

# Gang-gang

December 2006

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## COG CHRISTMAS PARTY

6-8 pm Wednesday  
13 December 2006  
Black Mountain Peninsula  
See page 4

## January Meeting Wednesday 10.1.07

*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.*

**NOTE:** The meeting will begin at **7:00 pm** with a demonstration of COG's new electronic data input program, along with the opportunity to give it a try and to ask questions.

The "regular" meeting will begin as usual at **8:00 pm** and will be a "members' night" with short presentations from COG members, plus the now-obligatory **Geoffrey Dabb** video spectacular.

If you would like to make a presentation ring Barbara Allan now on 6254 6520.

**Be sure you don't miss it!**

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

## What to watch for this month

By the beginning of December the pattern for birds for the spring/summer has been well and truly set, particularly for the migrants. This has been another year where the presence or absence of species has clearly been affected by the drought, and again it's an especially good one for seeing the **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Songlark** and **Superb Parrot**, with a number of reports of the last-named in areas where they haven't been sighted so early previously, including some breeding records. Over the past ten days we've had the first reports of the **Common Koel**, so keep an ear out for this bird (hopefully not too early in the morning) or an eye on any ripening fruit trees in your local area.



**Superb Parrot ( *Polytelis swainsonii* ) at Holt Oval, 10/11/2006**

**Photo by Stephen Martin**

As is shown by the report on the Nest Workshop at Campbell Park elsewhere in this newsletter, the drought has clearly affected the level of breeding this season, though many species are still trying to reproduce regardless, with reasonable success. One area that has been a particularly successful breeding spot this year has been around the Namadgi Visitors Centre, with Matthew Frawley noting that on the weekend of 18-19 November there were about 50-60

**White-browed Woodswallows** present and breeding in the large eucalypts in front of the Centre. A small number of **Masked Woodswallows** were seen among them. Both species are here this year due to drought conditions inland. He also noted **Dusky Woodswallow** with dependent young, a **Willie Wagtail** on a nest and a **Restless Flycatcher** both with a nest with young and another pair nest building. These were in front of the building, while behind it there was a **White-winged Triller** on a nest and a **Varied Sitella** nest with young. This is a quite remarkable breeding event, rivalling if not exceeding that expected at Campbell Park, even in a good year. If you're quick you might still be able to see some of the action.

November/December is always the quietest time in my GBS site, mainly due to the birds leaving my garden to breed elsewhere. However, after Christmas/New Year many start to return and look out for species such as the **Dollarbird** which characteristically breeds away from the built up areas but moves into the suburbs after, with in particular juvenile birds (much less brightly coloured including the bills) staying around till early March. However, by mid January for some species such as the **White-winged Triller** and the **Rufous Songlark** their brief period here will nearly be over. Records for these species after the end of January are usually very few, so keep an eye out and note when you last see them. Again make sure that valuable records are not lost but are entered into the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb



**White-browed Woodswallow**  
( *Artamus superciliosus* )

## Field Trip reports

### Sunday 22 October — Googong

Twelve people participated in the field trip to Googong on Sunday 22 October. Conditions were pleasant and mild enough to dissuade the resident Cunninghams skinks, usually in residence around the morning tea picnic tables, from putting in an appearance. The field trip site included a spot below the dam wall, as well as an area extending from the Visitors' Centre to a kilometre or two above the dam wall. Fifty six species were recorded from this area. Four of the group continued on for lunch at Tin Hut Dam at the other end of Googong Foreshores. A further four species were recorded here - **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Masked Lapwing**, **Musk Duck** and **Grey Butcherbird** - making a total of sixty species for the trip. The water level in Tin Hut Dam is so low the **Musk Duck** may have to move on soon.

On the day species such as **Rufous Whistler** and **Superb Fairy-wren** were particularly plentiful. No **Hooded Robins** or **White-fronted Chats** were recorded, although a couple of **Diamond Firetails** were seen.

In the mould of archival footage of the Battle of Britain shown recently on TV, we were privileged to observe an aerial "dogfight" between a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and a bird of prey identified as a **Peregrine Falcon**. The **Peregrine** was slightly above and behind the eagle which was moving on as fast as it could. It was not clear whether the falcon was just extremely greedy or it was merely defending itself and its family from attack!

We enjoyed observing over a significant period of time, various avian comings and goings in and out of the numerous tree hollows making up the "apartments" in an old Eucalypt. **Striated Pardalotes** and **Tree Martins** seemed to be cheek by jowl at times, with **Starlings** not far away. The identity of the occupant of the "Penthouse" in the top hollow with the most panoramic views, was difficult to determine through the terminal clump of foliage. This could be studied further on a future visit to Googong, an attractive general birdwatching venue. — **Ian Anderson**

### Sunday 5 November 2006 — Jerrambomberra Grasslands Nature Reserve

Despite the strong SE wind rapidly drying off all the benefits of the rain that had fallen several days earlier, the 14 members and guests that accompanied Jenny Bounds and me for COG's first visit to the grassy woodland in the southern end of this reserve had a thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable morning's bird watching. By slowing down, being patient and letting the birds come to us, all participants had excellent views of some of the smaller birds that often



are hard to find.

These included both the **White-throated** and **Western Gerygone** (the former building a nest), **Southern Whiteface** (which seems quite common in the northern part of this woodland patch), a group of **Striated Pardalotes** displaying, **Speckled Warbler** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**. Some summer migrants were also present, both male (rather silent as this species seems to have been this spring) and female **White-winged Triller**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rufous Whistler**, and **Dusky Woodswallow** (with the “check, check” calls of the **White-browed Woodswallow** also heard overhead on one occasion). Great views were also obtained of pair of **Dollarbirds** examining nest hollows, while earlier a **Nankeen Kestrel** was seen entering a surprisingly small nest hole in a dead tree (yes this species does nest in hollows, though not exclusively).

All in all 47 species were recorded during the morning, including the **Skylark** seen (but much less obliging than some of the other species) on our walk up through the grasslands. This patch of woodland is certainly a very welcome and valuable addition to the ACT reserve system, and a very worthy additional site for COG’s woodland surveys. The extent of fallen timber on the ground and many nest hollows in the mature trees in particular make it excellent habitat. It is accessible to members of the public as described in the *Gang-gang* advert, following the track up the gentle hill. However, care should be taken with parking, and visiting during the morning peak hour is not recommended. —

**Jack Holland**

## Sunday 12 November 2006 — Monga National Park,



Photo by Sandy Berry

**COGites temporarily distracted by a Tiger Snake in Monga NP**

Monga National Park has a well-deserved reputation as a top spot for birding, as well as a range of other outdoor activities, relatively close to Canberra but with a quite different suite of birds from what we get at home. This was certainly the experience of the 22 COGites who participated in this field trip. We observed almost 40 species, including such Monga classics as **Pilotbird**, **Lewin’s Honeyeater**, **Rose Robin**, **Large-billed Scrub-wren** and **Black-faced Monarch**.

Three species were observed breeding, including a **Rose Robin** building a nest. Splashes of red from the magnificent Monga Waratahs were seen along the Mongarlowe River and, as always, the first-time visitors were enthralled by Penance Grove and the tree ferns that are key features of the low-lying parts of the National Park. — **David McDonald**

## 18-19 November 2006 — Bumbalong Valley Campout

Again the relatively modest contingent of COG participants who accompanied me was boosted by a number of locals keen to learn about the birds that live in this secluded and private valley of the Murrumbidgee River south of Canberra. The weather too was again almost perfect during the afternoon when we arrived and set up camp on the edge of the bush that rises steeply into the Clear Range to the west. However, rather than bird around this upstream property as planned we were persuaded to go downstream as far as is possible and survey a lovely reach and bend of the river with some grand old ribbon gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) on the east bank. We were immediately rewarded by seeing several **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**. Thirty species were recorded



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### 2006 Birding Tours

#### Regular Plains-wanderer weekends

December 2 & 3, 9 & 10,  
16 & 17 and 30 & 31

### 2007 Birding Tours

#### Tasmanian Endemic Bird and Mammal Tour

18—24 February  
Bruny Island, Melaleuca, pelagic

#### South West Western Australia

27 February — 7 March

#### Thailand

7—24 April  
co-led with Uthai Treesucon

#### Gulf of Carpentaria

June 2007—Cairns return

#### Strzelecki Track

August 2007

#### Central Coast NSW inc nearby national parks

November 2007  
Barrington, Gloucester & Copeland  
Tops, Munghorn Gap and several  
others parks

**All above tours are accommodated**

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



**Little Lorikeets ( *Glossopsitta pusilla* ) at Mulligans Flat**

Photo by Lindsay Northrop

here in an hour with the dropping sun behind us, including **Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Olive-backed Oriole** and a lone **Dollarbird**, our only sighting of the last two species for the weekend.

Back at camp, and after a very enjoyable shared meal, spotlighting proved unrewarding until we played again the call of an **Australian Owlet-nightjar**, which responded very clearly, very close by and continued to call for a large part of the night. Morning gave the early risers among us the opportunity to survey the birds on the property and the adjacent river that again has a long reach (surprisingly full of water) either side of the access causeway. The total for this 0.5 km area search was a very impressive 57 species, including 4 cuckoo species, **Speckled Warbler, White-throated Gerygone, Leaden Flycatcher** calling loudly behind my tent,

**Eastern Yellow Robin** doing the same, including starting off the dawn chorus, **Collared Sparrowhawk** and **Clamorous Reed-warbler** on the edges of the river. Also seen right next to the causeway were a couple of platypuses, affording some of the closest and best views I've ever had.

After breakfast a number of us were keen to revisit some spots along the Downstream Road which had looked promising on our drive through the evening before. And we certainly weren't disappointed, with again 57 species being logged about 0.5 km either side of the S bend in the road that had proved such a hot spot on our last visit nearly 5 years ago. These included 2 magnificent **Wedge-tailed Eagle** overhead, a group of five **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, both the **Dusky** and **White-browed Woodswallows, Fuscous Honeyeaters**, a number of **Rufous Songlarks** and **White-winged Trillers**, as well as the declining species the **Brown Treecreeper, Southern Whiteface**, a pair of **Hooded Robins** and several **Restless Flycatchers**.

The rest of the party ventured up the steep slope behind the camp into the Clear Range to do some atlas surveys of grid cells K27 and 28, both of which are very hard to access otherwise. Unfortunately the rather poor condition of the track meant that John failed in his quest to reach the ACT portion of these two grid cells, which are among the few he hasn't atlased previously for the ACT. However, some sheets were completed for these rarely visited cells, including the recording of the **Superb Lyrebird**.

A very impressive total of 87 species was recorded in the less than 24 hour visit, even though like the rest of the region the valley was rather dry and not at its best. We certainly shall return, possibly for a two night stopover to allow us to more thoroughly survey all the different habitats. Once again our sincerest thanks to Helen and Jason for letting us stay on their property, and for alerting all the residents of our coming and gaining permission to bird along the private road as well as other areas, to Les and Jocelyn for great birding company, showing us some of the best spots and for the lovely surprise morning tea, and to Helen and Kim for inviting us onto their property in return for pointing out to them some of the birds that live there. I for one was very envious of the "hot spot" that is literally right outside their front gate. — **Jack Holland**

## **Sunday 26 November — Nest Workshop, Campbell Park**

The drought and perhaps the slightly later timing clearly affected the bird activity (particularly when it warmed up after about 10 am) during this annual COG event despite the 27 pairs of eyes and the cooler start compared with the previous days. However, we still recorded 41 different species, 14 of which were observed to be nesting or showing some breeding behaviour.

To me the undoubted highlight was watching four **White-winged Chough** arriving to feed four young in a large mud nest. As they did, the bird that had been brooding hopped off and the chicks, which could be seen with their necks and heads extended limply over the sides (eliciting some concern for their welfare) immediately perked up, craning their heads at the end of their long thin necks skywards as the food was delivered. The witness of an excellent example of co-operative breeding! Unfortunately the family of Tawny Frogmouths which had been photographed occupying a nearby chough's nest (most unusual according to the literature) only three weeks earlier had departed and could not be found.

Given the poor breeding conditions a surprising number of species were still nest building including two nests each by pairs of **Grey Fantails** and **Willie Wagtails**, as well as the **Noisy Friarbird** and **Dusky Woodswallow** still in the very early stages of nest construction. More advanced were **Weebills** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** either sitting or with

eggs in the nest, with the **Rufous Whistler** and the **White-browed Woodswallow** also both seen sitting on typically flimsy nests. The latter has been observed breeding over much of the ACT this season courtesy of the drought. Not such a highlight were the considerable numbers of active **Common Mynah** and **Common Starling** nests, with one tree having at least 3 different hollows into which food was being carried for each species.

A number of the usual species seemed to be absent and while we had good views of **White-throated Gerygone** and the **White-winged Triller**, neither seemed to be nesting. In fact the trillers were relatively silent, as they have generally appear to be this year, with a male seen foraging amongst the gum blossoms, most untriller like, but perhaps taking insects. A family of **Fairy Martins** sitting high on some dead branches in the heat of the day allowing easier than usual examination of the diagnostic rufous heads rounded off the morning nicely. My thanks again to Anthony Overs for both encouraging me to hold it for a fourth successive year and helping me to lead this "workshop", which has now become a permanent fixture on the COG field trips program. — **Jack Holland**

## 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, a Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.

### 13 December 2006 — Wednesday Walk, Botanic Gardens (note earlier time)

Given the very hot and dry conditions elsewhere, the mid week walk for December will be held in the Australian National Botanic Gardens, which is both shady for participants and acts as a refuge for many species. Meet at the Bus Stop at 9 am. Bring a hat and some morning tea.

### Draft 2007 COG Field Trips Program

There has been a very limited response to the draft field trips program for next year published in the November 2006 issue of *Gang-gang* for members' comments and/or offers to organise/lead some trips for which the entries are still vacant. This remains so for the major camp-out on the October long weekend, where both location and leader is still needed. There are also still some gaps for local or mid distance day or overnight trips.

If you have any offers or comments to make please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)). Once the program is finalised (to be published in the February 2007 *Gang-gang*) I will be handing over to Anthony Overs, who will be looking after the program from 2007.

## COG Christmas Party

Wednesday 13 December

6-8 pm

Sausage Sizzle

Black Mountain Peninsula



We expect to use the same barbecue area as last year but as it cannot be guaranteed, just follow the COG signs. Sausages, beer, wine and soft drinks will be supplied.

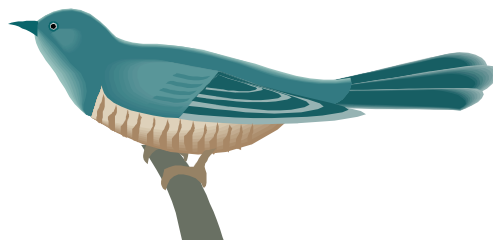
Contributions: \$4 for food and soft drinks; \$6 for food, wine, beer; free for members' children under 12.

Please bring any or all of the following: a picnic table, chairs, plates and glasses, salads or desserts to share, insect repellent and possibly sunscreen.

Lucky ticket prize and prizes for the best bird call – junior and senior divisions.

*Offers of help to assist with food and drink purchasing, setting up etc, to Sue Lashko 6251 4485.*

**Binoculars are compulsory!**  
**You'd be Cuckoo to miss it!**



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### 21 January 2007, Sunday — Brindabellas, Day outing

This will be COG's traditional annual visit to the Blundells Creek/Warks Roads area of the Brindabellas, which as members know was devastated in the 18 January 2003 bush fires. The outing will provide members with an opportunity to see how this area is regenerating from the fire damage and also to see what birds have returned here this summer.

Meet Bruce Lindenmayer at Uriarra Homestead (cnr Cotter and Uriarra Rds) at 8.30 am. Note there are actually TWO intersections of Cotter and Uriarra Roads, the other one being just up the road from Eucumbene Drive, Duffy! Participants will need to take either road and travel the 15 or so km to Uriarra Homestead at the other end.

Following a quick look at the waterbirds on the large dam there, we will car pool, and also do the usual shuffle, leaving some cars at the top of Blundells Creek Rd and some at the bottom so we only need to walk downhill. We expect to see **Flame Robins** and hope that more of the wet forest birds will be back, especially **Wonga Pigeon, Red-browed Treecreeper** and **Cicadabird**. Could those intending to participate please ring Bruce (6288 5957, mobile 0417 418 759) beforehand as due to the sensitivity of the area and potential parking problems it has been agreed to limit numbers.

### 27 January 2007, Saturday — Black Mountain Peninsula/Springbank Island, evening boat trip/picnic

This is a variation of the trip COG has done for the past couple of summers in that it combines a lake cruise with a picnic on Springbank Island where there is a jetty, a two-burner electric BBQ, picnic tables and a toilet. A perfect way to celebrate the Australia Day weekend. So why not join us at 5 pm at the hospital wharf (labelled Acton Peninsula on B7 on Map 59 of the UBD Directory), travel up to Sullivan's Creek, and past the Eastern side of Black Mountain Peninsula to look at nesting darters/cormorants, plus any other birds that might be there, for about an hour. We'll then get dropped off at the jetty on Springbank Island where we'll be picked up again round 8 pm.

Though a glass of champagne will be supplied please take your own food and drinks. Depending on the numbers we will travel either in the electric boat the Cygnet which takes a maximum of 10 passengers, or the new appropriately named Darter which can carry 16 people, which though it has a motor is very quiet at slow speeds. The cost will be \$15.00 per person for either vessel (payable on board). If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)).

### 4 February 2007, Sunday — Jerrabomberra wetlands, morning outing

Come to our local wetlands and help celebrate World Wetlands Day. This outing will appeal to all levels of expertise. We will search for ducks, rails and small birds of the grasslands and discuss their behaviour and habitat. We will also visit the adjacent Fyshwick Sewerage Ponds to look at the birds of deeper water.

The area is very open so please bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty to drink. Meet at the carpark off Dairy Road at 7.30 am. The outing is expected to finish by 11 am. Please book with Tom Green on 6247 0630 or [tomgreen@netspeed.com.au](mailto:tomgreen@netspeed.com.au).

### 9-12 February 2007 — Mallacoota, extended weekend accommodation/camp-out

COG is again venturing to the coast for the now regular, late summer, post-holiday period campout. This time we are going to Mallacoota just across the border in Victoria. It is an easy drive of about 375 km southeast of Canberra via Cooma, Bombala and the Imlay Road. There are a number of accommodation options at that time of the year including, for those members who prefer not to camp, units or a hotel-motel, and for campers there are about 600 sites at the camping area. We plan to visit different habitats such as rainforest, heath and woodland, and a boat trip on the lake could be a possibility. There will be plenty of opportunities to relax and socialise. New members are always welcome.

There has been significant rain there recently, and a trip in mid November found more than a hundred species of birds. One feature of interest was the large number of **Scarlet Honeyeaters** scattered through the forest, especially where the melaleuca was flowering. Hope some will still be there in February! We also saw a number of **Little Terns** from the beach flying about and had close views of several **Glossy Black-cockatoos** in the casuarina forest.

Contact Ian Anderson [iananderson@grapevine.com.au](mailto:iananderson@grapevine.com.au) or on 6281 0609 for information.

### 6-9 April — Willandra Lakes, Easter camp-out/accommodated

COG's Easter campout will be held at Willandra Lakes near Hillston, about 7 hours' drive from Canberra. There are



camping facilities (access is suitable for camper trailers but not caravans) as well as accommodation in a cottage (sleeps 8 in 2 bunk bedrooms) or in the shearer's quarters (sleeps 24 in bunk rooms that open onto an enclosed verandah). As we need to book the accommodation and the group campsite ASAP, if you are interested in attending this usually very popular COG activity could you please e-mail Sue Lashko on [susan.lashko@cgs.act.edu.au](mailto:susan.lashko@cgs.act.edu.au) or phone 6251 4485 or Tom Green on [tomgreen@netspeed.com](mailto:tomgreen@netspeed.com) (Ph 6247 0630) indicating whether you wish to camp or stay in the accommodation. Please do this no later than 13 December (date of COG Christmas party).

### Late November/early December — Lady Elliot Island, extended weekend trip

This proposal has now been confirmed as a formal COG field trip as it is fully subscribed and with a wait list started. Details were published in the November 2006 issue of Gang-gang, but if you are interested in seeking further information or putting your name on the wait list please contact John Cummings (0407 181 002 or 6254 6741 H) or by e-mail on [cummingsj@missionaustralia.com.au](mailto:cummingsj@missionaustralia.com.au), or [thecummings@spiderweb.com.au](mailto:thecummings@spiderweb.com.au).

## Report on November COG Meeting

Tom Green's recent trip to Central Australia yielded both arid zone whitefaces and he shared his excitement and knowledge with us. Like the **Southern Whiteface**, both the **Chestnut-breasted** and the **Banded Whiteface** have a white face with a dark band above blending into a brown head. The differences between the two species are summarised below:

	<b>Chestnut-breasted Whiteface</b>	<b>Banded Whiteface</b>
<b>Appearance</b>	Broad rufous chest band, chestnut back, white edge to wing feathers	Black chest band, chestnut flank feathers
<b>Distribution</b>	South Australia, particularly Lyndhurst and William Creek: one Northern territory record	Arid zones of Central and Western Australia
<b>Habitat</b>	Always on stony rises in very poor country with much bare ground	Variety of habitat; eg burnt spinifex, degraded stony plains but on outwash plains, also samphire and salt lake margins
<b>Status</b>	Uncommon – first collected by Gould in 1871, still only known from <40 sites in 130 years	Widespread

**Young Galah**  
( *Cacatua roseicapilla* )

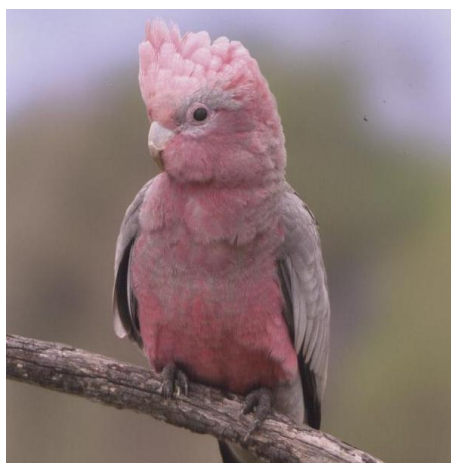


Photo © Helen Fallow

For our main talk, Judith Scarl, a Visiting Fellow at the ANU, entertained us with *Galah Gossip: Vocal Communication in a Common Australian Cockatoo*. Since 2004, Judith has been researching the ways **Galahs** communicate, particularly by mimicry, in the Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie Nature Reserves. To keep track of her study birds, she used patagial (wing) tags, rather than leg bands which are hard to read on the short legs of Galahs. Judith discovered that Galahs develop their own repertoire of calls, each serving a different purpose. These include contact calls, alarm/aggression calls, flight calls, breeding-associated calls, nestling/parental care calls and “generally confusing” calls (eg during erratic flight or when hanging upside down on wires). Using acoustic analysis, she was able to tell individuals apart from their contact calls and determined that some calls were different between the sexes. By playing back the calls she had previously taped, Judith could also determine what feature of the calls Galahs paid attention to. In 40 to 50% of cases, the birds change their call to converge with the playback. At the end of her talk, Judith's obsession with her study species was further revealed when she paraded in her Melbourne Cup Galah hat.

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## News from the committee

- Arrangements are being made for a demonstration of the new online data reporting system at the January meeting. A number of members, including some from the Committee, have already tried the new system with success.
- Ideas are still sought for COG trips for Easter and the October long weekend trips for 2007. If you have a good idea, please contact Anthony Overs or [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).
- The Garden Bird Survey data is being analysed in detail, and the results compared with long term records, to determine trends.
- The Committee hopes to see many members at the Christmas Party (see notice elsewhere in this issue) on December 13 at Black Mountain Peninsula.
- Could all members keep in mind the desirability of car-pooling for field trips. Taking large numbers of cars on trips is to be avoided whenever possible.
- For reasons which are not clear, some members missed out on the November *Gang-Gang/Canberra Bird Notes*. If you are missing either publication please contact the Secretary by mail or email, or email the cogoffice at [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).
- Our previous secretary Barbara Allan, while still carrying on with some COG duties, is no longer on the committee. The present committee would like to express its thanks to Barbara for her hard work in recent years as Secretary of COG.

If you would like any further information on any of these matters, please contact any committee member (contact details on back page).

## Other activities of interest to COG members

### Cowra Woodland Survey

The next Cowra Woodland survey will be held over the weekend of 20-21 January 2007. If you are interested in participating please contact Malcolm Fyfe on 6253 0772 or [mfyfe@tpg.com.au](mailto:mfyfe@tpg.com.au).

### COG Sales Desk

Carol Macleay, who has managed the COG Sales Desk for over the past 6 years, will not be able to undertake the duties regularly after February 2007, and therefore COG is looking for someone willing and able to take over this role.

If you feel that you can help COG in this way, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)), including for the list of duties. Carol will be happy to do a hand over while passing on her stocks of sales items and files, and would also be happy to help out occasionally.

### Members' night 10 January 2007

There remain a few opportunities for members to make short presentations on their favorite topics – an unusual bird observation, a birding holiday destination, identification tips (**Bushlarks**, anyone?), a poem, your highlight of 2006. Please let **Barbara Allan** (phone 6254 6520) know if you would like to participate. We look forward to a few new faces giving it a go!



## 2006 Blitz Update

Datasheets are still drifting in from COG's second bird blitz weekend on 28-29 October 2006. 232 have been received to date, with more "promised" (PLEASE hurry up, you laggards!), from at least 61 participants, plus an uncertain number of unnamed accompanying persons. It was good to see a few new names participating this time, and a huge thank you to all who did, and especially to those who "mopped up" unadopted grid cells over the weekend, to afford a more complete coverage. This time I urged participants to take on named locations, rather than grid cells per se, and a pleasing number of datasheets have been returned from Canberra Nature Parks that have not been much surveyed in the past. So far records have been received for 92 grid cells, including all habitat types. 160 bird species have been recorded, with breeding records for 70 of them, including many of our vulnerable species. Only two species on COG's unusual bird list were recorded this year, **Pied Butcherbird** and **Little Friarbird**, both of which appear to be becoming less "unusual" in the north of our region with every passing year. The weather conditions were kinder this year, at least on the Sunday – our congratulations go to those who braved the snow and icy winds in the ranges on the Saturday! A detailed account of the findings will be published, hopefully in the December issue of CBN. — **Barbara Allan**

## The Robyn Steller Foundation

The Robyn Steller Foundation was established in 2005, shortly after her death, as a tribute to Robyn's love of the environment, her passion for Monga Forest and dedication to its conservation. Robyn edited and self-published *Monga intacta*, the story of community support, political pressure and direct action that protected the Monga Forest from being logged.

Using funds generated by the sale of *Monga intacta*, the Foundation is now calling for applications for grants to support work on native forest conservation in South East NSW (South of Sydney). Three grants are available - one of \$5,000, and two of \$2,000. The Foundation will consider a wide range of projects.

Terms and conditions relating to the grants and application forms are available from Erika Steller at [erika.steller@robter.com](mailto:erika.steller@robter.com), phone 0427 131 701. Applications close on Monday 15 January 2007. Results will be announced in March 2007.



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Note: **Special COG Prices**, with \$10 from every purchase being donated to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

## Indian Myna Update

The latest *Myna Matters Bulletin* is available on the new Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) website

[www.indianmynaaction.org.au](http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au).

As at the end of September some 5300 Indian Mynas had been removed from the Canberra environment.

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Contact Barbara de Bruine

(02) 62583531.

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

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

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

(02) 6286 1564

or e-mail

[greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au](mailto:greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au)

# COG SALES

## BOOKS

- **The Long Paddock: A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW**, NSW Rural Lands Protection Board, \$31.00
- **Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape**, David Lindenmayer et al, \$34.00
- **Feather and Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art**, Penny Olsen, **REDUCED** to \$50.00.
- **Wildlife on Farms**, David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland**, Joe Wieneke, \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT**, Ross Bennett, \$13.00.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island**, Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira, \$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island: A Check list**, \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora: A Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT)**, David Eddy et al., \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book**, Gould League, \$12.50
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT**, Taylor and Day, \$16.00
- **COG Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change**, Steve Wilson, \$25.00

## OTHER ITEMS

- **COG Atlas**, \$12.00
- **COG Car Stickers**, \$2.00
- **COG Poster — Birds of Canberra Gardens**, \$4.00
- **COG Badges — two colour versions**, \$5.00
- **COG Cassette — Bird Songs of Canberra**, \$10.00.
- **COG CD — Birds of the ACT: The Calls and Songs**, Peter Fullagar and Ederic Slater, \$12.00

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

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## Avian Whimsy #48 — ‘Greenie’ go the Thrushes-oh!

I was recently startled to receive an unprovoked and highly vituperative (albeit otherwise incomprehensible) missive. I was taken aback on several levels, but now that the emotional dust has settled, my main source of *flabbergastery* is the use of the term ‘greenie’ as a pejorative. I hadn’t realised that anyone really thought of it as such any more, and how one can be a bird-watcher without also being aware of and concerned for the environment in which the birds and we live is beyond me. However, in this forum that’s really by-the-bye, since in subsequent discussions everyone who contributed also regarded that as self-evident. The original correspondence was not entirely pointless however, in that it has led to a new whimsy topic – birds and green(ies)!

My dad always referred to **White-plumed Honeyeaters** as Greenies, a term from his youth spent roving the vast boxthorn thickets on the north-western fringes of Adelaide. These Greenies are narky and vociferous, qualities that every society needs from some of its members, though not really ‘me’ – I find it less stressful to rely on reason and good humour! It’s a nice familiar and affectionate term and has also been applied to **Silvereyes** in Western Australia and to **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** on the east coast.

By my count there are 229 bird species in the world with ‘green’ in the ‘first choice’ name (and we won’t argue about the definition of first choice names just now, thank you very much!). On the other hand just six of them are native to Australia; at a world level about 2.5% of species are ‘greenies’, but less than 1% of Australians are. (I might be tempted to look around the world at present and think those figures make some sense, but of course I won’t, at least not here.)

So how does a bird get to be green? The obvious answer would be by using green dyes, but as is so delightfully often the case, the obvious answer is wrong. In fact, until recently, the only green birds which were known really to *be* green are the fabulous **African turacos**, some of the most brilliantly adorned beasts on earth. Some of these manufacture and use a porphyrin called, paying credit where it’s due, turacoverdin. This is copper-based, as is the brilliant red turacin also unique to turacos; between them it has been calculated that the plumage of a forest-dwelling green and red turaco contains 20mg of copper, which could be obtained by eating some 20kg of fruit. It has been further calculated that this would take some two to three months. You wanted to know that, didn’t you? (Turacoverdin is now known to be also manufactured by a very few other species among **Jacanas** and **Pheasants**, and by the **Indonesian Crested Wood-partridge** which looks remarkably, albeit superficially, like a turaco!)

So, what about a **Superb Parrot** for instance, which one might reasonably think looks rather green? If we were to pulverise a **Crimson Rosella’s** red feather, we would not be too surprised to obtain red powder. But if we were to put a Superb Parrot’s feather into the mortar (or pestle, I never can remember which is which) we might well be startled to find yellow powder! I think this is one of the most wonderful of the many birdy things worthy of our wonder. We would get a hint if we were to do the same thing to one of the Crimson Rosella’s blue feathers – the powder there would be whitish. The red feather’s pigments absorb all colours except red, which is reflected to our eyes. The blue feather however has no blue pigments – nor does any feather known on earth. It seems that lots of ancestral birds really ‘wanted’ to be blue anyway and they achieved it in a fascinating way, by using the feather’s internal structure to reflect only blue light. Each tiny feather barb has a remarkably complex structure, with a core surrounded by a cortex, both of which may contain pigment. In between core and cortex though is another zone, the cloudy zone, whose sub-microscopic structure is such that only blue light is reflected.

If there happened to be yellow pigment present too, then the mingling of yellow and blue reflected light would produce – green!

I’ve already written more than I have room for (what’s new?!), but I’ll just mention one other green-related thing that puzzles me about birds. Huge numbers of mammals and invertebrates live on the vast wealth of greens – grass and other leaves – which capture directly the sun’s energy. A few birds do so (as any one who’s tried to share a vegie garden with **Satin Bowerbirds** will know), but only very few relative to mammals. I can’t yet come up with a plausible reason for that. I bet you can though!

Ian Fraser [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au)

**P.S.:** By the time you read this I’ll be in Patagonia – *hasta luego mis amigos y amigas!*





## WONGA

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phone 02 6251 3136

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

## NEW MEMBERS

COG welcomes the following new members:

Robert Small & Jean Smith, Jamison

Don Fletcher, O'Connor

Dennis & Hazel Taylor, Ainslie

John Giacon, Griffith

Bruce Ramsay, Gordon

Vanessa Place, Holder

Suzanne White, Queanbeyan

## Next newsletter

February deadline

Wednesday 31 January 2007

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.

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### Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible.

Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

### 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 membership

2006-2007 memberships:

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

### COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'. Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to [canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au)

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

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



## Gang-gang

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