

Gang-gang

August 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

What to watch out for this month

Despite the cold weather and series of frosts in the first half of July, there have still been lots of reports of species staying over winter. The **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** in particular has often been reported, including 10 in one group in my local patch where I was regularly counting 6-8 together towards the end of the month. **Dusky Woodswallows** have also continued to be regularly reported, sometimes in reasonably sized groups, with my observations on NW Cooleman Ridge showing further unexpected behaviour. Early in July at the same time and spot as I reported them last month, I again heard woodswallows overhead. After seeing several of them circling high (at least 100 m above tree level) to the SE, I suspected they may have landed on the ridge itself, about 250 m to the SE. Indeed, on following this up I located 17 birds as they formed a cluster at the base of a large upright dead bit of mistletoe, where they settled somewhat nervously for a couple of minutes while preparing to roost.

I wasn't able to locate them again despite some searching, until the COG winter birds bus trip on 18 July when a maximum of eight **Dusky Woodswallows** were observed circling very high (possibly as high as 500 m) over Cooleman Ridge, just before 3 pm. I now suspect they spend the day circling and feeding up high (it's hard to believe there are insects up there that high in winter) and then drop down close to sunset to roost wherever they happen to be. This is the time I have been observing them, when they are close enough to hear them call and see with the naked eye as they descend.

The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** (especially in the Aranda area), **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Grey Fantail** have also been regularly reported, with lesser numbers of **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Western Gerygone** and **Australian Reed-Warbler**. Towards the end of the month there were also some reports of **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** and a pair of **Swift Parrots**, perhaps already on their way back to Tasmania.



Golden Whistler
(*Pachycephala pectoralis*)

Photo by David Cook

During August/early September, **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins** (in the preparations for the COG winter birds bus trip we found it difficult to find these – see separate write up) will depart for higher altitudes or the mountains, along with **Golden Whistler**, **Crescent Honeyeater** (those in my garden area have been very vocal in the second half of July), **White-eared Honeyeater** (still quite common in my patch in July), and to a lesser extent **Eastern Spinebill**.

Reports of breeding activity seemed to have quietened down in July, perhaps because chatline subscribers feel such activity in July is less unusual, though there was a re-

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AUGUST MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.08.10

*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.*

See details on page 2

Everyone welcome

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port of the **Brown Thornbill** already sitting on eggs. Late reports were of another **Brown Thornbill** nest with eggs, **Australian Ravens** with eggs hatching and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** feeding young in the nest. Soon the **Australian Magpie** breeding season will be upon us, if indeed it hasn't already started, as they've been calling noticeably earlier in the past week!

Even though it is still winter, August is the traditional time for the first spring migrants to arrive. For the species mentioned above, this year it will be even more difficult to determine whether they are the first arrivals, or birds which have stayed over the winter. Of the species which haven't been recorded regularly this winter the earliest often are **Welcome Swallow** or **Fairy** and **Tree Martins** and **Bronze-Cuckoos**. Towards the end of August listen for the first **Pallid Cuckoos** or **Noisy Friarbirds** calling. Other species which usually have arrived by then are **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, very few of which seem to have stayed over, in contrast to other species. These are most likely to return as they breed in the mountains. However, I expect that a number of species usually associated with the west of the ACT which have visited in numbers over the past dry summers may not be as abundant this year due to the improved conditions inland.

As always keep an eye out for the early nesters and/or arriving spring and departing altitudinal migrants in your local area, and please make sure all your sightings are provided to the Records Management Team and can be considered for the 2010-2011 *Annual Bird Report*. — **Jack Holland**

AUGUST MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.08.10

For the first presentation Barbara Allan will give an "Introduction to COG's 2010 bird blitz, and selected findings from the previous five blitzes".

Next Sandra Henderson will give a short talk on her "personal experience on one of the two pelagic day trips COG ran from Eden over a weekend in late July."

The main speaker will be Karen Stagoll, a Ph D student in the Fenner School of Environment and Society on "Conservation planning and management of habitat for a diverse bird community in future urban areas".

Globally, the number of people living in urban areas is growing, and the associated increase in land conversion represents a major form of landscape change. A significant challenge for conservationists and urban planners is to predict and prepare for the effects of this urbanisation on birds. By understanding what vegetation and land use features influence the presence of birds in urban areas, we can better incorporate bird conservation into urban design early in the planning process. This talk will explore patterns of landscape use by birds in urban Canberra and the Molonglo Valley (the next area of major suburban development in the ACT), and present some initial findings about how we can minimise the impacts of urbanisation.

Field Trip reports

Sunday 18 July — Canberra's Winter Birds — day bus trip

The purpose of this repeat trip was for participants to observe and learn more about bird activity in winter in Canberra, including those that come down from the mountains to stay here, and those that decide not to join their peers in warmer climes at the coast or further north. Perhaps due to Geoffrey Dabb's survey showing that so many more birds seemed to be staying over this winter, Jenny and I left our reconnaissance until a couple of days before. It was therefore a surprise that several spots we checked were largely devoid of birds, which left us with a bit of a dilemma and forced us to check Mulligan's Flat where the woodland survey several weeks before had discovered a mixed feeding flock (MMF) close to the main sanctuary gate.

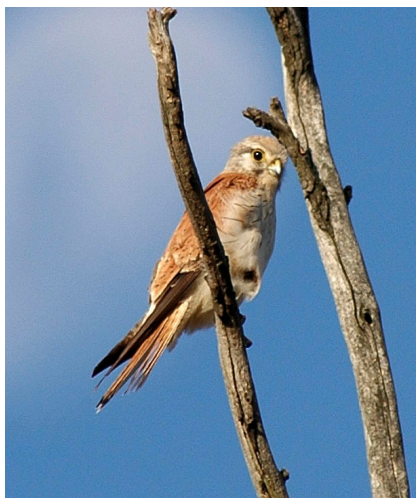
As we had picked up five of our target species quickly by mid afternoon, this was chosen as our first port of call next morning (luckily as north of the lake was clear and sunny, but to the south the fog was very thick), and we were almost immediately rewarded by a calling female **Rufous Whistler**, on our list but not really expected, as soon as we came through the main gate. However, our luck soon ran out, and we spent over an hour trying to locate a MMF and to see a very elusive **White-eared Honeyeater** (possibly several), without getting more than a fleeting glimpse. Eventually we

did find a female **Golden Whistler** and heard a **Mistletoebird**. A **Brown-headed Honeyeater** was calling as we stopped for morning tea near the newly erected shearing shed.

Earlier we had seen a pair of **Australian Wood Duck** calling from near a hollow in a tree, as well as had great views of a pair of **Striated Pardalotes** inspecting a couple of hollows in a dead branch. However, apart from some feeding flocks of (mainly) **Buff-rumped** and on one occasion **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Weebills**, the Reserve was very quiet indeed, until the stragglers on the way back to the buses followed up more **Brown-headed Honeyeater** calls and managed to find one amongst a very quiet feeding flock that included a male **Golden Whistler**, a **Grey Fantail** and a male **Scarlet Robin**, as well as four **Varied Sittellas**, not a target bird, but always a welcome sight.

Our next stop was in the Australian National Botanic Gardens where we did pick up a number of **Grey Fantails**, two **Silvereyes**, one of which had the buff flanks of the Tasmanian form, and several **White-naped Honeyeaters**, a surprise as very few seem to have stayed over this year. A **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** was also heard. Two had been seen/heard the day before, but the female **Crescent Honeyeater** which had been seen (and several males just a few weeks back), could not be located. Therefore, after lunch we drove to my garden in Chapman, where a male has been present and very vocal for the past seven weeks. We soon heard its very loud call in my neighbour's back yard and after about 10 frustrating minutes trying to call him up from a bush, he finally flew up to a very exposed perch where all participants were able to admire him for less than a minute before he flew off.

The decision to go here rather than elsewhere was further rewarded when I managed to find the male **Scarlet Robin** in the spot in my GBS site where he'd been for the past week. After all had admired him, Jarkko, our Finnish visitor, located up to eight **Dusky Woodswallows** circling (one assumes for insects) very high up, possibly 500 metres, very unexpected behaviour for this species in winter (one wonders what would be up there). We then moved about a kilometre to the start of the equestrian trail at the end of Kathner St at the NW edge of Cooleman Ridge, hopefully to find **Flame Robins**. While I couldn't find them the day before, our luck held as almost immediately we located up to four brightly coloured males, with an equal number of females. We also finally had a good look at a **White-eared Honeyeater** on a high but distant perch, with a **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike** in a similar position nearby.



Nankeen (Australian) Kestrel
(*Falco cenchroides*)

Photo by Stuart Harris

This was the first for the day of this species which has stayed over in surprisingly large numbers this winter, but as we gathered together before bussing back to the cars we were surrounded by up to six of them, a number of them landing in vantage perches in the adjacent gardens. Earlier we had seen a couple of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circling lazily over the ridge, and two **Nankeen Kestrels** hunting over the horse paddocks,

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(Continued from page 3)

and again distant but clear views of over 10 **Diamond Firetails** perched/moving through a dead tree, the most I've seen together on the ridge this autumn/winter.

As we neared the National Library for participants to pick up their cars, we saw several large groups of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** feeding on the grass, a very common sight in Canberra winters.

This was another successful and full bus trip thoroughly enjoyed by all participants who learnt more about the winter bird scene in Canberra. My thanks again to Jenny Bounds for helping to plan the itinerary, as well as driving the second bus. — **Jack Holland**

21 July 2010 — Wednesday walk

25 members and guests assembled at the entrance to McQuoids Hill at 9:30. The place originally looked a tad crowded as a somewhat greater number of Walkers for Pleasure were also using the venue! However, after a good car-park list had been assembled, we moved over to a small dam letting the other party head off. The main challenge was to confirm that all the *hirundines* were in fact **Welcome Swallows**, which turned out to be the case.



Welcome Swallow
(*Hirundo neoxena*)

Photo by David Cook

On moving on to the hill we decided that an anticlockwise loop was in order. The first bird of particular interest was a **Yellow Thornbill**, closely followed by an immature **Grey Butcherbird**. We then approached an area where a member of the group had seen a large number of **finches** just below the track we were following. Almost immediately a lot of bird activity was seen in and around trees just above the track. One could speculate about altitudinal migration or just enjoy the birds as we did. Within an area approximately 50m square we observed **Scarlet Robin** (m and f), **Diamond Firetail**, **Double-barred Finch**, **Speckled Warbler**, and **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**. Occupying the trees above were **Golden Whistler**, **Fuscous Honeyeater** and **Varied Sittella**. All told 36 species were recorded. Thanks to Sandra for a very good day. — **Martin Butterfield**

Weekend 24-25 July - Eden Pelagic Trip Report

Twenty-two members travelled down to the South Coast harbour town of Eden for a weekend of pelagic birdwatching. The conditions were ideal with 10-15 knot south-westerly winds and only a very moderate swell both days. We gathered each morning at 6.45am to board 'Connemara', a fast, comfortable, charter fishing boat. The skipper, Richard Buckingham, was a great host, never short of a story and happy to manoeuvre the boat around to give the best view of the birds.

On Saturday morning we left the harbour in the gloomy early morning light and soon left behind the resident **Pacific Gulls** in the harbour as we headed out into the open waters. It wasn't long before the first Short-beaked Common Dolphins were sighted beside the boat and within 15 minutes the first shout of "albatross" went out. It was an **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**, the smallest and lightest of the mollymawks. This species has declined rapidly in the last seventy years due to losses to the longline fisheries and introduced diseases to the breeding islands. We were lucky to see a number of this undeniably smart albatross, mostly inshore, but a few were also seen at the shelf edge.

Soon the first of many **Shy Albatross** cut across our wake. This was to be, by far, the commonest bird of the weekend and was rarely out of view - not really surprising as we were not far, as the albatross flies, from their breeding islands off Tasmania, where some 12,000 pairs breed on Albatross Island, Pedra Branca and Mewstone. The rarity of the day turned up next as an immature **Salvin's Albatross** made a brief pass of the boat.

Another flurry of excitement as sharp eyes on the lower deck picked up a **Common Diving-Petrel** flushed from the water's surface as the boat bore down on it. When disturbed like this, Common Diving-Petrel usually only fly a short distance on rapid stiff wing-beats before hitting the water with a splash and diving beneath the waves. Luckily this bird soon reappeared beside the boat, flew a very short distance and landed again giving everyone on board good but brief views of this tiny petrel. A second bird was also seen briefly whilst still in the colder (14.3°C) inshore waters.

The journey to the shelf edge took just over two hours, where water temperatures had risen to 18°C in the southern reaches of the East Australian Current. These warmer waters certainly had no affect on the concentration of **Shy Alba-**

trosses as we found a large group of 150 birds following a trawler. Two massive **Wandering Albatrosses** and a few **Black-browed Albatrosses** were picked out amongst the abundance of **Shy Albatrosses** but diversity was otherwise low.

We pulled up to drift on the currents and laid out a berley trail of crushed and oily fish remains. However, we couldn't attract any of the **Fairy Prions** that remained annoyingly distant, but quite a few albatrosses, a lone **Cape Petrel** and up to eight **Brown Skuas** visited the back of the boat. Soon it was time to head for home and probably just in time as the winds had picked up and the next hour was a bit choppy until we got back inside the wind shadow of Green Cape.

There was still time for a quick stop a few kilometres offshore where one of the highlights of the weekend was watching a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** stealing a large chunk of fat from two **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**. The day finished with a quick search for **Black-faced Shags** on the pontoons in the Two-Fold Bay.



Fairy Prion
(*Pachyptila turtur*)
Photo by Dan Mantle

Although the forecast for Sunday predicted the winds would pick up later in the day, it turned out to be even calmer than the day before. We encountered much the same birds on the way out as the day before, minus the **Salvin's Albatross** but we did add a few **Little Penguins** to the weekend list. As we neared the shelf edge we again encountered good numbers of **Fairy Prions**, and fortunately this time they played ball and fed just metres from the end of the boat for prolonged periods, allowing the photographers on board to get some great shots of these classic Southern Ocean seabirds.

Again, huge numbers of **Shy Albatross** were present along the shelf and the sight of hundreds of these mollymawks and diving **Australasian Gannets** feeding on bait fish driven to the surface by packs of Australian Fur-Seals and Common Dolphins will remain a treasured memory. A **Buller's Albatross** was seen only briefly before disappearing amongst the action. Fortunately it returned to the boat, an hour or so later, as we threw out another berley trail, but again it didn't stay for long – just long enough to circle the boat and for those inside the cabin to scamper out and sight this most stunning of albatrosses.

This time the trip back into harbour was interrupted by a brief appearance of a Humpback Whale surfacing just 30 metres from the boat. We quickly stopped the boat but the whale was gone, quietly returned to the deep.

After the success of these two trips there are already mutterings of running spring and autumn trips next year in an effort to see a whole new mix of birds.

— Dan Mantle



Buller's Albatross
(*Diomedea bulleri*)
Photo by Dan Mantle

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 7 August — Lake Ginninderra Beginners' morning (in conjunction with the Australian Science Festival)

This is the second of our bird walks in 2010 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various **ducks**, "**waterhens**" and **cormorants**. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

18 August 2010 (and beyond) — Wednesday Walk

It is planned to make the **August** walk in Molonglo Gorge. Exactly where will depend on what access arrangements can be negotiated, but the key point will be to meet on 18 August in the picnic area carpark, as signposted off Sutton Road. As the days will be quite a bit longer, and the weather should be warmer, we will revert to meeting at 9am!

For **September**, thinking at this stage is to do another 'longer outing'. It would seem a good time of year to revisit the three TSRs off Mountain Creek Road. To make sure Cavan TSR gets a fair shake, we would start there (after car pooling at Stromlo Forest Park and looking for chats) and work our way back, ending at Tinkers Creek TSR. More details closer to the date, 15 September.

Sunday 22 August — Nursery Swamp

On this trip we will visit one of the most delightful spots in Namadgi National Park to ascertain which birds may be found in the high country in late winter, and to obtain winter records for COG's and Birds Australia's Ongoing Atlas Project. We will drive to the Orroral Valley. The first part of the walk is uphill on a good track, then we continue along a valley through Black Salles to Nursery Swamp, a fen at 1,100 metres altitude containing peat that has been dated to 10,000 years BP. The area is of great significance to Indigenous people, containing both rock art and tool-making sites. Meet at the Kambah Village shopping centre car park (cnr Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent) at 08.30am for car-pooling. We will return in the early afternoon, so bring lunch and water, and be prepared for brisk weather conditions. Registration for this trip is essential. For further information, or to register, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at telephone (02) 6238 3706 or email coglists-owner@canberrabirds.org.au.

Friday-Sunday 3-5 September — Little Forest Plateau near Ulladulla

This trip focuses on birdwatching in the heathland of Little Forest Plateau and the rainforest of Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve near Ulladulla. We will stay in a caravan park at Lake Conjola that has cabins and campsites. Participants will need to arrive by Friday night ready for an early start on Saturday. Be aware that the road to Little Forest is gravel and car pooling is encouraged for the drive to the Plateau. We hope to find a variety of heathland birds including **Beautiful Firetails** and **Southern Emu-wrens** as well as various rainforest birds such as **Black-faced Monarch** and **Green Cat-bird**. The walk at Little Forest Plateau will be easy to moderate. The walk into Yatte Yattah will require a moderate level of fitness as the descent into the gully can be tricky, but if you are unsure please give us a call to discuss. Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the day.

Friday-Sunday 17-19 September — Monga National Park

(4wd vehicles, 4WD campers and tents only)



Rose Robin
(*Petroica rosea*)

Photo by Julian Robinson

This delightful section on the lower edge of Monga NP is situated at the base of the famous Corn Trail. Instead of having to walk to this spot we'll be driving in. The final very small section of this track is marked as 4WD only. It's not a difficult descent, but it does require crossing the small rocky (generally shallow) Buckenbowra River at the bottom before arriving at the pretty campsite. The restricted sized campsite requires us to limit the numbers of 4WDs. One of the delights of this place is the early morning bird chorus. You'll also have **Rose Robins** hopping around in the Casuarinas above your tent. Last year we camped here and had the most splendid display of Rock Orchids, which is one of the reasons that

we've timed it at this time of year. We'll do some easy walks, exploring the Buckenbowra River, nearby forests and *maybe* start up the Corn Trail and see how far we get.

More information when you book with leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer - ph: 6161 3450 email: mcjannett9@hotmail.com.

Friday-Monday 1-4 October — Croajingalong National Park, Victoria



We'll be camping at the gorgeous Thurra River campground, situated south of Cann River.

Amongst the many highlights of this trip will be a walk to the nearby Point Hicks Lighthouse. The campground and surrounds offer a variety of habitats and scenery, including the picturesque Thurra River running out to sea, the clean shell-littered beach, and forest featuring large old Banksias hovering over pretty campsites. Nearby heath might offer us a glimpse or two (!) of **Ground Parrot**. A drive through the National Park will find us amongst some very pretty and floristic sites away from camp. This camp can be for three or four days depending on when you arrive. If you're interested in birds, beaches, lighthouses, flowers, scenery, then this is a **MUST!** More information when you book with leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer - ph: 6161 3450 email: mcjannett9@hotmail.com

Saturday-Sunday 23-24 October — Goulburn area — overnight campout/ accommodated [note the change from the earlier advertised date of 9-10 October]

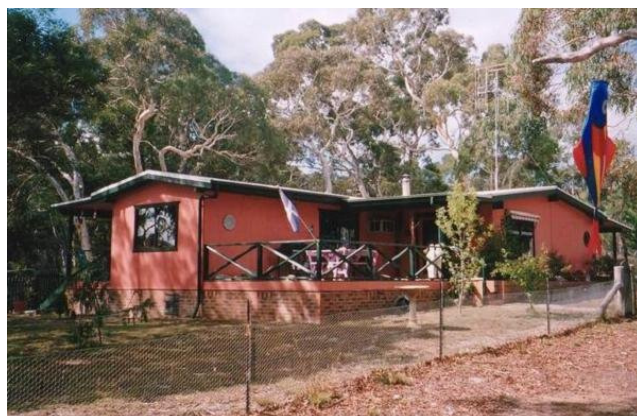
This trip will be the joint outing for 2010 as part of our continuing links with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS). We will be travelling to Goulburn early Saturday afternoon, returning mid Sunday afternoon, looking at, *inter alia*, their new bird hide at Arthurs Lee on the Wollondilly River. Further details next month, but in the meantime please note this change in your diaries.

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Woodland Winter Surveys

Hall/Gold Creek

Alison Rowell reported the survey was undertaken on a cold frosty morning. Bird activity was generally low, with the highlights including **Wood Ducks** loudly claiming hollows across the site, a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and an **Eastern Spinebill**. **Western Geryones** were heard calling across two sites, and a **Diamond Firetail** near another.

Mulligan's Flat NR — Sunday 27 June

Jenny Bounds reported that the team did the survey in sparkling fine and sunny conditions after an overnight frost. After initial problems with vehicle access due to the construction in Forde, 43 species were recorded, a good tally for winter. Highlights were: **Scarlet Robins** at five sites, **Jacky Winters** near the first dam and on the eastern side near site 24, three **Varied Sittellas**, three **Speckled Warblers**, several **White-eared Honeyeaters** (altitudinal migrant) and many sightings of **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**. Spring/summer migrants, a **Western Gerygone** and a **Rufous Whistler**, were recorded. A group of three of the introduced **Brown Treecreepers** were recorded near the quartz ridge, around the same area as last survey.

Goorooyarroo NR North — Sunday 27 June

Nicki Taws reported the woodland bird survey of Gooroo (north) was carried out on a fine and frosty Sunday morning. As is typical of the winter surveys, most sites were quiet with just a few of the larger birds - **magpies**, **rosellas**, **Noisy Miners** and lots of **Australian Ravens**. Usually the small birds are found in one or two big feeding flocks and this time there was a flock with three **Brown Treecreepers**, each identifiable by their different coloured leg jewellery and one still sporting the antenna, a pair of **Hooded Robins**, a pair of **Red-capped Robins** and two **Diamond Firetails**, a species not recorded in these surveys for nearly 10 years. For a while all four of these species were in or under the one tree. Two interesting 'winterbirds' were **Rufous Whistler** and **White-throated Gerygone**. The rest of the flock included the usual **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **Grey Fantail**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Willie Wagtail** and **White-throated Treecreeper**. Elsewhere in the reserve was another pair of **Red-capped Robin**, several **Mistletoebird** and a couple of **Western Gerygone**. No **Scarlet Robins** were seen.

Goorooyarroo NR South — Saturday 19 June

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the survey in windy but pleasant enough weather. Most sites were pretty quiet, with just 31 species recorded overall. Most interesting were a male **Mistletoebird** at Site 3, **Grey Currawong** near Site 7 and **Speckled Warblers** at two sites. There was no sign of the big **Chough** flock seen in the area the previous Friday. Site 8, in a relatively sheltered gully, was the liveliest with **Golden Whistler** (1), **Scarlet Robin** (pair), **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **Weebills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **Speckled Warblers** (2).

Jerrabomberra NR — Tuesday 29 June

Jenny Bounds and Sandra Henderson did the survey on another cold and frosty morning. As they drove through the grasslands area, five **Flame Robins** (one coloured male and four brown birds), flushed ahead. Most of the woodland sites were relatively quiet with no feeding flocks moving through, and not the usual good numbers of **Buff-rumped Thornbills** around. 30 species were recorded and the big highlight was an **Olive-backed Oriole** at site 7. Other species of interest were a group of **Southern Whiteface** and a **Brown Goshawk** being hassled by the **Noisy Miners**. **Pardalotes** of both kinds were recorded at most sites as well as a **White-eared Honeyeater** at site 6.

Callum Brae NR — Thursday 1 July

Jenny Bounds and Sandra Henderson did the survey on another cold, intermittently misty/foggy morning, but with quite pleasant conditions once the early chill had dissipated. 39 species were recorded, but most of these were seen walking between sites. The open hilly area abutting the quarry fence on the NE/east side of the reserve had the most interesting birds with 10 **Flame Robins** and four **Diamond Firetails** as well as **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and other small birds. **Flame Robins** were also recorded in the adjacent leasehold, where **Speckled War-**

bler was also recorded. Other highlights were a **Hoary-headed Grebe** on one of the dams, **Western Gerygone** and **Rufous Whistler**, several **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Southern Whiteface**, and a **Long-billed Corella** in amongst the many **Little Corellas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. Sandra counted 100 **SC Cockatoos** while waiting at the gate. Interestingly no **Choughs** were recorded. The ground layer in places is showing signs of recovery with recent rain; the microleana grass in some areas of woodland was looking abundant, in places where there has not been much grass growth in past years.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie surveyed their sites over the last two weekends of June, with 33 species observed in total. Highlights included very unusual **Scarlet Robins** (2), one male and an immature male; **Red-rumped Parrots** (40); **Speckled Warblers** (5) at two sites; and **Kookaburras** (2) at a site where they are not normally recorded. A nice mixed feeding flock in the outer 100 metres at site five included **Grey Currawong**, **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Weebill**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Grey Fantail** and **Brown Thornbill**.

Newline — Sunday 20 July

Sue Lashko did the survey and reported that, unfortunately, **Common Starlings** continue to dominate, particularly in the front paddock. However, there were plenty of other birds about, including **Dusky Woodswallow**, two **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** and a single **Brown Treecreeper**. The piles of dead *Pyrocanthus* and briar rose continue to provide safe havens for **Superb Fairy-wrens** (and almost every party contained a blue male), **Double-barred Finch**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Southern Whiteface**. There were large numbers of **Striated Pardalotes** everywhere, with just an occasional **Spotted Pardalote**. One site, where there were no bullying **Noisy Miner** or **White-plumed Honeyeater**, contained 11 **Fuscous Honeyeater**. **Australian Wood Duck** were quite vocal from their tree perches. For the first time in many years, all the dams were full, but the only bird occupants were **Wood Duck**. In total, 42 species were recorded for the morning.

Red Hill NR — Sunday 27 June

Harvey Perkins with Stuart Harris did the survey in crisp but perfect winter conditions. Some sites were very quiet but others made up for them, resulting in a fairly typical winter tally of 29 species. Of particular interest were three **Scarlet Robins** (two adult and one immature male), several **White-eared Honeyeaters**, a somewhat dispersed migrating flock of 47 **Red Wattlebirds** over a couple of minutes at site one, a vocal **Noisy Friarbird** at the edge of Deakin, and three **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**. Three **Speckled Warblers** were also seen; **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **pardalotes**, and a few **Grey Fantails** bulked up the numbers of small birds. Rather intriguingly, of the two species of **pardalote**, only **Spotted** were in the northern sites while only **Striated** were at the southern sites. The various parrots were, as always, well represented, with **Gang-gangs** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** both seen inspecting hollows.

Tuggeranong Hill — Sunday 27 June

Lia Battisson reported on the survey on a crisp, clear, breezy morning southside. 18 species in all were observed. The highlight of the surveys was a female **Scarlet Robin**. Her mate missed out by a couple of minutes! Other highlights were two **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, two **Mistletoebirds** and a pair of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** feeding young. The noticeable absence was **Common Mynas** and **Common Starlings** at Site two, usually seen on surveys, and the paucity of **Pied Currawongs** was surprising. **White-eared Honeyeaters** were seen in several places.

Rural leasehold near Tharwa — Sunday 27 June

David McDonald reported on the survey in cold conditions with some breeze, damp underfoot, and sheep on three of the sites. More birds than expected for the winter survey were recorded, including **Diamond Firetails** at two sites, two **Brown Treecreepers** at a spot where they were common at the beginning of the survey but rarely seen now, **Speckled Warblers** at three sites and one **Western Gerygone**. An **Australian Raven** was working on a well-advanced nest. There were many **pardalotes** calling, plenty of **White-eared Honeyeaters** and some **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, and it was pleasing to observe some **Red-rumped Parrots**, albeit in low abundance. There were also a couple of **Mistletoe-birds**, with most mistletoes laden with fruit. **Australian Wood Ducks** were noisy on the tree branches.

Garden Bird Survey Notes

There have been a few recent Chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant:

- records of breeding from a number of sites — species include **Crested Pigeon**, **Spotted Pardalote**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbil**, and **Australian Magpie**;
- **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** in Hoskinstown; and
- various contributions to the *Winterbird* project including **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**.

Rainbow Suburbs

There have been a number of comments on the chatline about the recent appearance of **Rainbow Lorikeets** in Lyons, Chapman and Kambah. In the case of Chapman this appears, from examining GBS reports, to be the first appearance after an absence since 1999, while for Kambah (relatively well served by GBS observers), after a spate of observations in 1987–89, there have been just a few isolated observations in the past decade. No Rainbow Lorikeets have previously been reported from GBS sites in Lyons.

To place these observations in some sort of context I assessed the number of suburbs from which Rainbow Lorikeets were reported, in three groups of years:

- for Years 1–10: 16 suburbs reported the target species (23% of suburbs for which at least one GBS Chart was submitted). Seven of those suburbs had reports of the species only in this period.
- for Years 11–20: 14 suburbs reported the target species (24% of suburbs for which at least one GBS Chart was submitted). Four of those suburbs had reports of the species only in this period.
- for Years > 20: 24 suburbs reported the target species (32% of suburbs for which at least one GBS Chart was submitted). 10 of those suburbs had reports of the species only in this period.



Rainbow Lorikeet
(*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

Photo by Harvey Perkins

This appears to show that the species has spread considerably in the last eight years. Only five suburbs have reported Rainbow Lorikeets in each of the periods. Four of these in the South Belconnen (Aranda, Weetangera, Cook and Macquarie) and the fifth (Ainslie), only have one or two reports for the last two periods. Page and Scullin (also in South Belconnen) have the greatest number of reports after Year 20, 102 and 31 respectively, but in each case only a single report before year 20. There have been very few GBS Charts submitted for Hawker.

Uses of GBS data

Data from the GBS has been provided to a member for consideration in the proposed census of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** in central Canberra.

Charts

A good number of members have taken up charts for Year 30. More will be available for distribution at the August meeting and/or (if people need one but can't make it to the meeting) they could be picked up from Barbara Allan and Kay Hahne (northside) and Anne Hall (southside). A good number of Charts have also been returned and **it would be greatly appreciated if people could bring their completed charts to the August meeting.**

— Martin Butterfield.

From the President

The end of the financial year stock-take has indicated that we are unable to locate two GPS units belonging to COG. One is a Magellin unit, the other a Garmin. It appears that last time the units were out on loan was during the White-fronted Chat survey at Molonglo Forest Park. If anyone has this equipment or can throw light on their whereabouts please contact Chris Davey at chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Over the last month there have been a few changes to the management of various COG activities:

- After nine issues of Canberra Bird Notes, Anthony Overs has, due to work pressures, had to stand down as Editor. I am glad to say that Beth Mantle has put her hand up to take over this position. Beth will be responsible from the December issue onwards. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anthony for the considerable amount of work that he has put into the production of Canberra Bird Notes since Volume 32, Number 3.
- To allow Beth to take on the role of CBN Editor she has stepped down from the role of Sales Desk Manager. I would like to thank her and Dan for the energy and commitment they have given to this position. Roy Harvey, having returned from 12 months overseas, will now return to the position held prior to his departure.
- Since February 2006, Judy Collett has been responsible for the distribution of our monthly newsletter Gang-gang and of our journal Canberra Bird Notes. Judy has decided to stand down and I would like to thank her and her team of helpers for their efforts and the magnificent job that they have done to ensure we receive the COG publications on time each month. I would like to welcome Brian Fair into the position. Brian will take over responsibility for the August distribution and will be in contact with the present helpers to see if they are prepared to continue.
- Belatedly I would like to welcome Dan Mantle to the position of Outings Officer. Due to pressures of work and family commitments Matthew Frawley unfortunately had to resign from this position in March and since then Dan has stepped in and taken on the position with great enthusiasm.

Many thanks to all.

— Chris Davey

News from the committee

- A response to the Tidbinbilla Draft Plan of Management has been prepared by Jenny Bounds. It focuses on core natural values, and calls for more clarification on issues such as tourism, on-site accommodation, large-scale events and the role of commercial interests.
- A specification for re-design of the COG website has been developed and quotes are being sought from several companies.
- A donation of \$200 will be made to the Science Fair run by the Science Educators' Association of the ACT.

— Sandra Henderson (Secretary)

(Whimsy—Continued from page 13)

Part of the essence of birding is of course the uncertainty, and my life has continued quite happily without a **Mount Kupé Bush Shrike** ever being part of it. I have no yen to return to the Bakassi Mountains, but I certainly don't regret having been there. If the sole point had been finding the bird then, as it turned out, there would have been no point. But the older I get, the more I am sure that the most important thing, in birding as in life, is looking *for*; looking *at* is just a bonus, never to be presumed.

— Ian Fraser (ianf@pcug.org.au)

COG SALES



Birds of
Canberra
Gardens
Second Edition



Birds of Canberra Gardens (\$20.00 for book only or \$25.00 with ***Bird Calls of the ACT*** CD included - members prices only)

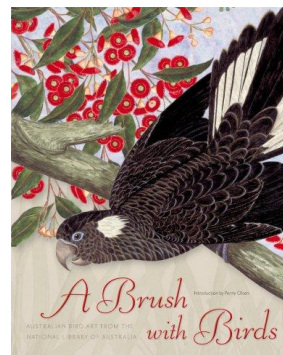
Nearly 230 bird species have been recorded in and around Canberra suburban gardens over the past 27 years in the COG Garden Bird Survey. The life and times of most of these birds are described in this book, illustrated with brilliant photographs and abundance graphs. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* describes the abundance and distribution of birds and discusses how and where to find them throughout the year. It also provides some ideas on how your garden may be made more attractive to native birds. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* is an excellent introduction to the birds of Canberra.

It demonstrates graphically the delights of nature that are available to us here in Canberra, as long as we open our eyes and ears.

Boom & Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country Edited by Libby Robin, Robert Heinsohn and Leo Joseph - \$27.00 for members.

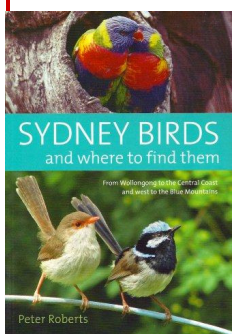
A Brush With Birds with Introduction by Penny Olsen (\$23.00 for members).

The paintings of Australian birds in *A Brush with Birds* are by artists whose work is represented in the National Library of Australia. They span the years from first settlement to the 1970s, telling us about the times as well as the birds, and showing how the style of bird art has evolved. This book is lavishly illustrated with vibrant and luscious art and it includes the stories of the artists behind the paintings. Enter the colourful world of birds such as the King Parrot, the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, the Satin Bower Bird and the Red Goshawk, and be inspired by their beauty.



Owls: Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia by David Hollands (\$55.00 for members)

The Owls of Australia: A Field Guide to Australian Night Birds by Stephen Debus, illustrated by Jeff Davies, photographs by David Hollands (\$20.00 for members)



Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them by Peter Roberts (25.00 for members)

Covering the Sydney Region from Wollongong to the Central Coast and West to the Blue Mountains, *Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them* features the 30 top bird-watching localities in and around Sydney. These birding hot spots stretch from Tuggerah Lakes on the Central Coast to Lake Illawarra near Wollongong and from the Blue Mountains in the west to some surprisingly accessible sites tucked away in the heart of the city. Each locality entry lists the key species to look out for, including rare and seasonal visitors. It describes how to access the location, both by public transport and road, and what amenities to expect; maps are featured wherever necessary. The main section gives precise details about where to look for certain birds. There is also a handy list of Sydney birds, each entry providing information on the best spots to find it, its rarity, and helpful tips about its habits and haunts, such as where it roosts or nests. This invaluable guide will take you to some beautiful places, many of which you may never otherwise discover.

Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series (\$27.00 each for members):

Kookaburra
Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns
Mound-builders

Australian Magpie
Cockatoos
Tawny Frogmouth

Wedge-tailed Eagle
Albatross
Australian Bustard
(coming soon)

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

Avian Whimsy #84

Birding Bakossi — What's the point?

Sometimes birding can be a pleasant stroll in the woodlands followed by a cuppa in a Jerrabomberra hide; on other occasions it can be a right Bakossi of a day.

The village of Nyasoso in mountainous western Cameroon is reached via a ferocious drive from Tombel (home of the modest little office of the National Association of Snail Farmers of Cameroon) over pot-holes with bits of road attached. We stayed at the Nyasoso Women's Collective rooms; mine was a basic concrete cell with a metal single bed, but it did surprisingly have an ensuite (cold) shower and toilet. Unfortunately the shower drain hole blocked up and after a shower my bed stood ankle deep in a large pool of water, which had nowhere else to go. Remarkably, my bag happened to be on the high part of the floor!

Our target was one of the rarest and most threatened birds in the world, the **Mount Kupé Bush Shrike** (*Chlorophoneus*, or *Telophorus*, *kupeensis*), with a population of perhaps only 50 pairs, believed until recently to be restricted to the Bakossi Mountains, though there appear now also to be some in neighbouring south-eastern Nigeria.

We began with a 3.45am breakfast consisting of dry cereal on a flat plate, white bread and tea. At 4am, 10 of us piled into a short wheel base Toyota; four of us were in the 'back back', two each along the sides on facing 20cm wide metal benches, vaguely padded with a strip of rotten foam. Our knees were jammed against those of the person sitting opposite. It was a long 90 minutes to the village at the end of the road, on a very rudimentary steep bush track.

In the pre-dawn we were greeted individually by Chief Abwé, a slight old man in a wooden shack slightly larger than those of his neighbours; it was too dark to see the nature of the photos on the newspaper clippings on the walls.

We had barely set out when, at a creek crossing where three women already washing clothes accepted our intrusion very graciously, we had an unpleasant interruption. A small group of agitated and angry young men overtook us and blocked our way. Their leader, apparently badly affected by alcohol or drugs, was bizarrely still using a pink tooth-brush, which somehow increased the sense of menace. A crowd materialised, with most concurring with the chap who told the angry ones 'If you are wise, my friends, you will leave'. Unfortunately they weren't and didn't. In the end it was all very tawdry, and came down to more money, which they felt the chief was not distributing properly; clearly the tradition of respect for the chief was eroding. They didn't want it for the benefit of the village though – they were quite open that it was for cheap whisky, and the extra 40,000 Central African Francs (about A\$100) they eventually received would have bought them a lot of it. It would also have paid for a lot of food or school books.

It is always stimulating to be in primary rainforest, but when you are focussed on a particular target the birds can seem very sparse – I saw 14 species all day. A steep climb was the precursor to a hideous descent on a scarcely present track, evil-slippery with mud and leaves. Without trackside saplings it would have been very dangerous indeed. We spent an hour listening and intermittently tape-playing up on the next plateau, but nothing. Down the other side, where someone thought they heard it along the valley so we hauled back up again and repeated the exercise, for the same result. Leaving even the rudimentary track, we then descended into the valley and battled up the other side – and then back again. My notes simply say 'this was *bad*'. I've done my share of bush-bashing, and was at about the median age of the group, but I recorded that 'I felt I was at my limits'. In the last hour of the final descent, on already perilously greasy slopes, the rain exacerbated the conditions.

We never did see the bird, not that day, nor the next, despite a brutal ascent (and descent!) of nearby Mount Kupé, which looms over Nyasoso. By then I was too sore to care much. My state may be judged by my reaction to a somewhat surreal encounter on my way down Mount Kupé, in late afternoon with thunder building. Most of the group had gone down earlier; I'd stayed with the hard core, but when during the eventual and reluctant descent they yet again turned back up-slope in response to a note that may have emanated from a bush-shrike I called it a day and continued down. The group leader wanted to make sure I was OK and sent Albert, our local guide, down after me. I discovered this only when I suddenly became aware of a figure bounding down the track towards me, brandishing a machete and yelling "I am coming for you!" My reaction, recorded that night, was just "this will be interesting".

(Continued on page 11)



WONGA

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South Coast of N.S.W.

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COG welcomes the following new members:

A Hayes, Chapman

P Handyside, Captains Flat

G Bray, Belconnen

NEXT NEWSLETTER

September deadline

Wednesday 25 August 2010

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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Newsletter distribution
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

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 with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

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Gang-gang

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