

Gang-gang

July 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 08.07.10

Canberra Girls Grammar School
corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne
Ave, Deakin. The meetings are held
in the Multi-media Theatre at the
School. Enter off Gawler Crescent
using the school road signposted as
Gabriel Drive. If that car-park is full,
enter using Chapel Drive.

The first presentation will be by
Alison Russell-French entitled "Why
is the Yellow Sea so Important for
Migratory Waterbirds?"

The main speaker will be Denis
Saunders on "From vermin to endan-
gered in 20 years: the case of
Carnaby's Black Cockatoo"

In the 1960s in southwestern Austra-
lia, because of damage to apple and
pear orchards and to pine planta-
tions, the **White-tailed Black-
Cockatoo** was classed as vermin and
had a bounty on its beak.

Research beginning in 1968 demon-
strated that there were two species
of black-cockatoo with white tail
bands in the region; one, **Carnaby's
Black-Cockatoo**, was responsible for
the damage to pine plantations and

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What to watch out for this month



Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
(*Coracina novaehollandiae*)
Photo: Harvey Perkins

Every year, a few representatives of a
number of species considered as "summer"
migrants stay in the Canberra region over
winter. This year, as judged by reports on
the COG chatline, the clear stand out is the
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. It is unclear
whether more are actually present this win-
ter, or there has been a higher reporting
rate in response to the survey that Geoffrey
Dabb is conducting, though I suspect the
former based on its greater and consistent
presence in my local area compared with
previous winters.

Also much more regularly reported compared with 2009 has been the **Dusky Woodswallow**, sometimes in reasonably sized groups. My observations on NW Cooleman Ridge were of birds showing unexpected behaviour. In the first case, more than 20 suddenly appeared circling high overhead, as they often do on migration in March/April. This was towards evening in mid June, and I thought they would pass over, but they suddenly descended and perched on the highest dead branches of a nearby tree, where I suspect they roosted. The following evening the same thing happened, but with a smaller group and they descended some 300 m away. My experience with this species during winter is that they tend to stay hawking at tree level in the same area for a while, but I haven't been able to find them since, so they may have still been migrating birds.

Other species have been seen in lesser numbers, including the **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, and **Olive-backed Oriole**. These are largish and thus relatively easily observed, particularly if calling. Smaller and less conspicuous species include the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** (just one sighting of the latter) and the **Australian Reed-Warbler**. The

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Everyone welcome

(July speakers — Continued from page 1)

the other, **Baudin's Black-Cockatoo**, was responsible for orchard damage. By the late 1980s, as a result of extensive declines in range and abundance, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo had been classified as endangered and subject to a recovery plan. The ecology and behaviour of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo has been studied in detail since 1968, with one population being monitored for 23 of the 40 years from September 1969 to November 2009.

This seminar presents data on the 40 year study of this species and the impact of habitat loss on its breeding range and success.

(What to watch out for this month — Continued from page 1)

last-named in particular is a surprise, but its presence in winter can be easily overlooked as it is very quiet and stays in the reeds.

Geoffrey has limited his survey to 10 species, and there has been some debate about others that have been seen and perhaps should be on his list as the vast majority leave the area in winter. These include the **Grey Fantail** (again significant numbers seem to be staying this winter) and **Welcome Swallow**, which often is more abundant in my local area in winter than over summer. More significant have been several sightings of the **Mistletoebird** and **Tree Martins**, and a single and well photographed sighting of a **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo**. The latter and other cuckoo species are, in particular, very quiet out of the breeding season, so it's always worth examining every bird you see, rather than dismissing them as likely to be a more common species.

A big surprise has been the regular sighting of the **Superb Parrot** this winter, including south of the lake where it has always been much less common. Such a large and colourful species would be hard to overlook, and its numbers seem to be increasing over the past couple of winters, similar to Rick Webster's observations in the Riverina when he spoke to COG in August 2009.

It does appear that above observations have been due to (so far) a relatively mild winter and, in particular, the much more favourable moister conditions, though surprisingly few **honeyeater** species (**Yellow-faced**, **White-naped** and **Fuscous**) seem to have stayed despite the good flowering. Please contribute to Geoffrey's survey so that a much truer reflection of the ACT's population of summer migrants remaining over winter may be obtained. Even more important is to ensure that sightings of all the above species are entered into the COG database.

With the exception of the Pink and Rose Robin, it also appears that good numbers of the altitudinal migrants, which come down from the higher country every autumn, are present in Canberra this winter. In particular the **Crescent Honeyeater** seems to be more widespread this year. A male has been noisily present in my GBS since the beginning of June, attracted by the prolific flowering this season, and was joined by a second on the last weekend of the month. Hopefully this reflects a return to the pre-fires pattern when it was regularly present from May to September. Compared with previous years the **Scarlet Robin** seems absent from my local patch this winter, but is being reported regularly elsewhere.

There have also been a surprising number of reports of breeding activity. This includes not only the **Crested Pigeon**, which breeds during most months of the year, but also well known early nesters such as the **Australian Magpie**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and the **Masked Lapwing** seem to be starting breeding activity earlier than usual. Later nesting species such as the **Buff-rumped** and **Brown Thornbill** and the two **pardalotes** have also been reported as nest building, or even on the nest. As has been observed on the chatline, it seems that there has hardly been a break in breeding this winter, with the late breeding caused by the good autumn rains that I have commented on in this column earlier this year. An example of this was the observation of **White-winged Choughs** feeding dependent young, possibly a successful outcome of the nest building activity noticed after good rain early in March.

So who said that birding in winter in Canberra was boring because all the birds are gone? This better season allows the opportunity to observe a number of different species, whether they have come from the mountains, decided to stay here over winter or to start breeding early. So watch out for the above species to see if they are still present in the traditionally colder month of July. Again please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

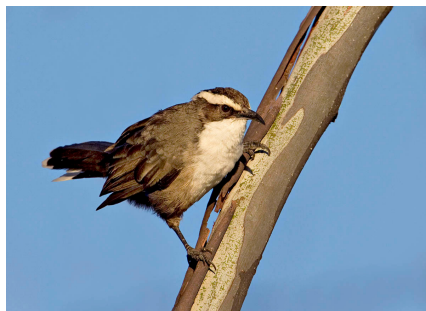
— Jack Holland

Field Trip reports

Easter Campout – ‘Spring Forest’, near Cowra.

This year’s Easter campout was a beauty. Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer led us to an excellent campsite on private property near Cowra; unsurprisingly (being Marg), the weekend was full of history, birds, interesting locations, orchids and Ben Hall. As a photographer I was particularly interested/enthused that the property we camped on was the long-time home of Olive Cotton, perhaps Australia’s most famous female photographer, and her husband Ross McInerney. Their houses have not been occupied for some years and remain a very poignant reminder of the lives they had lived at their chosen haven since 1946. Olive is remembered most for her Teacup Ballet photograph (famously featured on a stamp) and for her personal and professional relationship with Max Dupain, her first husband.

There were plenty of birds on the property with the less common including **Striped Honeyeater, Painted Button Quail, Brown Quail** and **Barking Owl**. My favourite photography corner hosted a nice collection of woodland birds -



White-browed Babbler
(*Pomatostomus superciliosus*)

resident **Hooded Robins, Brown Tree-creepers, Restless Flycatchers** and **White-browed Babblers** as well as passing **Crested Shrike-tits, Diamond Firetails,** and **Mistletoebirds**.

On Saturday after the “Barking Owl walk” mentioned further below, we visited a neighbouring property, John and Fiona’s wilderness retreat ‘Kooragindi’. During a bird and flower walk we managed quite a few birds including **Double-barred Finches** and another **Crested Shrike-tit**, lots of butterflies, a beautiful lacewing and

a surprisingly diverse array of vegetation. The lucky soul who stayed behind witnessed **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** arriving at the cottage. Fiona is an accomplished wildlife artist and we were fortunate to be able to see some of her works during the very lavish morning tea which they put on especially for us.

Lunch on the creek at another property was relatively bird-free but provided an interesting piece of history in the form of the remains of a large charcoal plant.

We spent the afternoon around the closest town, Koorawatha. A single **Superb Parrot** at the cemetery was the birding highlight, while the Bang Bang pub site was the historical highlight (Ben Hall!). We stopped at the modern-day pub for a drink and then absorbed some of the village’s local history before heading back.

Sunday morning started with a drive and walk to Koorawatha Falls along a varied and interesting track where we explored around the falls before heading off to Iandra. Iandra is a truly astonishing place, an impressive property described on the booklet as “A Romance of Pioneering”. Located geographically and historically in the centre of the NSW wheat belt, it is outstanding for two things:

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Tel: 03 9820 4223
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enquiries@philipmaher.com

2010: Celebrating 30 years of Plains-wanderers

11 to 15 July

Alice Springs &
MacDonnell Ranges

22 to 28 August

New Caledonian birds,
butterflies and flora tour

4 to 22 September

Strzelecki Track Outback Tour
31st Strzelecki tour!

Plains-wanderer Weekends:

6/7 & 20/21 November
4/5 & 18/19 December 2010

**Proposed tours 2011: Laos,
Malaysia, New Guinea**

**Tour itineraries, bird lists, checklists
and latest news are on the website**

www.philipmaher.com

(Continued from page 3)

the amazing homestead known locally as 'Iandra Castle', and its significance in the development of farming practices and methods in Australia.

The photo shows a little of the style and grandeur of the idiosyncratic homestead and you can guess at the energy and capability of owner and builder George Greene. Not only did he build this amazing edifice using revolutionary techniques, but also: established share farming in Australia; conducted serious experiments on fertiliser use for wheat; hosted the trial of the first Massey Harris Header; produced the first commercial crop of Farrer's famous wheat breed; successfully made the case for the construction of the railway to Grenfell; and built the entire village of Greenethorpe for his share farmers. He also included many technologically advanced techniques in and around the house including a sophisticated water supply, timber-fired gas operated electricity generation, a telephone exchange in the house, early or first use of roller doors and many other innovations.



Our final walk on the last day was to the corner of the Cotton property where the houses remain forlornly surrounded by probably every vehicle the Cotton/McInernys had owned since 1944.

Evenings were as interesting as the days. One night was the traditional communal dinner featuring a certain unusual sausage amongst other treats. The following evening Geoffrey Dabb entertained (and fed) everyone with a much-embellished demonstration of canapé preparation. John and Fiona joined us for a long dinner and discussion around the campfire. Wine was drunk.

Nobody will thank me for mentioning the **Barking Owl**, but it's a great birding cautionary tale. During our first big walk on the property we flushed an owl that flew high into a tree not far away. Barking Owls had been heard the night before so it was not completely surprising that we'd found one.



Barking Owl?

There was general agreement on the ID with only one dissenter who wanted to see a particular characteristic before agreeing it was not a **Boobook**. Eventually as we got a better view s/he agreed that it was indeed a **Barking Owl** and it was happily added to the list of sightings. Many photos were taken. However – on looking at the photos post-trip, it was obvious that the bird was actually a **Boobook** – which just goes to show how a group that included very experienced birders can be fooled, and even more, how a more circumspect observer who was originally on the right track could be convinced despite their reservations.

Special thanks to Margaret and Charles for agreeing to lead the trip at short notice and for carrying out such extensive fieldwork to create what must be one of COG's most fascinating and enjoyable weekends ever. It was truly excellent.

— Julian Robinson (who also took the photos)

Saturday 19 June — Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve- Superb Lyrebird survey.

The seventh annual survey of the Superb Lyrebird, designed to provide an index of population numbers since the 2003 bushfires, was run under cool, windy and misty conditions.

Thirteen COG members and friends met at the carpark of the Reserve at 8.30 am and were soon dispatched to the five main walking trails: Gibraltar Rocks, Devil's Gap, Fishing Gap, Ashbrook and Camel Back. Since the introduction of fees, over weekends the gates to the Reserve now open at 7.30 am.

Taking a minimum count, 20 individuals were recorded within the Reserve, compared with 6, 14, 12, 12, 19 and 19-20 in previous years. There now appears to be a trend emerging with numbers having plateaued since the 2008 survey and with a continuing preference for the wetter, eastern facing slopes. There was a minimum of 12 individuals reported from Camel Back and four reported from Ashbrook.

During the survey, 30 bird species were recorded, similar to last year, with the highest number of species from Gibraltar Rocks (16) and Devil's Gap (16). The **White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill and Superb Lyrebird** were reported from all trails with the **White-eared Honeyeater** being the most vocal species. Interesting observations included the **Wedge-tailed Eagle, Satin Bowerbird, Grey Currawong** and **New Holland Honeyeater**. Both **Scarlet** and **Flame Robins** were reported.

Many thanks to the participants and to the relevant authorities for waiving the entry fee.

— Chris Davey

Sunday 27 June — Red Hill Survey

Stuart Harris and I surveyed Red Hill in crisp but perfect winter conditions. Some sites were very quiet but others made up for them, resulting in a fairly typical winter tally of 29 species. Of particular interest were three **Scarlet Robins** (two adult and one immature male), several **White-eared Honeyeaters**, a somewhat dispersed migrating flock of 47 **Red Wattlebirds** over a couple of minutes at site 1, a vocal **Noisy Friarbird** at the edge of Deakin, and three **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**. Three **Speckled Warblers** were also seen. **Weebills, Buff-rumped Thornbills, pardalotes**, and a few **Grey Fantails** bulked up the numbers of small birds. Rather intriguingly, of the two species of pardalote, I saw only Spotted across the northern sites while Stuart saw only Striated at the southern sites — I can't begin to think of an explanation for that. The various parrots were, as always, well represented, with **Gang-gangs** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** both seen inspecting hollows. An enjoyable morning.

— Harvey Perkins



Gang-gang Cockatoo
(*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
Photo: Leo Berzins

Sunday 27 June — Gooroo (north) Woodland Survey

The woodland bird survey of Gooroo (north) was carried out on a fine and frosty Sunday morning (various other survey and recreational activities were occurring throughout Mulligans—Gooroo this weekend so it was safe to be in there).

As is typical of the winter surveys, most sites were quiet with just a few of the larger birds - **Magpies, Rosellas, Noisy Miners** and lots of **Australian Ravens**. Usually, the small birds are found in one or two big feeding flocks and today was no exception. The flock I came across contained three **Brown Treecreepers**, each identifiable by their different coloured leg jewellery and one still sporting the antenna. Also in the flock was a pair of **Hooded Robins** and a pair of **Red-capped Robins**, plus two **Diamond Firetails**, a species I haven't recorded in these surveys for nearly 10 years. For a while, all four of these species were in or under the one tree.

Two interesting 'winterbirds' were **Rufous Whistler** and **White-throated Gerygone**. The rest of the flock included the usual **Weebills, Buff-rumped, Yellow-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills, White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Grey Fantail, Striated Pardalote, Speckled Warbler, Willie Wagtail** and **White-throated Treecreeper**.

Elsewhere in the reserve was another pair of **Red-capped Robin**, several **Mistletoebird** and a couple of **Western Gerygone**. No **Scarlet Robin** were seen, but hey, I couldn't complain too much.

— Nicki Taws

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.

Sunday 18 July — Winter birding by bus.

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

As is best suited for these types of outings, transport will be by two 12-seater buses. This involves a total of 24 people, and a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles, otherwise the outing becomes logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8am. This is quite central, close to where some species are expected to be, and where the parking is free. It will run until mid afternoon so that the buses can be returned late that afternoon, so please bring morning tea and lunch. Costs will be \$20 per person. This will be payable on boarding the bus. At the time of going to press both buses were full, but a wait list is being started. To book please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

We will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these species are likely to be present. The exact itinerary will not be determined until very close to the day, and will depend on recent reports of where these birds are, though there will be an attempt to stay within the ACT boundaries. Tips of where to locate the harder to find species would be appreciated.

NOTE: If you cancel at short notice and your place cannot be filled from a wait list, you may have to pay the full fare if a loss to COG results.

Wednesday Walk — 21 July — 9.30am

This walk will be at McQuoids Hill Nature Reserve Yellow Pages map reference - Map 77 D14.

There is lots of parking at the access gate on the right hand side of Kambah Pool Road which is about 700 metres from the roundabout where the Kambah Pool Rd crosses Allchin Cct/Barritt St, Kambah, opposite the start of the golf club driving range, and 400 metres before the entry to the golf club. Look for the step-through gate.

We'll hope for a nice sunny day, but the 9.30am start should at least mean the day is warming up. We'll head first to the small farm dam to check if there is anything on it besides **Wood Ducks**, then across to the reserve proper, where we'll walk the perimeter track anticlockwise, hopefully seeing **Double-barred Finches** as the reconnaissance party did. No bookings required.

Saturday & Sunday, 24-25 July — Eden Pelagics

Two pelagic birdwatching trips for COG members will be run from Eden Harbour over the weekend of the 24-25 July. We will travel to the edge of the continental shelf in search of seabirds, cetaceans and seals. At this time of year we may encounter several species of **albatross**, **petrels**, **giant-petrels**, **prions**, **skuas**, **storm-petrels** and **terns**.

We will meet at Eden Harbour at 6.45am for a 7am departure. We aim to return to dock by 3pm, thus leaving enough time to drive back to Canberra on the same day. Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but no doubt there will be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on Friday and Saturday evening.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip. Seasickness pills or other remedies are recommended for those prone to seasickness. All participants should bring water, lunch, and sunscreen. More detailed instructions will be available closer to the day. The cost will be \$100 AUD per person.

NOTE: Both trips are now fully booked with a short waiting list. To add your name to this wait list please contact Daniel Mantle (0413 554 500 or danmantle@hotmail.com).

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

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

Sunday 22 August — Nursery Swamp

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

Oolambeyan National Park - mid week in early September

Expressions of interest are sought in a four nights, weekday field trip to this interesting national park in the northern Riverina (south of Carathool on the Sturt Highway) where COG has had several previous visits. Details/arrangements with the Ranger in charge can't be confirmed for a couple of months, however, dates will probably be Monday 13 to Friday 17 September and the group will be limited to six. Accommodation is in the homestead in shared bunk bedrooms, with use of cooking/bathroom facilities, and bring own bedding and food. As part of the visit, we expect to do some bird surveys (2 ha searches) at several monitoring sites in different habitats established on our visit last year. This adds to the interest of the stay and is easily incorporated into our general birdwatching program. A good range of birds occurs in the park (including **Plainswanderer**) and it is accessible to standard vehicles (short distance on dirt roads), except after rain. One participant with a 4 wheel drive vehicle is sought. Contact Jenny Bounds, ph 62887802 after 15 June to discuss.

August/September — 12 day Lake Eyre Basin wildlife expedition

If you are interested in joining Terry Bell (COG member) on a camping trip from 26 August to 6 September 2010 to see Lake Eyre, please contact him by phone on 0427292298 or email terrybellbird@gmail.com. The tour will start and end in Adelaide. Tour highlights include Coober Pedy - Lake Eyre - Maree - Goyder Lagoon - Birdsville - Coongie Lakes (Innamincka) - Strzelecki Track - Wilpena Pound. This escorted wildlife tour takes 14 people and there are limited vacancies.

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

This trip focuses on birdwatching in the heathland of Little Forest Plateau and the rainforest of Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve near Ulladulla. We will stay in a caravan park at Lake Conjola that has cabins and campsites. Participants will need to arrive by Friday night ready for an early start on Saturday. Be aware that the road to Little Forest is gravel and car pooling is encouraged for the drive to the Plateau.

We hope to find a variety of heathland birds including **Beautiful Firetails** and **Southern Emu-wrens** as well as various rainforest birds such as **Black-faced Monarch** and **Green Catbird**. The walk at Little Forest Plateau will be easy to-

moderate grade. The walk into Yatte Yattah will require a moderate level of fitness as the descent into the gully can be tricky, but if you are unsure please give us a call to discuss.

Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au. We will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the day.

Capertee Valley National Park

In June, the NSW Government announced the establishment of a 2,800 hectare national park in the Capertee Valley, bringing to more than 6.76 million hectares the area of land protected under the NSW National Parks system.

The property, known as 'Port Macquarie', includes 15 kilometres of the Capertee River and is a known breeding and feeding site for the nationally endangered **Regent Honeyeater**.

The property is a haven for woodland birds with another ten threatened species known to be present, including the **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin**, **Turquoise Parrot** and **Barking Owl**.

It also contains more than 350 hectares of nationally significant critically endangered white box-yellow box-Blakeley's red gum grassy woodland and is the habitat of several threatened plants. In all, seventeen threatened animal species have been recorded on the property including the spotted-tailed quoll and the large-eared pied bat.

Photo: Margaret Leggoe



White-browed Woodswallow
(*Artamus superciliosus*)

**Moon
Cottage**

Bush Retreat

Secluded

Self-contained



3 bedroom cottage near Braidwood.

Private walking trails thru 160 acres of bush.

Enjoy the birds, river gorge and platypus.

Close to Monga Rainforest and Budawangs

Ideal for families or small groups

Very reasonable rates

Phone: Toni on (02) 6247 8785 or email todavid@webone.com.au

The property was settled in the mid 1800s by George Innes, brother of Major Archibald Innes who helped establish Port Macquarie on the mid north coast.

Once work to make the park more easily accessible to the public is completed the property's four bedroom homestead will be made available for accommodation for park visitors. There are also plans for camping grounds and other facilities.

Aboriginal sites such as hand stencils are found on the property.

The previous owners, Dr Michael and Dorothy Harrison had owned the property for 32 years and had let much of it return to bush after they moved in.

Further information is at <http://www.nsw.gov.au/news/800th-national-park-milestone-protects-our-heritage>

CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION
2010-2011



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. Membership fees are set at **\$35** for 2010-2011 and are due 1 July 2010 for most existing members - check your *Gang-gang/ CBN* label to confirm when your membership expires, and to find your membership number.

2. You can pay by **cash or cheque** at the meetings or by **cheque/money order** through the post – do not send cash.
 Mail your payment to:

The Secretary
 Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc
 PO Box 301
 CNVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

3. **Electronic fund transfer (EFT)** is only available to renewing members. If you pay your subscription by EFT please notify Sandra Henderson at conoffice@canberrabirds.org.au with details, and ensure you let us know of any changes in contact details. Ensure your initials, surname and/or COG number are on the transfer – if we cannot identify your payment you could be struck off as a non-renewer.

Transfer funds to:

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc
 St George Bank
 A/C number 050111462
 BSB 112-908

COG membership number (check mailing label)		Title		Name	
Street Address			Town / Suburb		State Postcode
Telephone Home	Work	Mobile	Email address		

*Family memberships: List names of all family members covered by membership

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- ☐ Individual - \$35
- ☐ Institution - \$35
- ☐ * Family - \$35
- ☐ Student (18yrs or under) - \$17.50
- ☐ Canberra Birds Conservation Fund Donation \$

Total \$ *(office use only)*

Please mark boxes if you are you Interested In any of the following COG activities

- | | |
|--|--|
| Atlassing/Surveys <input type="checkbox"/> | Data entry <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Administration/Office <input type="checkbox"/> | Leading outings <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Publicity/Exhibition <input type="checkbox"/> | Youth education <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Publications <input type="checkbox"/> | Conservation <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you would prefer to read either or both of the following COG publications on the COG website in lieu of receiving a printed copy, please tick the appropriate box(es) and you will be notified by email when it is uploaded to the web:

- ☐ *Gang-gang*
- ☐ *Canberra Bird Notes (CBN)*

Revised 30 April 2010

CanberraBirds: COG's email-based announcement and discussion list

COG's email-based announcement and discussion list, CanberraBirds, has been operating successfully for over a decade. It has around 250 members and, on average, distributes about 10 emails per day.

The list has a few simple 'rules' that guide its operation:

- Messages sent to the CanberraBirds email list **SHOULD NOT**
 - be of a purely commercial nature
 - contain offensive or inappropriate language
 - contain personal attacks - argue about the message, not the messenger
 - stray too far from our main topics: the wild birds of the Canberra/ACT region, their habitat & conservation
- Messages, including attachments, **SHOULD** be under 100 kb in size.

Subscribing and unsubscribing are easy:

- To subscribe, send an empty email to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au with the word 'Subscribe' in the subject line.
- To unsubscribe, send an empty email to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@canberrabirds.org.au with the word 'Unsubscribe' in the subject line.
- Once subscribed, to send an email to the list, address it to canberrabirds@canberrabirds.org.au.

Other information can be found by emailing canberrabirds-help@canberrabirds.org.au with the word 'Help' in the subject line.

A comprehensive, searchable archive of all the messages sent to the list is available at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds>.

For any assistance, please contact David McDonald, who manages the CanberraBirds list on behalf of Cog's Committee of Management, email canberrabirds-owner@canberrabirds.org.au, or phone David at (02) 6238 3706.

Call for bird surveyors

The Cowra Woodland Birds Program was established in 2000 under BASNA with the aim of helping to reverse the decline of woodland birds in the Cowra district. Birders are well aware of the plight of our native woodlands and their associated birds.

Our major on-going project is quarterly bird surveys. The first six years of data were analysed in a recent report – see <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/cowra-woodland-birds.html>. To improve our understanding of the trends in woodland bird populations, the report recommended continuing the surveys and increasing the number of sites of better-quality bird habitat. Thus, we have selected about 20 more sites for future surveys.

We now need a small number of extra volunteers to help with surveys. Perhaps some old faces will show up again but newcomers are welcome. A survey weekend usually involves:

- a team of two or three birders (one needs to be competent at woodland bird identification and GPS if possible)
- Friday night briefing for allocation of sites, maps and other information
- Saturday and Sunday morning surveys at about four sites per morning
- Saturday night social event with the other surveyors

Remaining survey weekends for 2010 are 16-18 July and 15-17 October.

Being a voluntary effort, surveyors have to meet all of their own costs. You don't have to commit to every survey weekend but we do need two to three more teams for each survey. To register your interest, please contact Malcolm Fyfe mfyfe@tpg.com.au

News from the committee

- President Chris Davey will be away from Canberra from 9 August to 7 October.
- A meeting has been held to start planning for the Birds Australia campout being organised by COG for April 2011. The campout will be at the Bush Heritage owned Scottsdale Reserve, near Bredbo. A range of outings and on-site activities are being planned.
- The *Tidbinbilla Draft Plan of Management* (May 2010) is now available for public comment until July 26. It is available at http://www.tams.act.gov.au/play/pcl/parks_reserves_and_open_places/national_parks/tidbinbilla_nature_reserve/tidbinbilla_draft_plan_of_mgt
- A reminder that subscriptions for 2010-11 are now due. The application form is on page 9 or is downloadable from our website (<http://www.canberrabirds.org.au>)
- GBS charts for 2009-10 should be forwarded as soon as possible. Charts for the 2010-2011 survey will be available at the July meeting.

— Sandra Henderson (Secretary)

What to do with a dead bird?

The Australian National Wildlife Collection at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems in Crace (off the Barton Highway) is always happy to receive good specimens of dead birds. The same goes for any specimen of amphibians, reptiles, or mammals (well maybe not Eastern Grey Kangaroos and the larger wallabies).

The contact at the ANWC is the Collection Manager, Robert Palmer, phone 02 62421639 and his email is Robert.Palmer@csiro.au. If it is not possible to contact Robert, people can always try to contact Mark Clayton by phone on 62413620 (H) or by email at chollop7@bigpond.com.

If anyone wants more information about what data to record with specimens, please get in touch with Mark Clayton.



Golden-headed Cisticola
(*Cisticola exilis*)
Photo: Geoffrey Dabb

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Garden Bird Survey Notes

There have been several recent chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant:

- Several species appear to be thinking about starting breeding in GBS areas including **Crested Pigeon**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Spotted Pardalotes**.
- **Superb Parrots** observed in Wanniasa;
- **Southern Whiteface** in Curtin;
- **Crescent Honeyeater**(s?) in Chapman;
- **Philemon corniculatus** (*frigidus*) (the Frozen Friarbird) in Curtin.

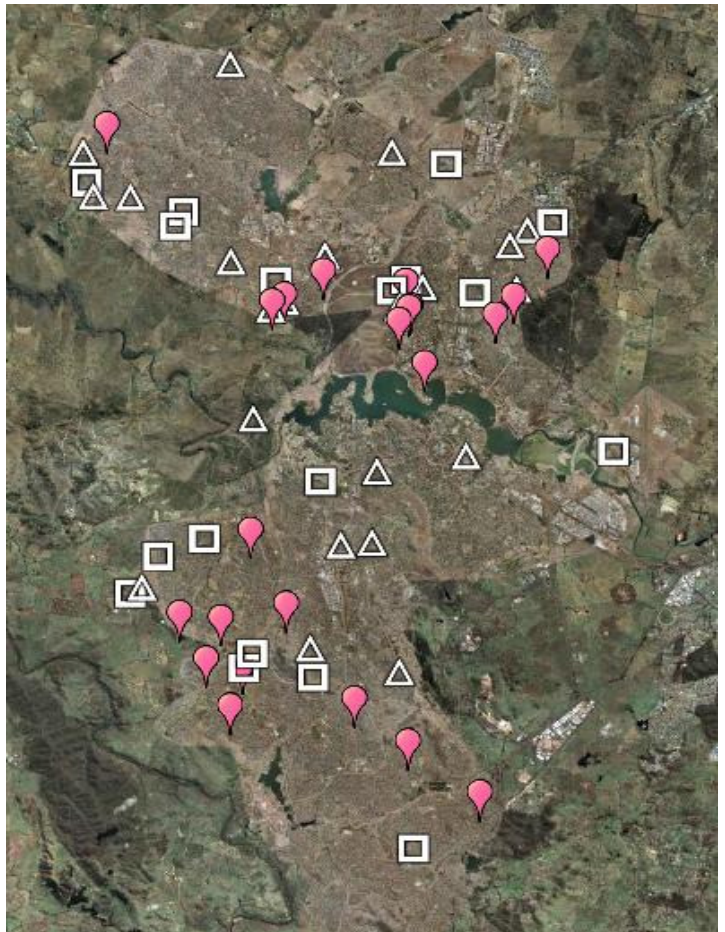
Under and Over the Mistletoe

The seasonal pattern of GBS records for the **Mistletoe-bird** is very similar to that for migrant species, although they are sometimes seen (or more often heard) in the bush over winter. There have been a couple of recent email exchanges suggesting that the species is not really a bird of Canberra gardens.

In the first 28 years of the GBS the average of A values for **Mistletoebird** places it 84th of the 239 species recorded in the Survey. (The related result for F places it at 74th position.) A time series of these indicators shows a resemblance to a cross-section of the Himalaya: no significant trend can be found.

In conversation with other members, opinions have varied about whether the species is a 'real' garden bird or just a wanderer from the woodlands. While sites at Burra and Hoskinstown feature strongly in a listing of reporting rate, other rural sites do not.

I have continued my experiments with ways of presenting GBS data in graphic format and have included an image from Google Earth showing sites with relatively high (teardrop), medium (square) and relatively low, but not zero (triangle), reporting rates for the species. The high-rate reports from north of Lake Burley Griffin seem to relate (mostly) to areas close to Black Mountain or the Ainslie-Majura *massif*. However, south of the lake, the high rates appear to be less focussed on such bosky areas.



Uses of GBS data

Data from the GBS has been provided to a member for consideration in the Winterbirds project.

Charts

A good number of members took up charts at the June Meeting. More will be available for distribution at the July meeting and/or if people need one but can't make it to the meeting they could be picked up from Barbara Allan and Kay Hahne (northside) and Anne Hall (southside). **It would be greatly appreciated if people could bring their completed charts to the July Meeting.**

— Martin Butterfield.

Workshop on recording bird calls

For all those interested in learning how to go about recording bird sounds there will be a workshop on Saturday 17th July. COG is now in possession of two sets of recording gear that can be made available to members interested in collecting material for the new CD that COG is hoping to produce.

The workshop will be held at 1/11 Joy Cummings Place, Belconnen, starting at 0900 and will last for a couple of hours. The workshop will start with a session on how to operate the equipment. We will then go outside to try and put into practice some of what we have learnt. All those interested please contact Chris Davey: tel: 62546324 or email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au.

The Woodland and Wetland Trust

The ACT Government has announced that a Trust will be established to raise and allocate funds to support the management and future development of the Mulligan's Flat Woodland Sanctuary and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve. It is envisaged that the Trust will consist of members predominantly from the business community, one Department member and an independent Chair.

Associated with the Trust, the relationship of which is still to be established, will be two Boards of Management, one for each area. Interim Boards of Management (IBM) have been set up to help establish the Trust and to guide future development and on-going management of the two areas.

I am pleased to say that COG will be represented on the Woodland IBM by Jenny Bounds whilst I will be a member of the Wetlands IBM. — **Chris Davey**

CIMAG Notes

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group has been operating now for just over four years, and has been successful well beyond the expectations of any of the group of about 10 conservationists who met in April 2006 to discuss what might be done to counter the growing numbers and range of the **Common Myna** in the ACT.

Since then, membership has grown to almost 1000, most of whom own and operate traps. CIMAG has had great support from the ACT and Federal Governments, the RSPCA, the ANU and the Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre. The Alexander Maconochie Centre has made almost 400 traps for group members and CIMAG (for the first time in its short history) now does not have a waiting list for traps.

The support of COG and its members is very much appreciated through links to the web site, analysis of myna populations through the Garden Bird Survey/Annual Bird Report, participation of skilled observers in the monitoring program for an ANU PhD project on mynas and opportunities for presentations at monthly meetings.

More than 31,000 mynas have been removed from the Canberra environment and both the frequency and average number observed in the GBS have declined to levels previously recorded in the early 1990s.

Further details are on the CIMAG web site: www.indianmynaaction.org.au. — **Bruce Lindenmayer**

(Avian Whimsy — Continued from page 15)

Histrionica, the mime. There is something of the theatrical about the black and white faces emerging from the saltbush around the little slot dam almost on the outskirts of Windorah. The **Flock Bronzewing**s (*Phaps histrionica*) seem somewhat mysterious until we understand their place as true children of El Niño, appearing in vast numbers in good years and spreading far across the land, studding the ground with their eggs, then retreating to some secret fastness. I've never seen them so far east; this is another moment to warm future cold Canberra afternoons.

But these are just words, only the birds are real. Sometimes though, I need words to maintain contact with a now-distant reality.

— **Ian Fraser** (ianf@pcug.org.au)

COG SALES



Birds of
Canberra
Gardens



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

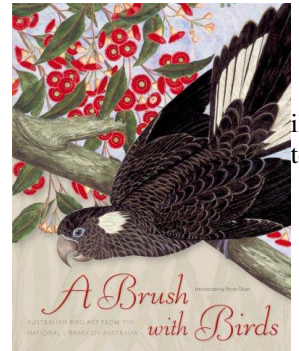
Nearly 230 bird species have been recorded in and around Canberra suburban gardens over the past 27 years in the COG Garden Bird Survey. The life and times of most of these birds are described in this book, illustrated with brilliant photographs and abundance graphs. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* describes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

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

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

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

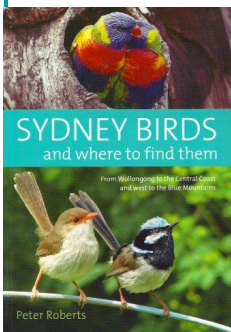
The paintings of Australian birds in *A Brush with Birds* are by artists whose work is represented in the National Library of Australia. They span the years from first settlement to the 1970s, telling us about the times as well as the birds, and showing how the style of bird art has evolved. This book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



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ter

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

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



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

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

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

Kookaburra
Herons, Egrets and Bitterns
Mound-builders

Australian Magpie
Cockatoos
Tawny Frogmouth

Wedge-tailed Eagle
Albatross
Australian Bustard
(coming soon)

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

Avian Whimsy #83

Nominally: Images of south-west Queensland, May-June 2010

Rubicundus, the red one. Four **Brolgas** (*Grus rubicundus*) are stalking along a sandy creek bed away from the road, threading between flowering myoporums and framed by paperbark tea-trees. The heavily dewlapped male leads, his mate brings up the rear; in between are two half-grown chicks, fluffy and yellowish, without their parents' distinctive red bandanna. They are as helpless as any nest-bound passerine chick in terms of feeding themselves, but unlike those immobile bundles they are quite capable of walking long distances after their parents, waiting for their next meal. Much further north on the vast floodplain of the Diamantina a flock of over 30 Brolgas edges away from us, but even while retreating individual birds can't resist a leap and pirouette; this time of plenty is demanding courtship.

Artamus, the butcher. The Spur-throated Locusts are moving in their millions; if I drive slowly enough their bullety bodies just bounce off the windscreen without damage to either. Brolga pairs hunt them in the paddocks, but overall the birds seem overwhelmed by the sheer vastness of the resource. Suddenly though a huge loose flock of **woodswallows** – **White-browed** (*Artamus superciliosus*) and **Masked** (*A. personatus*) – is swarming along the roadside, clustering in trees and swirling in the air. They are harvesting the locusts, taking them from the air and returning to a perch to dismember and gorge, or hopping across the ground to select and seize from the vast moving smorgasbord. A few thousand less locusts still leaves millions though.

Falco, the sickle. A different harvester of locusts, and a sight I've never seen. A flock of some two dozen **Brown Falcons** (*Falco berigora*) circling tightly together above another locust swarm.

Sugamel niger, the black honey-sucker. The thin clear 'seeeee' of **Black Honeyeaters** sometimes seems almost a part of the background music of the landscape, though perhaps that's just my tinnitis-raddled ears making it seem so. The birds appear as tiny silhouettes against the overcast sky, mere knots on the dead twigs they favour as display posts, their bent-needle bills unmistakable. This season the glorious eremophilas – 'desert loving' indeed – are profuse and the lure of their open-mouthed tubes, purple-mottled white, yellow, red and mauve, summonses the **Black Honeyeaters** from across the wide plains.

Undulatus, the wavy one. In the southern channel country the **Budgerigars** (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) have become a part of every joyful minute of our day it seems. Flocks fly at frenetic speeds alongside, swerving towards the windows and jinking over the top at the last possible moment, eliciting unconscious shrieks of delight and fear for their safety. When the rains came the budgies started breeding with startling fecundity, chicks hatching their own eggs at just six weeks of age, building a safety net of a vast population so that some hardy and lucky birds will survive the next dry time – next month, next year, who knows? They rely on the seemingly infinite cornucopia of grass seeds and each stand of Mitchell Grass explodes with vivid green shrapnel as we pass. George Shaw, a frustrated under-resourced early 19th century British Museum employee, named the exquisite tiny parrot for the wavy barred patterns on its back, but he never saw a wild one; I feel very sorry for George.

Ariel, spirit of the air. The roads of the channel country can only exist because of numerous bridges and even more numerous culverts. The culverts might pass beneath the tyres without being noticed, were it not for the whirling clouds of birds above each one; stop and open windows and the bus fills with their musical buzzing as even more arise from beneath us. **Fairy Martins** (*Hirundo ariel*) have benefited greatly from human constructions. Their ancestors relied on cliffs, overhanging banks and big tree hollows to anchor their jumbled apartment cities of funnel-mouthed enclosed mud nests. Today's rusty-headed Fairies have a near limitless range of choices, under these bridges and culverts, and under the eaves of a million bush dwellings and sheds.

Plumifera, the plumed one. **Spinifex Pigeons** (*Geophaps plumifera*) inevitably evoke delight and wonder. They emerge from a red landscape by sleight of feather; a movement changes your focus and suddenly one, two, a dozen exquisite rusty little birds have been there all along. Their ludicrously tall head tufts and red, black and white visages that seem to have come from a child's face-painting stall are borne swiftly through the stony landscape on legs that give the impression more of whirring wheels. One tries not to be anthropomorphic, but some birds make it harder than others.

(Continued on page 13)



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COG welcomes the following new members:

J Brannan, Florey

L Rayner, Lyneham

R Kitchens, Downer

D Nicholls, Deakin

NEXT NEWSLETTER

August deadline

Wednesday 28 July 2010

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

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

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

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COG membership

2010-2011 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for changed address or other details

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund
Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

Office

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allen on 6254 6520

COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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Gang-gang

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