

# Gang-gang

March 2009

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## March meeting

8 pm Wednesday 11.3.2009

**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**, President of Birds Australia, on *The Australian Bar-tail Godwit Satellite Tracking Project*.

The main presentation will be by **Dr Denis Saunders**, well known ecologist formerly with the CSIRO. He will discuss the *WA Wheatbelt Revisited*.

From May 1985 to June 1995 CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology, with support from other organisations, carried out a major programme to investigate movements of birds over a 625 km<sup>2</sup> area between Kellerberrin and Trayning in the central wheatbelt of WA. This study was based on an extensive banding program. In August 2006 the area was re-surveyed using the same netting protocols and sites as in the earlier study. This presentation on the 2006 field work will describe changes in the area's bird community and discuss the role of revegetation in conservation of the area's birds.

Everyone welcome

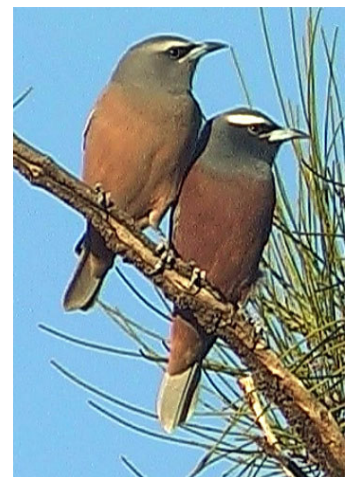
## What to watch out for this month

I've lost count of the number of times we've had some rain for a month or two that has tricked me into thinking the drought was over. And again it's happened over the past month, first with incredibly hot weather and then much cooler but still with a drying wind. And after nearly two decades with never than above average rainfall I fear it has taken an inexorable toll on our local birds and wildlife. And this is all between record floods to our north and devastating bushfires in Victoria, where both the human and animal toll has been unequalled in our modern history.

The dry weather was reflected by the dearth of reports on the chat line early in the month and it wasn't until close to the end where some sightings of some of the species I had alerted members to look out for in last month's column were reported, including some late **Superb Parrots**. Mid month there were still reports of the **Common Koel**, including the intriguing possibility that there had been more than one successful breeding event in the Ainslie/Mt Majura area. Steve Holliday's posting was particularly significant as he still recorded in the one morning to the south of Canberra the **Rufous Songlark**, some immature **White-winged Trillers** and a surprise group of **White-browed Woodswallows**, which I can't recall anyone reporting since a number of flocks flew over in October/November 2008.

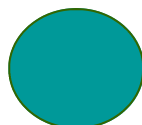
On the other hand **Dusky Woodswallows** have still been regularly reported except from my local patch round Cooleman Ridge where they have been absent post-Xmas for the first time since the 2003 fires. Also reported have been some late staying **Dollar-birds** (it's amazing how one report lead to a number in quick succession) and **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, including in some cases birds that didn't seem to have started their migration yet. There has also been a sprinkling of reports of three **Cuckoo** species (**Pallid**, **Horsfield's Bronze** and **Shining Bronze**). When they're quiet as they are at this time of year these can present real identification challenges

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb



**White-browed Woodswallows**  
(*Artamus superciliosus*)

Continued page 2



## VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE WILDLIFE APPEAL

If you wish to donate to the care of wildlife injured by the Victorian bushfires please send a cheque to The Treasurer, Canberra Ornithologists Group, GPO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608 and we will ensure that it is sent to Wildlife Victoria. Alternatively, donations can be made directly at

<http://www.wildlifevictoria.org.au/>

*What to watch out for (continued)* (a bird of the month presentation for someone!), as was presented to me by my neighbour of a bird that had flown into her window. This was a surprising uniformly dark bird which seemed to lack any real eye-ring, and despite having it in the hand and a very close look at the very barred tail I was unable to be certain whether it was a **Fan-tailed** or a **Brush**. Either way it was a significant event; I've hardly had the former in my GBS (or local area) since the fires, and to my recall have never had the latter, though in former days when the Fan-tailed seemed more common I spent plenty of time looking at them closely desperately trying to turn them into Brush.

Please continue to report and record any of these species you see over the next few weeks, as well as the **White-throated Needle-tails** and the rarer **Fork-tailed Swifts**. There have been very few reports of these, probably reflecting the lack of any storm fronts coming through. Also look out for the **Sacred Kingfisher** which is also likely to be seen briefly in Canberra gardens etc in late February/early March on its way north (very few reports in the New Year as opposed to pre-Christmas).

Other species which are migrants through Canberra during March include those which breed in the mountains such as the **Satin Flycatcher** and the **Rufous Fantail**. These may be seen passing through for a brief period in quite unsuitable habitat during this month and for the first few days of April. The **Leaden Flycatcher** and the two **Gerygone** species also will be gone towards the end of March; again there have still been a few reports of the former species.

In the last week or so of March keep an ear and eye out for the flocks of migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. Last year the migration seemed closer to normal, but again it will be interesting to see how the very dry weather, not to mention the Victorian bush fires, affects their numbers and migration pattern. It could well be another very poor season as it was in 2007, so it will be very important that this migration is carefully monitored again in 2009. Please do so and report any major numbers, or the failure for any to appear when expected (remember the best migration conditions are on a clear still day after a cold night).

One of the features of the Canberra bird scene as we move into autumn is the mixed feeding flock (MFF). These can form anywhere and are often characterised by a number of smaller bird species feeding co-operatively in a very busy manner at all levels, such as on the ground, in the shrubs and in the tree canopy. While one or two species may be most conspicuous, keep a watchful eye on all the birds as often there may be one or two uncommon species quietly feeding in amongst the activity. A feature is how rapidly they can move through an area, with hardly a bird to be seen only an hour later. — **Jack Holland**

## Field Trip reports

### Sunday February 1 – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

Nine members celebrated World Wetlands Day with a visit to Kelly's Swamp and the Fyshwick Treatment Plant. These are ideal locations to see a good range of waterbirds and to compare similar species, such as **Australasian** and **Hoary-headed Grebe**, and **Grey** and **Chestnut Teal**. The **Royal Spoonbill** families were entertaining and a **Nankeen Night Heron** gave a fleeting glimpse as it flew from the reeds deep into a willow. **Little Grassbirds** were very vocal but elusive, while **Australian Reed-warblers** were quite visible but quiet. The species of the morning was the **Blue-billed Duck** at FTP with one male in particular giving us a close up display. By 10am, with the temperature already up to 30°C, and a list of 43 species recorded, it was time to call it a day. — **Sue Lashko**

## Wednesday 4 February — ANPS walk to Chalet Rd off the Mt Franklin Rd between Bulls Head and Mount Franklin.

Almost as soon we left the cars (at the Mt Franklin end of the road) I flushed a covey of six quail-type birds. I didn't get a very good look at them then, but a few hours later when returning to collect the cars saw one adult and two much smaller **Painted Button-quail** standing in the middle of the road. (They left promptly for a less Subaru-enhanced area but I got a reasonable look.). I think this is close to the area where Harvey Perkins and Michael Maconochie have recorded this species breeding.

Moving right along we also recorded **Flame Robin, Pilotbird, and Red-browed Treecreeper** as well as good numbers of **Lyrebirds** (not suprisingly only **Superb**), **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, various **thornbills** and **Gang-gang Cockatoos**.

Although the area is distressingly invaded by Scotch thistle and mullein, a COG walk along the road could provide an interesting counterpoint to the renowned Warks Road expedition. — **Martin Butterfield**

## Saturday 21 February - Monga National Park

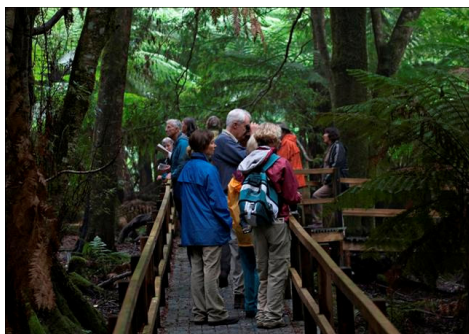


Photo by Julian Robinson

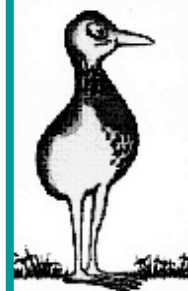
Sixteen members and friends of COG participated in this field trip to the delightful Monga National Park. After carpooling at Queanbeyan we drove to Braidwood and then, as we approached the park entrance, we were in thick, wet cloud, leading some participants to wonder if perhaps we should make a U-turn and focus on coffee and the galleries at Braidwood, rather than birding in the rain at Monga! The group agreed, however, that we can't have rainforest without rain, and so we

persevered. As things turned out, the forest was at its best. Exquisite temperate rainforest with soft mist providing a beautiful ambience.

We commenced at the Dasyurus picnic area, noting the Monga Waratahs and marvelling at the beauty of the Mongarlowe River. At this point we spotted our first **Rose Robin**. Interestingly, despite seeing a number of these delightful birds, we did not hear any of their distinctive calls.

Later on we moved to the River picnic area where we could hear **Pilotbirds** and observed some other of the wet forest specialties. As always, a visit to the Pinkwoods and tree ferns at Penance Grove was a highlight. At this spot some of us saw a **Bassian Thrush**. Our stroll up Milo Road revealed a number of other species, including crippling views of **Crescent Honeyeaters** (the noisiest bird in the forest at that location) and more **Rose Robins**. Unlike COG's previous visit in November 2006, we dipped on the rare **Pink Robin**. Some fortunate members of our group caught glimpses of **Pilotbirds** dashing across the forest roads, as is their want.

Surprisingly, we observed only 15 bird species, a very small number compared with usual. Perhaps this reflects the fact that we visited in February rather than



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17 April — 2 May 2009  
[Vietnam birding tour](#)  
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

3 May — 9 May 2009  
[Thailand Pitta tour](#)  
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

12 May — 1 June 2009  
**Borneo and Peninsula Malaysia**  
co-led by Dennis Yong

1 — 5 July 2009  
[Alice Springs](#)  
best birds: dusky grasswren & grey  
honeyeater, slaty-backed thornbill

8 — 18 July 2009  
**Gulf Country**  
best birds: Carpentarian & Kalkadoon  
grasswrens, rufous-crowned emu-wren,  
spinifexbird, flock bronzewing

13 — 25 June 2009  
[Top End](#)  
Kakadu NP, Katherine, Kununurra  
best birds: chestnut rail, white-throated  
grasswren, red goshawk, black-banded  
fruit-dove, Gouldian finch, chestnut-  
quilled rock pigeon

26 June 2009  
**Mitchell Plateau**  
best bird: black grasswren Kimberley  
honeyeater, yellow-eyed form of  
partridge pigeon

4 — 22 September 2010  
[Strzelecki Track Outback Tour](#)

**Tour itineraries, birdlists, checklists  
and latest news are on the website.**

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

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near the end of the year; we usually visit in the October to December period when the waratahs are in flower. Perhaps it was because of the mist? Nonetheless, it was a delightful visit with all participants seeing some of the special birds of the temperate rainforest that are so different from those of the parched Canberra region, and delighting in this ever-popular remnant of the

Gondwanan continent, just one and a half hours' drive from Canberra. — **David McDonald**

## Wednesday 18 February — Callum Brae

13 members and friends gathered at Callum Brae and, once I turned up, had a great time!

We started by exploring the old zoo area which was very quiet, apart from two **Speckled warblers**. As we got back to the gap in the fence everything brightened up with an aggregation of birds including: **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Red-browed Finches**, two **Southern Whiteface**, and another **Speckled Warbler**.

We moved on up the hill to the locale where Sandra had seen **Diamond Firetails** and were soon rewarded with the call of this species and on my count saw 10 of them. Two **Leaden Flycatchers** (one being fed); a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and a group of **Varied Sitella** (including three rated as DY) were found in a single tree. We then moved on to a largish dam where many finches (**Red-browed**, **Double-barred**; **Euro. Gold and Diamond Firetails**) were drinking. Our final excellent sighting was an immature **Pallid Cuckoo** flying just in front of the group for some distance, and eating grasshoppers captured at the base of trees.

At this time the plan is for the next walk to be on Wednesday 18 March at Hall Grasslands. Meet at the TSR just inside the Territory border at 9am. — **Martin Butterfield**

## 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.**

### 7-8 March — Saturday/Sunday — Goulburn area overnight campout/accommodated

This trip over the Canberra Day long weekend will be a joint outing as part of our continuing links with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS). We will be travelling to Goulburn early Saturday afternoon to visit the Gorman Road Sewage farm. These ponds are very extensive in size, being very much bigger than those at our local sewage farm at Fyshwick, and on previous visits the numbers of waterfowl on them were correspondingly higher. These included many **Hardhead**, **Pink-eared Duck** and **Grey Teal**, with smaller numbers of **Musk Duck**, **Chestnut Teal**, **Australasian Shoveller** and **Blue-billed Duck**. If time allows we'll also visit other similar spots in the local area.

Overnight we'll be camping on one of the GFNS member's property, or those more comfortable with accommodation can stay in nearby Goulburn. We'll be having Saturday night's dinner with our hosts at the historic Old Brewery, the oldest in Australia still using the original buildings.

Next morning we will travel to the Towrang area, which is a few kilometres to the NE of Goulburn in a picturesque valley on the edge of Sydney's geology. After some bird watching along the Wollondilly River we will have morning tea at one of the Billyrambja Landcare member's property. This will be followed by a short drive to Bush Bottoms adjoining the Tarlo River National Park, where we will be walking along a route where the vegetation/geology is very varied and **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**, **Spotted Quail-Thrush**, **Painted Button-Quail** and **Lyrebirds** are routinely seen, plus koalas have been reintroduced. The views are great and the birding and other fauna/flora opportunities will be very diverse.

We will return to Canberra on the Sunday afternoon. If you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au) for more information. Participants are also welcome if they wish to join in only for the Sunday morning or Saturday afternoon/night events. More detailed information was circulated to participants towards the end of February.

### 15 March — Sunday — East Basin/Molonglo River — Electric/powering boat cruise

This will be the first cruise for 2009 on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River, where early autumn is the peak time for nesting, with three species of **cormorant** and **darters** known to breed

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## CHANGE OF MONTHLY MEETING TIME

**From April, the Members Night meeting will start at 7.30pm NOT 8.00pm.  
This will be for a trial period during the winter months.**

there. The area is also rich in other water birds, and a variety of land birds can be seen on the banks. This year could be very different following the clearing of the trees on the north bank in May 2008, though indications are that breeding has continued anyway.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We propose to travel in the MV "Darter" which can carry 16 people and, though it has a motor, is very quiet at slow speeds. If numbers exceed this the electric boat the "E.L. Cygnet", which takes a maximum of 10 passengers, may also be used. The boats allow both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The point of departure will be the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way).

If you are intending to join in this outing, please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)) as soon as possible as the boat is filling up fast.

### 18 March — Wednesday Midweek walk

This month's Wednesday Walk will be at the Hall Grasslands. Meet at the TSR just inside the Territory border at 9.00am.

### 28-29 March — Saturday/Sunday — Bumbalong Valley campout on private property

This is a repeat visit to this spot following COG's successful camp-outs there in February 2002 and November 2006. The Bumbalong Valley is a very sheltered valley straddling the Murrumbidgee River about 10 km N of Bredbo. The area is generally not accessible and COG is very fortunate to have the opportunity to again visit. The proposed outing replaces the one that had to be postponed at the end of November 2008 due to inclement weather.

Last visit we recorded a very impressive total of 87 species in less than 24 hours, including nearly all the spring migrants. During the previous visit in early February we recorded 81 species. Numbers may be slightly down at the end of March but many of the later leaving migrants will still be there and some other species may be in transit.

After setting up camp mid Saturday afternoon we propose to do a survey of the birds on the property and the adjacent river. On Sunday morning we will proceed upstream along the river to survey back along the road, and probably access a couple of properties to identify the birds.

We will be camping overnight on another one of the local properties at the northern end of the valley, on a take everything in, take everything out basis. Participants should aim to arrive mid afternoon on the Saturday, and it is expected we'll stay until mid Sunday afternoon. Car pooling will be encouraged, so if you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)).

### FESTIVAL OF THE FOREST

COG will be having a stall at the *Festival of the Forests* in the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens on Sunday 15 March.

If you would like to help with the stall please advise Chris Davey (details on back of *Gang-gang*).

### CHATLINE

All is again well with our online archive of messages sent to our Chatline. No contributions were lost. You can access it at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/>. The archive's features include a sophisticated search facility and the capacity to display messages by date or by thread. EMail addresses of people who send messages to the list are masked to prevent them being harvested and sold or used by email scammers. — **David McDonald**

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## 4 April — Saturday morning — private property near Mundoonen

Alex McLachlan has kindly offered to lead an outing to his 450 acre property that adjoins the Mundoonen range near Yass. Common local birds include **Hooded Robin**, **Brown Treecreeper** and **Diamond Firetail**. In 2008, Alex reported seeing **Stubble Quail**, **Painted Button-quail** and **Little Button-quail** at the same time within one hectare! To book on this trip, please contact Alex at [Alex.McLachlan@ga.gov.au](mailto:Alex.McLachlan@ga.gov.au) or 0422 655 393. More details, including directions, will be made available to participants shortly.

## 10-13 April — Fri/Mon (Easter) — Weddin Mountains — Extended camp-out

Previous trips to the Weddin Ranges have been popular and produced very good bird lists, with one trip recording over 80 species within 5 km of the camping area. For this trip we will again stay at the Fuzzy Box Campground (formerly known as Seaton's Farm). If preferred, participants could stay in motel accommodation in nearby Grenfell. Over the long weekend we expect to visit the callitris woodlands of Bimbi State Forest at the southern end of the range, the iron-barks of Seaton's farm and Holy Camp, and perhaps a visit to Gum Swamp near Forbes. If you intend to participate please contact Sue Lashko on 6251 4485 or [SMLashko@gmail.com](mailto:SMLashko@gmail.com). While Sue will be organising and participating in the camp-out, she would like to hear from anyone familiar with the area willing to help lead the outing. Further details, including maps, bird lists etc will be available closer to the trip date.

## 26 April — Sunday Morning — Honeyeater migration

The autumn movement of thousands of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** (and lesser numbers of other species) from the mountains to warmer climes along the coast and further north is a feature of the Canberra birdwatching calendar. On a good migration day thousands of honeyeaters can be counted passing through the Angle Crossing area. To witness this spectacle, and to help count the honeyeaters, meet Nicki Taws at 8:30am in the car park on the Tharwa side of the bridge across the Murrumbidgee. Bring something to sit on, a hat, sunscreen and morning tea. Enquiries to Nicki (6251 0303, [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com)). As usual, if the weather is not the best for honeyeaters we will visit the Tharwa Sandwash for some general birding.

## Committee news

- COG and the National Parks Association ACT sent a joint letter to the ACT Government about the neglect of parks and reserves and greater resourcing needed for a range of management matters including weeds, ranger monitoring etc.
- Several COG committee and other members attended workshops organised by the Environmental Defender's Office on environmental and planning legislation.
- Tidbinbilla Discussion Paper on a new management plan — a letter has been sent urging a return to/more focus on fundamentals of conservation and low key recreation management in the reserve and biodiversity monitoring, rather than more investment in theme park/tourism related infrastructure/activities etc.
- **Superb Parrot** habitat in Gungahlin — a response from Minister Barr has been received re loss of mature trees in Crace and Harrison. While trees in the Harrison School site will now be conserved and there is to be further consideration of tree clearance for stage 2 of Crace, we are planning to follow up some issues.
- Kinlyside woodlands near Hall — a letter is being drafted for joint signature by COG, FOG and the Conservation Council, urging no urban development in Kinlyside and for open consultation with community groups on concept plans.
- The Committee approved supplementation of the funds raised at the last COG meeting for assistance for native fauna, and birds in particular, affected by the Victorian bushfires. A donation of \$1500 is being made.
- Jenny Bounds and Chris Davey will represent COG at the BIGNet meeting in Newcastle in March.

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## The following letter was sent to the ACT National Trust

### The Social Value of Lake Burley Griffin and its Setting

I am writing in response to the questionnaire you have invited the Canberra community to provide their views on. As there are no fields for free comments, we would like to provide this information for your survey.

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is a volunteer-based community group with around 350 members whose mission includes the conservation of native birds and their habitats. COG plays an active role in advocating for the protection of native vegetation/bird habitats and for the mitigation of threats to and impacts on native birds.

COG has a special interest in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands in the East Basin of Lake Burley Griffin, a habitat for many species of birds including some rare and threatened species, and lake fringe habitats which provide nesting sites for various species of waterbirds such as cormorants and darters. Some areas have become important regional breeding sites for several species of cormorants and darters which nest in lakeside vegetation. Such areas, although man-made, are assuming more importance for birds in a regime of a drying climate and the loss of some inland wetlands and natural lakes as habitat and breeding areas.

Our members, birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts, place great value on the tranquil setting of the lake overall and of Molonglo Reach and the eastern shores of the East Basin particularly, for low impact recreational bird watching and nature viewing. Our members regularly visit the Jerrabomberra Wetlands area, we hire the quiet electric boats operated by Lake Burley Griffin Cruises (Jim Paterson) for bird watching outings on various parts of the lake (Molonglo Reach, East Basin, Black Mountain Peninsula, Yarramundi Reach, Yarralumla Bay). Occasionally we have birdwatching by bicycle outings around the lake along the bike paths. Some members have used canoes to view birds or do surveys of birds from the water.

We have been concerned in recent years at moves by various planning authorities to develop the lake foreshores more significantly (eg Griffin legacy proposals) and to open up the lake to a greater range of active, noisy motorised or sporting activities. COG's members would prefer to see the lake prioritised for passive activities, as a place for quieter contemplation and recreational enjoyment by the community, and for the lake setting to remain as far as possible as parklands and green spaces. COG members also value heritage and support the preservation of heritage sites in their appropriate setting.

We believe that Lake Burley Griffin and its very visible birdlife around the shores (eg Swans, Swampheens, Ducks, other waterbirds) has enormous social value for the Canberra community, as well as values for birds and other wildlife, and the lake should not be allowed to be taken over by re-developments which would compromise those values.

In summary, these are specific matters relating to Lake Burley Griffin which have been of particular concern to us in recent years, and on which we have made representations to various Government authorities:

- Moves by the National Capital Authority to 'open up' the lake to a greater range of motorised boating and sporting activities, particularly waterskiing in the East Basin very close to the sensitive Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Molonglo Reach
  - COG opposed the waterskiing trial pushed through by the former Territories Minister, Jim Lloyd;
  - our concerns have been around impacts on birdlife which breed and roost in and around the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Molonglo River; this is the most important wetland in the ACT and a major waterbird breeding and roosting area;
  - also concerns about the lack of proper environmental impact assessment and lack of proper ongoing monitoring of impacts on wildlife by waterskiing;
  - the likelihood of an increasing number of sporting/recreational events in the area; and
  - the cumulative human-related impacts on wildlife in an otherwise tranquil, natural area of the Lake.
- The lack of genuine consultation by planning authorities, eg the National Capital Authority (NCA) with the broader community about the use of the lake, and allowing sectional interests (specific lake user groups) to prevail;

*Continued page 10*

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## 2009 — 11 COG Forward Plan

The existing COG Forward Plan was published in the May 2007 Gang-gang. It was agreed that the Plan would be reviewed regularly. The COG Committee appointed a small group, comprising Chris Davey, Tony Lawson and Bruce Lindenmayer, to review and revise the plan. Their proposals have been endorsed by the COG Committee.

The Forward Plan for 2009 – 11 takes into account the core COG objectives of:

- a) Encouraging an interest in the birds of Canberra and region;
- b) Increasing our knowledge of the local birds; and
- c) Helping to conserve our native birds.

Realistically, the Forward Plan also takes into account the capacity of COG to undertake projects, and recognises the many activities already being undertaken by COG members, including surveys, data recording, the Website and chat line, publications and conservation, as well as the monthly meetings and outings.

The Forward Plan includes both projects to be undertaken by COG members, and also financial support to other projects which are in accord with COG's objectives

The Plan recognises two categories of projects – major and minor. Major projects are likely to need more manpower and or money to come to fruition. Smaller tasks should be completed relatively quickly and are likely to need only modest resources. Within each category projects have been listed in the order in which they are likely to start. Some have already started. In this Plan there are 6 major and 8 minor projects. Some are continuations of previous projects and some are new. There has also been some re-ordering of priorities.

### Major tasks/funding

The following projects have been given high priority

1. Republish a revised Birds of Canberra Gardens — there is still interest in this publication though it has been out of print. Republishing a revised version of the book is considered to be cost effective.
2. COG database update — review, revise and document existing system and incorporate various improvements.
3. Produce a new 2-CD set of Birdcalls of the ACT region
4. Update the ACT Bird Atlas — undertake a scoping study which would identify the financial and manpower requirements to produce a new Atlas.
5. Provide ongoing financial support to the Mulligan's Flat / Gorooyaroo ecological community research project
6. Develop sets of display material that can be used primarily for COG exhibitions — but would also be useful for educational purposes and for interesting young people and the public in general in birds

Projects 1, 2 and 3 are underway. Project 4 is to commence in 2009. Project 5 is dependent on creating the long-term management structure for the Mulligans Flat sanctuary (2009 or 2010?). Project 6 cannot start until someone volunteers.

### Smaller more immediate, less expensive projects

1. Re-order copies of existing CD of *Bird Calls of the ACT region*
2. Develop pamphlets/brochures for the reserves making up Canberra Nature Park, and other popular bird watching venues – using a three-tiered approach:
  - a Pamphlets (similar to that for Mulligans Flat) for a small number of key sites such as Campbell Park, Callum Brae, Jerrabomberra Wetlands, and the ANBG;
  - b Fact sheets including bird lists and maps, for other sites, to be made available on the website; and



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- c Bird route pamphlets for some of the key areas of the ACT, following the examples produced by other bird clubs.
  3. Digitise CBNs and put on the COG Website
  4. Review need for enhancements and additions to the COG website, and as necessary incorporate
  5. Support for CIMAG initiatives to reduce populations of **Common Mynas** (and **Starlings** and **Spotted Doves**)
  6. Members **nametags** - name tags are to be issued to each member and their use at COG meetings strongly encouraged.
  7. Prepare a scientific paper on the GBS methodology
  8. Update the COG pamphlet on bird attracting garden plants

Minor projects 1, 2 and 3 are underway. Projects 4 and 5 are ongoing. Work on the other three projects depends on finding people to do them.

The Forward Program is envisaged as a rolling three-year process and members will have an opportunity each year to put forward further proposals for consideration. Good ideas are welcome at any time. The Plan is intended to be flexible and adjustments were made to the original plan.

But, as mentioned, before any project can go ahead we need someone to do it, and the COG committee welcomes volunteers to put their names forward to help with any of the projects listed above. This should be done to Tony Lawson on 6161 9430, or by email to [tlawson@home.com.au](mailto:tlawson@home.com.au). Tony is also happy to answer any queries members may have about the Forward Plan.

## Garden Bird Survey Notes

Some GBS-relevant highlights from the Chatline for the last few days of January and (most of) February include:

- **Little Lorikeets** in Rivett and Watson;
- **Black Falcon** in O'Connor;
- Female **Eastern Koel** in Scullin; and
- The first **New Holland Honeyeater** in 28 years from the same site in Scullin.

### Number of Honeyeater species at a site

During the last few weeks I have noticed a number of **honeyeater** species within my GBS site and a few messages to the Chatline have commented on additional honeyeater species appearing within other sites. This has led me to investigate how many species of honeyeater (and their close relatives) have been recorded in sites and to look at some possible explanations (or at least correlations) underlying this.

In total 21 species classified to the family Meliphagidae have been recorded in the GBS over the 27 years of the Survey. The highest number of species seen at one site is 15, with 72 sites (close to 1/5<sup>th</sup>) recording 10 or more. Surprisingly – to me at least – there is no obvious correlation between the number of years a site has been in the GBS and the number of species of honeyeaters recorded.

I also examined the number of honeyeater species seen in the various sub-areas of the COG AOI as used in my recent article in Canberra Bird Notes. Of these areas Belconnen had the greatest number of species (19) with Weston Creek on 17. North Canberra, Woden, and Kambah each had 16 species. Other areas had lower diversity for this family. The correlation between number of honeyeater species and observer years was again not significant.

Of the 21 species, nine were seen in all of the 10 areas and a further 5 species were seen in eight or nine of the areas. Two species were only recorded from a single area: one in Kambah and one in Weston Creek. — **Martin Butterfield**

Continued from page 7

the issue of lack of genuine consultation by bodies like the NCA has also been manifest in other development proposals regarding the lake, including the Albert Hall area re-development which was vigorously opposed by the community;

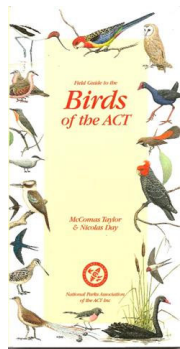
- It is not only additional activities on the water, but also the very significant impacts of large numbers of people living in and recreating around new urban and boat harbour type developments in areas such as Kingston Foreshores right next to the Jerrabomberra wetlands; so far little has been released publicly about future plans for future East Lake development and how the Jerrabomberra Wetlands will be protected/buffered from these impacts;
- Willows removal in known nesting areas of cormorants and darters by the ACT Government has also been of concern, particularly the total clearance of vegetation on the north bank of Molonglo Reach when a more phased approach and the protection of known nesting trees was recommended.

I can be contacted at any time to discuss the above matters..

Chris Davey  
President  
Canberra Ornithological Group

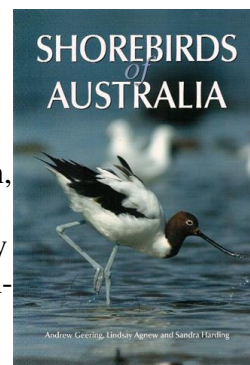
21 February 2009

## COG SALES

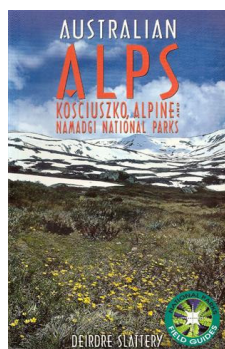


**Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT (Taylor & Day) - \$16.00** — Bird identification in the ACT has just become much easier! Here are all the birds of the ACT in colour, with easy-to-follow text and key biological data, in a compact field format that will fit easily in your pocket.

**Shorebirds of Australia (Geering, Agnew & Harding) \$33.00** — This title brings together the latest information about the evolution, ecology and behaviour of shorebirds and how they are distributed in Australia. This is a highly sought after title in the popular "CSIRO Publishing" series.



**Field Guide to the Orchids of the Australian Capital Territory (Jones, Egan and Wood) - \$33.00** — Orchids can be found throughout the ACT, in nature parks, urban reserves and in Namadgi National Park. They can be beautiful or bizarre; some look like ducks or spiders, others grow long beards or have delicately hinged appendages. This guide's handy size makes it suitable for use in the field.



**Australian Alps: Kosciuszko, Alpine & Namadgi National Parks (Slattery) - \$16.00** — This guide is your key to the secrets of the three national parks that stretch over Australia's spectacularly beautiful rooftop - Kosciuszko in New South Wales, Alpine in Victoria and Namadgi in the Australian Capital Territory. Ideal for field trips, this guide will make a wonderful memento as well as a great reference for future trips.

**Watching Wildlife (Chris) - \$24.00**

**Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? And Other Bird Questions You Know You Want To Ask (O'Connor) - \$13.50**

**CD: Bird Calls of the ACT (Fullagar & Slater) - \$12.00**

**LIMITED STOCK: Messent Bird Calendar 2009 - \$8.00**

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

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## Avian Whimsy - No. 70

### Wrong Place, Wrong Time — when birds collide

Some years ago I was given a delightful 1953 book called *Murray Walkabout* by Archer Russell. In it he recounts an apparently very tall story wherein he describes a **Sacred Kingfisher** killing a **Grey Teal**. “Straight as a javelin it flew, straight into the middle of the covey it flashed. As the kingfisher flew among them, the teal rose in their flight and then sped on – all but one. That one first swooped and then fell headlong into the water... The kingfisher had struck the teal on the head, apparently piercing the brain and killing the bird instantly.” He makes it that clear he regarded it as an intentional attack. It has worried me since I read it, since it seems to be such far-fetched nonsense in the context of an otherwise generally sensible and credible book. However it recently occurred to me that perhaps he really had simply observed a remarkably unlikely accidental collision and misinterpreted it.

I recall driving early one morning driving through the Pilliga, wincing as a **Kookaburra** flashed across in front of the car, then watching in horrified fascination as it swung back and homed in with what seemed like determined inevitability on the windscreen. Out of the whole Pilliga that windscreen was a pretty tiny dot at that precise moment in time, but it and the bird coincided. And why not? I know of smaller objects and smaller birds doing so, no matter how improbably.

In the Marylebone Cricket Club museum is a **House Sparrow** mounted on the cricket ball which prematurely ended its career in 1936, when it flew across the pitch during an MCC vs Cambridge University match, a moment after Jehangir Khan had released the ball. Tom Pierce, the batsman, was left waiting for the ball which never arrived. (Jehangir’s son, Majid, went on to captain Pakistan, but never matched his father’s achievement.)

I know of at least one other bird which died in mid-pitch, this one a **Welcome Swallow** at the Adelaide Oval in 1969. Greg Chappell, then a young bloke, was bowling to John Inverarity, at that stage still representing Western Australia; the ball apparently suddenly dipped alarmingly and bowled the perplexed Inverarity. When he was half-way off the ground the honourable fielders (well, they were South Australians!) called the umpire’s attention to the dead bird lying some distance behind the wicket, and Inverarity got called back. Beats me how no-one saw the bird being hit, but there you go. In fact, if Inverarity were not a school principal (and therefore principled) I’d say he’d pulled a swiftie. [Eds. Note: Groan]

(I am reminded too of another ex-sparrow whose much more recent demise was premeditated. It was shot in 2005 in the Netherlands – presumably after a fair trial and all appeals had been exhausted – for slipping through an open window and pre-empting the felling of 23,000 dominos, just before the lucrative television coverage to 11 countries began. But that of course is irrelevant to this story.)

So, I set out to see if I could find any other examples of such apparently near-impossible bird accidents – and found myself in the strange parallel universe of YouTube. A left-handed baseball pitcher hurls the ball – and a bird taking a short cut (either gull or pigeon I think) explodes in a cloud of feathers. (And if you doubt my description of this world as ‘strange’, consider that the category of this clip is ‘humour’!) The snout of one of a group of performing dolphins leaping out of a pool clips a passing gull, which cartwheels into the water. In a doubles tennis match a small passerine – possibly a swallow – swoops across the net and ball and bird stop dead in their respective tracks. (I vaguely recall this as having occurred in the Australian Open.) In Buenos Aires a shot on goal by a soccer player results in a dead pigeon.

Birdies inevitably feature in golf. A woman – possibly a touch more amateur than some of the previously mentioned (human) participants – tees off, and unfortunately for the gull foraging some 15 metres ahead, the golf ball doesn’t get above ground level. On the other hand professional golfer Tripp Isenhour was charged in 2007 with deliberately killing a **Red-shouldered Hawk** with a golf ball, to punish it for making a noise and interrupting something vital but unspecified which he was being filmed doing. He was sentenced to “one year of supervised probation, four hours of anger management classes and 100 hours of community service. Forty hours must be performed at a wildlife or animal shelter.” There was also a \$500 fine, which I suspect he can afford. Given that he was liable for up to 14 months gaol for the offence, it might be seen that he got off lightly.

At the other end of the scale, a space shuttle rocket, weighing apparently some 2000 tonnes, clips an unidentifiable (but presumably large) bird with the cone. It appears to not be moving very fast, but the inertia is irresistible. You might think that sitting here reading this is an example of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – but it could be even worse. — **Ian Fraser** [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au)



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## NEW MEMBERS

**COG welcomes the following new members:**

**P Wintle, Garran**

**J Verrier, Garran**

**T Munro, Garran**

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**March deadline**

**Wednesday 25 March 2009**

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

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

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

## COG info

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Email: [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

*Vice President*—TBA

*Treasurer*—Lyn Rees  
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*Secretary*—Sandra Henderson 6231 0303  
[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

*Address for correspondence*  
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COG, PO Box 301  
Civic Square, ACT 2608

*Newsletter distribution*  
Judy Collett and helpers

### *COG membership*

**2008-2009 memberships:**

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

### *Membership inquiries—*

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303  
[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au)

### *Office*

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

### *COG E-mail Discussion List*

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

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### *Gang-gang editors—Sue Lashko and*

*Greg Ramsay*

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



## Gang-gang

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