



Gang-gang

February 2005

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday 9 February

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MAGPIES PLAYING

Three magpies on the lawn we had -
Mum and Dad plus fledgling.
We thought the little one was dead
But he was just pretending.

Then Mum laid down upon her back,
Next Dad, with feet up in the air.
A heap of feathers in our yard,
We laughed to see them lying there.

Then up Dad got and with his beak
He pulled on Mother's tail.
We should have had a video,
For you won't believe this tale!

Kay Hahne

MAGPIE RESCUE

For several days the first week of December, 2004, we noticed our resident young, begging **Australian Magpie** had entangled both feet in some green fishing line (or something similar). He could still fly, or hop and shuffle about, begging loudly in several yards around the neighbourhood. At least three sets of neighbours had tried unsuccessfully to capture the youngster so we could cut loose the strands. No luck. Both the parents and young one came close to us all as we enticed them with bits of meat, but would shy away at the last minute if anyone tried to throw a towel or shade cloth over the young one. We just weren't clever or quick enough.

However, young magpie soon caught himself – just what we were afraid of. One late afternoon Horst came rushing into the house – “Bring your binoculars, but I think I know what has happened”. Sure enough, there is our magpie hanging upside down, suspended by his feet, hopelessly caught in the neighbour's TV antenna in Aranda. No parents were around for moral support or causing a ruckus. Horst got his extension ladder, David rushed to his garage for gloves and sharp shears, and up on

the roof they both went. It was definitely a two-man operation (I was glad David was at home so I didn't have to go up – but I would have if necessary!). They stood on the edge of the brick chimney in order to reach the bird. Horst held the bird carefully while David cut the strands first from the antenna, and then from around his feet. When gently placed on the roof tiles, he stumbled a few steps and then flew off into a tree without so much as a backward glance or a thank you. Oh well, we had done our good deed for December, and the chimney was all clear for Santa's visit in a couple of weeks time.

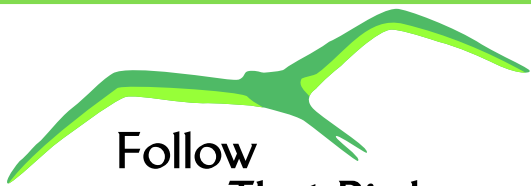
The magpie family was soon back in our backyard feeding and playing and prompted this poem (left) which I wrote for the end of year BBQ.

Kay Hahne

Field Trip Reports

Goorooyaroo Field Trip 5 December 2004

This was COG's first group outing to this new reserve. Goorooyaroo was a grazing lease until recently so is predominately open grassland with scattered clumps of trees and limited regrowth. This makes for an interesting walk with **Little Ravens**



Follow That Bird

Our small well serviced birdwatching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre.

All three star accommodation and meals are included. For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

February 2005

Divine Lord Howe Island 12-16th
(excludes airfare) \$ 1750
Start Lord Howe End Lord Howe
Leader the Lord of Howe himself: Ian Hutton

May 2005

Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfield 2-8th
(excludes airfare) \$ 2130
Start Canberra End Adelaide
Leader Alan Morris

June 2005

Blue Green and Gold of Coffs Harbour
28- 3rd July \$ 1425
Especially for Canberrans, Start & end
Canberra. Leader Alan Morris

October 2005

Eastern Australia
Part 1 Tropical Cairns 1st-6th \$ 2250
Leader Klaus Uhlenhut Start & End Cairns
Part 2 Lamington to Sydney \$ 3950
Leader Alan Morris
Start Lamington End Sydney

December 2005

Christmas Island \$ 2850
Leader Dion Hobcroft Start & End Perth

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outnumbering **Australian Ravens** and **Eastern Rosellas** as well as **Crimson Rosella**.

We found both **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones** and enjoyed their elfin songs. Good views were had of **Pallid Cuckoos** and again we were treated to their full range of calls. The cuckoos drew in a range of other birds to add to our list. After a quick look from the summit of Burnt Stump Hill (**Tree Martins** and a **Dusky Woodswallow**) we circled past some of the farm dams below Old Joe Hill in search of waterbirds and the occasional "little brown job". A disappointment was the sighting of a successful breeding pair of **Common Mynas**. Good views were had of a pair of **White-winged Trillers** and a **Rufous Whistler**. To my surprise we recorded a good total of 42 species for the morning.

Thankyou to the 15 people who attended.

Tom Green

East Basin/Molonglo Reach 12 December 2004

A full boat, leaving at the more leisurely time of 8 am, again silently proceeded up the Molonglo River on the all electric "EL Cygnet", to look at the nesting darters and cormorants.

Despite the recent rain we weren't to be disappointed, with **Darter** breeding in full swing and at most stages of nesting.

Birds (mainly females) were seen sitting very tightly on nests, there were a number of nests where very small young could be seen continually snaking and spiralling their necks and puffing their cheeks up past their mother's breast towards her bill, another nest had still very downy chicks on it, while there were several nests with well developed largely non-downy young either still on them or within a metre or two. All in all close to 50 **Darters** were seen, with nests again well spaced over the length of the Reach. Most free flying birds were either in female or immature plumage, and less than one third were adult males. As for early May 2004, the latter were generally not in full breeding plumage, with limited red-brown colouring only on the underside of the neck.

Little Black and Little Pied

Cormorants were also seen nesting, but these were concentrated in one spot along the southern bank where the river widens appreciably before the Dairy Road Bridge. The nests were also much closer together, and in the "Apartment Block" there were at least 5 nests of each. Nearby was another tree with at least 10 **Little Black Cormorant** nests, which were in big numbers here, with up to 75 birds seen. These two species tended to take the wing (**Darters** were noticeably less shy) and the stage of nesting was difficult to determine, though the **Little Pies** appeared to be either on the nest or in one case with small young as well as 3 much larger young. There were a few **Great Cormorants** here but no confirmed nesting, though on return a group of about 15 was seen resting on the eastern shore of East Basin. On our way back to the jetty at Bowen Park, we observed several **Pied Cormorants** feeding in the water, which completed the observation of all the local species before these flew off in the direction of the Carillon, where they are known to gather.

In keeping with the wetter conditions

numbers of other waterbirds were generally low, though at least 3 sets of **Pacific Black** ducklings were seen with their parents, as well as a fairly advanced **Black Swan** cygnet. However, the other highlight was an immature **Nankeen Night Heron**, which while rather shy flew to several logs on the river, allowing very good views. Over 30 species were recorded in the 2 hour trip, including several **Sacred Kingfishers** calling and on one occasion briefly seen. **Clamorous Reed Warblers** were also calling regularly, with several birds emerging from the reeds to allow reasonable views.

This is the fifth trip COG has had up Molonglo reach within 18 months, but it continues to be very rewarding. At the time I felt there finally appeared to be some consumer resistance, but in fact further trips were run on Sunday evenings 16 and 23 January 2005. See below for a report on the latter trip, during which at least 35 Darters were seen including both adults and various immatures and nestlings. The 3 other cormorants (**Little Pied, Little Black and Great**) were also nesting, plus **Caspian Tern, Whistling Kite** and **Dollarbird** were seen.

If there is demand, I'm happy to organise further trips. It is clear that this site, together the one on Black Mountain Peninsula described below, are becoming very important regional breeding areas for the darter and cormorant species.

Jack Holland

Kelly Road, Wednesday 15 December 2004

Ten members joined me under cool clear though breezy conditions at my favourite local woodland at Kelly Road for the last official COG outing for 2004. In a walk of just over a kilometer along the road, I was very pleased to be able produce nine of the 10 species I had predicted, plus a few

more. These included a family of **Hooded Robins** with two young males, close to 10 **Brown Treecreepers** spread over the length of our walk, even more **Dusky Woodswallows** feeding several very streaked dependent young, at least a dozen **Fuscous Honeyeaters** including one sitting on a low nest, a pair of **Restless Flycatchers** building a nest, several **Diamond Firetail**, a family of 4 **Southern Whiteface**, a pair of **White-winged Trillers**, and about half a dozen **Rufous Songlarks**, including at least one calling loudly from vantage points from where it launched into its characteristic mate attracting display flight.

Two other species that I hadn't recorded there before were a family of 4 **White-necked Heron** (including two young birds) on a dam and a **Little Eagle** overhead (by no means a classical specimen). We saw 45 species in just over 2 hours, including 9 confirmed breeding records, not including the heron and Hooded Robin families where the young were advanced enough to have flown in from elsewhere. While the removal of the extensive briars in TSR 36 seems to have somewhat altered the distribution of birds, there does not seem to be any loss of species so far. All participants (for about half this was their first visit) agreed this was a very fitting end to a very successful program of COG field trips for 2004, particularly in spring and early summer.

Jack Holland

Lake Burley Griffin, Saturday 15 January 2005

A full boat set off at 6 pm on a hot evening on this partly exploratory trip on the EL "Cygnet", as it was the first time COG had used this means to look at birds on the Lake Burley Griffin itself.

Our first objective was to check for darter/cormorant breeding in the

October Meeting

8 pm Wednesday

9 February 2005

*Canberra Girls Grammar School
cnr 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 carpark is
full, enter using Chapel Drive.*

Short talk by Chris Davey,
of CSIRO Sustainable
Ecosystems, "An encounter
with the birds of the Tibetan
Plateau".

Main, by Prof Henry Nix,
long-time COG member and
supporter, current President
of Birds Australia, and ever-
popular speaker. Henry will
give a talk entitled "Listen to
the Birds", reflecting on what
the early explorers noted, and
the present situation, and
what we can learn from
this. [*For those who heard
Henry's talk of the same title
to CSIRO last year, this will
be a considerably adapted
version.*]

Please come along.

It will be a great evening!

willows etc along the eastern bank of Black Mountain Peninsula. This is a relatively new breeding spot for these species, and a check by Jim the skipper in November had indicated it was at a much lower level compared with Molonglo Reach. However, this was not the case by mid-January, in fact the level of breeding activity rivalled the more traditional spot.

Initially a group of up to 12 **Little Pied Cormorant** nests were seen close to the entrance to Sullivan's

Creek. This was dwarfed by the extent of breeding further down round about the start of Gary Owen Drive where there were "wall to wall" nests and several apartment blocks over a couple of 100 metres. Most of these were either **Little Pied** or **Little Black Cormorants**, all of which were very quick to take flight making estimates of the number of nests and their stages difficult for the at least 50 birds present of each species. However, at least one nest contained 3 lovely dark downy young of the latter.

Scattered amongst these were at least half a dozen **Darter** nests with breeding at all stages, some with a parent (male or female) sitting tight, a couple of nests with large but still very downy young, and several juveniles sitting a metre or so out of the nest. A bit further down were 2 more **Darter** nests, with in one case a very young chick with its neck spiralling in typical fashion towards the sitting parent. Of the 15 or so **Darters**, 4 were males in breeding plumage. Only several **Great Cormorants** were seen, with again no confirmed breeding activity.

A couple of **Dollarbirds** on this same stretch rounded off a perfect start to the trip. Typically the remainder of the trip couldn't live up to the above high expectations. Easily the most numerous waterbird were several hundred **Eurasian Coot**. One surprise was 4 pairs of **Black Swans** with cygnets, with at least two still very young, probably not a month old. Several young **Purple Swamphens** were also seen, as were 4 still young **Australian Wood Ducklings** at Yarralumla Bay. There were very few ducks, of which nearly all were the **Pacific Black Duck**. The **Clamorous Reed-Warbler** was commonly heard and occasionally fleetingly seen wherever there were any reeds.

The visit to Yarralumla Bay did reveal one **Silver Gull** nest on an

ADFA boat. A visit on 2 January to all 3 bays where nesting was so common in 2003-2004 revealed only one lot of nesting material on a single boat, confirming earlier suspicions that the authorities are much more zealous in ensuring boats are kept clean this breeding season.

A total of just over 20 species for the night is not a high tally. However, the breeding was spectacular and is well worth a further visit, together with a more detailed look at some of the closer spots. Further trips may be a bit less ambitious and omit the rather long trek to Acacia Inlet (not a grebe in sight).

Jack Holland

BRINDABELLAS 23 January 2005

COG's annual outing at this time of year attracted 17 keen bird watchers. I have led this walk now every year since 1990 (except of course in 2003!). One of our main interests this year again was to see how the habitat has recovered since the 2003 bushfires and which of the birds special to area have returned.

As usual, we met at Uriarra Homestead dam, which was as interesting as ever. Highlights were three adult **Nankeen Night Herons** (my recollection is that we have recorded only immature birds there in previous years), **Musk Ducks**, a **Brown Goshawk** and a flock of **Stubble Quail** in an adjacent field. Our total of 32 species was 2 less than our best ever year, but not bad considering that the day was dull and overcast.

After some tricky car pooling to allow us to walk only down hill, we started at the top of Blundells Ck Rd towards Warks Rd. Birds were very scarce until we were more than half way down the 3.5km walk, and there was little to hear in the gully where we regularly used to hear **Pilotbirds**. Further on, there were good numbers of **Yellow-faced**, **White-eared** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Spotted**

Pardalotes, **Grey and Rufous Fantails**, **Brown Thornbills**, **Grey Shrike-thrushes**, **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **Grey Currawongs**, a **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Golden and Rufous Whistlers** and a **Superb Lyrebird**. **Flame Robins** were very much in evidence, particularly young birds, a flock of 4 of which flew and walked along the road in front of us for about a km. At lower end of Blundells Ck Rd and along Warks Rd there were more **Satin Flycatchers** than I have seen anywhere in more than 30 years of birdwatching. Several had dependent young. It was very satisfying to record good numbers of **Rufous Fantails**, which seem to have increased since last year. Perhaps the most exciting record was of a **Pilotbird** calling, one species many of us feared might have been lost to the area.

Whilst the bushfire has killed many old eucalypts and most of the understorey plants, there has been very good epicormic growth and an abundance of new wattles, blanket bush and wildflowers among the weeds and exotic grasses. Interesting plants included (flowering) bursaria, trigger plants and native raspberry with masses of ripe fruits. Even so, it was sad to see how few tree ferns have survived along Lees and Blundells Cks.

This area been special to me since I started surveying it for the COG Atlas in 1986. It is great to see it continue to recover and hopefully we will find **Cicadabirds**, **Wonga Pigeons** and **Crested Shrike-tits** amongst others in future years.

Bruce Lindenmayer

DARTERS ON THE MOLONGLO 23 January 2005

On Sunday afternoon, ten enthusiastic birders embarked on the electric boat to explore the upper reaches of the Molonglo River in search of **Darters** on their nest. And what a feast we had! We saw a total

of 21 nests with parents and young either on nests, or close to nests. The Darters are beautiful birds and we were easily able to see the differences between the male, female and young at close quarters, binoculars hardly required. Some of the young birds were still downy. We saw several birds being fed by their parents.

Also sitting on branches or dead logs were single birds, with wings outstretched. Sometimes they would fly off as we approached and we had views of them in flight.

Besides the Darters, and often literally beside them in the same tree, were cormorants also nesting. I was unable to count the nests of the **Little Pied** and the **Little Black Cormorants** accurately, but there were probably between six and ten of each. Also there were about three **Great Cormorants** nesting.

As we sailed back across the lake, a **Caspian Tern** plummeted into the water, not far from our boat.

Elizabeth Compston

Surveys

Mulligan's Flat Survey Sunday 12 December 2004

The Mulligan's Flat December survey produced several species of interest, including 2 **Hooded Robins**, one a juvenile, at a site on the eastern side of the reserve where there has been a breeding territory for several years, and a **Jacky Winter** at the large dam. **Varied Sittella** and **White-winged Triller** were also at the Hooded Robin site, and two other sites recorded Sittellas. **Speckled Warbler** and **Golden Whistler** were other good sightings. A **Brown Songlark** and **Stubble Quail** were heard in the paddocks adjacent to the reserve gate off Gundaroo Road. This Brown Songlark record is only the third record of this species in the reserve or in the adjacent paddocks, the other two being in November 1987 (paddock near reserve off Gundaroo Road) and

(Continued on page 8)

COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - reduced to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by 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.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by 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) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- **Simpson and Days' Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 special price - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

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.

Future Field Trips

Jerrabomberra Wetlands; Sunday 6 February - morning waterbirds

This outing is to one of the most popular and best birding spots in Canberra. A number of very interesting species, such as three types of crane, **Buff-banded Rail**, **Red-Kneed Dotterel**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, **Latham's Snipe** as well as **Freckled** and **Blue-billed Duck** have been seen here recently. Who knows what will turn up on the day. We will be visiting both Kelly's Swamp and the adjacent Fyshwick sewerage ponds. The latter in particular is very open, so if it is going to be hot don't forget to bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water to drink (plus morning tea).

Meet Tom Green (6247 0630) at the carpark off Dairy Road at 7.30 am for the morning's outing.

Ben Boyd National Park; 11-14 February – extended weekend campout

COG is again venturing to the coast for a quiet late summer campout after the main holiday period. The previously advertised trip to Cape Conran has been deferred until 2006 and the venue is now the Saltwater Creek campground in Ben Boyd National Park, a 320 km easy drive south east of Canberra via Cooma, Bombala and the Imlay Road. We plan to visit a variety of bird habitats on or near this unspoiled coast, and there will be plenty of opportunities to relax and socialise. New members and beginners are particularly welcome and there are plenty of lovely beaches, walks, vistas etc if you or yours do not want to peer through binoculars all weekend.

Contact Trevor and Joan Lipscombe at TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com or on 62627975 for an information pack.

Lake Burley Griffin; Sunday 20 February – birding by bike morning Or the “Tour des Birds de LBG”

Martin Butterfield will lead this bicycle tour of the Central and West Basins of Lake Burley Griffin intending to visit a number of locations with good chances of seeing some of the less common sights of Canberra (in addition to the birds there is always the possibility of encountering a bagpipe player or a naked jogger or perhaps even the PM power-walking).

Martin's expectation would be at least 40 bird species including 4 cormorants and darter, 3 grebes and most of the other usual Lake and parkland suspects. In addition the edge of Westbourne Woods can generate some of the less common bush birds.

Meet at Mr Spokes bike hire in Acton Park at 8 am, and we'll head off clockwise (for those with digital watches, that means towards the Carillion). He expects to have at least 9 'formal' stops with many others possible. We'll cover about 20 km, at a polite pace with no big uphill, in about 3 hours. At least one water bottle per person is advised, and although he doesn't intend to go off road a spare inner tube each would be good insurance. Wearing a helmet is compulsory.

For further information please contact either Martin Butterfield (Ph 6253 1286) or Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH) or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au.

Brooks Hill; Sunday 6 March – morning woodland birds, plants and animals

Brooks Hill is one of those small reserves that quietly goes about its business of looking after the woodland flora and fauna on which it is located. Often passed on the Kings Highway, but not often visited, it is

located between Queanbeyan and Bungendore. When travelling from Queanbeyan, the car-park for the reserve is located on the right hand side at the bottom of the last hill before the last flat stretch of about 4 km in length, before Bungendore.

This will be a joint outing with the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra (FNAC), so there will be an opportunity to share some of our knowledge of the birds, with the knowledge of the plants and animals of the woodland. We'll meet at the carpark at 8.00 am for a morning walk up the slopes of the reserve (along ye olde Kings Highway in fact), before completing the loop along a gravel track, past the small dam, and back to the carpark. It should be a pleasant 2-3 hours. Please bring a hat, binoculars and a drink, and it would be preferable (but not essential) if your interest was registered with the leader, Alistair Bestow 6281 1481.

Wee Jasper/Lake Burrunjuck area, 18-21 March – Canberra Day long weekend – accommodated

COG will be returning to Wee Jasper on this long weekend, staying in the comfortable 'Wee Jasper' station shearers' quarters. It is a spot close to Canberra, with lots of interesting birding, along with opportunities to simply relax, swim, fish, walk and enjoy this lovely locality by the Goodradigbee River. Visiting the limestone caves and dining at the 'Stables' restaurant could also be on the agenda. The birding was excellent on our September 2000 visit, and is sure to be this March as well.

Participants can arrive on the Friday afternoon/evening and stay through to Monday. Some may care to come for shorter periods, if space is available. The shearers' quarters have been renovated for groups like us. The accommodation is bunk bedrooms: there are plenty, so ample space for singles, couples and even four-to-a-

room, if you prefer. You bring bedding and food. A large kitchen, fridges and BBQ are available, along with a pleasant common room. The cost is modest, perhaps \$12-\$15 per person per night, depending how many participants we have.

Further information may be obtained from the trip leader, David McDonald, phone 6231 8904. Bookings are essential; please advise David if you plan to participate in this field trip.

Goonoo State Forest; 25-28 March Easter camp-out

The COG Easter campout is proposed to be in the Goonoo State Forest area NE of Dubbo. This is a large area of ironbark forest and is the home of **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** and **Mallee Fowl**. A range of accommodation options will be possible on this trip for those who do not wish to camp. A trip to the Dubbo zoo is also planned. Not only is it a good spot for wild birds, but it also has a very tame mallee fowl, not to mention the other attractions. More details will be in the March *Gang-gang*, but in the meantime please forward expressions of interest to David Rees (02) 6242 4517, or by E-mail to david.p.rees@csiro.au

Wednesday walk – 16 February – Lake Ginninderra west

Help celebrate the bird diversity of urban Canberra with a walk along the west side of Lake Ginninderra.

A great spot for **Red-rumped Parrots** and **Dusky Woodswallows** as well as waterbirds. Hopefully the walk will climax with a glimpse of the Nankeen Night-herons in the lakeside she-oaks.

Meet at 9 am at the water police carpark off Beissel St Belconnen.

Capertee Valley Bird Week

As part of the COG field trips program, I'm intending to run another trip to this wonderful birding spot in the second half of the year, at a timing when **Regent Honeyeaters** are known to be in the Valley. The Capertee Valley still has a wonderful range of woodland birds which are rare or declining in other places. Timing cannot be confirmed until we know what the Regents are up to, but most likely will be in the period September to November, and will be from a Monday to Friday (4 nights). I plan to book accommodation in a cottage in the Valley, hopefully the cottage on a large property we have used before with great birds around. This will be on a shared room basis (bring own bedding), with organised car pooling for transport. Catering will also be organised, with some bulk purchases I will organise, and shared arrangements for main meals with everyone bringing a contribution. All costs will be shared. While I have a good knowledge of the Valley and its birds and will take the group to some good birding places, I am intending to hire Carol Proberts, an expert guide who regularly takes birding groups into the Valley, on one day, so we can access her property, other private properties and productive birding places Carol will know of - likely extra cost around \$30-\$35 per person.

At this stage, I am seeking expressions of interest only. Group size will be limited to 12, with 7-8 in cottage (depends on gender mix) with possibility of another 4 camping in the cottage grounds. I will contact people on the list by mid year to finalise timing, indicative costs and get arrangements under way. Phone Jenny Bounds, ph 6288 7802.

Longer trips

Unfortunately there was not sufficient interest for "**The Green Gold and Blue of Coffs Bird Routes**" to be viable as a formal COG trip. However, it will still go ahead, and is being advertised on page 3 of this *Gang-gang* in the Follow That Bird advert. In this way those that expressed interest can still participate, as can any other member who is interested.

2005 COG Field Trips Program

The final 2005 COG Field Trips Program is included as a separate leaflet in this issue of *Gang-gang*.

I have had little feedback or comment on the draft published in the November *Gang-gang*. As advised then the formal program is arranged around two outings per month, generally the first is a local one and the second a longer day/overnight trip a bit further afield, plus the usual events on long weekends. This leaves the flexibility for the organisation of some opportunistic outings, as occurred during 2003 and 2004.



EMU TOURS

Nature Tours with the Focus on Birds

EMU TOURS TO MALAWI IN 2005

Richard and Roz are going back to Malawi for one more time! The experience of a lifetime—and wonderful birds - in the spring when migrants will be around and birds will be in breeding plumage. We shall include magnificent Nyika Plateau in the north and Liwonde NP. The tour will be for 14 days in mid-October (ask us for the dates). Unbeatable value at **\$2950** twin share ex Lilongwe - with all good accommodation (1 night a bit rustic!).

Reserve your place now.

Richard and Roz
emutours@austarnet.com.au
0428 38 5677

There will again be no longer commercial trip offered this year, with the one advertised on the draft program failing to elicit sufficient interest to make it viable as a formal COG trip. However, as noted elsewhere in this *Gang-gang*, it will still go ahead and COG members will be able to participate.

As indicated, leaders are still needed for several outings. If you can help with these or have any other offers of places to go and/or lead, **please** contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH

or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

The COG committee has been discussing a new policy on "Guidelines for the advertising and conduct of COG *Field Trips*". It was hoped that this would be published on the COG web site and ready for implementation in time for the 2005 field trips program. Unfortunately it has been delayed, and needs further work, including obtaining feedback from regular trip leaders. An Acknowledgement of Risks and

Obligations form is part of the draft policy. The leaders workshop, now scheduled for 21 August, is also related to this new policy.

2004 Christmas Party

Despite the heavy downpours, fun was had by all at last years COG Christmas party...and we've got photos and poetry to prove it! Unfortunately, there was no room for them in this months newsletter. Watch this space. The frivolities will be a feature in the March 2005 *Gang-gang*.

(Continued from page 5)

November 1985 (in reserve), both my observations. In all, 55 species, about the norm for this time of year. Disappointingly, no Little Friarbirds this season -Mulligan's has been a fairly regular place for this species most years. The reserve is now green and dams are filling, but the lack of rain early in the spring has meant that none of the spectacular wildflowers or verdant kangaroo grass growth characteristic of the reserve in a good year has come up this year. Thanks to the 10 volunteers who assisted with the survey.

A special thank you to everyone who has assisted with the surveys at Mulligan's over the ten years it has now been running - this is a great achievement. It is important that we continue these systematic surveys into the long term so trends in bird species can be determined.

Tentative dates for these surveys in 2005 will be 3 April (as Easter occurs the last weekend in March when we usually have the survey); 26 June; 25 September; 27 November or 4 December. These dates will be confirmed by notices in *Gang-gang* and email to the volunteer list.

Jenny Bounds

South Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve Woodland Survey, Monday 13 December 2004.

The fourth survey of the southern part of this interesting new nature reserve completed the first year of monitoring, as Dave Cook and myself raced gathering storm clouds, managing to finish about 15 minutes before a big hail storm hit north eastern Canberra. The most important record was a **Brown Treecreeper** heard at site 1 (where all previous records have been); the species had not been seen for several months here and whether this bird was the same individual as previously recorded, or is a new arrival, isn't known.

Other highlights included numerous, very vocal **Rufous Songlarks** and **Stubble Quail**, mostly at the far southern end of the reserve; it seems to be a good season for both these species around Canberra. A **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, 3 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, both gerygones, **Varied Sittellas**, **White-winged Trillers**, **Tree Martins** and a **Grey Currawong** were among the more interesting of the 51 different birds seen or heard during the morning. 51 was also the total for the September survey but there was quite a difference in species composition between the two. No Speckled Warblers or Southern Whitefaces, regulars at previous surveys, were found this time, and **Pallid Cuckoo** was the only cuckoo species noted.

Steve Holliday

Newline Woodland Survey Thursday 16 December 2004

It was a fine and mild morning with lots of bird activity, especially in the front paddock, and a total of 47 species. I had been expecting high (phalaris) grass growth and lots of grass seeds, as is often the case in December at this site. The grass was not too bad, but gaiters were still the order of the day. Yellow Box is in flower across the site and some Blakely's Red Gum is also flowering. I spent nearly 3 hours surveying the nine sub-sites which run right down to the quarry at the end. A **Peregrine Falcon** flew low through the woodland early on, followed by a **Brown Goshawk** disturbed by the alarm calls from other birds. Five **Brown Treecreepers** (possibly 6) were active and calling in the front paddock, with several **Rufous Songlarks**, **Jacky Winter** and a **Crested Shrike-tit** calling. Five **Varied Sittellas** were recorded near site 3 along the laneway - in a dead tree like little mice scurrying around. I have often seen this species in dead trees or trees with some dead limbs, presumably searching for insects. **Speckled Warblers** were recorded at several places, and three species of **Cuckoo** were calling (**Pallid**, **Horsfield's Bronze**, **Shining Bronze**). No trillers on this survey which is surprising as they are in good numbers at other places in the region this year and were at Newline last year.

Jenny Bounds

Notices Notices Notices

Woodland Birds Seminar 2005

I will be coordinating for COG a second seminar on a woodland birds theme, proposed for **4 June 2005** around the timing of World Environment Day. This will be along similar lines to the very successful seminar COG hosted at CSIRO Discovery in 2003, which attracted 140 people. A Steering Committee has been formed to guide the preparation. The theme is likely to be around woodlands/woodland birds and on-ground actions for recovery. We are expecting to link the seminar with other key events relating to woodlands and woodlands research, with COG hosting in collaboration with other organisations.

We will need a number of people to assist with administrative type tasks in the lead up to the seminar, some of which can be handled through the COG Office computer in Civic or at home (if preferred), eg setting up email lists to publicise the event, arranging printing of publicity flyers and distributing, doing mail outs, and handling registrations/enquiries. On the day itself, I will be looking for assistance with setting up tables and displays, organising supplies for and setting up afternoon tea etc, carparking guides etc. If you will be in town then and can assist, please let me know, on phone 6288 7802 - Jenny Bounds.

~~~~~  
The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of 12-13 March. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on thebradybunch8@bigpond.com.

### PRELIMINARY NOTICE

**BASNA GOES TO CANBERRA!**  
Birds Australia Southern NSW & ACT Group Seminar and Annual General Meeting

Saturday 2 April 2005

12noon – 4.30pm

### BUSHFIRES AND BIRDS

National Library Lecture Theatre,  
Canberra

Registration\*: Members \$25 Non members \$30 Students \$20

Speakers include: Jack Baker *Fire Sensitive Birds & Adaptive Management*; Dr Jamie Matthew *Post Fire Changes in bird populations in dense mallee habitat*; Chris Davey *Impacts of the 2003 Bushfires on the Superb Lyrebird at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve*; David Lindenmayer; Ian Fraser *Land of Fire; 20 million years of practicing*

\* Registrations close 21 March 2005. Late registrations will incur an additional \$5 fee.

In addition there is a Saturday evening dinner at University House; Fire Recovery Inspection & Honeyeater Migration Trip, & Lake Burley Griffin/Molonglo River Darter & Cormorant Breeding Trip organised.

For further information or to register contact Lise at BASNA on; Tel: 02 9436 0388 Fax: 02 9436 0466 PO Box 1322, CROWS NEST NSW 1585 Email: [rosella63@bigpond.com](mailto:rosella63@bigpond.com)

~~~~~  
The **January TATTLER** is now available on the website at www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/

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Australia Post will be releasing a **new stamp range** showcasing five **Australian Parrots** in their native habitat on 8 February 2005.

The five parrots represented are:

Princess Parrot (*Polytelis alexandrae*); Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*); Green Rosella (*Platycercus caledonicus*); Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*); Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Gossopsitta porphyrocephala*)

These colourful stamps illustrated by South Australian wildlife artist Kevin

Stead are rich in detail. In the background the stamp displays one of the above parrots in its natural environment, while in the foreground shows a more detailed close up of the parrot. Avid bird breeders/watchers will appreciate the beauty of these stamps and stamp products.

For more information on stamps or stamp products, please checkout our website [auspost.com.au/stamps](http://auspost.com.au/stamps).

### NSW TWITCHATHON 2004 - RAREST BIRD

The following were the nominations for the "Rarest Bird"

Hunter Home Brewers - Painted Honeyeater; Whacked Out Woodswallows - Barking Owl; Central Coast Champions - Jacana; Hunter Thickheads - Black-eared Cuckoo; Black-necked Stalkers - Rufous Scrub-bird; Cheerful Drongos - Great Crested Grebe; Dodgie Drongos - Whiskered tern; Orange Chatterers - Glossy Black Cockatoo; Eastern Whiplashers - Pacific Baza; Lessticum Phoradæ - Jacana; Warblered Specklers - Turquoise Parrot; Whitton Street Sapsuckers - Blue-billed Duck; Matheson Mopokes - Lewin's Rail; Red-faced parrots - Glossy Ibis; Wollongong Wongas - Little Tern.

### COMMENTS

Painted Honeyeaters are indeed hard to find, but this year they were seen by at least three teams and they have been recorded annually in our Twitchathons in recent years.

Barking Owl were only reported by the Wacked Out Woodswallows but have been recorded on previous Twitchathons, however probably overall this bird would be the runners up to the Winner.

Jacana. Although normally occurring, their numbers are greatly reduced because of the drought, however they were sighted by at least 3 teams.

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Black-eared Cuckoo A great little bird but seen at least by two teams and probably heard by others, overall not actually rare.

Rufous Scrub-bird Maybe the first time reported on a Twitchathon, and certainly numerically one of the rarest resident birds in NSW, with populations reduced to three limited locations in NSW.

Great Crested Grebe Drought has made this hard to find inland but seen by a number of teams on the Coast.

Whiskered Tern. Actually not hard to find on the Coast at present, much rarer inland because of the drought.

Glossy Black Cockatoo Perhaps the Orange Chatterers were the only team to see Glossy Black Cockatoos, but overall they are not that rare in NSW.

Pacific Baza A great bird to see and watch, my team missed them this year, but not as rare as some of the other species seen.

Turquoise Parrot What beautiful little parrots and how delightful is their call, but alas, seen by others too on this occasion.

Lewin's Rail How lucky were the Matheson Mopokes to see/hear this bird, I suspect that they were the only team to do so, but alas not rare

enough!

Glossy Ibis Numbers are down in NSW because of the drought but there are still a few around including 6000 at Fivebough Swamp, Leeton!

Little Tern - They may be a bit slow reaching Wollongong but they were plenty to see on the Hunter and Central Coast.

Overall, the rarest bird seen on this Twitchathon was the Rufous Scrub-bird recorded by the Black-necked Stalkers! Congratulations to them! Many thanks to the other contenders because your birds were all special!

*Alan Morris*

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## From the Committee

**At its 19 January 05 meeting, the Committee discussed the following, amongst other more routine matters.**

Despite our best endeavours, the Birds Australia exhibition, "Stuffed and Mounted", will not be coming to Canberra.

There have been initial setbacks with an online data entry program for COG; the records management team will meet shortly to examine options to progress the matter.

As noted on page 9 of this *Gang-gang*, the Birds Australia Southern New South Wales and the ACT group proposes to hold a seminar in Canberra on 2 April. COG will assist with guided bird walks.

COG is proposing to run another Woodland Bird seminar, on 4 June. Jenny Bounds will again be the organiser. See page 9 for further details.

Jenny Bounds will be COG's representative at the BigNET meeting at the end of January - a workshop to identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for NSW.

COG members are reminded to keep Sunday 30 October free, in order to participate in our first all-Canberra bird blitz. Details next *Gang-gang*.

## Conservation Matters

In recent months COG made a submission to Environment ACT on the draft ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy.

COG considers the draft strategy to be a very good foundation for the protection of this endangered ecosystem. Although there are few bird protection issues specifically associated with the ACT's grassland ecosystems, we commented on the importance of connections between grasslands, woodlands and forests, as well as the need for protection of important grassland and woodland areas in the Majura and Jerrebomberra Valleys where there are development pressures looming. We also raised the need for wet grassland areas used by Latham's Snipe to be considered conservation priorities.

COG has also written to the National Capital Authority about the Griffin Legacy proposals raised in the media before Christmas. We raised issues with plans for the eastern end of Lake Burley Griffin that might negatively affect the fringing channels of the Jerrabomberra Nature Reserve and the backwaters of Molonglo Reach. We also asked that all development proposals recognise and protect remaining areas of native vegetation

and bird habitat around the lake shores.

The Conservation Officers recently presented the COG Committee with a background policy paper outlining bird protection issues associated with wind farm developments. A number of wind farm development proposals have popped up in recent months in the COG area of concern. We may put a submission into the public consultation process on a proposal for wind turbines on a ridge east of Googong Dam when the environmental impact statement is released in the next few months.

COG recently wrote to the NSW Government about protecting the Kenmore Dam grassy woodlands near Goulburn, in support of the Goulburn Field Naturalists' campaign to better protect this area; COG members visited there late last year.

COG also put in a submission on the Draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT, which has implications for nature parks in terms of fire abatement zones - COG strongly put the case that these zones (at least for new developments), should be outside reserve boundaries.

*Jenny Bounds*  
*Julie McGuinness*  
Conservation Officers

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## Avian Whimsy # 27

### What a Superb Bird!

I was ambling in Campbell Park the other day, admiring the burgeoning daisy display of Lemon Beautyheads *Calocephalus citreus*. My mind meandered on then to the fact that the genus name is (nearly) the same of that of the Gang-gang, *Callocephalon*. Both mean 'beautiful head'; no-one's going to argue with the description, but why the Gang-gang specifically? There were plenty of impressive bird heads known when it was named; why single it out? Then I mused further (the birding was slow, you understand!).

It occurred to me that there are lots of totally useless 'ooh ah' type common names around, reflecting lots about the justifiable enthusiasm of whoever bestowed the name, but not much that's useful about the bird. (I could also wonder about who got the honour of bestowing a common name that others accepted, but shall leave that rather intriguing side lane for another time.) For instance, 'superb'. Now our local fairy-wren is indeed quite superb, but what fairy-wren isn't? What is the distinction between a Superb Fairy-wren and a Splendid one? Or indeed, a Lovely one?? Is there a non-lovely wren? The Macquarie tells me that superb means 'stately, majestic, grand'. Now a male Bluey in full regalia is a gorgeous sight, but 'stately'? Hmm. Not how one might normally describe a hyperactive, hyper-loquacious hyper-fornicator.

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## GBS Central #9

There have been quite a few reports of interesting birds and bird activities since I last composed one of these reports.

The least usual bird, at least in terms of GBS records, reported to me was a **Nankeen Night Heron** flying over a site at Gunnawal. That is the 3<sup>rd</sup>

'Splendid' though is defined as 'gorgeous, magnificent, sumptuous', which might be more appropriate. However, I don't for a moment suppose that the bestower of names was referring to a dictionary; he (of course it was he!) was just casting about for synonyms. And, I'd suggest, being a bit lazy. For instance, still among fairy-wrens, Red-backed, Red-winged, White-winged, Purple-crowned are all (relatively) helpful names.

Of course there are other Superb Australian birds too, three of them in fact, of which another two are also local. Superb Parrots are indeed superb – not to mention splendid! – but what would, say, a blandly labelled Eastern Rosella have to say about this discrimination? As for lyrebirds... How unfair is an accident of evolution whereby you could have proudly been a Superb Lyrebird, but instead got to be Albert's?? Fair go! And the fruit-doves; how very sensible it was when two closely related species were distinguished by being designated as Purple- and Rose-crowned. Now one still has a rosy crown, but the other is apparently more helpfully described as – yep, Superb. Helpful? I don't think so!

And before we leave the word, it seems to me curious that we have half of the world's Superb birds! Four among our 700-odd species, and just four for the other 8300 or so. On what is that a comment? (On the other hand, the relevant fairy-wren is the only Australian Splendid species

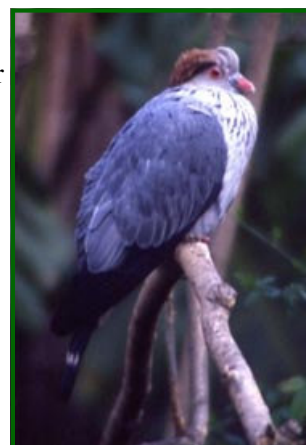
of the world's five.)

The Albert's Lyrebird dilemma is repeated among the riflebirds too. At least none of them is unfairly favoured by a useful name, but in contrast with Magnificent and Paradise, pity the poor Cape York rep, Victoria's Riflebird, who also got saddled with the name of a foreign (human) aristocrat.

Is a Blue-winged Parrot Inelegant compared to its favoured relative? And is Lewin's Honeyeater Ungraceful? (Well yes, actually, but that's not the point!) Or is a Red-eared Firetail not Beautiful?

Well it's all pretty frivolous really, but it is only January. It does occur to me though how much more fun it would have been if they'd been named later. We might have had a Beaut Fairy-wren, a Ripper Parrot and a Bonzer Lyrebird. On the other hand, had the naming been taking place now, they might (I am informed) have been Mad, Fat or Sick. Things could be worse.

Ian Fraser



**Topknot Pigeon** (*Lopholaimus antarcticus*). Would it have preferred to be known as a Spendiferous Pigeon?

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sighting for the GBS and the first since 1988. A **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** seen at Fyshwick is also noteworthy, although there have been two other records in the past two years. I suspect these may be more due to recent sites operating in the sorts of places the birds overfly rather than a significant increase in the number of birds in the area.

**Satin Bowerbirds** have been mentioned in a couple of reports. One from Cook reported the first sighting of a bird in that garden: as reported in last year's ABR they were sighted at three sites in Aranda in year 21. A site in Kambah reported that a 'blue' bird was observed for the first time in Summer.

I mentioned in a hotline report an



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episode in which Pied Currawongs harassed a Common Bronzewing on its nest. Sadly the forces of evil won that encounter, although the Common Bronzewings are still in the area.

Your reports for the year ended 30 June 2004 have been compiled into the ABR material for that year and species authors are busily preparing their drafts. Thank you all for your contributions.

*Martin Butterfield*

## Next newsletter

**MARCH deadline**  
**Wednesday 23 February 2005**

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to  
**Editors *Gang-gang***  
**gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au**  
or send 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. Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

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**Lia Battisson and helpers**

*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)**

*COG membership*

**2004-2005 membership: Individuals, families and institutions: \$35. school students (under 18): \$17.50.**

*Office (6247 4996)*

**COG maintains an office in room G5, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, civic.**

**[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)**

**Office volunteers are not in attendance for regular opening hours. Members access by prior arrangement.**

*COG E-mail Discussion List*

**COG has an email announcement and discussion list for members and friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.**

**Join the list by sending an empty email message to [canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).**

*Editor Canberra Bird Notes*

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## Gang-gang

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