



# Gang-gang

April 2008

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday  
9 April 2008**

*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.*

The first presentation will be a DVD by **Geoffrey Dabb** entitled *Birds of the Riverina: Oolambeyan National Park*. The DVD includes various shots of birds of interest including the **Australian Pratincole**, **Plainswanderer** etc.

The main presentation will be by **Professor David Lindenmayer** from the Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU, on the school's *Jervis Bay project - particularly studies into the effects of fire on native birds and other animals*.

While he has spoken to COG many times, this is the first time

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Everyone welcome**

## What to watch out for this month

The surprise return of both summer and the drought at the start of March until Easter has meant that, as illustrated by the chat line and the discussion at the COG meeting, there has been very little activity in respect of both unusual bird sightings or of migrants passing through. Certainly there have been very few reports of any of the birds that I alerted members to keep an eye out for in last month's column. There have also been only sporadic reports of mixed feeding flocks.

If we do get some rain there might still be an opportunity, in the first few days of April, to see **White-throated Needle-tails** and **Fork-tailed Swifts** on passing fronts or local thunderstorms. Similarly there might still be an opportunity early in April to see a **Satin Flycatcher** or **Rufous Fantail** passing through, or one of our four smaller **cuckoo** species. The **Grey Fantail**, the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and the **Noisy Friarbird** usually stay a bit longer into April, with small numbers staying over winter, depending on the season. **Red Wattlebirds**, **Silvereyes** and both **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes** also migrate (as has been reported over Easter), and can sometimes be seen doing so in large numbers, but quite a few remain over winter. Keep a special ear out for the **Dusky Woodswallow**, particularly on clear still days, as groups drift slowly overhead in a northerly direction, calling and feeding on the wing.

In mid March it appeared that the **Yellow-Faced Honeyeater** migration may have begun early as for last year. However, this was not sustained and it remains to be seen whether this species will migrate at the usual time from late March to mid-late April or whether numbers will be even lower this year. Towards the end of April the **White-naped Honeyeater** traditionally joins these flocks and then becomes the major species. As noted in my March column it will be very important that this migration is carefully monitored in 2008. Please do so and report any major numbers, or the failure for any to appear when expected (remember the best migration conditions are on a clear still day after a cold crisp night). Some **Fuscous**



Photo by Julian Robinson

**White-naped Honeyeater  
at Chiltern**  
( *Melithreptus lunatus* )

*Continued on page 2*



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## April meeting *(continued from page 1)*

Prof Lindenmayer will be presenting a full talk on this project, which comprises a real life environmental impact study looking at all aspects of the biodiversity of this important area. A number of COG members have helped with the bird surveys, and all members should be interested to hear about the preliminary findings of this large scale and long term project.

There will also be a small number of copies of his best selling book *On Borrowed Time*, available for sale at a discount to the current retail price of \$40. David is willing to sign any books sold at the meeting or ones that members might like to bring along.

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## What to watch out for this month *(continued from page 1)*

**Honeyeaters** may be caught among the movement, and some may linger in gardens for a while, though few seem to have over-wintered in recent years.

Finally there are some species that move down from the mountains and higher country in late March/April to overwinter in Canberra. The **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater** are prominent birds among these and will often be seen in gardens, as opposed to the **Scarlet Robin** that prefers to stay in the woodlands close to suburbs. It will be interesting to see whether the **Flame Robin**, the only robin that occurs in flocks and prefers the more open spaces to the west of the city, will be present this year. This species is well known to irrupt after fires, and numbers seem to have been reduced for the past couple of winters compared with those immediately after the 2003 fires.

Again make sure that valuable records are not lost but are entered into the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

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## Field Trip reports

### 3 February—Kelly's Swamp and Fyshwick Sewage Ponds

COG's regular outing to coincide with World Wetlands Day was attended by 15 people, including a few experienced birders, some novices, as well as interested friends of birders. For many, this was their first visit, especially to the sewage ponds.

Highlights at Kelly's Swamp were a **Great Egret**, a **Royal Spoonbill** displaying its breeding plumage and **Australasian Shovelers**. There was plenty of time to study the differences between **swampheens**, **moorhens** and **coots**, and compare the size of **White-faced Herons** and **Great Egrets**, as well as **Darters** and **cormorants** in flight. A pair of **Eurasian Coots** was busy with dependent young while another was building a nest in front of Bittern Hide.

The sewage ponds had the usual selection of waterbirds, with the exception of **Pink-eared Ducks**. **Blue-billed Ducks**

proved to be the favourites, but a single **Freckled Duck** on Pond 1 was a highlight. We were treated to wonderful views of a **Spotted Harrier** lazily circling the ponds, landing on a fence post and later on the ground, and a **Whistling Kite** made a brief appearance. Two family groups, one of **Sacred Kingfishers** and the other of **Dollarbirds**, sat obligingly to give great views through the scopes. **Golden-headed Cisticolas** showed themselves well at the top of grass stalks, but **Little Grassbirds**, despite calling repeatedly at both locations, remained hidden.

With 44 species recorded on a fine and mild morning, it was a rewarding way to celebrate World Wetlands Day. — **Sue Lashko**

*(This report was held over due to technical problems)*

Photo by David Cook



**Restless Flycatcher  
at Chiltern**  
(*Myiagra inquieta*)

## 16 March — Molonglo Reach by boat

Due to an unprecedented demand we took two boats up the Molonglo River on a warm, calm, early autumn morning, on this now annual COG trip to view the Darter and cormorant nesting. And certainly in terms of **Darter** numbers and breeding no one could have been disappointed, as we observed much activity. On one occasion apparent nest building was still in progress, six nests had either a male or female sitting tight, there was one nest with a male brooding a very young chick which a fortunate few managed to get a glimpse of, and at least another seven nests had large but still downy chicks in them. One of the latter contained five chicks, only the second time we've ever seen this many in about 10 trips. Unlike last year there was also some nesting close to or between the two bridges, as well as quite a few nests on the northern bank. A feature of the total of nearly 60 **Darters** seen over the whole stretch of the river was the many juvenile and immature birds, which together with the 25 mostly young birds seen in East Basin on our return, mostly loafing on the bare development banks, points to a very successful though still unfinished breeding season.

On the other hand cormorant numbers were well down on the usual with just eight **Great Cormorants** seen together in a small bare tree which contained three nests, two with adult birds sitting tight and the other with three well grown chicks. At the back of this tree were about six **Little Black Cormorants**, several of them recently fledged by the appearance of their lighter coloured heads. Only three **Little Pied Cormorants** were seen; two of these were on a nest, on one occasion within one metre of a Darter nest, well away from the tree containing the other cormorants.

As for this time last year, the river was very quiet in respect of other water birds, with few ducks and surprisingly not even a **Coot** seen. Unfortunately, due to a silt curtain blocking its mouth, we were not able to visit Jerrabomberra Creek where we had found many waterbirds last time. Land birds too were very quiet though the total of 40 species seen, including several seen only on East Basin, was about average based on previous years.

The 25 participants, easily a record, thoroughly enjoyed themselves, as I did even though it was close to my tenth trip in five years. A fitting end was observing two very young cygnets, one of which was taking a ride on its **Black Swan** parent's back, in East Basin. I certainly look forward to leading my next trip; every time you go up the reach seems to be different.

## Easter camp at Chiltern



Picture by Prue Buckley

Peter and June Gotham warmly welcomed 17 COG members to their property near Chiltern in northern Victoria. Thanks to their planting of thousands of trees to supplement the 35 established trees that were there when they bought the property in 2001, and their stunning house, garden and water features, we were able to enjoy great birding within metres of our camp. **Southern Whiteface** were just outside our tents and a **Diamond**



Australian  
Ornithological  
Services P/L

PO Box 385  
South Yarra 3141  
Victoria  
Tel: 03 9820 4223  
Mob: 04173 10200

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

## 2008 Birding Tours

July  
New Caledonia  
incl Lifou & Ouvea islands

10—28 August 2008  
Strzelecki Track  
Outback Tour

See other 2008 tours on our  
website

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

**Firetail** sat above us displaying with a seed stalk on two afternoons. **Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin** and **Speckled Warbler** lurked around the farm gate. June and Peter had put together a very comprehensive programme for us covering a variety of locations and habitats in the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park and very kindly led us to these along the maze of roads on both sides of the Hume Highway. Highlights were **Painted Honeyeater, Turquoise Parrots** (seen by only two people) and **Regent Honeyeater** (seen by only one who made a brief stop at Cyanide dam on her way to the property). Despite the prolonged drought in this part of the country, we recorded 115 different bird species, but we also learnt a lot about butterflies, reptiles and mammals, thanks to our resident expert, Steve Holliday. One night's spotlighting yielded two Koala, a Brush-tailed Possum with a baby on its back, a Ring-tailed Possum and a Squirrel Glider, as well as calling **Australian Owlet-nightjars**. Very special thanks go to Peter and June for their hospitality, the wonderful facilities they made available to us and their generosity in giving up their Easter weekend to show us "their patch." — **Sue Lashko**



**Sunset at Chiltern**

**Photo by Julian Robinson**

## Future Field Trips

**The Guidelines for the conduct and advertising of COG field trips are published on the COG web site. Both trip leaders and members/participants should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. In particular, the Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.**

### **Saturday 5 April—Lake Burley Griffin — Birding by Bike or the "Tour des Birds de LBG"**

Martin Butterfield will lead a repeat of this bicycle tour of the Central and West Basins of Lake Burley Griffin, intending to visit a number of locations with good chances of seeing some of the less common sights of Canberra (in addition to the birds there is always the possibility of encountering a bagpipe player or a naked jogger). Martin's expectation would be at least 40 bird species including four **cormorants** and **Darter**, including breeding activity, and most of the other usual lake and parkland suspects. In addition the edge of Westbourne Woods can generate some of the less common bush birds, and Acacia Inlet has recently produced many sightings of **Little Bittern**.

The traditional route is not looking very interesting this season. The leader will do a final reconnoitre in late March and if that continues to be the case, at the start the leader will offer participants a choice of the traditional Central/Basin route or going out to Black Mountain Peninsula and then heading around East Basin including the Molonglo Reach and Kellys Swamp. Distance and time are likely to be similar.

Meet at Mr Spokes bike hire in Acton Park at 8:00 am, and we'll head off clockwise (for those with digital watches, that means towards the Carillon). If anyone is intending to hire a bike from Mr Spokes it would be wise to check their hours of operation as last year they didn't open until 9:00! Martin expects to have at least nine 'formal' stops with many others possible. We'll cover about 20 km, at a polite pace with no big uphill, in about 3 hours. At least one water bottle per person is advised, and although he doesn't intend to go off road, a spare inner tube each would be good insurance (Martin is hoping to make it through this year without a personal puncture). Wearing a helmet is compulsory. For further information please contact **Martin Butterfield** (Ph 6238 2637 or 0422 753 230, e-mail [martinflab@gmail.com](mailto:martinflab@gmail.com)).

### **Sunday 13 April—Honeyeater migration**

The autumn movement of thousands of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** (and lesser numbers of other species) from the mountains to warmer climes along the coast and further north is a feature of the Canberra birdwatching calendar. On a good migration day thousands of honeyeaters can be counted passing through the Angle Crossing area.

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To witness this spectacle, and to help count the honeyeaters, meet Nicki Taws at 8:30 am in the car park on the Tharwa side of the bridge across the Murrumbidgee. As the bridge is closed, travel to Tharwa via Point Hut Crossing. Bring something to sit on, a hat, sunscreen and morning tea. Enquiries to Nicki (6251 0303, [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com)). As usual, if the weather is not the best for honeyeaters we will visit the Tharwa Sandwash for some general birding.

### **Sunday 27 April—Gungahlin Hill—Morning Walk**

Meet Chris Davey at 8.00am at the entrance to Gungahlin Hill on the Barton Highway for a casual stroll through the woodlands and adjacent grassland reserve.

### **Sunday 11 May—Botanic gardens – Bush Birds for Beginners**

This morning walk will be the first for 2008 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 a couple of hours from 9.15am, meeting at the bus shelter. Please book your place with Anthony (6254 0168, or by email to [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.

### **Sunday 25 May—Local nature park – Morning walk**

We are still looking for someone to lead a morning walk to a local nature park. If you would like to show people your favourite patch of bush, please contact Anthony Overs on 6254 0168 or [anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au).

### **Saturday/Monday 7-9 June—Jervis Bay – Long weekend campout**

We will camp at Green Patch camp ground in Booderee National Park, about 4 hours drive from Canberra. All sites are unpowered and they have various sizes, some suitable for caravans or campervans. We will be birding a number of different habitats in Booderee with target species being Sooty Owl, Southern Emu Wren, Eastern Bristlebird and Tawny Crowned Honeyeaters. Numbers will be limited to 20, so first in!! Costs of campsites are between \$10-25 per night depending on the size, plus \$5 per person. Members will also need to pay the Park Use fees of \$10 per car, per 48 hours. Please contact Kathy or John at [walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au](mailto:walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au) to register your interest or for more information.

## **Other Surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members**

### **BIGNet meeting.**

COG is hosting the next meeting of the Bird Interest Group Network (BIGNet) on 5-6 April 2008. The business sessions will be held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. There are a number of ways members can assist. To ensure the success of the meeting, we need volunteers to:

- take and write up minutes of the meeting (summary/outcomes);
- organise morning and afternoon teas, including delivery to the meeting venue;
- organise the food, the setting up, and to act as marshals at the gate for a breakfast at Mulligans Flat on Sunday 6 April; and
- man (or woman) a small scale sales desk on one day, focusing on COG publications and local materials.

If you are willing to assist, please contact Jack Holland on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au), as soon as possible.

### **Draft version of the Review of the Garden Bird Survey**

A draft of the Review of the first 25 years of the Garden Bird Survey was submitted to the COG Committee on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March. If anyone wishes to view the draft and make comments could they please contact me on

[chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au). I will send them a zipped version of the 67 page document and would like to receive concise comments by Wednesday 23 April.. — **Chris Davey (President)**

## Report of March COG meeting

**Jack Holland** gave a very comprehensive, illustrated short talk outlining the main differences between Brown Quail, Stubble Quail and Painted Button-quail. The table below outlines the features to look for.

Feature	Stubble Quail	Brown Quail	Painted Button-quail
<b>Back</b>	Boldly streaked with white	Finely streaked with white	Finely streaked with bright chestnut shoulder patch (female) Male is duller
<b>Head</b>	Clear white lines down centre of head, above and below the eyes	Faint white lines centre of head, above and below the eyes	Fine white eyebrow, red eye (all 3 have to some extent)
<b>Throat</b>	Male – rich buff Female - pale	Light brown	Fine white spots on face/neck
<b>Below</b>	Chest – longitudinal black streaks, White belly (female duller)	Fine transverse black barring (chevrons), much less contrast	Large creamy spots on a creamy grey breast
<b>Call</b>	Three note whistle “pippy wheat” OR “cuch-ee-whit”	Two-note drawn out whistle “tu-weeee” OR “ff-weep”	Deep repeated “oom” (female) - like Common Bronzewing
<b>Flight</b>	Flushes with explosive whirr, skids tail first into cover	Flushed birds explode in different directions, dive head first into cover	Flies fast, weaving through trees on pointed wings showing grey-brown rump & tail
<b>Habitat (typical)</b>	Dry grasslands	Wetter grasslands??	Open woodlands with branch & leaf debris

The main speaker was **Sandra Berry** who discussed her research on *Habitat Productivity, Connectivity and Bird Conservation*. Sandra works at the ANU Wildcountry Research and Policy Hub which recognises the urgent need for long-term conservation planning in Australia, given that only 8% of Australia has some protection. Sandy’s research problem was how to identify the habitat requirements of dispersive fauna, including many birds. With food being the main driver of bird movement, she used satellite tracking of vegetation productivity and Birds Australia data to graph the preferred productivity domain for individual species. We were fascinated to see the monthly distribution of **Masked** and **White-browed Woodswallows** change as vegetation productivity altered across Australia over the last 5 years. In the past, birds have responded to climate change by relocating to where the food is, evolving new traits to use different resources, adapting or contracting their range. Now, by clearing or degrading the most productive habitats, the options for birds to cope with climate change are severely compromised. Protecting remaining habitat, restoring and rehabilitating altered habitats and reconnecting ecological processes, especially water flow in rivers, are the options that remain. — **Sue Lashko**

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# Gleanings from the Chatline

*A small selection of items from the COG Chatline which caught the Editor's eye*

(NOTE: Reports of sightings of rare species have not been endorsed by the Rarities Committee)

Some Easter observations:

- **Newline** — The place was a hive of activity! Notably, **Striated Pardalotes** were everywhere, and flying across in small groups - numbers must have been in the hundreds. **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Grey Fantails** were also very active, with probably in excess of 20 of each. One **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, several **Rufous Whistlers**, and small numbers of **White-plumed** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. One **Little Eagle**. The only 'Newline speciality' was 2-3 **Brown Treecreepers**. — **Frank Antram**
- **Mountain Creek Road, Tinkers Creek TSR and around Uriarra Crossing** — A light drizzle, mist-shrouded mountains, scent of moist stringy-barks – beautiful! Most of the summer migrants appear to have gone but there was a bit of movement by **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** and **Silvereyes**. The **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were feeding rather than moving in a migratory fashion. There was a single **White-throated Gerygone**, **Diamond Firetails**, **Nankeen Kestrels**. Oddity of the day - a **Red-rumped Parrot** with some sort of genetic variation - lutino or partial-albino (if that is possible), in any case the colour surely made it stand out from the rest of the flock. No breeding recorded. — **Con Boekel**
- **Narrabundah Hill, Coleman Ridge** — Two immature **Olive-backed Orioles**. There were also 1000+(?) **Starlings** coming to roost on a dead tree and two or three **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** not moving very much. **Dusky Woodswallows** were numerous. Also a pair of **Peregrines** slicing around finished off Easter Sunday quite nicely. — **Tobias Hayashi**
- **Tuggeranong** — some rather interesting displays by **Little Corellas**. The first was on the bridge going across the lake. Two Corellas were on a large lightpost, one either end. The one on the light bulb end was pivoting very quickly around in circles on one leg. (Quite like a netballer.) It would do it six or seven times in about three seconds, stop for 10 seconds and then do it all over again. It moved to about three different lightposts and then did the same thing again. After losing this first Corella I continued walking past the Medicare Australia building which has reflective windows. About 10 Corellas were lined up on the windows attacking their reflections. It was almost as if they were shadow boxing in a gym along the mirror. Quite a few had different fighting styles. Two fought balancing themselves with their wings, most pecked at the window, and one would only kick with its feet. It didn't use its wings to balance and it was the most entertaining to watch as it looked like it was doing Kung Fu.
- Finally, about 15 more Corellas were on the Salvation Army building and in the trees around the carpark. The five or so on the building would crouch low, put their beaks to the ground and let out a low "ehrrr" sound. They would then stand straight again. They did this occasionally.
- Also seen at Tuggeranong were about 15 **Pied Currawongs**, three swans and a **Pipit**. — **Alberta Hayes**
- **Mount Taylor** — A **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** repeatedly swooping a dog, exactly in the manner of a breeding magpie; (the dog was quite unconcerned); came in, swooped low and almost pecked; seemed unusual behaviour for this species? — **Suzanne Edgar**
- **Black Mountain** — Plenty of **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Silvereyes** and **Striated Pardalotes** on the move. Up to 10 Friarbirds in one Red Box. — **Chris Davey**
- **Latham** — In the last month **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** have reappeared and we counted 10 yesterday evening (25 March). This is the first time we have seen them for about a year. Last week, for the first time in four years we had three juvenile **Gang-gangs**. They stayed around for three days. It was interesting watching the local magpies actively chase them. It seems that this is a species that the local magpies are definitely not used to. There was much flying after the Gang-gangs and actual swooping and attacking. — **John Cummings**



**Brown Treecreeper**  
( *Climacteris picumnus* )

Photo by David Cook

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- **Sheppard's Look out** — There was a female Leaden Flycatcher late Easter Saturday. In fact it was about the only bird there. — **John Cummings**

## Newline

In response to a question regarding access to Newline, **Geoffrey Dabb** provided the following (unofficial) advice:

The paddock is government land, being one of the holding paddocks for the now-disused Oaks Estate abat-toirs. However, it is the subject of a grazing licence which gives the holder the right to graze his stock without interference. I believe the govt/department position is that if you want an *assurance* on right to enter you should speak to the licence-holder. *So far as I know*, that person is amiably-disposed provided people act reasonably, including, for this purpose, not evicting sheep, stampeding lambing ewes or complaining about them being there, ie behave sensibly, and where appropriate deferentially, and don't force the issue.

**Chris Davey** confirmed the thrust of Geoffrey's advice and added that:

the land encompassing most of the COG survey sites is Federal land and under the Department of Defence. The quarry is under ACT Government control. I have been contacted by the owner of 'Tableland Explosives' and been told that the land is up for sale and this has been confirmed by other interested parties. This has naturally set off warning signals and I am now in the process of enquiring from TAMS what they know about this. The grapevine tells me that the Airport is not interested in buying the land but we obviously need to keep a close eye on the situation.

**Gungahlin** — While cycling up the Barton Highway Easter Sunday morning we saw an **Australian Raven** with a pure white tail feather, the full length of the feather being white. With the exception of this tail feather, the rest of the bird was the normal glossy black. It flew across about 10m in front of us and landed on the median strip. It definitely wasn't a Pied Currawong – there was no white other than this one feather, and it was much glossier than a currawong and had the raven's throat ruff. — **Nick Payne**

And just to make you all jealous, **Marnix Zwankhuizen** spent Easter at Kianga, north of Narooma. His highlights were:

- One **Azure Kingfisher** along the shoreline of Mummaga Lake Walk in Bodalla Forest Park. A **Whistling Kite** patrolling Kianga Lake. One immature **Rose Robin** in remnant rainforest along Riverview Rd. Five **White-Headed Pigeons** and many **Lorikeets** of various species roosting at dusk at Forster's Bay. A dozen **White-throated Needle-tails** flying low over the highway at the Tuross Head turnoff on Saturday 22/3. A beautiful Southern Fiddler Ray and a Black Stingray at the Mill Bay Boardwalk. Over 180 **Bar-tailed Godwits** in Wagonga Inlet along with five **Pied Oystercatchers**, one **Sooty Oystercatcher**, one **Eastern Reef Egret** and four **Little Egrets**. Two **Australian Pelicans** and several **White Ibis** by the bridge over Runnyford Ck.

And earlier in the month:

**Covans Road near Lake Bathurst** — A pair of **Australasian Grebes** in breeding plumage out on a dam. There was a **Wedge Tailed Eagle** circling, much to the consternation of the resident gaggle of **Magpies**. Shortly after returning from my wander around the dam I noted a bird alight on the telegraph pole and as far as I can tell it was a **Nankeen Kestrel**. On the drive back from the property to Lake Bathurst we saw squillions (a technical term meaning lots and lots!) of **Crimson Rosellas**, another **Wedgie**, and just after we got back onto the main road from Covans we saw an **Emu** in one of the paddocks. We stopped on the side of the road to have a look through the bins. No idea whether it was wild or someone's pet, but it was somewhat surprising to see in a paddock within half a km of Lake Bathurst. While we were stopped there we saw a **Willy Wagtail**, and just after Lake Bathurst there was a large flock of **Starlings** feasting on the Hawthorn berries on the trees that seem to be popping up all over the place out there. — **Paul Taylor**





## Flying trip to the outback wetlands

Interested in joining a trip by light aircraft to the outback wetlands now in flood?

In about two months, George Wilson proposes to visit the Coongie Lakes, Innaminka, Nockatunga, Cooper Creek, Birdsville, Bulloo Overflow and Currawinya. The schedule will be to fly over the area in 5—7 days as the water recedes to see the waterfowl and waders. Opportunities for boat trips on Cooper Creek.

Cost will depend on the size of the group and the itinerary developed but of the order of \$850 per head per day all inclusive.

Contact [george.wilson@awt.com.au](mailto:george.wilson@awt.com.au) or 0418236575 to discuss.

## THE INDIAN MYNA

"Den" (C. J. Dennis 1876-1938)

*Herald*, 7 January 1933



**Indian (Common) Myna**  
*Acridotheres tristis*

Photo by Harvey Perkins

Gimme the town an' its clamour an' clutter;  
I ain't very fond of the bush;  
For my cobbers are coves of the gardens and gutter  
A tough metropolitan push.  
I ain't never too keen on the countryfied life;  
It's the hustle an' bustle for me an' me wife.  
So I swagger an' strut an' I cuss an' I swagger;  
I'm wise to the city's hard way.  
A bit of a bloke an' a bit of a bragger;  
I've always got plenty to say.  
Learned thro' knockin' about since my people came out  
From the land at the back of Bombay.  
When out in the bush I am never a ranger;  
There never ain't nothin' to see.  
Besides, them bush birds got no time for a stranger;  
So town an' the traffic for me.  
I sleep in the gardens an' loaf in the street,  
An' sling off all day at the fellers I meet.  
An' I swagger an' scold an' strut an' I swagger,  
An' pick up me fun where I can,  
Or tell off me wife, who's a bit of a nagger,  
Or scrap with the sparrers for scan.  
A bonzer at bluffin', I give you my word,  
For, between you an' me, I'm a pretty tough bird.

# COG SALES

## 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) 6258 3531.

## 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

6286 1564 or  
gramsay@actewagl.net.au

The following items plus various pamphlets (most free) and membership application forms are available from the sales desk at COG meetings.

- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** by Taylor and Day - \$16.00
- **Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change** by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- **Bird Calls of the ACT** – CD - \$12.00
- **Bird Songs of Canberra** – Cassette - \$10.00
- **COG Car Stickers** - \$2.00
- **COG Badges** – red or grey - \$5.00
- **The Long Paddock: A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW** by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **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
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** by Jo Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Grassland Flora: A Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT)** by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch: A Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region** - \$12.50
- **The Nestbox Book** by Gould League - \$12.50
- **Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape** by David Lindenmayer et al - \$34.00
- **Feather and Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art** by Penny Olsen - \$50.00

A range of substantially discounted titles, mostly from CSIRO Publishing, is also available at meetings or may be ordered via email/telephone by COG members only.

**All these items plus COG T-shirts and Polo shirts are available at the monthly meeting sales desk**

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## AvIan Whimsy #62

### There isn't a Whimsy #62!!!

The editors apologise for the absence of an AvIan Whimsy in this edition. Our contributor is en-route to Africa, to the northern Sahel and the southern tropical rainforests of Cameroon. We have been promised great things from him on his return to Canberra.

## March GBS Notes

GBS-relevant highlights from the chatline and elsewhere for late February - March include:

- A flock of 8 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters in Curtin, which led to some discussion of why migrants may be leaving earlier;
- Two little Eagles over the Torrens shops and an adjacent GBS site. Doubtless celebrating their new status within the ACT!
- Reports of single Wedge-tailed Eagles over Macquarie and Page (about a week apart, so might be the same bird)

It is probably a good time to mention the GBS rule that observers should report the maximum number of birds **occurring in the area at any one time**.

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## From the British Press

A recent article in London's *Daily Telegraph* reported that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has banned the use of the word "cock" when applied to the male of the species, in case it causes offence. A spokesman for the RSPB said its website filter, which replaces "cock" with four asterisks, is part of a standard software filter package.

The article prompted a spate of letters to the editor that included the following:

- If the RSPB's computer has replaced the word cock on its website with asterisks, can we assume tits, boobies and shags will face a similar excision?
  - As the owner of a 300 year old country pub, I am to force a smoking ban on my customers and educate them about the sins of alcohol. If we follow the RSPB's lead I shall have to change the name of my pub.  
– *Andrew Turner, The Cock Inn, Luddesdowne, Kent*
  - Try sending an e-mail to an American addressee if one lives in Penistone.
  - What next? "Who killed Male Robin? Will the Piccadilly Line underground end at Malefosters? As for an aircraft cockpit – now there's a problem.
  - Please reassure me that your report concerning the RSPB and the male blackbird was really just a \*\*\*\* and bull story.
  - What does the RSPB suggest I call my female dog?
  - What a \*\*\*\* up!
-



## 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)

## Next newsletter

May deadline

Wednesday 30 April 2008

Please send, articles, advertisements, updates etcetera 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, ph 6254 6324  
Email: [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

*Vice President*—Jack Holland  
ph 6288 7840 (home)

*Treasurer*—Lia Battisson ph 6231 0147

*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*  
Judy Collett and helpers

### COG membership

2007-2008 memberships:

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

### Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 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)

### Office

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allen 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) with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

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

### Gang-gang editors—Sue Lashko and

Greg Ramsay

Email: [gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au)



## Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to  
Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.  
PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

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