterly direction to the south of Bunnybee Hill. Brookfield (2000) also reported the outward migration in Spring 2000 at the same place, the birds then flying to the west.

Bill and I have attempted to follow this migration over subsequent years. Muriel speculated that many of the birds seen at Jerrabattgulla Creek could have come from Angle Crossing and that Warragandra HS was on a major migratory route. Their appearance every year since 2000 in such large numbers at Warragandra HS indicates that at least the latter is indeed the case.

We have now observed the migrating birds regularly at broad 'points' on N-S trending roads between Angle Crossing and Warragandra HS, and also between Warragandra and the foot of the Araluen Valley. The birds were seen only at these broad crossing-points, not to the north or south along the roads. This defines a repeatedly used migration route. We are aware of course that other migration routes out of Canberra are present, as well as many other routes throughout SE Australia.

Figure 1 lists the crossing points:

- Just south of Williamsdale on the Canberra-Cooma Road,
- Crossing Burra Creek, to the west of Mt. Urialla
- At Tinderry Creek near the northern end of the Tinderry Mountains
- Near Piggibilla Homestead along the Captains Flat-Jerangle Road,
- On Wild Cattle Road, and
- Just north of Round Mountain on South Forest Way, from which they cross open grazing country to reach
- Warragandra HS on Jerrabattgulla Creek.
- At Stoney Creek Homestead on the Braidwood--Cooma Road.
- At the foot of Araluen Valley, at Neringla Creek.

We have not traced the birds beyond Neringla Creek. They continue to fly east towards the Deua River valley, but we have only seen a few small flocks following the Deua River Road. The birds might not travel to the coast at all but disperse and continue north instead along the edge of the plateau.

It should be stressed that it is only at Angle Crossing and Jerrabattgulla Creek that the birds pass in spectacular numbers. Between those two localities, the flight path is evidently wider and the succession of flocks at the intermediate points is smaller a consequence. We still cannot predict with any confidence which days they might be seen: they can be absent in good weather conditions, and they will fly sometimes against very strong headwinds.

Many questions remain. Do the honeyeaters roost for the night or continue to fly? How often do they stop to rest and/or to feed? And finally, where do they end up?

*Elizabeth and Bill Compston*

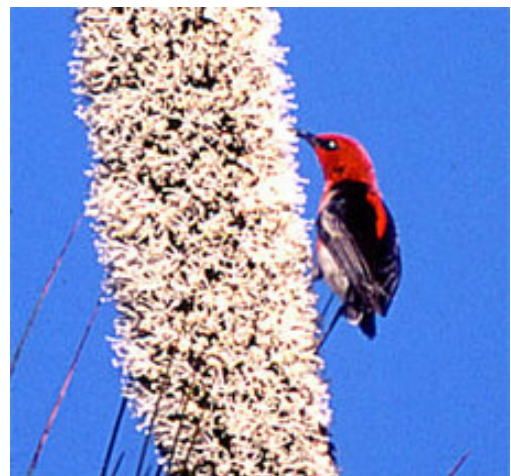


Photo by Steve Stephenson

Scarlet Honeyeater  
(*Myzomela sanguinolenta*)

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 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) 62583531.

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

*Arupingi* is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck, while for the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction. Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

(02) 6286 1564

or e-mail  
greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au

# COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

COG T-shirts, Polo shirts, all above and other books on local flora and fauna available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Carol Macleay (for post and packing costs) on 02 6286 2624.

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## Avian Whimsy #40 — A duck's luck

Not many individual birds can claim (albeit posthumously) to have unequivocally given their name to the entire species. That however is the dubious consolation for an unfortunate male Musk Duck, cut down not only in his prime but at the most inconvenient time of year for him. We know this, not only because he was collected (in 1791 by Archibald Menzies, inland from current-day Albany) at the height of his spring breeding season, but because his post-mortem revenge was to imbue the entire ship with his courtship perfume. This, it seems, had been more alluring to female Musk Ducks than it was to male British sailors. The drake exudes the chemical with his preening oils from his uropygial gland when he most needs to impress his intended. As far as I know, not many birds employ this strategy which is more often associated with mammals or insects, but it could well be that there are other examples that we cannot detect.

Certainly not many birds are named for their smell, though the Musk Lorikeet is another one. What is not obvious here however is the reason for it – while I've never actually sniffed a Musk Lorikeet, Joe Forshaw has and reports (in *Australian Parrots*, second edition) no evidence of a scent, musky or otherwise. A more straight-forward one is the sailors' name Stinker for the Giant Petrels (they were not differentiated until the 1960s). A defensive habit of both adults and chicks is to regurgitate thoroughly – and since much of their diet comprises already ripe carcasses, the epithet is not unduly unkind. The same name has been applied to the Australasian Shoveller; Harry Frith explains politely in *Waterfowl in Australia* that it is “not considered a good table bird”. Very sensible of it too.

But back to Menzies, and it wasn't just the late duck whose luck ran out. George Vancouver (a veteran of Cook's Pacific expeditions) was sent by the Admiralty in the *Discovery* in 1791 to sort out the Spanish who were being a nuisance off the north-west coast of North America. As ever, Banks made sure there was a scientific presence, in the person of Archibald Menzies, a naval surgeon and botanist. At that stage the west coast of North America was about as far from England as you could get. If you didn't want to go via Cape Horn (and who in their right mind would?!) the option was the Cape of Good Hope, east across the Southern Ocean and north-east across the entire Pacific. Vancouver decided that he might as well have a squiz while he was in the neighbourhood of south-western Australia. Menzies used his time industriously; he collected 'wild celery' (?) to counteract scurvy, collected many native plants and planted vine cuttings and watercress, and almond, lemon, orange and pumpkin seeds. (The latter, unsurprisingly, did not survive.) And, in addition to the Musk Duck, he collected and wrote in his journal the first descriptions of Western Rosella, Boobook and Red-capped Parrot. Sadly he didn't ever publish so others later got the credit. It got worse for him though – he fell out with Vancouver and got locked up on board for three months, during which time his carefully collected and tended live plant collection perished. Prior to that though he did valuable work in North America and his name was attached to the Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*.

It seems however that having one's name associated with this mighty tree was not a good auspice. (And now we've meandered away from birds and Australia altogether in pursuit of a good story, so if you're at all a purist you may want to give up at this point. Actually, you've probably already done so.) The tree waited another 30 years or so for a common name, until the advent of a remarkable and ultra-hardy Scot, David Douglas, who worked for years and often alone among trappers and native Americans in the sub-Arctic Canadian vastnesses. But he was not lucky either. Early in his stay, while he was up a tree (!) his guide absconded with his jacket and money. The hired horse and carriage were left, but the horse only understood French and Douglas at that stage didn't. His health profoundly deteriorated after drifting for some time, drenched and frozen, in Hudson Bay, and he was substantially blinded by years of sun on the snow. At this point he decided it was time to go home to England. Via Alaska and Siberia. On foot, to save money. En route to the coast though his canoe went over a waterfall and all his specimens and notes were lost. Somehow he found himself in Hawaii (I have *no* idea), where he effectively and permanently ended his run of bad luck by managing to fall into a bull trap – complete with bull.

You might think that this whole Whimsy is encapsulated in those last three words. Or that, like Menzies' Musk Duck, it stinks. If permitted, I'll try and make up for it next time...

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au



## WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com  
phone 02 6251 3136

www.visitnsw.com.au (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

## New members

### COG welcomes the following new members:

Sally Blanchard, USA  
Robert Gosford, Nowra  
Nobbs-Mohr family, Flynn  
Paul Schneider, Pearce  
Jacqui Stol, Murrumbateman

## Next newsletter

May deadline

Wednesday 26 April 2006

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to the

Editors of *Gang-gang*

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or send 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.

Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

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*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.

### Office

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allen on 6254 6520

### COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

### COG membership

#### 2005-2006 memberships:

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

### 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)

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au



## Gang-gang

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