



Gang-gang

JULY 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.07.2012

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 short presentation will be by **Brani Igic**, a Ph D student at the ANU's Research School of Biology, entitled **Brown Thornbill mimicry**.

The main presentation will be by **Dr Denis Saunders**, a regular speaker to COG. He will be showing a DVD called "**Steps to Recovery; Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project**".

This DVD, prepared for Birdlife Australia, was produced by the film maker who made the film "On a Wing and a Prayer" broadcast by ABC-TV in March. This film was based on a year in the life of a pair of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos. It was filmed in Denis's study area and was based on much of his research. The DVD "Steps to Recovery; Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project" features discussion of the recovery actions and interviews with those involved. Denis will provide a brief introduction to the DVD and then wrap up with an update on some interesting results relating to timing of the birds' breeding in relation to rainfall and the implications of those results in the light of predicted changes to the climate of south-western Australia.

What to watch out for this month

The early returns from the first two weeks of Geoffrey Dabb's winter birds survey tend to confirm my impressions that very few "summer migrants" are staying in Canberra this winter, certainly compared with his similar survey two years ago when, based on my experience in over 35 years living here, I thought that the numbers and range of species seen were atypical.

Again this year the clear stand out is the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, with only single records so far of the **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Olive-backed Oriole**, two other species which tend to leave late and partially stay over. Other species on Geoffrey's list of 12 reported so far include several sightings of the **Rufous Whistler**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and the **Australian Reed-Warbler**, and single records of the **Rufous Songlark** and **Superb Parrot**.



Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
(*Coracina novaehollandiae*)

Photo by Julian Robinson

Not on Geoffrey's list is the **Grey Fantail**, and I've corresponded with him a number of times over the past couple of years to ask why not, but this year he's again being proven correct as there seem to be significantly more staying over than any of the dozen species on his list. In fact, unusually, I've recorded it in my GBS for each week of winter so far. The **Welcome Swallow** is also in this category and is often more abundant in my local area in winter than over summer but absent so far this year.

However, a number of other summer migrants not on Geoffrey's list have also been recorded, including **Tree Martins** which, according to the *2010-2011 Annual Bird Report*, do over-winter in reasonable numbers and, presumably because they are considered "complete" migrants, the **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Shining Bronze-cuckoo**. Cuckoos in particular are 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.

Everyone welcome

So please contribute to Geoffrey's survey in order that a much truer reflection of the ACT's population of summer migrants remaining over winter may be obtained. It is clear that there is a spectrum of migration patterns, with some species totally migratory from this area, with very few if any individuals staying over most winters, but for other species, which do migrate much further than the altitudinal winter migrants mentioned below, many individuals remaining in Canberra during the winter months. These include species such as the **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** (both almost absent from my local area this winter, but still being reported elsewhere), **Silvereye** and even the **Red Wattlebird**.

Of the winter altitudinal visitors to Canberra the **Flame Robin** has continued to be occasionally reported, mainly well outside of Canberra's suburbs (I cannot find them in my local area of Cooleman Ridge/Narrabundah Hill this year). Likewise there have been only a few reported observations of **Yellow-faced, Brown-headed, Fuscous** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** during June. While there have been a few reports of the **Rose Robin**, most notably the ones at the Botanic Gardens, and there has been one report of each of the **Crescent Honeyeater** and **Swift Parrot**, there have been no reports in June of **Pink Robins** or **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**.



Double-barred Finch
(*Taeniopygia bichenovii*)

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

Large flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs** and **Corellas** have been very noticeable feeding on the ground on roadside, median strips, ovals, etc., over the past month, and don't appear to have been limited to their usual haunts of the close-in suburbs south of the lake. There has also been an apparent increase in the flock size of the **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo**, often seen around the pines in Yarralumla. Mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) also continue to be reported, with quite a few being of the ground-feeding variety involving a mix of several **finch species, Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, etc. These have often included a surprisingly high number of **Double-barred Finches**, including over 35 in a nearly pure flock I saw at Narrabundah Hill where the **Red-browed Finch** is often the dominant species.

There have been a number of sightings of the **Red-browed Treecreeper** in the Botanic Gardens including the postings of images on the chatline, and there has been some discussion on how far this is from its usual habitat of the high wet forests in the ranges. My estimate is that these birds, noted in the ACT Bird Atlas as being sedentary, would have had to have travelled across at least 15 km of unsuitable habitat. The **Brown Gerygone** also observed in the Botanic Gardens towards the end of the month would have had to have travelled over many kilometres of unsuitable habitat, but has been recorded there previously. Like the **Powerful Owl** of some years ago, one really marvels at how birds are able to find these small spots of suitable habitat. It's another example of how you can never be certain of what might pop up.

The **Black-shouldered Kite** continues to be widely reported, including with photos posted on the chatline of them making inroads on the introduced rodent population. This autumn breeder raised at least one brood at Callum Brae; the juveniles/immatures can easily be recognised by extensive orange around their heads/necks/upper breasts, so please examine all sightings carefully. While in the first month of winter it may seem too early to look for evidence of breeding activity, in July the early nesters such as the **Australian Magpie, Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and the **Masked Lapwing** will be starting. The **White-winged Choughs** also seem to be thinking of breeding already; Sandra Henderson's post of one bird being busy on some home renovations on the nest they used last year at Pine Island South was matched by mine when I again observed them coming in to roost late in June to the tree close to the dam at the end of Kathner Street, Chapman. This time it was past 4:50 pm when the sun had already dropped behind the Brindabellas, and one of the birds spent about a minute trying out the last year's nest for size, while calling softly.

So who said that the winter in Canberra was long and the birding was poor? Already at the end of July some birds will be breeding and the first of the "summer migrants" may be expected to return. Again please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

Field Trip Reports

Saturday 16 June — Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve — Superb Lyrebird Survey

The ninth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird**, designed to provide an index of population numbers since the 2003 bushfires, was run under threatening rain, cool, cold and, unlike last year, still conditions.

The fourteen COG members and friends were all assembled at the car park by 8.00 am and after breaking up into teams soon started to survey the five main walking trails. Unlike last year there were insufficient numbers to survey the redesigned Lyrebird/Cascades trail. The Gibraltar Rocks track has a new alignment with the path now going slightly to the north of the old trail. Both trails were covered during the survey.

Taking a minimum count, 22 individual **Superb Lyrebirds** were recorded within the Reserve compared with 6, 14, 12, 12, 19, 19-20, 20 and 13 in previous years (Gibraltar Rocks-4, Devil's Gap-3, Fishing Gap-2, Ashbrook-3, Camel Back-10) and appears to confirm that the low count last year, particularly from Camel Back, was influenced by the weather.

During the survey a total of 34 species was recorded, similar to previous years, with the number seen depending very much on the trail walked; Gibraltar Rocks-23, Devil's Gap-26, Fishing Gap-13, Ashbrook-11, Camel Back-12 with as usual a greater number of species being recorded from the dryer western-facing slopes. There were 6 species reported from all trails: **Superb Lyrebird**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Striated Thornbill**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **White-browed Scrub-wren** and **White-throated Treecreeper**. Species seen from one track only included the **Grey Butcherbird**, **Maggie Lark**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Satin Bowerbird**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Red-browed Finch**, **Flame Robin**, **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo**, **Common Bronzewing** and **Grey Fantail**.

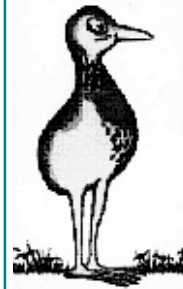
Many thanks to the participants and to the authorities for waiving the entry fees. — **Chris Davey**

Wednesday 20 June — Lake Rd, Bungendore

25 members and guests gathered at the end of Lake Rd Bungendore on a cold (2 degrees C) and foggy morning.

After the rules of engagement were explained we moved about 1km down the road to the Big Dam. This had more water in it than for many years - several of those attending had never seen it as anything but a horse paddock. We recorded 25 species at this stop. Highlights on the water were four **Australasian Shovelers** and two **Chestnut Teal**. On the edge of the water were two **White-necked Herons** which also obliged by flying and showing the "landing lights" on the leading edge of the wings. A bit back from the water were four **Cattle Egrets** and in an adjacent paddock about 20 more of this species. 10 **Masked Lapwings** were given careful consideration but alas, all had a clear break across the breast.

We then moved up the road and consolidated into a smaller number of cars before entering private property (with prior arrangement with the land-



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August: Alice Springs

New October tour: Scarlet-chested
Parrot tour
Yorke Peninsula

September: Strzelecki Outback

November: New Caledonia

November: SW Western Australia

2012 Plains-wanderer weekends

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15 & 16 December
29 & 30 December

2013 Tours

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February: New Zealand

June: Top End

July: Gulf Country

August: Alice Springs

September: Strzelecki Outback

October: Yorke Peninsula
to Ceduna

2013 Plains-wanderer weekends

23 & 24 November
7 & 8 December

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Photo by Steve Wallace

holders). We birded our way along the western edge of Lake George for about two km recording 46 species as we did. The water was a reasonable distance away and even with three telescopes available it wasn't possible to accurately count the waterbirds. Taking expert advice, we estimated that there were at least 3,000 ducks in a series of rafts near our turning point (and many others in other parts of the Lake), including **Grey Teal**, **Pacific Black Duck** and **Hardhead**. Some **Chestnut Teal** were also identified and two **Australian Shelduck** emerged for a graze. 150 **Silver Gulls** were also walking around on the grass.

On the land the outstanding birds were robins, with a very obliging pair of **Scarlet Robins** and at least 12 **Flame Robins** visible, and finches with 10 **Diamond Firetails**, four **Red-browed Finches** and 40+ **European Goldfinches** recorded in a fairly small area. As we drove out of the property a dozen **Double-barred Finches** were also seen.

We totalled 55 species for the trip. Thank you to Helen and Carol of Silver Wattle Quaker Centre for allowing us to visit. A full list of species at each site will be added to the COG website under the trips icon (ie the Pelican).

Sunday 24 June – Australian National Botanic Gardens

Fifteen members and guests joined the walk in brisk and breezy conditions, and those who had been reading the chatline started by putting in an order for a **Rose Robin** and a **Red-browed Treecreeper**.

We set off towards the CSIRO gate, where the robin was last seen. As requested, it appeared on the path ahead of us as we stood next to the gate, and good views were had by all, followed later by views of a female. Unfortunately we had no luck with the treecreeper, and had a few frustrating about-turns as we met closed-off paths.

Striated Thornbills, **Brown Thornbills**, **New Holland Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills** were all present in good numbers, and a **Spotted Pardalote** came down to eye-level to give everyone a good view. Other birds seen included **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **Australian King Parrots** and **Crimson Rosellas**.

Over towards the rainforest gully a **White-throated Treecreeper** vied for attention with two **Grey Fantails** hawking for insects, and just as the group started to think about heading for a coffee or a browse in the bookshop, Anthony heard a **Brown Gerygone**.

The group had a good look at the bird above the path near the Brittle Gum lawn.

Thanks to Anthony for another brilliant ANBG outing. — **Sandra Henderson**



Eastern Spinebill
(*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*)

Photo by David Cook

Future Field Trips

Before the start of each trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities. The form reads as follows:

I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.

Changes to trips are notified on the trips page of the COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/> and on the COG chat-line at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>.

Sunday 15 July - Superb Lyrebirds - Tidbinbilla NR

This walk will be along the Lyrebird and Cascades Trails in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. These have been rebuilt after the 2003 fires. We will be looking for the birds that are using the rapidly regrowing wet forest of the eastern slope of the Tidbinbilla Range. You will hear Lyrebirds and hopefully see one. Come prepared for changeable weather conditions. Bring morning tea if you wish; we will finish well before noon.

Registered participants meet 8 am at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve car park (adjacent to the Visitor Centre). The usual vehicle entry fee to the Reserve will apply.

Registration is essential as the number of participants will be limited. Bookings may be made by phoning the trip's leader **David McDonald** on **6238 3706** or by emailing him on [david\[at\]dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:david[at]dnmcdonald.id.au).

Wednesday 18 July - Australian National Botanic Gardens

Meet in the car park near the bridge to the cafe at 9 am. As Martin Butetrfeld will be away on that date, any queries should go to cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au.

Saturday 21 July – Eden Pelagic

The Sunday trip was cancelled because of a lack of numbers by the advertised closing date. The Saturday trip is going ahead but is fully booked, with a waiting list. The trip is being led by Anthony Overs. Sandra Henderson will be in touch with participants closer to the time with departure details and a suggested time/place for Friday night for those who want to meet over dinner.

Sunday 29 July - Mount Majura Vineyard

This is a repeat of a most excellent field trip run last year in the Mount Majura Vineyard (MMV). MMV is now the ACT's only working vineyard that offers both wine making and cellar door facilities and sits at the foot of Mount Majura, on the eastern side. Stuart spends nearly every working day outside and has managed to 'tick' more than 68 species within the parameters of MMV, which belies the notion that agriculture (viticulture) creates 'poor birding zones'. To his surprise, with the advent of winter, an avian exodus did not occur; on the contrary, large flocks of **Diamond Firetail**, **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, and both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robin** were sighted on a regular basis. Nothing can be promised; at worst you will experience a nice morning walk, with some hills, fresh air, outstanding views and some tid-bits of info about MMV and Canberra wine in general. Please dress appropriately for this walk, as the terrain ('terroir') is quite open and the ground can be uneven and rocky in parts (though we will be sticking to established paths as a rule). Rabbit holes hidden by grass pose a threat to ankles.

Meet Stuart Harris at 8.45 am in MMV's large car park off Majura Rd (<http://www.mountmajura.com.au/index.html>) which runs between Canberra Airport/Pialligo (in the south) and the Federal Hwy/Horse Park Drive (in the north), for a prompt 9 am start.

Before entering the vineyard, the bottom of your shoes will be sprayed with Methylated Spirit which will prevent the spread of Phylloxera fungal spores which have had, and could have, a devastating effect on the root systems of grape vines.

The walk will finish by 11-1130am. There are toilet facilities and the cellar door will be open if people wish to avail themselves of a seated wine tasting at the conclusion of our walk. No booking required.

Sunday 5 August - Googong Foreshores

Join Philip Veerman for an afternoon's birding at Googong Dam. If you wish to carpool from the southside of Canberra, meet in the carpark at Kambah Village, corner of Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent, at 11.15am or the Spotlight car park at Warroo Street and Bungendore Road at 11:45 am or meet at the Ranger station at middday. To access Googong Foreshores, take the Old Cooma Road from Queanbeyan and turn left into Googong Dam Road. The walk will begin at the Ranger Station at 12 midday and will be finished by 4 pm. You can contact Philip by phone on 62314041 or pveerman@pcug.org.au (or on the day 0411716177).

Saturday 11 August - Lake Ginninderra Beginners' morning

This is the second of our bird walks in 2012 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 19 August - Burra

This outing is to Ian Anderson's property, "Kurrajong Gardens", at 156 Hutchinson Place, Burra. People can either travel there direct or if any want to travel in a convoy they can meet at my place in Canberra, 12 Wylly Place, Hughes. It takes about 40 minutes to drive from Hughes to the property. I suggest we aim to arrive at Burra by 8.30 am. I will therefore expect to depart from my place in Hughes by 7.50am.

Those wishing to travel direct to the property from Canberra will need to use a part of the section of the Old Queanbeyan to Cooma Road between Queanbeyan and Williamsdale. One of the options, perhaps the easiest, is to take the Monaro Highway and just before Williamsdale take the turn left towards Burra. Continue on this section of the Old Queanbeyan to Cooma Road for about seven or eight kilometres, most of which is dirt, until you come to a right hand turn with a bitumen road. This road is called Badgery Road. Continue on this road for about a kilometre. Turn right into a cul-de-sac, Hutchinson Place, which is a dirt road. The property, near the top of the cul-de-sac, has the number 156 stamped on a metal plaque on the fence, and has a Conservation Agreement sign on the front gate with the name "Kurrajong Gardens".

Those coming from the Queanbeyan direction need to take the Queanbeyan to Guises Creek Road. (There is no settlement at Guises Creek which is a fire control centre on the Monaro Highway.) Turn left at the Burra sign just before the historic Anglican Church on the right hand side. Continue on past the turnoff to London Bridge and Tin Hut Dam on the left until you come to Badgery Road on the left hand side, after turning right off the Burra to Michelago Road and crossing Burra Creek heading towards Williamsdale. Turn onto Badgery Road and follow the instructions from there given above.

A third option which may suit some people is to travel along the Monaro Highway to the Guises Creek Fire Station, turn left and continue on towards Queanbeyan until they reach the Burra sign. They can then following the instructions given above.

Contact Ian on 62810609 (home) or 0413754453, or by email: [Iananderson\(at\)grapevine.com.au](mailto:Iananderson(at)grapevine.com.au)

I suggest those coming bring something for a morning tea snack. There are facilities available at the property, including hot water and protection from inclement weather. — **Ian Anderson**

Garden Bird Survey Notes

GBS Coordinator

Having been the Coordinator of the GBS for 7 of the last 9 years I now find that I have other tasks to address and this will not allow me to do the GBS Coordinator's job as I wish to do it.

I advised the Committee a few weeks ago that I wished to step down from the position and subsequently Duncan McCaskill (duncan.mccaskill@gmail.com) has agreed to take on the position. I thank him for this and assure him that he will enjoy the opportunities this presents. Obviously I will work with him to ensure all goes smoothly with the processing of the Year 31 data.

Usage of GBS data

At the June meeting, both presenters from the Fenner School (Karen Ikin and Laura Rayner) mentioned their use of GBS data in their research.

Charts

Year 32 of the GBS commences on 3 July 2012. The starting day of the weeks for that year will be the Tuesday. A good number of members collected new charts at the June meeting, and a further batch will be available at the July meeting.

It would be appreciated if people could return their completed Year 31 charts at that meeting. This will facilitate the compilation of data for the Annual Bird Report in a timely manner. — **Martin Butterfield**

COMMITTEE NEWS

- Duncan McCaskill has agreed to take over the GBS Coordinator's role from Martin Butterfield.
- COG has received a response from TAMS apologising for the state of the Black Mountain Peninsula barbecues at the time of the COG Christmas party last year.
- COG has had to pay to replace its lock at Mulligans Flat, which was glued by the anti-kangaroo-cull people.
- Work on the new COG website is progressing slowly.
- COG annual subscriptions were due on 1 July. You can pay by mail (see the membership form on the website or in the May *Gang-Gang*), by electronic funds transfer (be sure to identify yourself) or in person at a meeting.
- And to the person who addressed their mailed renewal cheque to "The COG Treasure" - it's nice to know we're appreciated!

— **Sandra Henderson**

Layout Editor Required

COG invites expressions of interest from members who might be willing and able to take over as layout editor for *Gang-gang*.

After five years, Greg Ramsay thinks it is time for some new blood with fresh ideas to take over. He will be available to assist with training and backup from time to time as required.

Anyone with desk-top publishing experience – or with good word processing skills – would be capable of doing the job. If you are interested, please contact Greg on 6286 1564 or gramsay@grapevine.com.au to discuss.

Vale Ann Mckenzie

COG members will be saddened to learn of the death on 1 June, of Ann McKenzie at the age of 86. Ann was a COG member for several decades and served on the committee for many years from the late 1980s. She was a popular, committed and forthright committee member and made an outstanding contribution in the often difficult (and difficult to fill) position of Exhibitions Officer.

Ann grew up in Victoria, worked for CSIRO in Melbourne and then in England for some years. She came to Canberra in the 1960s after her marriage to Colin McKenzie (a friend and colleague in the Trade Department and the Australian Trade Commissioner Service). As a parent with three children, Ann managed to squeeze in a BSc degree in the 1970s. She and Colin travelled extensively during Colin's postings in the Netherlands, Argentina & Iraq.

Ann and Colin shared a love of Australian native birds and plants, and their home and garden, on a splendid battleaxe block in Chapman, just a short distance from ours, was always a pleasant place to visit. Ann was also an active member of Canberra Field Naturalists, Womens Electoral Lobby, served Meals-on-Wheels and, as a lover of classical music, sang with the Llewellyn Choir. The house and garden survived the 2003 bushfires but they moved out as Colin's health declined, prior to his death in 2007.

A large number of family and friends including many from interstate attended Ann's farewell service on 8 June.

— Bruce Lindenmayer



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AvIAN Whimsy #94 — Hircine Magpies on the Menu

There's something about yellow eyes. Maurice Sendak knew it when he painted the Wild Things. Look up 'yellow eyes' on a Famous Search Engine and, once you get past all the people who want to know how to turn their yellow irises back to nice white without bothering with a doctor, you get into lots of strange stuff about demons. (A quick office survey done on my behalf elicited 'cats', jaundice', 'drinking too much', 'unnatural' and 'demon' as the response to 'yellow eyes'.) I must confess that there is something slightly disconcertingly starey about them; think of **boobooks**, **stone-curlews** or **goshawks**. Very few passerines have opted for the look – in Australia I can think of **Grey-crowned Bblers**, **Crimson** and **Gibber Chats**, **Ground** and **Barred Cuckoo-shrikes** (and don't tell me they don't both look a little manic around the eyes!). And of course **Currawongs**.

John White, surgeon with the First Fleet, provided in his 1790 *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales* an illustration of a **Pied Currawong**, calling it the **White-vented Crow**, which thus became one of the first Australian birds to acquire an English name. Oddly, nearly 60 years later John Gould lamented the fact that he had been unable to obtain any eggs, though he could describe the nest. Presumably they nested up in the Blue Mountains, although Gould and his network of collectors were well-travelled. Throughout the 19th century, awkward combination names, especially crow-shrike and bell-magpie, prevailed (it astonishes me how many disparate Australian birds reminded our forebears of shrikes). Unexpectedly, 'currawong' did not make an appearance in the literature until well into the 20th century. I say unexpectedly because its origin, according to the *Australian National Dictionary*, is with the Jagawa language of south-east Queensland and surely it must have been in usage among the colonists to have survived until then, but oral tradition can be hard to identify from a distance. (Other reputable sources, such as the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*, suggest it was from the Sydney languages.) Again according to the *Australian National Dictionary* the first written appearance is in the form 'churwung', from a 1905 illustrated book on fishing in the Brisbane River. 'Currawong' first entered the birding literature 21 years later in what must have been something of a shock to Australian birders, in the RAOU's second *Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia*.

(For another aspect of a Brisbane language word for currawong we are indebted – for not the first time – to Edward Morris in his 1898 *Dictionary of Austral English*. In it he reports that a Mr. Meston, in the *Sydney Bulletin* in 1896, says "jackeroo comes from the old Brisbane blacks, who called the pied crow shrike 'tchaceroo', a gabbling and garrulous bird. They called the German missionaries of 1838 'jackeroo', a gabbler, because they were always talking. Afterwards they applied it to all white men." This doesn't necessary make it true however, any more than does the fact that I'd like it to be...)

Years ago I interviewed a retired ACT forester on life in the local mountains in the 1950s; he told me (under condition that I didn't use it with the rest of his story) that towards the end of the fortnightly pay cycle food often had to be supplemented with currawong meat. They were, however, far from the first European-Australians to discover currawong edibility. George Caley, Banks' irascible collector, tells us that the colonists referred to Pied Currawongs as Hircine Magpies. "It is very good eating," he assures his readers, "except the hinder parts, which have a strong goatish smell." (Hircine, as I'm sure you already know, comes from the Latin *hircus*, a billy-goat.) I can find no other reference to this name. Gould reported that "the flesh of this species is frequently eaten by the colonists, and is by some considered a delicacy". In 1904 Alfred North, in a book on Australia eggs and nests, passed on the information from a correspondent that they were known as Mutton Birds in the Albury area.

Obviously enough, currawongs are not everyone's favourite bird, but earlier ornithologists at least regarded them highly. They are the "last and highest blossom of the avine tree" according to British ornithologist Alfred Newton in his monumental 1896 *Dictionary of Birds*, referring to currawongs, magpies, birds of paradise and cuckoo-shrikes, which he grouped. Doubtless influenced by this, John Leach concluded his 1911 *Australian Bird Book* by describing them as "at the very summit of the avine tree". (And it strikes me that 'avine' is a word to be resurrected.)

I can't really avoid the raging controversies over currawongs – surely the universally least popular of Australian native birds? – but I'll have to leave that aspect for another time. Meantime if, unlike me, you're a streperaphobe, bad luck that you were born too late to legally curry a currawong.

— Ian Fraser (calochilus51@internode.on.net)

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!!

It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs.

It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine
(02) 6258 3531, or
barbdebruine@hotmail.com
or see

<http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.



Rufous Whistler
(*Pachycephala rufiventris*)

Photo by Stuart Harris

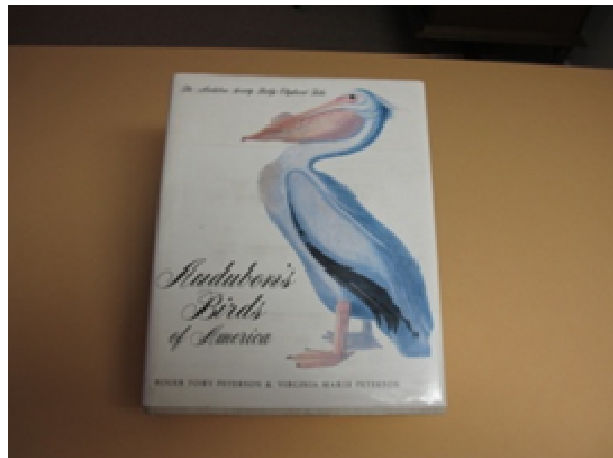
PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

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

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

Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay
6286 1564 or
gramsay@grapevine.com.au



For Sale

The Audubon Society Baby Elephant Folio

AUDUBON'S BIRDS OF AMERICA

By Roger Tory Peterson & Virginia Marie Peterson

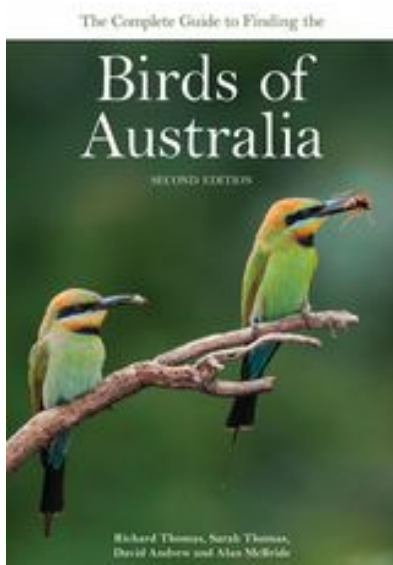
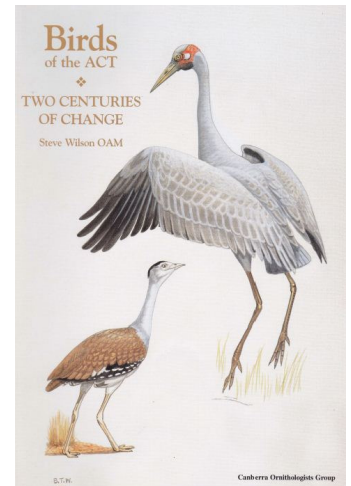
1st Edition 1981
Excellent condition
Asking price \$150
Pick-up or deliver in **Canberra**
Contact Merelyn on
6247 5488

COG SALES

Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change *Steve Wilson OAM, Canberra Ornithologists Group*

Published by COG in 1999, a number of this historic book were found in COG's dusty archives recently. The book provides a 'history of recorded birds' of the ACT for two centuries. It contains a Margaret Preston woodcut and illustrations by Robin Brown. Many of the people who contributed to the book are still active members today.

A beautiful book for only \$10.



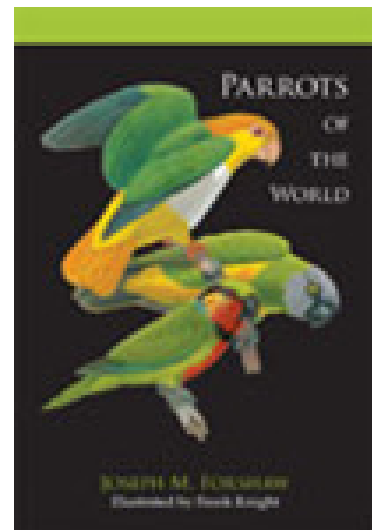
The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia, 2nd Ed.

Richard Thomas, Sarah Thomas, David Andrew, Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. Member's price \$32.

Parrots of the World **Joseph M Forshaw, Frank Knight**

A stunningly illustrated, easy-to-use field guide to all 356 species and well-differentiated subspecies of parrots. 2010 - CSIRO PUBLISHING - 336pp - \$28



Invisible Connections: Why Migrating Shorebirds Need the Yellow Sea **Phil Battley, Brian McCaffery, Danny Rogers, Jae-Sang Hong, Nial Moores, Ju Yung-Ki, Jan Lewis, Theunis Piersma, Jan van de Kam**

Shorebird migration is one of nature's most spectacular phenomena, creating surprising links between countries, habitats and people.

2010 - CSIRO PUBLISHING - 160pp - Colour photographs - \$34.95



WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

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

patricia.walker@bigpond.com
phone 02 6251 3136

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

K Town, Amaroo
J Malins, Watson
L Kench, Fisher
J Bourne, Yarraluma
S McNeill, Duffy

NEXT NEWSLETTER

August deadline

Wednesday 25 July 2012

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.

COG info

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Email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au

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Email: alisonrf@inet.net.au

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cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

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Civic Square, ACT 2608

Newsletter distribution
Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership
2010-2011 memberships:
• Individuals, families and institutions: \$35
• school students (under 18): \$17.50.

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

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

COG website
www.canberrabirds.org.au

Cog library
For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan 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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