

# Gang-gang

December 2007

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## COG Christmas Party

**Wednesday 12 December**

6-8pm

Black Mountain Peninsula

We expect to use the same barbeque area as last year but it cannot be guaranteed; just follow the COG signs.

Sausages, bread, onions, 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 your own plates, cutlery and glass, and table and chair if possible. Please also bring either a salad or a dessert to share (with serving spoons).

Lucky ticket prize and prizes for best "birdy" hat (with or without the story attached to it) – junior and senior divisions.



## Field Trip reports

### Buddigower Nature Reserve – 29 September to 1 October 2007

The October long weekend saw a group of Canberra birdwatchers and fly swatters head out to the Buddigower Nature Reserve, which is about 20 kms south west of West Wyalong. We had in our company a number of bird banders which added to the experience.

The vegetation of the Reserve consists of a mixture of iron bark and mallee. This resulted in a very good assortment of birds. At one stage the Reserve experienced mining activity. There are shafts and debris scattered throughout the area.

**Mallee birds** are always good to see. A group of **Shy Heathwrens** did not disappoint. Other birds of note were **Major Mitchell Cockatoos**, **Blue Bonnets** and **White-browed Woodswallows**. Afternoons were warm and restful. At night we were serenaded by an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** and the spot-lighters found a brush-tailed possum.

The banders were kept busy in the mornings with **Red-capped Robins** (some more than once), and various thornbills and whistlers. It's good to see birds in the bush but having them up close and personal is a great experience.

Many thanks to Anthony, Harvey, Carole and Demetrius for sharing their banding with us. It's a shame the **Rainbow Bee-eaters** weren't into fly-eating.

Noel Luff

Brown Songlark—Julian Robinson





## Green Cape – 8 – 12 October 2007 – Hundreds of whales and tens of thousands of shearwaters!

What a great week! Eleven COG members and friends stayed at the Green Cape Cottages and one happy camper stayed a Bittangabee and commuted by foot (and Mum's taxi) each day. The weather was fine and largely benign – give or take a few bitterly cold southerlies (35 knots or so) and the occasional shower.

Birds had to compete with the whales for our attention. There were 10s of thousands of Short-Tailed Shearwaters (up to 50,000 by Peter Fullagar's estimates) moving around Green Cape, and rafts of 5,000 or so on the water. But there were often five or six pods of Humpbacked Whales in sight at the one time (I saw 4 simultaneous spouts from a single pod) with some just 20-30 metres off shore. Breaches, tail slaps and fin waving were common events.

Occasionally the birds and whales would collide when whales would plough through a storm of feeding shearwaters and gannets. One whale even ploughed through the 'boys' – a group of about 15 young male fur seals which were almost permanently 30 - 50 metres off the Cape – simple *joie de vivre* on the whales part, I think. For me the highlight of the whale watching was on the Friday of our departure – two whales swimming 30-50 metres apart, each accompanied by a

calf, and each calf taking it in turns to breach. In a space of about 15 minutes each calf probably breached 10 times – and all this within 100 metres of the Cape.

Much of the time was spent on the Cape (often on the verandas of the cottages) watching the sea birds and whales although we had one walk from Bittangabee in which almost everyone took part. There were many excursions by small groups into the heath lands – early morning, late afternoon, anytime. Because of the variety of birds seen by different groups, reporting back on these small groups trips was one of the (many) pleasures of the week (although some people refused to believe that there really was a **Bassian Thrush** almost permanently on duty at the gate to the cottages - until she saw it on the last day).

Now for the numbers. The total number of bird species seen by one or more birdos at Green Cape, Bittangabee or the heath lands between was 81 (I saw 54 – 9 for the first time). **Short-Tailed Shearwaters** were there in mass every day, and **Fluttering Shearwaters** were seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> (from 2 to about 100 on different days), while only two **Hutton's Shearwaters** and a few **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** were seen. Of the Albatross family, **Shy Albatrosses** were the most common (from only one on one day up to several hundred later in the week), a few **Black-Browed Albatrosses** and one **Yellow-Nosed Albatross** were seen.

Sightings were made of a few **Giant and Cape Petrels** and a few **Arctic Jaegers**. One off sightings were made of a **Brown Skua**, **Pomarine Jaeger** and a **Southern Fulmar**. The sighting of the Southern Fulmar produced what Peter Fullagar described as the 'most memorable incident' of the week – 'Tobias running back from the Cape to let the rest of us know that he also had identified the Southern Fulmar flying past him' (See <http://peter.fullagar.com/2007/10/green-cape-nsw.html> for more details on birds seen, photos etc – a beautiful website). I didn't see this but was told by a couple of people that did see it, that as Tobias was getting close to the group which had also seen it, Peter, almost as excited, was calling out to Tobias 'Yes Tobias, Yes it was a Southern Fulmar'. Clearly many others regarded this as a memorable incident also.

**Australian Gannets** were present in large numbers, **White-bellied Sea Eagles** were (almost) common. There were a few sightings of **Cormorants (Little Pied, Black-Faced and Great)**, **Pied** and **Sooty Oystercatchers** and a couple of **Ruddy Turnstones**. **Caspian** and **Crested Terns** and **Pacific** and **Silver Gulls** were also seen in varying numbers. Lots of sea birds - you get the picture.

The Cape also had a pleasing variety of resident birds: the **Beautiful Firetails** were probably the favourites; **Australian Pipits** were common and two nests were found; **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** were busy amongst the Westringia and occasionally engaged in combat with **Yellow-Faced Honeyeaters**. **Little Wattlebirds** were their usual noisy selves but not in great numbers.

The heath started almost at the gate to the headlands and continued several kilometres towards Bittangabee Bay. Perhaps the most sought after heath bird was the **Southern Emuwren** and several groups of people saw them, often accompanied by **Striated Fieldwrens**.

The walk from Bittangabee Bay to Green Cape passed through open forest, heath land and Melaleuca scrub. The different habitats provided a great variety of birds: the open forest provided **Black-faced Monarchs, Olive-backed Orioles, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, Created Shrike-Tits, Varied Sittellas, Brown-headed Honeyeaters** etc; the heath and the Melaleuca scrub provided lots of calls and a few good looks at **Eastern Whipbirds, Brush Bronzings, Eastern Yellow Robins** and **Thornbills (Striated and Brown)**.

We shared the area with a variety of other wildlife: wombats, wallabies (Red-necked and Black), Lace Monitors, bush rats etc.

The Parks and Wildlife Ranger in charge of Green Cape gave us a conducted tour of the light house and told us of its construction, operation and history and went on to tell us of the Aboriginal peoples who lived and live along the coast from Eden to Mallacoota. He was also a great store of information about the wildlife and birds of the area.

For the first three nights each cottage prepared its own meals. But on the last evening we shared curries, crème caramels and quaffables and a large amount of hilarity.

Peter Fullagar shared his boundless store of knowledge of birds with us, Sue Lashko was ever patient in explaining to some of us novices (and to many groups of tourists) how to use the telescopes and how to tell a Shy from a Black-browed Albatross, while the boundless energy and enthusiasm of Tobias Hayaski was a never ending joy.

Although I enjoyed seeing 9 new species and endless breaching whales, for me one of the most enduring memory will be of a flight of 19 Swans, flying in line out to sea, with their primary feathers glowing pink in the early morning light.

*Roy Harvey*

### COG's bird blitz, 27-28 October 2007 – an update

The weather for the appointed blitz weekend was a modest improvement on the previous two years. It did not snow this time, though blitzers who left their surveying in Namadgi till the Sunday afternoon got rather wet. The cut-off for the receipt of datasheets (30 November) has not been reached, so the following figures are preliminary only.

At least 79 named participants and probably up to 100 persons in all took part, some for the first time, with many spending two full days surveying ACT birds. We managed far more complete coverage of the ACT this year, with 132 grid cells of a theoretically possible 165 being surveyed. Most of the unsurveyed cells were inaccessible for a variety of reasons, and none represented habitats not surveyed elsewhere. Thanks go to the many COG members who volunteered to "mop up" the unloved areas, ensuring that we achieved the best coverage by far of any blitz weekend to date.



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### 2007 Birding Tours

#### Plains-wanderer Weekends

1/2, 15/16, 29/30 December 2007

### 2008 Birding Tours

#### 25 February—2 March Tasmania Birding & Mammal Tour

incl pelagic & Melaleuca flight

#### 12—30 March Thailand

A repeat of our wonderful 2007 trip with over 400 species of birds recorded; fantastic mammals, reptiles, butterflies, flora, scenery and food. Co-led by Uthai Treesucon, Thailand's foremost birding guide

See website for checklist & trip report

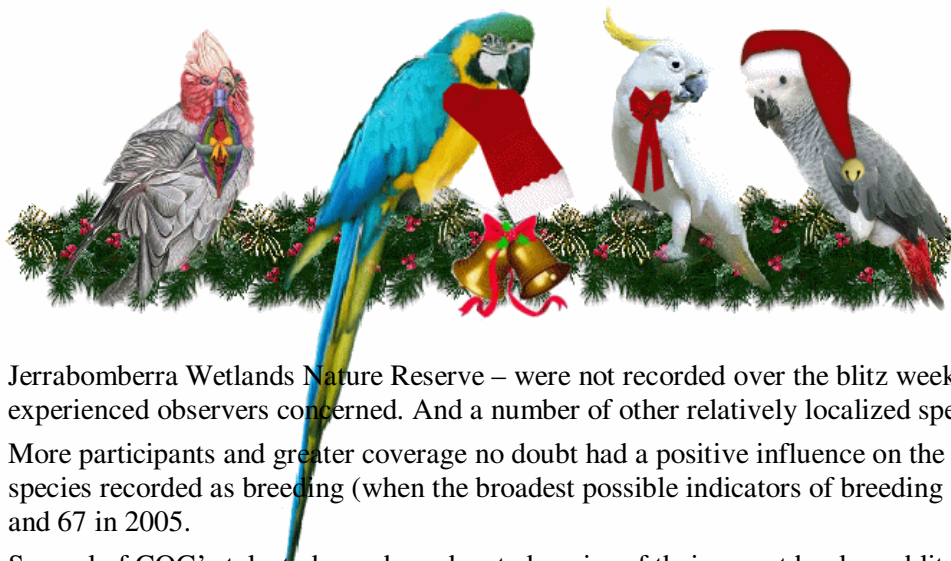
#### July New Caledonia incl Lifou & Ouvea islands

#### 10—28 August 2008 Strzelecki Track Outback Tour

See other 2008 tours on our website

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





So far, 163 bird species have been recorded, two more than last year and including two highly unusual species for the ACT, Red-backed Kingfisher and Bar-tailed Godwit. A surprising number of Red-capped Robins were also recorded, from widespread locations. Two of the major highlights of the ACT birding year – the Powerful Owl in the Australian National Botanic Gardens, and the Painted Snipe at

Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve – were not recorded over the blitz weekend, despite the best efforts of the experienced observers concerned. And a number of other relatively localized species appear to have been missed.

More participants and greater coverage no doubt had a positive influence on the numbers of breeding records, with 84 species recorded as breeding (when the broadest possible indicators of breeding were used) compared with 76 in 2006 and 67 in 2005.

Several of COG's talented members donated copies of their recent books as blitz prizes and at the November COG meeting, new President Chris Davey drew the following winners' names:

Noel Luff won Penny Olsen's *Glimpses of Paradise*, for most unusual record (Red-backed Kingfisher)

John Brannan won North's *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds* (facsimile, donated by Chris Davey) for a breeding record of an ACT-listed vulnerable species, the White-winged Triller

Mark Allen won Ted Edward's *A Guide to Australian Moths* for participation in the blitz

Chris de Bruine won Suzanne Edgar's *The Painted Lady* for participation in the blitz

Stuart Harris won Don and Betty Wood's *Flowers of the ACT* for participation in the blitz.

Dick Schodde presented a prize bottle from his cellar for "significant effort" (participation over two days or more than 10 datasheets), the lucky winner being Con Boekel.

Many thanks to all prize-givers; to the staff of Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve for facilitating access; and especially to all participants for making blitz 2007 a great success.

A full report on the blitz will be prepared for *Canberra Bird Notes*.

Barbara Allan

## REPORT ON NEST WORKSHOP, CAMPBELL PARK, SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER

The well over 30 members and guests who joined me on this annual event were rewarded with 23 different species exhibiting nesting activity, close to 50% of the 50 species seen for the morning. The higher than expected breeding numbers clearly was the result of the good rains late October/early November, which was also reflected by the fact that much more of the activity than usual was associated with nest building, with a number of species seeming to be putting on the finishing touches prior to egg laying/incubating. Also different from previous years was that most nests were found in a line running roughly NW/SE through the horse crossing, a few hundred metres east of the depression area where the "hot spot" has been located previously.

Highlights included two pairs of **Leaden Flycatchers** busily building nests within 20 metres of each other, one in an atypical spot on a relatively open bare dead branch without the usual live branch just above, **Varied Sittellas** putting on the final touches to a small dainty nest typically wedged in an upright fork of a small dead branch, both **gerygones** nest building (and for those who stayed later a completed **White-throated Gerygone** nest with its hooded entrance and long pony tail), as were a pair of **White-winged trillers** and the related **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike**. Great views were obtained of the latter in a typical position on a horizontal fork, as well as of a pair of **Weebills** entering a dome-shaped nest through a concealed side entrance, possibly due to its relatively open position, and a pair of **Spotted Pardalotes** before they flew to the opening in a shallow bank.

A **Dusky Woodswallow** was seen on a typical untidy nest against a tree trunk where the bark had peeled away, and a **Magpie-lark** was sitting on a nest which appeared nearly as big as the nearby **White-winged Chough's** nest. We

suspected it had been taken over, though on closer inspection it clearly had been built in several stages, perhaps recommenced when the recent rain had made mud available again. We also found what we suspected was an **Olive-backed Oriole's** nest which was a wool-lined deep cup similar to but smaller than the nearby **Noisy Friarbird's** nest, but in a surprisingly open position at the end of a dead branch with only a few spindly twigs, which may have been the reason it had been predated as there were two broken eggs underneath. Close examination of these with the various books led to the conclusion these were oriole, possibly the pair nearby that seemed to be restarting building again. However, for me the undoubted highlight was the male **White-winged Triller**, which at first chased a female and then led her to a likely nest site where he displayed and then kept very close by with his wings fanned while she examined it.

Once again a very successful event with 5 of the 10 basic nest types observed. This is now a permanent fixture on the COG program and continues to be very popular. My thanks go to Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley for both finding nests for me during the week and then helping me by taking half the group when numbers suddenly swelled mid-week, and to Con Boekel who came early and also located a number of nests for the group, as well as a number of others who provided nesting intelligence by E-mail.

*Jack Holland*

## January meeting Members' Night

9 January 2008

As is traditional, for our January meeting we will be having a "Members' Night", with the opportunity for COG members to contribute short presentations (no more than 10 minutes) on a range of bird related topics. If you would like to participate please contact Jack Holland on 6288 7840 or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

[gov.au](http://environment.gov.au).

### Bellmount Forest 11 November 2007

A successful trip was held to Pauline Wicksteed's property and Travelling Stock Route (TSR) 48 at Bellmount Forest. Although only a short distance apart, the two sites had quite distinct birdlife, no doubt due to the different plant communities at each site. Pauline's property has a mixture of natural woodland and planted areas, whereas much of TSR 48 is more like a parkland with large isolated eucalypts scattered through a grassy open area. About fifty species were observed on the day. Being springtime, many birds were calling throughout the morning and a number of nests were observed.

Some of the highlights at Pauline's property included the small **Australasian Grebe**, one of which was sitting on a nest on the dam. **Wood Ducks** and **Masked Lapwings** were also nearby, as was a **Nankeen Kestrel**. Birds seen in the woodland included **Varied Sitellas**, **White-throated Treecreepers**, **Rufous Whistlers**, **Leaden Flycatchers** and **White-throated Gerygones**. The latter two species were in the process of nest building. A lone **Olive-backed Oriole** was spotted and a **Noisy Friarbird** was perched in a position which allowed people to get good views.

At TSR 48 several **Brown Treecreepers** were seen and good views were obtained of a **Little Eagle** soaring overhead. Also present were several **White-winged Trillers**. It was interesting to learn that they have a call which sounds quite similar



Major Mitchell Cockatoo—Julian Robinson



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to the **Rainbow Bee-eater**. A female **Hooded Robin** appeared to be nesting but her mate was not sighted. A lone **Diamond Firetail** was spotted carrying nesting material to a partially built nest at the top of a small eucalypt. Some **Dusky Woodswallows** were also in the area, as were a number of **Tree Martins**.

*Peter Holbery*

### **Naas Valley Weekend - 23 to 25 November 2007**

After the spell of hot weather and then rain, our small group found it delightful to spend a relaxing weekend in temperate conditions in the lovely Naas Valley, based in a comfortable cottage at Caloola Farm. Birding was very good from the verandah with **Diamond Firetail**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **King Parrot** and many other birds passing by. Along the Naas Creek, a number of pairs of Bee-eaters were nesting in the banks, with Sacred **Kingfishers**, **Brown Tree-creepers**, and three robin species (Flame, Eastern Yellow, Scarlet) in the Apple Box woodland fringing the river, and smaller birds like Speckled Warbler in the thicker patches. On our longer walk along the Naas Trail to Namadgi National Park, the open woodlands had lots of **White-winged Trillers** and **Dusky Woodswallows**, while the edge with the national park gave a good number of birds including **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, Dusky Woodswallows nesting, and Satin Bowerbird. While no unusual species were recorded this time around, we had a total of 74 species. Unfortunately we did not record Hooded Robins which are usually there, and it was disappointing to s particularly) which have increased since our last visit four years ago.

*Jenny Bounds*

## **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.

### **Extended morning - Kelly Road; Sunday 2 December 2007**

For those who missed out going to Lady Elliot Island, there will be an opportunity for members and guests to accompany the retiring President to one of his favourite bits of woodland at Kelly Road, which runs parallel to the Monaro Highway just outside the ACT border about 10 km north of Michelago. On past trips, participants have had excellent views of the **Hooded Robin**, **Brown Treecreepers**, **Restless Flycatchers**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Southern Whiteface**. It is also one of the best spots close to Canberra where very close views of **Fuscous Honeyeaters** can be obtained.

Hopefully the bird life at Kelly Road will again be excellent this early summer, in particular the 200 metre stretch at the southern end of TSR 36. Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)) at the Williamsdale Service Station at 7.30 am, for car pooling etc prior to the 5-10 minute drive down the start of this outing. The main part will involve a 1-1.5 km easy walk along this quiet road and is suitable for all members. Bring morning tea.

### **Brindabellas; Sunday 20 January 2008- 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 continuing to regenerate 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**, **Satin Flycatchers** and perhaps **Rufous Fantails**, 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



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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.

### **Jerrabomberra wetlands; Sunday 3 February 2008 - 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, waders, 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 the deeper water.

The area is very open so please bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty to drink. If you have a telescope, please bring it. Meet at the carpark off Dairy Road at 7.30 am. The outing is expected to finish by 11 am. Please book with Sue Lashko on 6251 4485 or by E-mail to [Susan.Lashko@cggg.act.edu.au](mailto:Susan.Lashko@cggg.act.edu.au) . Should numbers become very large, the group will be divided in two, so Sue would appreciate it if someone was prepared to help her lead this outing.

### **8-11 February 2008 Ulladulla – extended weekend**

Bob Rusk will be hosting COG for an extended long weekend of birding in the Ulladulla area. A number of habitats will be visited in the area including wet forest, heathlands, beaches and headlands. Bob will lead organised walks in the mornings and point members to other local birding spots for the afternoons. A wide range of accommodation options are available, including local caravan parks. It will be up to individual COG members to book and pay for their accommodation. Bob will be able to provide you with a few suitable options, and booking early is advised. Please contact Bob on 4455 6813 or [sharonrusk@bigpond.com](mailto:sharonrusk@bigpond.com).

### **Sat 16 February 2008– Mulligan’s Flat Nature Reserve – Twilight walk and picnic dinner**

Join Jenny Bounds for an evening walk and picnic dinner at the Mulligan’s Flat Nature Reserve, meeting at 5pm at the main gate to the reserve (now opposite the northern Forde development - access from the north along the unsealed road - follow signs to the reserve). We will stroll through the reserve looking for woodland birds foraging in the last couple of hours of the day. We will conclude the evening with a picnic dinner in the reserve. Bring along water, hat and sunscreen for the walk, and dinner and drinks for later. For more details, and to book, please contact Jenny Bounds on ph 6288 7802.

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

### **Volunteer Interpreters needed at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve**

Many COG members will be aware that the wetlands area at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) has been closed for several months. The redeveloped area will be opening at the Tidbinbilla Extravaganza on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 and will provide new opportunities for visitor experience and education. The ACT Government has formed a partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia to introduce a Volunteer Interpreter Program at the Reserve. Under this Program, trained volunteers will be positioned at interpretation stations along trails in the new wetland area, offering informal education to visitors. From July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, CVA will also manage the TNR Visitor Centre and Volunteer Interpreter duties will extend to the Visitor Centre.



**Jacky Winter**—*Julian Robinson*

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Volunteer Interpreters will help visitors to better understand and appreciate the natural world. They will have a chance to develop their own knowledge and to share this with others. A uniform and travel allowance will be provided, as well as a range of benefits to recognise and reward their commitment including a formal qualification, discounts and social events. Anyone 18 years and over can apply to join the Program but good communication skills and spare time will be essential. Volunteer Interpreters are asked to make a two-year commitment, to spend at least 144 hours per year volunteering and to regularly participate in training. The initial training will take place over a six-week period during February and March and will be delivered by experts, including TNR staff. There will be quizzes, assessments and a final exam but the aim is to provide applicants with the skills and knowledge to pass these and graduate as a Volunteer Interpreter. Upon successful completion of the initial training, graduates will receive their uniform and badge and can begin volunteering.

COG member, Paula Banks, is the Volunteer Manager for this exciting new Program. Anyone interested in becoming a Volunteer Interpreter is encouraged to attend an Information Session - these will be held regularly until the end of January. Call Paula on (02) 6247 7770 or email [vip@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:vip@conservationvolunteers.com.au) for details. Be quick - applications for the first intake will close on February 1<sup>st</sup> and places are limited. If you are too busy to commit to the Volunteer Interpreter Program don't despair as there may be other ways in which COG members can get involved. Whether you want an active role or just to visit, Paula hopes to see you all out there!

### **New volunteer opportunities at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve**

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is looking to partner with Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on an exciting new venture. CVA would love to hear from anyone who is interested in finding out more about the volunteer program, which would be starting at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve early in 2008. Contact the Volunteer Manager, Paula Banks, on (02) 6247 7770 or email [pbanks@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:pbanks@conservationvolunteers.com.au) for more information. Paula is a COG member too, so you can also chat to her after the November COG meeting.

### **Indian Myna Update**

The local campaign against the Indian Myna continues apace. The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc was successful in getting an ACT Environment Grant and a Federal Government Envirofund Grant to continue its program. The monies will go on developing public education pamphlets and brochures on how to reduce the numbers and spread of mynas, and towards an intensive trap building program to reduce the long waiting list for traps.

The Group had a successful AGM in late August with Dr Chris Tidemann announced as the CIMAG Patron and Ian Fraser announced as a CIMAG Roaming Ambassador. Both Chris and Ian gave informative and entertaining presentations at the AGM.

Our membership now stands at some 350 people, with 320 people involved, from time to time, in backyard trapping. Members of CIMAG have now removed around 12,500 mynas to the end of September. Where intensive trapping has taken place, the difference is astounding.

The campaign against Indian Mynas is gaining pace along the east coast of NSW as well. An Indian Myna Workshop was held in Coffs Harbour recently, where we gave a presentation on the CIMAG experience, strategy and community-action model; it became a major focus of discussion. Local councils are joining community groups to replicate the Canberra experience. This can only be to the good.

You can read the latest "Myna Matters Bulletin" and other information about the campaign to tackle Indian Mynas on the CIMAG website, [www.indianmynaaction.org.au](http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au).

If you are interested in joining the group and participating in its activities, please contact Bill Handke on 6231 7461 or the new Vice President, Bruce Lindenmayer on 6288 5957.



## **News from the Committee**

The Committee has started discussing arrangements for the BIGNET meeting to be hosted by COG in 2008.



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The Committee is concerned that to date a coordinator for the Annual Bird Report has not been identified. The ABR is an important and useful record for members, so further efforts will be made to find someone willing to take on this role. Arrangements for the COG Christmas BBQ were discussed. Look for a notice about this event elsewhere in this issue of *Gang-gang*.

There was discussion of progress on some initiatives identified in the COG Forward Plan.

One of these is the development of education and exhibition programs, but it is an area where assistance from COG members is needed. If you are particularly interested in this aspect of COG's activities, and feel you have some useful skills, please let us know.

The Indian myna project in the Plan will get underway next year – COG is making a financial contribution to this work which will be organised by ANU.

## 2008 Field Trips Program

The draft 2008 COG Field Trips Program is published for members' consideration and comments separately in this edition of *Gang-gang*.

There are still a few organisers/leaders needed for some identified trips, as well as some unidentified venues for local or mid distance day trips. If you have any offers or comments to make please contact Anthony Overs (6254 0168 AH or [anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au)).

The final program will be published in the February 2008 edition of *Gang-gang*.

White-browed Babbler—Julian Robinson



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## A message from the President

Dear Members,

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank the membership for their vote at the October 2007 Annual General Meeting to allow me to fill what I regard as a very important position. The Canberra Ornithologists Group has in the past been able to play an influential role on many issues that are of importance to the membership and I feel honored to be in a position to help this to continue. I understand that with the large number of nominations for the position you really had little choice in the matter!*

*I must apologise for not being able to participate in the AGM but a previous engagement did not allow me to attend. My only excuse was that I was engaged in bird business; looking at the effects of woody-weeds, or what is now termed invasive scrub, on the birds around Nyngan.*

*Having been Vice-President for the past 18 months has allowed me to understand what the Canberra Ornithologists Group is all about and in particular to appreciate the President's role and the excellent job that Jack has done over the last four years. I am delighted that he remains on the Committee and will continue on the large team that works away in the background to keep the organization running. Jack will take on a new role of organizing the speakers and I trust will continue at least for a little while writing what I always find most interesting; the front page article for Gang-gang.*

*I have always found bird watching a most rewarding pastime for it is an excuse to pursue so many different interests whether it be bushwalking, photography, tape recording or to enjoy the social gatherings, outings or field trips or to get involved in conservation issues, bird surveying or whether it is used as an excuse to sit and marveling at what we have around us.*

*As a bird club it is the Committee's responsibility to cater for as many of these interests as possible. In addition I feel that we all have a responsibility to put something back into a pastime that gives us so much pleasure. It is important that we continue to be heavily involved in conservation issues, that we continue to monitor the birds in our area of concern and to document for the future the birds present distribution and abundance through the submission of observations to be incorporated in the Club's database.*

*I see the way forward as implementing the COG Forward Plan that was published in May 2007 and to continue providing services to the membership. This sound relatively simple but from my experience on the Committee it is obvious that there is always something waiting around the corner to surprise you!*

*One of my first jobs will be to get to know the membership better. Please, if you do not know me come up and introduce yourself. An ideal opportunity to do this will be at the COG Christmas party organized for December 12<sup>th</sup> and to be held as usual at the Black Mountain Peninsular. Although I have been a member of COG for about 35 years I have to admit that I have seldom made use of the fantastic trip opportunities that Jack and others and now more recently Anthony Overs have been able to provide and it is for this reason that I do not know as many of the members as I would like.*

*Finally, I am delighted to see that virtually all of the present Committee has been prepared to put their hands up again for another stint and just as importantly I see that we continue to have in place people to fill the many other jobs that go unseen and unheralded within COG. In the short time that I have been President I have already become aware that there is an urgent need for increased membership participation in the running of the Club. We are always looking towards the membership to fill roles on the various sub-committees. There is a need for an additional Member on the Committee for at times it is difficult to have a quorum, without which decisions cannot be made. The position of Exhibitions Officer remains unfilled as does the position of Annual Bird Report Coordinator and Secretary, Rarities Panel.*

*If anyone wishes to find out more about these positions please contact me or any other member of the Committee for further details. Contacts can be found in Gang-gang, on the Web or in Canberra Bird Notes.*

*I look forward to working with you all over the coming years. To my knowledge we have three past Presidents still as very active members of the club so I am aware that there is a wealth of experience to help guide the club into future.*

Chris Davey

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# THE COG RARITIES PANEL

The COG Rarities Panel was formed in 1984, initially to appraise unusual records for the *Atlas of ACT birds*. It was based on a similar panel set up to vet records for western New South Wales for the first RAOU Atlas (1977-81). The need to vet records is not new, and is used by all responsible ornithological bodies to check unusual and extralimital records before they can be officially accepted into regional checklists, manuals and atlases. It is a procedure that provides standards for the reliability of such works and for regional ornithological knowledge.

The function of the Panel today is to

- provide informed and impartial appraisal of the records presented to it, and
- maintain a list of rare and unusual species, the sightings of which will not be published as accepted by COG unless they receive Panel endorsement. The Panel does not “reject” records; it accepts or does not accept them. Failure to accept a record merely indicates that, on the evidence available to the Panel, its identity has not been demonstrated convincingly.

In reaching its decision on records, the Panel considers the details provided against its collective knowledge of the species, as much in behaviour and habitat preferences as plumage traits. Observers may be asked to clarify aspects of their reports. If Panel members lack collective expertise in a species, reports are circulated outside for opinion. Reports of birds unusual to Australia as a whole are referred to the Birds Australia Records Appraisal Committee.

The value of the Panel’s work can be seen not only in the enhancement of the quality of published COG records but also in the monitoring of the status of the birds of the ACT and surrounding areas over time.

## Composition of the Rarities Panel (2007)

Richard Allen, Jenny Bounds, Grahame Clark, Dick Schodde, Nicki Taws, Barbara Allan (Secretary)

Panel members are appointed by the COG Committee. The qualifications for members of the Panel are a banding licence and/or professional qualifications and experience in a relevant field and/or extensive and proven track record of observing and providing records to COG of birds in the Canberra region. The Panel also uses the services of two local consultants, Mark Clayton and Penny Olsen.

## Which birds require an unusual bird report?

The Panel is currently revising the list of rare and unusual birds in the Canberra region; and the present list on the COG website will be up-dated shortly. Hard copies of the list will also be available at COG meetings or by mail from the COG secretary. As a very general indication, if the species does not appear on the COG datasheet, the completion of an unusual bird report form is advisable. Please note that these species are not necessarily unusual in the broader Australian context – but they are unusual *in our region*. If you submit a COG datasheet which lists an unusual bird, the records checker will remind you of the need to complete an unusual bird report form.

The Panel always stands ready to assist birders identify what they have seen. Please feel free to submit a report or a photo about any bird species which may have puzzled you, for informal feedback.

## What about the problem of multiple reports of the same bird?

Thanks to the excellent alerting service now provided by the COG electronic chat line, the same unusual bird may be seen by many observers. The Rarities Panel suggests that the original finder of the bird should be the one to submit the report or, if that person is reluctant to do so, that he or she ensures that a subsequent observer does so. Any subsequent records of the same species in approximately the same location at roughly the same time will be published by COG as if they had been endorsed. This presupposes that the record submitted is adequate in detail. The Panel secretary will pursue the matter with other known observers until a report is forthcoming.

## How to submit an unusual bird report

Unusual bird report forms are available in hard copy at COG meetings, or can be mailed to you by the Rarities Panel secretary or COG secretary. They are also available electronically for downloading from the COG website, at [www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au). Once completed, the form may be emailed to [rarities@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:rarities@canberrabirds.org.au), mailed to COG



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Rarities Panel, PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608, or placed in the red records box at COG meetings. If you have any questions, please contact [rarities@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:rarities@canberrabirds.org.au) or telephone the Panel secretary.

Please complete forms for records as fully as possible, paying particular attention to the description of the bird and its behaviour. If you were unable to see certain features, say so. For example, if a striated breast is a key characteristic of the species and you only saw the bird from the rear, it is important for the Panel to know this.

### What happens to your report?

Electronically submitted forms are acknowledged on receipt. If the form appears to lack relevant detail, the Panel secretary may contact you for further information. The Panel meets approximately quarterly to consider unusual bird reports. Reports will be accepted (endorsed), not accepted, or further information will be sought, either from the observer or an expert. Endorsed records are published in the next available issue of *Canberra Bird Notes*, and in the relevant Annual Bird Report, with commentary if warranted. Observers are informed of the outcome of the Panel's views either by phone or email.

In reaching its decision about a record, the Panel considers the following matters:

- does the record appear to be a faithful account of what the observer saw and did not see? [by all means, consult a field guide, but only after noting the details of what you saw first]
- has the observer had previous experience with the species?
- has the species been observed in that location before? in the ACT before? and if so, recently?
- are the details of the sighting collectively consistent with the species claimed?

The Panel is obviously influenced by matters such as accompanying good-quality photographs (though it acknowledges the possibility of digital tinkering). — **Barbara Allan, Secretary, Rarities Panel, October 2007**



**Red-capped Robin (F)**—Julian Robinson

## DRAFT PROGRAM – COG FIELD TRIPS – 2008

Date	Place	Type of Event
Sun 20 January	Brindabellas	All day
Sun 3 February	Jerrabomberra Wetlands	Morning - part of World Wetlands Week
8-11 February	Ulladulla	Post School Holidays extended weekend camp-out/accommodated
Sat 23 February	Mulligan's Flat	Evening walk/picnic
Sun 9 March	Lake Burley Griffin	Evening boat cruise
Sat-Mon 15-17 March (Canberra Day)	Lacmalac/Goobarragandra River	Long weekend campout
Fri-Mon 21-24 March (Easter)	Chiltern, Victoria	Extended long weekend camp-out
Saturday 5 April	LBG	Birding by bicycle
Sunday 6 April	BIGnet	Morning
Sun 13 April	Honeyeater migration	Extended morning surveys
Sun 27 April	<i>Local nature park *</i>	Morning
Sun 11 May	Botanic gardens	Beginners morning
Sun 25 May	<i>Local nature park *</i>	Morning
7-9 June long weekend	Jervis Bay	Long weekend accommodated/caravan park
Sat 21 June	Tidbinbilla	Lyrebird survey
Sun 6 July	<i>Local nature park *</i>	Morning
Sun 20 July	Robins' trip	Morning bus trip
Sun 3 August	Lake Ginninderra	Waterbirds for beginners morning
Sat 16 August	<i>Local nature park *</i>	Morning
Sun 31 August	Kama Woodlands	Morning
Sun 7 September	Raptors	Morning bus trip
Sat-Sun 13-14 September	Taylors Creek	Saturday afternoon and Sunday surveys with LandCare group
Sun 21 September	<i>Local nature park *</i>	Morning
4-6 October long weekend	Round Hill NR *	Long weekend camp-out
October	Cowra area	Mid week accommodated
Sat-Sun 11-12 October	Bungonia	Overnight camp-out on private property
Sat-Sun 25-26 October	Bird Week blitz	All day atlassing
Sun 9 November	Callum Brae	Extended morning
Sun 16 November	Campbell Park	Nest workshop
Sat-Sun 22-23 November	Bumbalong Valley	Camp-out on private property
Sun 7 December	Hospital Hill	Extended morning

\*Leader needed

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Contact Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531.

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

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

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

(02) 6286 1564

or e-mail  
gramsay@actewagl.net.au



## COG SALES

- **The Long Paddock:** A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW - Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **Wet and Wild:** A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country - M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Jo Wienneke - \$16.00.
- **Grassland Flora:** A Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) - David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch:** A Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$12.50
- **The Nestbox Book** - Gould League - \$12.50
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** - Taylor and Day \$16.00
- **Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change** - Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- **Woodlands:** A Disappearing Landscape – Lindemeyer et al \$34.00
- **Feather and Brush:** Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art – Penny Olsen - \$50.00
- **COG Car Stickers** - \$2.00
- **COG Badges** – red or grey - \$5.00
- **COG Bird Songs of Canberra** – Cassette - \$10.00
- **COG Bird Calls of the ACT** – CD \$12.00

All these items plus various pamphlets (most free) and membership application forms are available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Bruce Ramsay via email to [barkeramsay@velocitynet.com.au](mailto:barkeramsay@velocitynet.com.au) or telephone 02 6294 5881 (after 6.30 pm please)





## Avian Whimsy #59—It's Called *What?*!



It was over a beer – the fourth one, actually – that Paul commented on the inappropriateness of ‘Common’ when appended to ‘**Sandpiper**’. (It’s nowhere a common migrant in Australia, but does not appear to be especially abundant in Europe either; perhaps it used to be.) I drew out the notebook, as I do when my Whimsy antennae are alerted. “Why not write about inaccurate names in general?” he said. “What about **Singing Honeyeater**?” And so a Whimsy was hatched. (I addressed some aspects of this one way back in early 2003, and again in 2005 when we looked at fatuous superlatives in names, but there’s a lot more fun and amused indignation to be had yet out of the topic!)

‘Singing’ Honeyeater indeed; even among the generally undistinguished *meliphagid* choir, the peevish ‘prip’ of the Singer falls rather short of the normal requirements of a song, a fact that many a birdo has pondered on. Who thought to call it such, and under the influence of what? He – must have been a he – didn’t even have the excuse of naming it from a skin, which presumably led to ‘**Pink-eared Duck**’ and ‘**Lyrebird**’, among others. The duck does have pink ears, but they are only obvious with the sort of telescope not available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and only a dead lyrebird can be persuaded to form its tail into lyrical form.

Some are simply baffling. What is especially – let alone noticeably – sharp about the tail of the so-named **sandpiper**? I’ve looked, at live birds and painted ones, and it evades me. And look at the field guide plates of shearwaters and see if you’re convinced that a **Short-tailed Shearwater**’s tail is discernibly shorter than any others. (If you are, the next test will be from the deck of a rolling boat ...) An **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** indeed has orange feet – but one might reasonably have expected its equally orange legs to have attracted a bit more attention. I don’t have any evidence that a **Peaceful Dove** is overtly more pacific than, say a **Diamond Dove**, and **Noisy Friarbird** seems like a classic tautology to me; I’ve certainly never met a quiet one of any species.

Why is a **Graceful Honeyeater** more so than its congeners? If I were a **Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** I would be very miffed about the implication that I was somehow boofy by comparison. And who decided that the clearly Lone Rangeresque mask of a **Black-faced Woodswallow** was actually a face, while the all-black face of a **Masked Woodswallow** is the real mask? (Say that three times quickly, then try and remember what the point was. Then come back tomorrow and have a look at the field guide, and I think you’ll see what I mean.) **Wandering Whistling-ducks** are nowhere near as peripatetic, at least in most of Australia, as are **Plumed Whistling-ducks**; so why?

There are plenty of names too in the ‘true but not very helpful’ category – far too many to enumerate here in fact. However, consider the following in the context of most others among their nearest relatives; **Black Petrel**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Pied Cormorant**, **Brown Quail**, **Brown Gerygone**, **Brown Thornbill**. Can you look me (or them) in the eye and tell me that any of them are helpful distinguishers? (Mind you, I’d not want the job of coming up with useful and unique names for shearwaters, for instance!) And what about **New Holland Honeyeater**? Huh? Did someone think it was going to be the only one? As for **Kelp Gull**; what gull doesn’t potter among seaweed? And tell me about an **Unwelcome Swallow**.

I’m prepared to go a step further and suggest that some are just plain wrong. For as long as I’ve been aware of the mighty bird, I’ve been baffled by the description of the overtly diamond-shaped tail of our great eagle as **Wedge-tailed**. (Compare it with the nether appendage of a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater**, which actually is.) A couple of the most blatant examples of wrong names though are, perhaps unexpectedly, in the scientific name. The **Laughing Kookaburra** is *Dacelo novaeguineae* – but isn’t found in New Guinea. Even more dramatically, the endemic **Tasmanian Green Rosella** is *Platycercus caledonicus*; New Caledonia is a very long way away indeed! These presumably resulted from wrong labelling. (My favourite misnomer is actually that of a frog, the familiar and accurately named Green Tree Frog, called *Litoria caerulea*, meaning sky-blue! The reason is that the formalin-pickled specimens turned blue before they got to England.)

On the other hand, maybe it’s a clever ploy – perhaps we’re more likely to ponder on, and thus remember, a baffling or wrong name than a logical one. Cheers Paul!

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



## WONGA

*Bawley Point  
South Coast of  
N.S.W.*

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

*patricia.walker@bigpond.com*

*phone 02 6251 3136*

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

## COG welcomes the following new members

P Mirchandani & S Genner,  
Yarralumla

M Cummings, Amaroo

D McCould, Belconnen

K Smith, Hawker

P Townson, Lyons

R Ormella, Anu

R Lundie, Weston Creek

T O'Sullivan, Weston

## Next newsletter

February deadline

Wednesday 30 January 2008

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

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

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

## COG info

### President

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Email: [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)

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### Treasurer

Lia Battisson ph 6231 0147

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Civic Square, ACT 2608

### Newsletter distribution

Judy Collett and helpers

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Sue Lashko and Greg Ramsay

ph 6286 1564

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

### 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

2007-2008 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

If undeliverable, please return to

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