



Gang-gang

APRIL 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.04.2012

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 by **Shauna Chadlowe**, a Development Executive with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC): **Fighting back: securing the future of Australia's threatened birdlife**. Shauna will outline how AWC's innovative approach to conservation is saving wildlife, with some emphasis on birds found at its Mornington, Scotia, and recently acquired Bowra sanctuaries.

Geoffrey Dabb will give the second presentation entitled "**The Enigmatic Painted-snipe - together with observations on shooters, artists, birdwatchers, field guides, photography and Kelly Swamp**". "This wide-ranging presentation begins in 1809, and includes a reference to Gough Whitlam. It comes with a lot of pictures, appropriately for such a visually interesting species. While this non-snipe is unmistakable in appearance, it is sufficiently rare to create uncertainty about what it looks like – as shown by its treatment by various artists. Moreover, its pattern of movement is little known. The presentation tells the story of the appearance of the species at Kelly Swamp last spring, and discusses what might attract visiting birds to that site."

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

March is always a time of considerable bird movement in Canberra, and this year has been no exception, though in some respects it has been somewhat unusual. Many **Eastern/Pacific Koels** seemed to leave Canberra by the 7-8 March, just after the second heavy rain on 3-4 March, though some stayed on for up to another week, some into the third or fourth week, and was still reported calling from Griffith/Narrabundah on 26 March. This is a similar timing to last year, and by my count about 10 different fledglings were reported, all with Red Wattlebirds as hosts. A different feature this season seems to have been how much bolder some dependent young had become, with in a number of cases being seen on a regular or even daily basis for up to a month, and following a well-known and relatively restricted daily pattern.

Likewise there have been reports of the **White-throated Needle-tail** in March, though only after the very wet period at the beginning had passed, and a first report of possible **Fork-tailed Swifts** at the end of the month. However, I'm not aware of any reports of the **Superb Parrot** or **Brush Cuckoos** during March and more surprisingly of the **Sacred Kingfisher**, the **Australian Reed Warbler**, the **Mistletoebird** and the **Satin Flycatcher**. There was one report of some late staying **Dollarbirds** in the first week of the month, and the **Rainbow Bee-eater** also seemed to stay later than usual, and was last reported on both 23 and 25 March. There were also only single reports of **Tree Martins**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** and the **Leaden Flycatcher** during the month, though both the **White-throated** and **Western**

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Gerygone, the **Rufous Fantail** and the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** were still recorded during the last weekend of March.

The biggest surprise, however, was the continued observations by Elizabeth Compston and Julian Robinson of up to three pairs/families of **White-winged Triller** at Callum Brae during March, with at least two different juveniles being seen to be fed. It appeared most had moved on and only one family with a juvenile remained there by 18 March, but amazingly two trillers were still seen there during the COG outing on 24 March, nearly 2 months after I would have expected they would have departed.

By the time this Gang-gang reaches you in the first week of April any sightings of any of the species mentioned above will be very significant and should be recorded in the COG database.

Mid-month there were some signs that the **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** migration was starting early, including on 18 March when several flocks of up to 55 were seen over Lindsay Hansch's place at Jerabomberra, well known to be directly under a major migration route. However, by the time of the Gang-gang deadline on 28 March, it did not appear that any major migration had commenced, despite the seemingly good conditions on Sunday morning 25 March with the low minimum temperature. Hopefully this is not an indication of another poor year. Please keep an eye and ear out for them, including for **White-naped Honeyeaters** that start joining them mid-month and dominate the flocks by the end of April, as well as any **Fuscous Honeyeaters** that get caught up in the movement. Also keep an eye out for other species which usually depart during April such as **Rufous Whistlers** (still being reported towards the end of March) and the **Noisy Friarbird** (very few indeed in my local patch this summer).

As members are aware while many species depart Canberra before it gets too cold, each autumn/winter a number of other species come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas. Examples of these are the **Scarlet** (already widely reported from the start of March) and **Flame Robins** (still to be reported, watch out for these in the more open areas by mid April), plus the **Golden Whistler** (also reported throughout March) and the **White-eared honeyeater** (first reported during the last weekend of March).

A surprising amount of breeding activity was reported in March, perhaps due to my request in last month's column. The highlight was an active **Speckled Warbler** nest found by Steve Wallace. Callum Brae seems to have been a hot spot for breeding this year, apart from the trillers mentioned above. Julian Robinson noted on the chat line that he had seen 12 species exhibiting breeding activity there since late summer, and then added a thirteenth, the **Black-shouldered Kite**, a well-known autumn breeder. This species has been widely reported again in March, with up



White-winged Triller (*Lalage sueurii*)
Photo by Roger Curnow

to six seen together on the Hoskintown Plain, so keep an eye out for it and any breeding activity in your local patch. This build up, and the recording of several **Eastern Barn Owls**, is a portent of an upcoming mouse plague this autumn, certainly if the number seen in my garden towards the end of March is any guide.

Mixed feeding flocks (MFF) typical of a Canberra autumn have also been reported but these seem to have been less prevalent than last year. The one in my GBS based on **Weebills**, **Grey Fantails** (lots of them moving through in March, with up to 20 seen together), both species of **pardalote**, **Brown Thornbill** and **Silvereyes** (the most numerous species, again lots are moving through) has been seen intermittently.

Finally more movement of the **Grey Butcherbird** has been reported, most notably two birds in Mark Clayton's yard in Kaleen. This was the first time in over 30 years living there he's seen them, and notably he identified them as adult rather than juvenile birds dispersing as many other records seem to have been.

So April will be also be a time of significant change, with many species still moving out of or through Canberra on their way north, or moving down from higher altitudes. As usual keep your eyes and ears open for what might move through your local area, and please record all significant observations (including when species are last seen), as well as any autumn breeding or MFF activity, and ensure these are reported for inclusion in the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

For Sale - new, unused copy of Birds of Peru (Princeton Field Guides) 2010, Schulenberg et al - \$40 will deliver within Canberra. Phone Sue Lashko on 62514485 or email smlashko@gmail.com



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Field Trip Reports

Wee Jasper, 10-12 February 2012

Over this weekend a joint field trip between COG and the Illawarra Birders (IBs) www.illawarrabirders.freei.me was conducted at Wee Jasper. The party comprised 8 COGites and 17 IBs, plus two very welcome children. Most of us stayed at the Wee Jasper Station's shearers' quarters, while others stayed in other accommodation in the valley. The valley is beautiful at present, after the extended period of rain in the area. Over the weekend we observed 69 bird species in a variety of habitats, including at the shearers' quarters, Billy Grace Reserve, Wee Jasper Nature Reserve (we followed the Hume and Hovell Walking Track from the village to the James Fitzpatrick Trackhead) and Micalong Creek Reserve. Specific mention should also be made of the Wee Jasper Tavern from where a group of IBs, over a few beers and pizzas, saw and photographed an **Eastern Osprey**. This is an extreme rarity, with only one inland NSW record in Birdlife Australia's Birddata database www.birddata.com.au, though Duncan McCaskill added the species to the ACT list in May last year. Other species of interest included adult and juvenile **Wedge-tailed Eagles** perched, providing crippling views; night-time observations of the **Australian Owlet-nightjar** (heard) and **Tawny Frogmouth** (seen); along with threatened species including **Brown Treecreeper** and **Diamond Firetail**. Thanks to Michael Robbins and Penny Potter for assisting me in organising the trip, and Chris Davey and David Rees for serving as co-leaders in the field. — David McDonald



Jerrabomberra Joey Scouts, 12 March 2012

On the evening of 12 March, Chris Davey and Sandra Henderson led a group of eight Joeys (6-8 yrs old) and their parents on a short walk at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. For some of them this was their second visit – we ran the same outing last year. The children were each given a sheet with names and photos of some of the birds they were most likely to see, with space for ticking them off. They were most enthusiastic about the task, and recognised some of the birds as ones they see in their gardens (**Superb fairy wrens, galahs**). Most of the birds cooperated, so all 10 pictured species were sighted and ticked off, and all but two of the additional “perhaps we’ll see” species also got a tick (only the **White ibis** and **White-faced heron** failed to put in an appearance). Chris pointed out the resident possum in one of the hides. At the end of the walk the leader handed over a small donation for COG, and hopefully we’ve encouraged a few youngsters to look more closely at their local birds. —Sandra Henderson

Gungahlin Hill - 17 March 2012

A small group turned up for this outing in quite dismal conditions. The rain continued for most of the outing, and seemed to deter many of the small birds from making an appearance, although **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were both spotted. A very large gathering of **Pied Currawongs** was noted on the edge of the grasslands. **Magpies, Red Wattlebirds** and **Starlings** were also present in large groups. A **Brown Goshawk** was seen at a distance. Other birds noted down (20 species in all) included **Crimson Rosellas, White-winged Choughs, Superb Fairy-wrens, Australasian Grebes and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. There were many varieties of fungi scattered throughout the reserve, and a lone orchid (*Eriochilus cucullatus*, or Parson’s Bands) admired. Many thanks to Margaret Robertson for leading the outing. — Sandra Henderson

Wednesday Walk to Mulligans Flat - 21 March 2012

19 members and guests gathered at the entrance to the Reserve adjacent to Horse Park Drive. In total we recorded 43 species. Raptors were represented by a mature **Black-shouldered Kite**, a rocket-propelled **Australian Hobby** and a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** causing distress to the local **Australian Magpie** population.

Pacific Black Ducks were seen flying over the Reserve, with 5, including 3 dependent young, on the still breached Big Dam. Also on the dam were 2 **Australasian Grebes** (still in breeding plumage) and 2 **Eurasian Coots**. Other birds at dams were 2 **Little Pied Cormorants**, 2 **Masked Lapwings** and a **White-faced Heron**.

We had a good range of "bush birds" with the highlight being a flock of at least 12 **Varied Sitellas**. 7 of these birds flew in front of us for some time. The only other breeding record was a **Magpie-lark** sitting on a nest in a dead tree over a small dam. — Martin Butterfield

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Callum Brae - 24 March 2012

Ten COG members and guests spent three hours at Callum Brae on a very pleasant morning, and were rewarded with 45 species in all. We were met at the gate by a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** quietly feasting on sawfly larvae in one of the eucalypts. We proceeded to the gully on the left, noting the pair of **Black-shouldered Kites** in their usual location in the trees to left of the track, and an **Australian Hobby** and **Nankeen Kestrel** in the same vicinity. The gully area yielded a range of small birds, including a flock of **Diamond Firetails** (several immatures), a couple of **Jacky Winters**, two **White-winged Trillers**, a **Western Gerygone**, **Dusky Woodswallows** (again, several immatures among them), more **Nankeen Kestrels**, many **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and a group of **Noisy Friarbirds**. At the small dam a little further along we flushed a **Pacific Black Duck** and a pair of **Chestnut Teal**. An **Australasian Darter** and a **Little Pied Cormorant** were checking out the large farm dam. A family of **Speckled Warblers** checked the group out very briefly before moving on, near the quarry fence. Towards the end of the walk two male **Scarlet Robins** appeared to be having a vigorous and noisy territorial dispute in the top of a eucalypt. A very nice morning's birding indeed. —Sandra Henderson



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Committee news

- The Committee is working to update the Forward Plan.
- A submission has been sent to the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities regarding the EPBC Act referral of Throsby and Kenny for urban development.
- A letter was sent to the National Capital Authority opposing further development (embassies) on Federal Golf Course land on Red Hill.
- Chris and Jenny have prepared a report for the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary Board regarding monitoring of the introduced Brown Treecreepers, following a visit to the reserves to try to locate remaining birds.
- The first progress payment has been made to the company redeveloping COG's website.

New COG Observation Record Form

On 22 March 2012 the COG committee approved implementing the new paper COG Observation Record form. The approved form will be available on the COG web-site by May 2012, as will be appropriately amended website text

Last May I requested people test a redesigned COG Observation Record. Several COG members contributed excellent feedback on that redesign which has resulted in the approved new form. I would like to acknowledge the input of all of the testers, and especially the form's design work of Geoff Alves, Paul Fennell and Steve Wallace, and the help in sorting out data entry issues provided by Tony Harding and Nicki Taws.

The three main changes to the COG Observation Record sheet are:

- The layout has been simplified and made easier to follow, including larger text for names of birds.
- The "Weather" and "Habitat" sections have been dropped. Significant immediate impacts of Weather or Habitat can put in the "Notes" field.
- Grid squares (eg L14) have been dropped. Latitude & Longitude is the preferred way of identifying locations. However, for those who find it difficult to provide a lat/long pair, provision has been made to provide a place name for which a lat/long pair can be determined. The place name can be any name found in a Canberra street directory, or a named place/feature anywhere within the boundaries of the COG Area of Interest - roughly Adaminiby to Wee Jasper to Yass to Gunning and Goulburn and then a line running due south, slightly east of Lake Bathurst.

NOTE: A set of "standard locations" (Gazetteer) will not be published at this stage, as discussions with ACT Government personnel revealed that locations shown in a Canberra street directory and "place" names in rural areas (e.g. addresses, campgrounds, fire trails) provide practically all that's required. Also current discussions about possible changes to the COG on-line data entry system mean it is best to defer publishing such a list.

Michael Robbins

Future Field Trips

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

I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.

Thursday 5 April – Kelly's Swamp – Morning

The third walk of the Thursday trial will be mainly around Kelly's Swamp (we can shelter in hides if it rains), and possibly around the sewerage ponds. Those so inclined will have coffee afterwards at local cafe. Meet at 8.30 am at the parking lot at the end of Dairy Flat Rd, Fyshwick. No booking required.

Michael Robbins : mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au

Friday 6 to Monday 9 April – Cocoparra NP – Easter Weekend

The advertised venue of Yathong is not available for Easter. It has been decided to move the campout to Cocoparra National Park. The park is about 350 kms west of Canberra. Facilities consist of dry toilets and gas barbeques. Open fires are not permitted, so warm clothes are required.

Registration is essential. Contact Noel Luff on 6288 3291 or (preferably) by email:

noelluff@hotmail.com

Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 April – Yathong Nature Reserve.

Yathong is located in the mallee between Cobar and Hillston (200 kms north west of Cocoparra). Facilities consist of refurbished shearers quarters with a full kitchen, refrigerators, showers, flushing toilets and beds. You are required to bring bedding and food. Camping is not permitted. Costs are \$22 per person per night, making a total of \$88 per person for the four nights.

Registration is essential. Contact Noel Luff on 6288 3291 or (preferably) by email:

noelluff@hotmail.com

Sunday 15 April – Mount Rogers – Morning (National Arboretum now 13 May)

Many species have been seen in this area over the years including Australian Owlet-nightjar, Painted Button-quail and Collared Sparrowhawk. Superb Parrots have generally left the area by this time but their movements have been different this year compared to other years so may be possible. Enjoy good views over Belconnen, with mostly easy walking, but with some uphill sections.

Meet at 8.30 am at the Wickens Place carpark. The walk will take about 2 hours but there are plenty of tracks going back to the carpark if people want to leave earlier.

No booking required. Contact is Steve Wallace (skcbf@bigpond.net.au, ph.62582706).

Wednesday 18 April—Tharwa Sandwash

The Wednesday Walk for April on 18th of that month will be to Tharwa Sandwash. Contact person is Sandra Henderson at cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Sunday 22 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**, and the autumn honeyeater migration will be in full flight. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer.

Registration is essential. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws.

Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or PH. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

Sunday 29 April – Booroomba Rocks to Mt Tennent Fire Trail – All Day

This is a reasonably easy 7.5 km all day bushwalk in northern Namadgi National Park, involving a short car shuffle. From Booroomba Rocks carpark we will use the Australian Alps Walking Track to slowly walk down Booroomba Creek to Bushfold Flats. After lunch we will then walk out to the gate on Apollo Road via the southern end of the Mt Tennant Fire Trail.

The Booroomba Creek section involves a descent on a narrow track, followed by a flat section around Bushfold Flats and a steepish descent on the firetrail with loose gravel underfoot, and finally a short climb back to Apollo Road. It should be suitable for reasonably fit folk who are steady on their feet.

At this time of year in these wet creek and dry forest habitats we might expect to see **Eastern Yellow** and **Scarlet Robins**, various **thornbills**, **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Red-browed Finch**, **Brush Cuckoo** and, if we are lucky, **Superb Lyrebird** and **Pilotbird**. Raptors are a good possibility in the open country. Meet at 8.30 am at the Namadgi Visitors Centre carpark, where we will arrange the car shuffle logistics and carpool if possible. Bring lunch and water.

Please pre-register with Julie McGuinness by email: julie.mcguinness@bigpond.com (preferably), or by phone 0428319882, to facilitate car shuffle organisation.

Saturday 5 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens (Beginners' walk)

This morning walk will be the first for 2012 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.

Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter.

Registration is essential. Please book your place with Anthony (6254 0168, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Canberra's Autumn/Winter Birds; Sunday 27 May – Day bus trip

Each autumn/winter a number of bird species come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas. Examples of these are two species of red-breasted **robins** (**Scarlet** and **Flame**), plus two species which are much less common (**Rose** and **Pink**), a number of species of **honeyeater** including the **White-eared**, **Fuscous**, **Brown-headed**, **Crescent** and the **Eastern Spinebill**, and the **Golden Whistler**. Several other species such as the **Dusky Woodswallow**, the **Grey Fantail** and the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** will overwinter in the ACT in small numbers. The aim of this outing is to learn about them and to try to observe as many of these species within the ACT in the one day. Some passage migrants might also still be moving around in late May to add to the interest.

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland will lead the outing. As is best suited for these types of outings, transport will be by two 12-seater buses. This involves a total of 24 people, and a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles, otherwise the outing becomes logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am. This is quite central, and where the parking is free. It will run until mid afternoon so that the buses can be returned late that afternoon, so please bring morning tea and lunch. The costs will be \$20 per person, including the COG admin fee. This will be payable on boarding the bus. To book please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

In this annual outing we will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these species are likely to be present. As usual, the exact itinerary will not be determined until very close to the day, and will depend on recent reports of where these birds are, though we will stay within the ACT boundaries.

NOTE: Cancellations at short notice which cannot be filled from a wait list may have to pay the full fare if a loss to COG results.



Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) : Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

Saturday & Sunday 21-22 July – Eden Pelagic (two single day trips)

As there is sustained interest in the Eden pelagics, two single day trips, led by Anthony Overs, have been organised for July. These will again be run from Eden Harbour with Freedom Charters. As usual we will travel to the edge of the continental shelf in search of seabirds, cetaceans and seals.

We will meet at Eden Harbour early each morning (time to be confirmed) and aim to return to dock by 3pm, thus leaving enough time to drive back to Canberra on Sunday afternoon. Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but no doubt there will be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip. Seasickness pills or other remedies are recommended for those prone to seasickness. All participants should bring water, lunch, and sunscreen. More detailed instructions will be available closer to the day.

The cost will be \$100 AUD per person. To secure a place on this outing, please contact Sandra Henderson (6231 0303 or shirmax2931@gmail.com). Note that you may book for one or both days. Please make this clear when booking and, if booking for one day, specify Saturday or Sunday. **Payment in full must be made by the end of April.** Sandra will provide you with payment details. In the event that you have to withdraw from the trip, if a replacement person can be found, your money will be refunded. Both trips are restricted to 12 participants and will be filled on a first paid basis.

ANU Bird Surveys

ANU held a successful bird survey on Saturday 28 January, with expert input from COG members. Volunteers who participated commented that it was highly enjoyable and they learned a lot.

Our next survey is scheduled for **Saturday 14 April**, and we are hoping that COG can continue to support us.

As with past surveys, COG members will be relied upon to act as mentors in the field, transferring knowledge and giving tips on bird identification to novice volunteers. COG members will most likely lead a team of 2-3 volunteers.

We will be using the 2-hectare 20-min search method. Each team will do a maximum of 6 sites.

There will be a thank you BBQ following the surveys, so please join us afterwards.

To participate, contact the ANU Biodiversity Officer Tim Yiu (tim.yiu@anu.edu.au) to obtain registration and declaration forms. Members who participated in our January survey will only need to return the declaration form.

Avian Whimsy # 93

Lord, Howe did we let it happen?

Islands fascinate me, and the most fascinating of islands from a biological perspective are those which have never been connected to other land – ‘oceanic’ islands, as opposed to ‘continental’ ones. Continental islands sit on the continental shelf, and are regularly exposed and inundated as sea levels rise and fall with global temperature changes. Tasmania, New Guinea and Kangaroo Island are continental islands. Oceanic islands generally form from the upthrusting of volcanoes. Perhaps the most famous volcanic oceanic archipelago is the Galápagos chain in the eastern Pacific, but closer to home Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands formed in the same way. Lord Howe, some 600km from the Australian mainland and 1500km from New Zealand, burst out of the Tasman Sea seven million years ago, a totally naked lump of rock. And that is what makes oceanic islands so special – everything living on them derived from somewhere else, their ancestors having flown or floated or swum or been carried in. On Lord Howe, land organisms derived from both Australia and New Zealand; New Zealand vagrant birds in particular blow in fairly regularly but when I was there recently a single **Plumed Whistling Duck**, the first ever recorded there, dropped in from Australia.

On such an island the ancestral genetic pool is likely to have been small, and evolution proceeded in total isolation from the rest of the species. As a result endemism – the number of species found only in a given place – is high; nearly 50% of the Lord Howe plant species are endemic.

There are other implications too. Many isolated island birds have become flightless – being in the air can actually be dangerous for a land bird on a small island at the mercy of strong winds. Many islands lack larger predators too – they are probably too small to support a population – so inhabitants generally lack predator avoidance strategies. This is a very bad combination of characteristics if predators do arrive – and they do, sadly they do. The **Lord Howe Woodhen** is a flightless rail, related to the **Buff-banded Rail**; it potters engagingly about, and is inclined to walk up to a strange object to investigate. From the late 18th century such strange objects included visiting sailors and whalers, and later on settlers (there were never indigenous inhabitants), all of whom were glad to welcome a variation of diet. The Woodhen survived, thanks to an intensive recovery program (the island museum has photos of the beginnings of the program in the early 1980s, featuring COG stalwarts Chris Davey and Peter Fullagar, both looking even more youthful than they do today). Others did not.

There was a stunning **White Gallinule**, probably flightless and eaten to extinction by the time of settlement in 1834. The **White-throated Pigeon** (a sub-species of a south-west Pacific species) was abundant, and was slaughtered in vast numbers, so tame that it was killed by sticks; it had gone by the middle of the 19th century. The **Red-fronted** (or Tasman) **Parakeet** made the mistake of eating the new-comers’ crops, and paid with extinction by 1869. While it has traditionally been regarded as a sub-species of a more widely distributed species, current thinking is that it represented a more restricted species, limited to Lord Howe and Norfolk Island; it just hangs on in Norfolk.

Nonetheless there was still an abundance of small bush birds, famously tame and enriching the forests, gardens and even houses of the settlement. Then in 1918, a disaster even greater than the earlier ones arrived unnoticed. The island trader the *Makambo* ran aground and its cargo of Black Rats swarmed ashore. Astonishingly, within a decade four endemic passerine species and a sub-species, all common, some abundant, had gone for ever. No-one will ever again enjoy or even see the **Vinous-tinted Blackbird** (now regarded as a sub-species of **Island Thrush**), **Lord Howe Fantail**, **Lord Howe Gerygone**, **Robust White-**

eye or **Tasman Starling**. (There used to be a sub-species of the starling on Norfolk Island too, but we did for it as well.)

We hadn't quite finished though. In a belated attempt to curb the rats (remember the Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly?) **Masked Owls** were introduced from Tasmania. They didn't get rid of the rats of course, but by the 1950s the endemic **Lord Howe Boobook** (a sub-species) had gone, quite probably out-competed by the much bigger new-comers.

Lord Howe Island is still a very beautiful place, but it is a much quieter and poorer one than when we took control. Cupidity, stupidity and sheer bad luck are apparently an irresistible combination.

Ian Fraser : calochilus51@internode.on.net



Lord Howe Woodhen (*Gallirallus sylvestris*): nearly all are banded for research purposes. Ian Fraser

The main presentation at the April meeting will be from Shauna Chadlowe. Here is an expanded description.

Fighting back: securing the future of Australia's threatened birdlife



Presentation description:

The future of many of Australia's unique bird species hangs in the balance. In northern Australia in particular seed-eating birds as well as small mammals are experiencing a catastrophic decline. Scientists are predicting a suite of extinctions within the next 10 – 20 years unless urgent action is taken. This is a matter of national and international significance - Australia already has the worst mammal extinction rate in the world.

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is a non-political, non-government organization that is dedicated to saving Australia's threatened wildlife and the habitats in which they live. AWC represents an exciting new model for conservation in Australia – one that is successfully stopping *and reversing* this tide of extinctions.

Shauna Chadlowe will share with you how AWC is using scientific excellence and innovation to fight back and restore Australia's threatened wildlife and secure the future of some of Australia's most threatened bird species. It's an award winning approach that is transforming conservation on the ground and offering new hope for Australia's threatened birdlife.

Biographical Profile:

Shauna Chadlowe,

Development Executive, Australian Wildlife Conservancy

Shauna Chadlowe is a Development Executive with Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). Prior to joining AWC in 2006, Shauna was the Executive Director of IQPC, Sydney, a global conference organization, where she gained 10 years' commercial experience. Prior to that, she was a litigation lawyer, for a well established Sydney law firm.

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren 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, or

barbdebruine@hotmail.com

or see

<http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.

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.

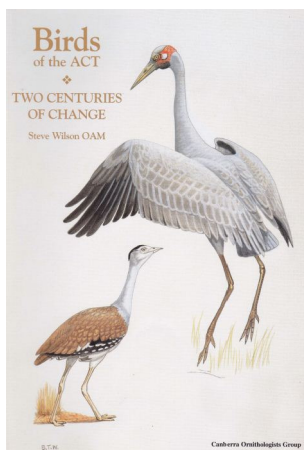
Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay

6286 1564 or

gramsay@grapevine.com.au

COG SALES

Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change, Steve Wilson OAM, Canberra Ornithologists Group

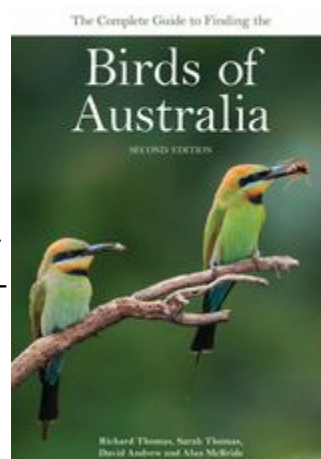


Published by COG in 1999, a number of this historic book were found in COG's dusty archives recently. The book provides a 'history of recorded birds' of the ACT for two centuries. It drew on knowledge of birds by local indigenous groups, early settlers, scientific publications, records of pre-COG bird-watchers and then on the garden survey. It contains a Margaret Preston woodcut and illustrations by Robin Brown. Many of the people who contributed to the book are still active members today.

A beautiful book for only \$10.

The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed, Richard Thomas, Sarah Thomas, David Andrew, Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.



Old stock specials—\$20 or less

CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series

- Australian Magpie: Biology and behaviour of an unusual songbird, \$20
- Kookaburra: King of the Bush, \$20
- Wedge-Tailed Eagle, \$15
- Herons, Egrets and Bitterns, \$10

Also: – Watering house and Garden (LandLinks) \$15

Also: – titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): including: **Albatross, Mound-builders, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Bustard.**

Also:— at the February meeting only – remaining T-shirts and Polo shirts (limited sizes only) \$10-15



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 member:

P. Stagg, Kambah

NEXT NEWSLETTER

MAY deadline

Wednesday 25 April 2012

Please send, articles, advertisements, updates etcetera to the Editors at
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
or c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership

2010-2011 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303
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

Cog library

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

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'. Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

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Gang-gang

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