

Gang-gang

June 2011

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 8.6.11

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 **Martin Butterfield**, Garden Bird Survey (GBS) Co-ordinator. After a few words about the GBS, Martin will offer some Powerpoint images and personal reflections on two British Bird reserves and contrast them with some aspects of Jerrabomberra wetlands."

The main presentation will be by **Dr Tonia Cochran**, Inala Nature Tours, Bruny Island, Tasmania on *Tasmania's endemic and threatened birds*.

As an island state of Australia, Tasmania's separation from the Australian mainland has resulted in a high degree of endemism in its flora and fauna. It is also a stronghold for a number of species that have either become rare or extinct elsewhere in Australia and now exist in Tasmania
(Continued on page 2)

What to watch out for this month

The prominence of mixed feeding flocks (MFF) has continued into the last month of the autumn of 2011, with many subscribers reporting them on the chat line. MFFs may be expected to continue for at least part of winter, though the rapidly drying conditions may hasten their breaking up. Certainly the one in my GBS for the past three months had almost petered out by the second last weekend in May, compared with containing well over 50 birds at its peak. The range of birds reported in them has also been quite remarkable, often with one or two unexpected species, the most notable being a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** in Philip Veerman's Kambah garden.

Based on his observations at Kelly Road, Geoffrey Dabb has suggested on the chat line that they can be moving (MMFF) or resident (RMFF), though I suspect that in many cases they're a mix of both, which they seem to be in my garden. While you often see approximately the same numbers of each species in successive days, you can never be sure that the **pardalotes** and **silveryeyes** you're seeing today are exactly the same birds as yesterday, or if they are new birds which have moved in while the others have moved on. Over the past weeks the **Striated Pardalotes**, the main species in the first month, had all moved on; others are also reporting lower numbers of them recently. There has also been an inconclusive debate on the chat line as to which are the "nuclear" or "trigger" species around which a MFF forms. (Also see *Martin Butterfield's comments in the GBS Report on page 10 — Ed*) While **pardalotes** and **silveryeyes** have often been present, certainly the MFFs reported this season do not seem to have had a single common species or element such as feeding on lerps.

Apart from the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** (in my experience the **Shining**

Spotted Pardalote
(*Pardalotus punctatus*)



Photo by Robin Eckermann

(Continued on page 2)

Everyone welcome

(June Meeting — Continued from page 1)

because of its isolation and retention of large areas of suitable habitat (over 40% of the state is reserved as National Parks and State Reserves). This provides for some rather exciting birding opportunities and options to be involved with programs designed to help protect the threatened birds found here.

Tasmania is home to 12 species of endemic birds and the presentation will focus on those. One of these species, the **Forty-spotted Pardalote**, is also listed as an endangered species and recent survey results have shown a 60% crash in their population over the last 12 years giving them the unenviable position of being one of Australia's rarest birds. As a member of the National Recovery Program for this species and the owner of a large property that fortuitously contains one of the largest known colonies of this species, Tonia will cover information on this, as well as other threatened birds such as the **Swift Parrot** and **Orange-bellied Parrot** which migrate to Tasmania to breed each year (fewer than 50 **Orange-bellied Parrots** are now believed to remain in the wild).

The presentation will be accompanied by images, and will highlight information on field characters for each species to facilitate their identification for birders visiting Tasmania.

Dr. Cochran is the Managing Director, owner, main travel consultant and guide for Inala Nature Tours, a tour company and travel agency that specialises in designing birding and wildlife tours around Australia. She is also heavily involved with threatened species conservation and is part of the National Recovery Team for the **Forty-spotted Pardalote** and eagle (**Wedge-tailed** and **White-bellied Sea Eagle**) programs and a contributor to other endangered species programs such as that for the **Swift Parrot** and **Grey Goshawk**, both of which breed on her property.

Tonia lives at "Inala", a 500 acre private wildlife reserve on south Bruny Island in Tasmania, but spends a lot of time away leading tours around Australia, speaking at ecotourism and birding conferences around the world and getting involved with wildlife documentaries. Tonia has a doctorate in Zoology from the University of Melbourne and has been guiding and designing wildlife and birding tours for the past 17 years. Before that she was a Marine Biologist with the Australian Antarctic Division and participated in seven research voyages to sub Antarctica and the Antarctic continent.

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

Bronze-Cuckoo is the more likely to be seen in winter), there have been a number of other sightings, often just of a single bird, of species expected to have left long ago. The most unexpected was the **Latham's Snipe** seen at the North Watson Wetland in mid May (I really should make more mention of this migratory species associated with water in this column, and move away from my bias on bush birds). Other sightings of the earlier departing migrants since late April have been of a young **Tree Martin**, a **Mistletoebird**, and a **Leaden Flycatcher**. While there have been no further reports of **Superb Parrots**, I understand there are still some around on the north side of Canberra.

Of the slightly later staying migratory species there have been regular reports of the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory cuckoo in this area, several observations of the **Rufous Whistler**, with the last **Noisy Friarbirds** being reported in the first week of May. On the other hand there has been limited further reporting of **honeyeaters** migrating, though some still seem to be around, as noted in the report from the autumn/winter birds' bus trip elsewhere in this newsletter.

Of those species traditionally the last to leave Canberra (noting they do overwinter in varying numbers), the **Grey Fantail**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, and **Olive-backed Oriole** have still been regularly seen and reported, much more so than the **Dusky Woodswallow**, which hasn't been reported so far in May, though again I understand there are still a few around, but in much lower numbers than in 2010.

Considering the species that come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas, the **Flame Robin** seems to be present in low numbers only, and has still not been recorded in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge and the southern part of Narrabundah Hill. There have been limited reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** and of the **Swift Parrot**, the latter unexpected as there's not much local eucalyptus flowering to attract this species. On the other hand the **Rose** and **Pink Robin** have both been reported in May, with up to three of the former in the Australian National Botanic Gardens, where a female of the latter was also seen by many observers from mid May following the posting of an image on the chat line by Roger Williams.

Breeding is still being reported, especially of water birds, with Steve Wallace noting on 10 May dependent young (many still with down) of the following species still being common at West Belconnen Pond: **Eurasian Coot**, **Dusky Moorhen**, **Purple Swamphen** and **Pacific Black Duck** (three ducklings less than half the size of the parents). There was also a **Black Swan** on a nest. An **Australasian Darter** was still on a nest on the Molonglo River at Weston Creek on 29 April. On 7 May Barbara Allan reported a **Diamond Firetail** was being pestered by two begging young at the Pinnacle, and that the adult bird finally relented and fed one of them. Dependent young **Gang-gangs** as well as **Rainbow Lorikeets** were also reported during May, and in my local patch young **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Galahs** can still regularly be heard being fed; it seems to have been a good breeding season for them.

Perhaps it's because of the early evenings, which seem to get dark very quickly, that I always find it easier to observe birds preparing to roost at this time of year. **Galahs**, **Australian Magpies** and **Crested Pigeons** have recently been seen doing this, and unfortunately a small **Common Myna** roost seems to have formed in a blue gum just outside my GBS site.

So while winter may have come by the time this *Gang-gang* reaches you, and activity may be quieter, there is still plenty to observe and report from the Canberra bird scene. Continue to keep an eye (and ear) open for all of the above species, and all significant observations of species mentioned above, especially of breeding or outside of the time they usually are considered to be present, should be reported for inclusion in the COG database.

— Jack Holland

Field Trip Reports

Easter 2011 — Willandra

After a rocky start due to the road into Willandra only opening on the Thursday afternoon before Easter, and braving a reported mouse plague, 20 COG members had a very birdy Easter camp out with 125 species recorded over the five days. Always keen to look on the bright side, the mouse plague had some

Black Falcon
(*Falco subniger*)

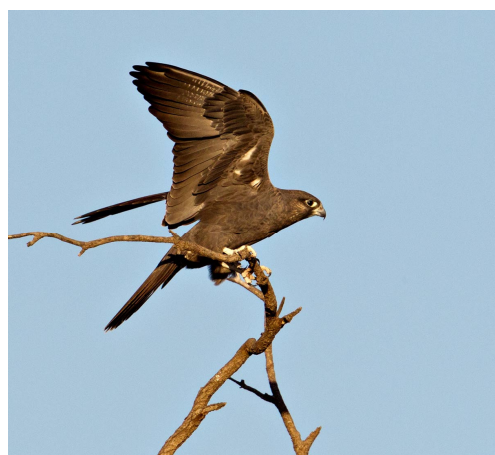


Photo by Julian Robinson

particular advantages with 12 raptor species seen. Highlights were numerous views of both **Black Falcons** and **Spotted Harriers**. Julian Robinson had such a close up view of a harrier as it sailed past his car that he was too awestruck to take a photo! We also came across a flock of around 10 **Black-shouldered Kites** that had obviously been breeding in the area. Each one was meticulously scanned in case it turned out to be a **Letter-winged Kite**, but no such luck. The down side of the mouse plague was that Sandra Henderson and Jean Casburn, who stayed in the Shearers' Quarters, had to spend the night fending them off rather than sleeping.



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2011 Tours

22 June — 5 July 2011

Top End

Darwin-Kakadu NP-Katherine-Kununurra

10 — 17 July 2011

Alice Springs

6 — 13 August 2011

Pilbara (Western Australia)

Karijini and Millstream
& Chichester National Parks

3 — 22 September 2011

Strzelecki Track, Outback

13 — 22 October 2011

**York Peninsula, Lake Gilles,
Ceduna**

Plains-wanderer Weekends

26 & 27 November 2011

New Year's Eve 2011

2012 tours

January: New Zealand

February: Tasmania

**March-April: Sabah, Laos,
Thailand**

**Check our website
www.philipmaher.co**

Willandra has a lovely camping area near the homestead, which is adjacent to Willandra Creek. The creek has a weir and in good years such as this, water forms a lagoon around the homestead and camping areas. The surrounding vegetation proved very productive for some of the smaller woodland birds such as **Red-capped Robins**, **White-winged** and **Variegated Fairy-wrens** and **Chestnut-rumped Thornbills**. With an embarrassing number of onlookers, John and I launched our inflatable canoe and paddled around the lagoon flushing numerous juvenile **Nankeen Night-Herons**. Julian took his more stylish canoe upstream for three km and caught up with a lone **Black-tailed Native-hen** amongst other waterbirds.

The large areas of grassland on Willandra were fruitful and numerous **Stubble Quail** were flushed while hunting for **White-winged Fairy-wrens** and **White-fronted Chats**. The vegetation was in good condition with six different varieties of saltbush in flower or fruit. We spotlighted an **Inland Dotterel**, **Owlet-nightjar**, **Tawny Frogmouth** and a number of **Barn Owls**.

Steve Holliday's knowledge of reptiles and frogs was invaluable. While most of us sat round the fire eating Easter eggs and listening to Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer entertain us with stories about why men's and women's brains are different, Steve was hunting down an Inland Carpet Python (in the toilet block!), Variegated Gecko, Giant Banjo Frog and Peron's Tree Frog. Dan Hoops identified a Painted Burrowing Frog while out spotlighting and Sue Lashko was entertained by spotting a **Tawny Frogmouth** that decided to devour a Green Tree Frog while she was watching.

Noel Luff had organised an interesting program which included excursions to two nature reserves in the Hillston area, Loughnan and Langtree. Loughnan is a patch of mallee where **Malleefowl** had been reported. Unfortunately we dipped out on spotting one, but the mallee was in good condition and the **Splendid Fairy-wrens** were a highlight. Langtree is a Callitris woodland that provided good views of **Hooded Robin**, **Restless Flycatcher**, **Grey-fronted Honeyeater**, **White-winged Triller** and **Painted Button-quail**.

We took a detour through Merriwagga to catch sight of some **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos** that David and Kathy Cook had seen on the drive in to Willandra two days before. A few of the more adventurous dropped in for a beer at the pub which is renowned for having the tallest bar in Australia. Pat Moffat enjoyed climbing one of the tall stools at the bar and looking down on Martyn.

A big thank you to Noel and Ethel Luff for an outstanding campout which we all thoroughly enjoyed. More photos can be found in Julian Robinson's 'Photo ops' page 14. — **Kathy Walter**

Photo by David Cook



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo
(*Lophochroa leadbeateri*)



Photo by Robin Eckermann

Varied Sittella
(*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*)

Wednesday 18 May – Brooks Hill and Bungendore area

18 members assembled at the Brooks Hill Reserve parking area on a day that was a tad cool to start, but brilliantly clear. Some members who had previously explored the Reserve were a little cautious about predicting a big haul of species here. In fact we marked off 29 species in a bit over two hours which was very acceptable for the season. Notable sightings included a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, at least three **Varied Sittella**, at least four **Scarlet Robins**, more **White-throated Treecreepers** than one could poke a stick at and two (I hesitate to call it a pair, since we didn't enquire that closely) soaring Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Most of us then relocated to the escarpment at Smiths Gap to survey Diane's property. We recorded 25 species there, adding nine species to the day's list giving a very respectable 38 in total. We recorded another **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and five species of honeyeaters (**White-eared**, **White-naped**, **White-plumed**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Eastern Spinebill**). A large

flock (at least 20) of **White-winged Choughs** greeted our return to base. Here we enjoyed some most excellent chestnut and pumpkin soup and **Speckled Warbler** (a nice garden bird) and **Double-barred Finches**.

Very many thanks to Diane for the guiding and the soup! — **Martin Butterfield**

Sunday 22 May – Day bus trip (Canberra's Autumn/Winter Birds)

Under surprisingly clear skies 22 members and guests filled the two hired mini-buses to try to find and learn about the species that come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas, as well as to observe some of the summer migrants which overwinter here in small numbers.

Our first stop was the back entrance of Callum Brae in the SW corner off Mugga Lane. This allowed us to soon find the target mixed feeding flock (MFF) which has been such a feature of the Canberra bird scene this autumn. These species included early sightings of a yet to depart **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike**, good views of altitudinal migrants, including the **White-eared Honeyeater** and a female/immature **Golden Whistler**, as well as several **White-naped Honeyeaters** and a possible young **Brown-headed Honeyeater** (heard calling only once).

We learned about the difference between the local, southern (Victorian) and Tasmanian forms of the **Silvereye**, but only the first two were seen on the day, with surprisingly the local form predominating. We also found a pair of reasonably co-operative **Scarlet Robins**, and received some preliminary tips on the diagnostic features of both as compared with the other robins we hoped to see later in the day. A flock of about 12 migrating **Red Wattlebirds** was seen moving first in a northerly direction and later to the south. As we returned to the buses a highlight was a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** which had alighted on the top of a tree, and was joined by a second as it flew off pursued by the local magpies and ravens.

We next drove to the Australian National Botanic Gardens hoping to find the female **Pink Robin** that had regularly been seen there over the past week, including by Jenny, but unfortunately only she had a reasonable view as it stayed largely in the undergrowth, with the large size of the group possibly spooking it. A partial consolation prize was a brown female/immature **Rose Robin** which also preferred the cover of the foliage and only allowed brief views for most participants, much less so than the nearby **Eastern Yellow Robin**, lovely but not a target species. The **Rose Robin** was not seen or heard again, despite there apparently being at least three currently in the gardens. In fact bird life was surprisingly quiet, though reasonable views were obtained of an **Eastern Spinebill**, and a couple of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, all target species. A couple of overwintering **Welcome Swallows** were also seen feeding high overhead.

After lunch we repaired to Stromlo Forest Park, one of the few places that the **Flame Robin** has been reliably observed this autumn, and eventually found at least a couple of pairs feeding close together in company with some **White-fronted Chats**. Earlier we had seen a group of at least 23 of the latter, surprisingly most of them being adult males. Clearly the habitat there continues to be favourable for them. A **Little Eagle** and a **Nankeen Kestrel** were also seen overhead.

A total of about 50 species were seen on the day, including 14 of 20 or so target species which we had focussed on, though not all of these met the criterion that the whole group had good views. Luckily the weather held; in fact it was the warmest day for some time, positively balmy, and the rain, forecast earlier in the week to start at dawn, didn't come until a shower passed through as we were driving back to return participants to their cars. Again a most enjoyable day, participants learned quite a bit and being together in the buses always makes for a good social time. Once again my thanks to Jenny Bounds for driving the other bus and for helping with the guiding and the reccies of where the birds were to be found, as well as in the planning the itinerary. — **Jack Holland**

Photo by Robin Eckermann



Silvereye
(*Zosterops lateralis*)



Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

Collared Sparrowhawk
(*Accipiter cirrocephalus*)

Sunday 22 May - Jerrabomberra Wetlands with the ACT Down Syndrome Association

This field trip was unique in the long-history of COG as it was the first time we have invited members of the ACT Down Syndrome Association (ACTDSA) to join us on an outing. It provided an opportunity for us to share our knowledge of birds and to make new friends whilst having a lot of fun. It may have been the dire weather forecast in the days leading up to the outing that deterred some people from attending but with a modest group we gathered in the car park at 9:00 am and saw a late-season **Olive-backed Oriole** perched high in a Casuarina, and a **White-faced Heron** feeding in a nearby paddock. From the hides overlooking Kelly Swamp we were able to see and distinguish between the **Pacific Black Duck** and the **Grey Teal**, as well as the **Eurasian Coot**, **Dusky Moorhen** and **Purple Swamphen**. In a flowering Banksia next to the hide we had a brief glimpse of a **New Holland Honeyeater** and heard it calling loudly for some time. Overhead we were treated to a flyby from the **Great Cormorant**. Also seen was a **Collared Sparrowhawk** that flew into a tree and briefly perched before taking off again. On the swamp we also enjoyed seeing the **Black Swan**, **Little Pied Cormorant** and **Australian Wood Duck**. Later in the morning we saw a **Little Eagle** circle directly over our heads. In all we saw thirty-four species in a couple of hours.

I was delighted to receive feedback from Laura Hooper, one of the young participants from the ACTDSA, who said that what she liked most was “watching the eagle go round and round in the sky”. She also said that she liked “watching the birds eating the swamp” and liked seeing the birds through the telescope.

I extend my gratitude to the ACTDSA for agreeing to join us for this field trip. I hope we can join together again in the future and share more fun. I would also like to specifically thank Chris Davey for assisting in leading the walk, sharing his knowledge of water birds and for bringing along his scope for others to use. Please note that photos taken by Laura Hooper will be appearing in the spring newsletter of the ACTDSA and that I will share them with you via the email discussion list later in the year. — **Matthew Frawley**

Future Field Trips

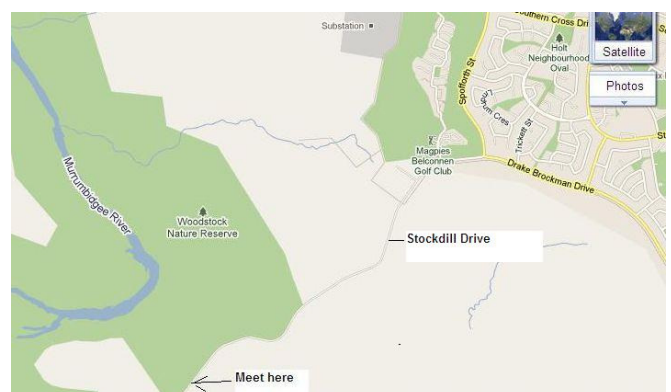
The Guidelines for the conduct and advertising of COG field trips are published on the COG web site. Both trip leaders and members/participants should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. In particular, the Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.

Sat-Mon 11-13 June – Long weekend campout

CANCELLED

Wednesday 15 June – Shepherds Lookout

The June Wednesday Walk will be to Shepherds Lookout and walking towards (and perhaps to) the Murrumbidgee River. Terry Bell and Terry Munro will be the contacts for this walk and will circulate meeting arrangements via the chatline and website (www.canberrabirds.org.au).



Saturday 18 June – Superb Lyrebird Survey – Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning's survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. If interested and for further details please contact Chris Davey on 62546324 (h), email chris_davey@aapt.net.au.

After the survey Peter and Chris will give a presentation on the Tidbinbilla lyrebirds to Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) in the meeting room at Tidbinbilla Depot starting at 1.00pm. The presentation and question time should last for about one hour.

All those involved in the survey, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve staff and any other COG members are welcome to attend. Please note that if the weather is inappropriate on the Saturday we would try to run the survey the following day. If this is the case the presentation will be held on the Sunday. If anyone from COG wants to come to the presentation, please could they let CVA know by emailing vip@cva.org.au so that they can keep a tally on numbers.

Sunday 26 June – Wanniasa Hills (morning walk)

This outing will be a repeat of last years successful trip to the Wanniasa Hills Reserve that adjoins both Farrer Ridge and Isaacs Ridge. This outing will commence at 9am. Park at the Farrer Ridge gate off Erindale Drive (accessible via dirt track from Sulwood Drive (see map). This "parking area" is next to the underpass into Wanniasa Hills Reserve. The reserve is looking great at present after the rain over recent months. There are tracts of woodland as well as large grassy slopes, but be aware there is very little flat ground, so you will be going up and down gentle slopes much of the time (2-3 hours). Highlights last year included great views of **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and **Peregrine Falcon** and some unexpected **Rainbow Lorikeets**. Leader: Sandra Henderson. Email: shirmax2931@gmail.com or phone: 6231 0303. Bookings not necessary.



Saturday 9 July – Urambi Hills (morning walk)

Meeting Place is next to 34 Meredith Circuit, Kambah, ACT 2902. There is plenty of off-street parking on dirt next to the entry gate to the Urambi Hills Nature Reserve. Meet at 9:00 am to walk along the back of the Hills and, if participants like, to climb up to the saddle between the two peaks in search of further birds and better views.

Michael Robbins will lead this walk. Hopefully we will see both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**, and maybe **Diamond Fire-tails**. We are likely to see mixed feeding flocks among the low wattles with an opportunity to distinguish several species of **thornbills**, **Weebills**, and maybe **Southern Whiteface**.

Saturday or Sunday 23 or 24 July – Your Favourite Local Hotspot

If anyone is interested in leading a morning walk to their favourite local bird area, please contact Daniel Mantle (danmantle@hotmail.com) to discuss. New leaders are particularly requested and are not expected to be expert bird-watchers. Only a reasonable knowledge of the area to be visited is required. There are always several keen birders who will join in on the day.

Advance notice

Sat-Mon 1-3 October – Buddigower Nature Reserve – Bird banding

In response to numerous member requests over the past year, I have decided that the banding team will run a bird band-

ing session over the October long weekend at Buddigower Nature Reserve near West Wyalong. This reserve is near to our usual banding site at The Charcoal Tank NR. This is not designed to take people away from the COG trip to Capertee Valley but an additional trip. October is very pleasant in this region, especially now the drought has finally broken.

Please contact Mark Clayton (email: chollop7@bigpond.com) if you are interested and need directions to the site. Accommodation will be camping with a strict 'bring everything in, take everything out' policy. There are NO facilities in the reserve.

Sunday & Monday 2-3 October – Capertee Valley Tour (led by Carol Proberts)

Carol Proberts (a professional bird and wildlife guide in the Blue Mountains) will run a short birding tour for COG members over the early October long weekend. To enable everyone to drive down leisurely on the Saturday, the tour will start on Sunday morning (~7am, unless everyone is keen to start at dawn) and continue till lunchtime on Monday. The cost of the tour will be dependent on the number of people attending and is likely to be less than \$70 per person.

Accommodation can be either camping (on Carol's property with minor fees for amenities) or at local guesthouses. The closest locations recommended by Carol are Binalong self-catering (contact April Mills – 02 6379 7326) or Oskas Cottage (9713 5344). For further non-camping options see Carol's webpage (<http://www.bmbirding.com.au/valley3.html>). Please contact Daniel Mantle (danmantle@hotmail.com or 0413 554 500) to book your place. **ONLY TWO SPACES LEFT.**

Saturday & Sunday 22-23 October – Eden Pelagic (two single day trips)

As there is sustained interest in the Eden pelagics, two further single day trips have been organised for October. These will again be run from Eden Harbour with Freedom Charters. As usual we will travel to the edge of the continental shelf in search of seabirds, cetaceans and seals.

October is one of the peak months for seabird migration off the east coast of Australia and we hope to see a wide diversity of seabirds. We will meet at Eden Harbour early each morning (time to be confirmed) and aim to return to dock by 3pm, thus leaving enough time to drive back to Canberra on Sunday afternoon. 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 the Friday and Saturday evenings.

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.

To book a place on this outing, please contact Daniel Mantle (0413 554 500 or danmantle@hotmail.com), who will co-lead this trip with Anthony Overs. Both trips are restricted to 12 participants and filled on a first reply basis.

Saturday & Sunday 10-11 December – Deniliquin Plains Wanderer Weekend

This year COG will return to the Deniliquin area to search for some of the special birds of the region, including the enigmatic **Plains Wanderer**. The weekend tour will be led by Phil Maher in the same manner as his regular 'Plains Wanderer Weekends' and will incur similar costs (\$270 per person). This early notice is to advise those interested that accommodation should be organised shortly as there are limited local options and they will likely be busy in early December. One recommended option is the Deniliquin Riverside Caravan and Cabin Park (03 5881 1284).

This weekend outing will be limited to 14 people and will be filled on a first reply basis. A deposit of \$50 will be payable upon registering for the trip. Please contact Daniel Mantle (danmantle@hotmail.com or 0413 554 500) to book your place. **ONLY ONE SPACE LEFT.**

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Committee News

- The ACT government is concerned about the significant number of **Silver Gulls** now breeding on Spinnaker Island. COG is monitoring the situation.
- A number of people are now testing the new observations data sheets. Michael Robbins is coordinating this trial.
- There have been ongoing difficulties finding a company able to undertake redevelopment of the COG website. The Committee has decided to cease work on this for the time being.
- A COG-proposed project has been accepted for National Science Week. A number of members of the public will do bird surveys in their own suburbs after some brief training. The Atlas of Living Australia will develop a data entry system for the results.
- COG will purchase two pairs of smaller binoculars for use in beginner activities.
- Members are reminded that annual subscriptions (\$35) are due at the end of June.

Garden Bird Survey Notes

The Chatline has had several GBS sightings this month!

- **Swift Parrots** in Cook;
- **Little Ravens** in (or rather, over) Deakin;
- **Olive-backed Oriole** in Holt and Scullin (6 – 7 May);
- **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** in Kambah on 14 May;
- **Crescent Honeyeater** in Macquarie and **Speckled Warbler** in Jerrabomberra were both novelties for the sites in question

Mixed Reported Groups

There has been some commentary on the Chatline about the composition of the mixed feeding flocks (MFF) that occur in late autumn/winter around Canberra. As this phenomenon relates to birds in a flock at a point in time it isn't possible to tease such flocks out from the GBS results as observations are compiled over a week. However, it is possible to identify, within the GBS, groups of observations of a relatively large number of the species which commonly contribute to the "basic" MFF.

From the comments on the Chatline, I decided that the "common contributors" to MFF were **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**; **Weebill**; **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**; and **Silvereyes**. My initial filter was to identify the GBS observer weeks in which five or more individuals of four or more of those species were present. This produced a set of 228 observer-weeks (out of an impressive 76,441 observer weeks in total).

Only three of those 228 observer-weeks included 5+ birds of all six species. A further 21 observer weeks included 5+ birds of five of the six species. Including reports of less than five birds (within the set of 228 observer weeks) greatly increased the diversity: 71 observer weeks then included all six species and a further 100 included five of the species.

The most commonly reported of the six species was the **Silvereye** (222 reports in total with 219 of them 5+ birds). **Buff-rumped Thornbills** were the least commonly reported (106 reports with 77 of 5+ birds). The other four species were all close to 200 reports with 65% to 85% of the reports of 5+ birds.

Uses of GBS data

No data provided to other users this month. — **Martin Butterfield**

News From CIMAG

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group celebrated its 5th birthday in April. Membership is now around 1300, with 100 more awaiting traps. Even with the 500 traps produced by the Alexander Machonochie Centre and our own trap-making workshops, CIMAG has always struggled to meet local demand.

PhD Candidate, Kate Grarock's two-monthly surveys finished in March. Kate is now analysing the data for her thesis. Many thanks to the team of COG & CIMAG members who carried out these transect surveys over three years in 15 suburbs and adjacent nature parks. With the surveys finished, myna trapping in Bonython, Campbell, Chapman, O'Connor and Red Hill is now permissible and indeed, people in these suburbs wanting traps will be given priority.

The June issue of Birds Australia's quarterly magazine *Wingspan* will feature articles from several sources on **Common (Indian) Mynas**, their threats and public attitudes towards them. CIMAG has provided an interview, and short summaries on CIMAG's history and future plans, and myna traps.

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre has developed an interactive Indian Myna web site which can be accessed as "MynaScan". — **Bruce Lindenmayer**

CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION

2011-2012



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. Membership fees are set at **\$35** for 2011-2012 and are due 1 July 2011 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
CIVIC 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 cogoffice@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 no. (check mailing label) Title Name

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Street Address Town / Suburb State Postcode

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Telephone Home Work Mobile Email address

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***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"/> |
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| 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 12 April 2011

Help save the Gang-gang!



Photo by Julian Robinson

The following article appeared on the ABC 666 website this week:

The ACT Government is considering removing the Gang-gang cockatoos from the ACT Parks logo.

The recent Hawke review of the ACT public service recommended a single brand for each of the new directorates.

Jeremy Lasek from the ACT Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate says a case will have to be made for why the Gang-gangs should remain as an individual agency logo.

"We're the only jurisdiction now in Australia, Commonwealth, state or territory, that hasn't adopted a single brand," Mr Lasek said.

"I guess in a way we're playing catch-up. For the lovers of the Gang-gang, this is their big chance to state their case."

Mr Lasek says no final decision has been made on what the ACT Parks Conservation and Lands emblem should look like in future.

"There would be space [for the Gang-gang logo] if there was a decision taken based on the case put ... where for whatever reasons it is seen as important to retain its identity."

University of Canberra Adjunct Professor Mike Braysher helped introduce the native birds on to the ACT Parks emblem in the 1970s.

"I would hate to see it go," he said.

"I think most of the other state agencies, even though they have gone to a common logo for the whole government, there has been some co-branding. Like NSW National Parks has the Lyre Bird and Western Australia has the Numbat and Tasmania has the Tasmanian Devil.

"So I think that we could be the same for the ACT, because people associate national parks, and the rangers with wild-life, usually an animal or a plant.

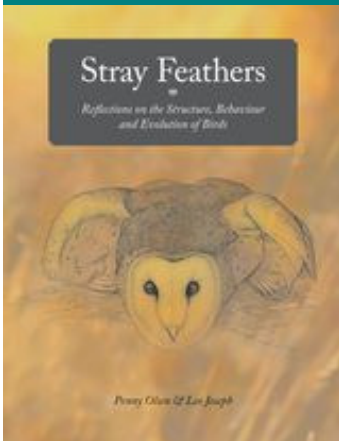
"To me, the Gang-gang [cockatoo] represents Canberra."

Black-fronted Dotterel
(*Elseya melanops*)

Snapped by Margaret Leggoe on Pond 5 at the Fyshwick Sewage ponds on 25 May.



COG SALES



Stray Feathers: Reflections on the Structure, Behaviour and Evolution of Birds, Penny Olsen, Leo Joseph

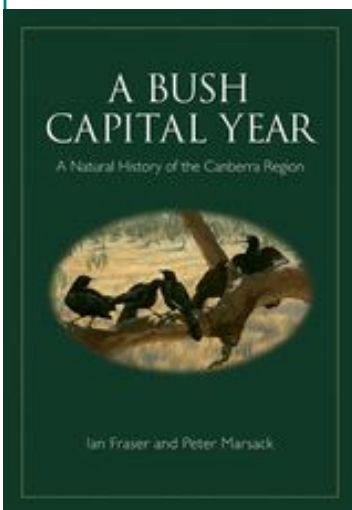
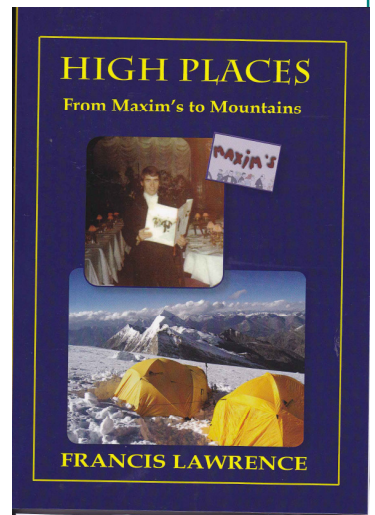
Stray Feathers showcases some of the remarkable adaptations of Australian birds. A brief introduction describes how evolution shapes form and function, followed by a series of vignettes illustrating the wondrous variety of forms and functions shaped by evolution. For example, did you know that barn owls can hunt in absolute darkness and that cuckoos commence incubation before their egg is laid?

Members price \$39 – available at the June meeting

High Places – From Maxim's to Mountains by COG Member Francis Lawrence

From swanky palaces to ritzy salons of France to some of the highest points on the earth, *High Places* spans five decades and is an astonishing memoir of a great French-Australian gastronome, traveller, adventurer and mountaineer'.

Members price \$23

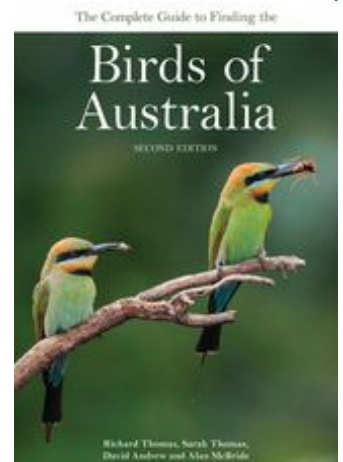


A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region Ian Fraser , Peter Marsack

A Bush Capital Year introduces the fauna, flora, habitats and reserves of the Australian Capital Territory and includes the most recent research available. It also emphasises often unappreciated or even unrecognised urban wildlife. For each month of the year there are 10 stories which discuss either a species or a group of species, such as mosses and mountain grasshoppers. While never anthropomorphic, many of the stories are written from the organism's point of view, while others are from that of an observer. Beautiful paintings complement the text and allow better visualisation of the stories and the subjects. Members price \$32

The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed Richard Thomas , Sarah Thomas , David Andrew , Alan McBride

First published in 1994, *The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia* was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species in Australia. 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. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32



From CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series (\$29.00 each for members): *Kookaburra, Australian Magpie, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Cockatoos, Albatross, Mound-builders, Tawny Frogmouth, Herons, Egrets and Bitterns, Australian Bustard*

Photo Ops 3 — COG Campouts

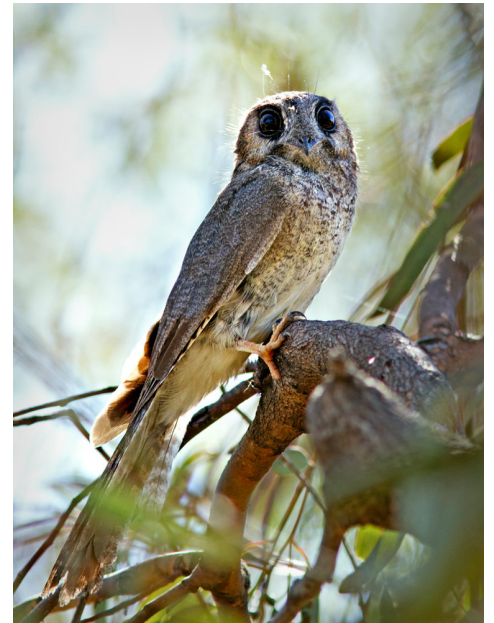
Bird photography by its nature is a fairly solitary occupation and perhaps it is the avoidance of crowds that explains why many keen photographers don't frequent COG campouts as much as you might expect. It's true that more people often means fewer opportunities for satisfying photos, but other factors such as excellent locations and the presence of many good birders to find and report birds might outweigh this apparent disadvantage.

David Cook and I were the most bird-photo-centric enthusiasts on last Easter's trip to Willandra National Park in mid-west NSW and you can see some of David's shots in the trip report in this issue. For me, it was thanks to the aforementioned array of talented eyes and ears at Willandra that I came across far more birds (and other wildlife) than if I'd been left to my own devices. Many of these discoveries became photo subjects.



Blue Bonnet
(*Northiella haematogaster*)
Not behind the leaves

Blue Bonnets were my only pre-conceived objective for this trip. Sounds easy, but these are tricky birds to get close to and I'd never succeeded in getting anything like a really good view of one, let alone a photograph. They fly at the sight of an approaching photographer and fly again when a lens is raised. Even then (and although by now a very long way off) they will determinedly manoeuvre to avoid a clear view by sidling up the branch until hidden by leaves or twigs. On the second day of the trip we came across some of these most recalcitrant photo-subjects while wandering in a patch of open forest, but it



Australian Owlet-nightjar
(*Aegotheles cristatus*)
flushed by the passing crowd

was business as usual and they eluded even a passing shot despite me separating from the group in the hope of catching them unawares. All was not lost however. Proving the theory that if you chase one bird another will present itself, just as I re-joined the main group an Owlet-nightjar was flushed, thus giving several of us our first views and photographs of an **Owlet-nightjar** in the open.

The next day I took myself back to the same patch of bush with a bigger lens and more time. Much chasing and frustration followed but eventually, finally... a few really good views of several **Blue Bonnets**.



Serendipity prevailed later the same afternoon when a pair of **Black Falcons** arrived at the nearby dam, one clutching prey in the form of a small-medium sized bird.

Black Falcon
(*Falco subniger*)
with prey

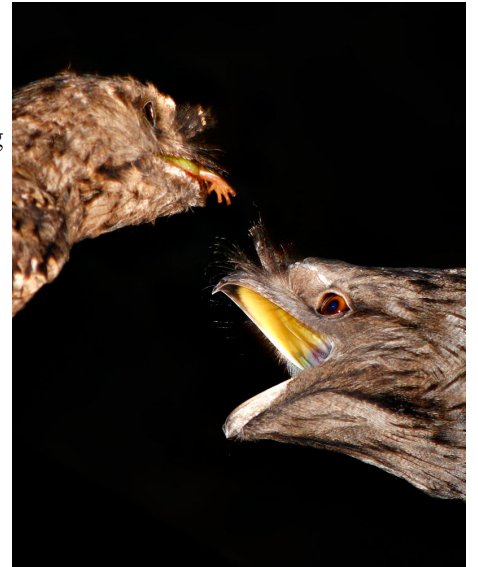
Photo essay by Julian Robinson



Roosting Barn Owl
(*Ninox novaeseelandiae*)

There were many other nice photo opportunities during the weekend that space does not permit describing in any detail. One highlight was watching a Green Tree Frog being fed to a begging juvenile **Tawny Frogmouth** just above our campsite.

Kathy Walters found a roosting **Barn Owl**, also close to camp, that seemed to me mysterious and possibly even more magic than finding one at night.

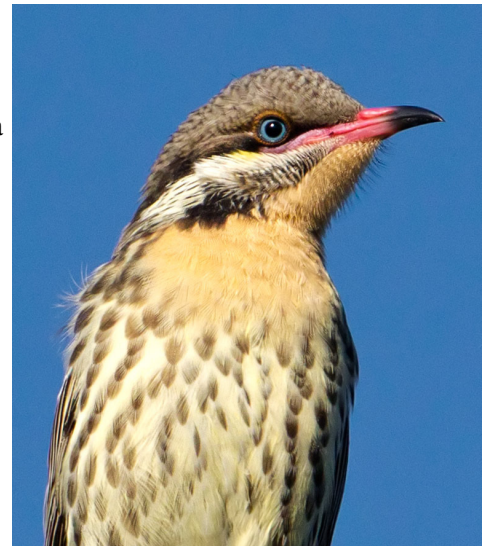


Tawny Frogmouth
(*Podargus strigoides*)
gets a frog



Red-capped Robin
(*Petroica goodenovii*)

Red-capped Robins were irresistible; many **Black-shouldered Kites** including young were snapped (as was a pair mating); waterbirds were less obliging, but **Ringneck Parrots** posed beautifully and a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** presented itself in full sun.



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
(*Acanthagenys rufogularis*)



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo
(*Lophochroa leadbeateri*)
and exotic food

On the homeward journey we called in briefly at Meriwagga where **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos** had earlier been seen by most of the group. While they were not in the photographically preferred native vegetation they still looked as beautiful as they always do and were duly captured. Even chomping on pine cones, **Major Mitchell's** made a fitting finale to what was for me another highly recommended and photographically fascinating COG campout.

Readers are reminded that all Gang-gang photos can be viewed in colour in the pdf website version and most can be enlarged satisfactorily by setting the pdf reader to 150% or 200% enlargement.



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NEXT NEWSLETTER

June deadline

Wednesday 29 June 2011

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—

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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 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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