

# Gang-gang

March 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## MARCH MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 10.03.10

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

**Bruce Lindenmayer** will give the bird of the month talk on "**Thornbills and their allies**".

The main presentation will be by **Professor David Lindemayer** from the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society. David's talk will be on birds in the Victorian wet forests, reviewing several years of studies prior to the 2009 fires, some post-fire recovery observations and the longer term forward monitoring program.

**URGENT  
LEADER NEEDED  
FOR EASTER  
CAMPOUT  
SEE PAGE 5**

Everyone welcome

## What to watch out for this month

Coming towards the end of four very hot months of late spring/summer, Canberra has only had two significant rain events. The first over Christmas does seem to have resulted in triggering some (re?)breeding, including a couple of reports for the **Rufous Songlark**. This species as well as the **Brown Songlark** and **Horsfield's Bushlark** should all have migrated by now. The same usually applies to the **White-winged Triller**, though still some records for this species were being posted in mid February, as there were for **Tree Martins**. However, there don't seem to have been any for the related **Fairy Martins** for some time, perhaps reflective of an average season for this species. Any records of the above species from now are very significant, and should be recorded in the COG database.

The impact of the other significant rain event over the second weekend in February is still unclear. Maybe it has been responsible for some species staying later than usual due to the increased food availability. Perhaps it has allowed others to spread out again. Certainly in my GBS site a number of species which had come in to the gardens due to the dry conditions seemed to move out again, notably the **Common Bronzewing**, rarely seen in the area for the past five years, and the **Red-rumped Parrot**.

This may also mean that mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) will form later this year. These can form anywhere, and are one of the features of the Canberra bird scene as we move into autumn. They 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 of 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.

The surprise to me was that the rain activity only led to the single report on the chat line of **White-throated Needle-tails**. This was after the event, though there was a verbal report of unidentified swifts over NW Cooleman Ridge on the Friday evening before the rain fell. Please keep an eye out for this species and the rarer **Fork-tailed Swifts** on any passing fronts or local thunderstorms.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

There have also been some late **Superb Parrots** observations, usually of just a single or only a few birds. The **Eastern Koel** seems to be staying later than ever, perhaps reflective of its best and widest breeding season in Canberra to date, with a dependant young bird recorded from the Griffiths/Narrabundah area, and after some determined searching a similar record confirmed from Page in Belconnen. The former in particular was quite bold and conspicuous, so much that it led to the posting of a photograph on the chat line for an ID! Again in both cases they were hosted by **Red Wattlebirds**. March is also the month most other cuckoos move out of Canberra, so keep an eye for the last of five **Cuckoo** species (**Pallid, Horsfield's Bronze, Shining Bronze, Fan-tailed** and **Brush**). They're most likely to be quiet at this time of year, and can present real identification challenges.

The **Dollarbird** also has still been recorded – continue to keep a watch out for this species before they all leave early in March. Similarly during the next week or so continue to watch out for the **Rainbow Bee-eater** on return migration either high overhead (listen for their characteristic pee-pee calls and flight with orange wings), or if you're lucky lower amongst the trees. The **Sacred Kingfisher** is also likely to be seen briefly in Canberra parks and gardens post breeding in late February/early March on it way north.

Finally March is the month for both the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones** and **Leaden Flycatchers** to move to where it's warmer. The **Satin Flycatcher** may also be seen as a passage migrant and stay around in gardens for a day or two on its way down from the wetter slopes of the mountains. The same applies to the **Rufous** and **Grey Fantails** which often move through in March. There have been very few of the latter in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge/ Narrabundah Hill this year, perhaps the dry weather forced them to move elsewhere.

Again, observations of all of the above from now on are significant, and should be entered onto the COG database.

— Jack Holland

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## Report on the January 2010 Members Night

Considering the time of year and the number of members on holiday, the January meeting was well attended and, given that Sue Lashko was still away, went surprisingly smoothly.

As usual the January meeting provided an opportunity for those who had not spoken at COG meetings before to tell us about interesting birding events that they had been involved with during the year. Apart from a few panic attacks on the part of the President before the meeting started, the rest of the evening ran very smoothly.

The evening started with Kathy Cook, ably assisted by David on the computer, telling us about a very interesting trip that had taken to northern Peru. The presentation was illustrated by pictures of some of the wonderful birds of the area. This was followed by Beth Mantle informing us of the options available for the updating of the COG website. It is hoped that further work during this coming year will soon lead to a website that will provide some of the new options that are now available.

Margaret Leggoe showed us some of her beautiful bird photos and we wish her luck with her entry in this year's photo competition conducted by the Canberra Photographic Society. Roy Harvey and Anne Holmes have returned to Australia after a year spent in the UK, where they spent some time exploring the RSPB reserves in Norfolk and so entertained us with pictures and stories of the reserves they visited and the birds they saw. This was followed by a most interesting presentation from Kevin Windle who spoke about his translation of a Russian Hunting Manual by Sergei Aksakov, 'Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler' (1852). The notes not only described the birds that were hunted but also their habits and habitats, instructions on cooking and the author's views on the quality of the meal.

Finally Geoffrey Dabb drew the evening to a close with a presentation titled 'The Year in 13 photos', illustrating some of Geoffrey's birding highlights for 2009. The evening closed with a short video of the 50<sup>th</sup> shearwater survey on Montagu Island which he had taken part in.

Many thanks to all of the contributors for a most entertaining evening.

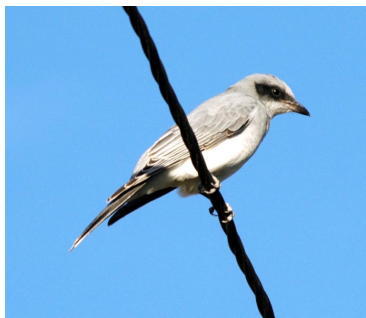
— Chris Davey

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## Field Trip reports

### Wednesday 17 February — Stirling Park, Yarralumla

We met at the Lotus Bay carpark to explore Stirling Park, site of the original Westlake settlement for early Canberra workmen and their families. From the carpark a raft of **Little Black Cormorants** was seen as they made their way along the edge of Lennox Gardens. The species list was up to twenty before we left the carpark.



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

Photo by Stuart Harris

The Westlake historic markers and explanatory signs were new to many in the group, although there is nothing left of the settlement now. As Martin has already mentioned in email, young **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** had us a little puzzled, with mottled plumage and no black faces. Another surprising aspect was the number of **White-throated Treecreepers** in evidence – at one point four in view at the same time. **Striated Pardalotes** were inspecting tree hollows, and a highlight was finding **Speckled Warblers** with the

**Brown and Buff-rumped Thornbills.**

Many thanks to Ian Hufton for showing the group round his local patch, which few had visited despite its proximity to the city. — **Sandra Henderson**

### Sunday 21 February — Gungahlin Hill

A small group met early to explore Gungahlin Hill with leader Chris Davey.

As on the Wednesday walk, immature **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were in evidence, along with several adults.



**Laughing Kookaburras**  
( *Dacelo novaeguineae* )

Photo by Margaret Leggoe

**Crimson and Eastern Rosellas** were plentiful right through the reserve, as were **Striated Pardalotes**. Although no unusual species were seen, the list for the trip includes **Little Corellas**, **Brown Goshawk**, **Dusky Woodswallows**, **White-throated Treecreepers**, **Kookaburras** and **Red-rumped Parrots**. There were a number of **Wood Ducks** high in the trees, and many groups of **Superb Fairy-wrens**. **Pied Currawongs** and the two **Rosella** species were bathing in large numbers in the water coming from small leaks in the bottom of the reservoir.

Many thanks to Chris for leading the outing. — **Sandra Henderson**



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### 2010: Celebrating 30 years of plains-wanderers

#### 11 April 2010

Pelagic trip off Eaglehawk Neck,  
Tasmania.  
a 'not-for-profit' pelagic trip

#### 23 June to 7 July

**Top End**  
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine,  
Kununurra & optional Mitchell Plateau  
flight

#### 11 to 15 July

Alice Springs &  
MacDonnell Ranges

#### 22 to 28 August

New Caledonian birds, butterflies and  
flora tour

#### 4 to 22 September

Strzelecki Track Outback Tour  
31<sup>st</sup> Strzelecki tour!

#### Plains-wanderer Weekends:

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

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

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

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

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## 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.

### 6–8 March 2010 — Canberra Day Long-Weekend — Nangar National Park Campout

**Nangar National Park** is situated off the Eugowra-Orange Road, approximately 15km east of Eugowra. The delightful amphitheatre-style campground has six wooden tables and benches, but there are plenty of grassy areas for campers not requiring tables. Despite the road being a bit rough on the way in, it's accessible to 2WD cars and camper-trailers. The Nangar-Murga Range is a very distinctive landmark from all angles, and is a less-known area to Canberra birders. Terrara Creek, which runs through the park, is lined with rocky slopes rich in flowering shrubs and eucalypts including ironbark, tumble-down gum, and bundy. The surrounding landscape has been cleared, leaving the park an oasis harbouring interesting birds including **Peregrine Falcons, Glossy Black-Cockatoos, Barking Owls, Turquoise Parrots**, and many other species which rely on the cover and food the park provides. Mammals are plentiful, and the robust, shaggy-coated Wallaroo is easy to spot grazing at the base of the hills.

The 'Dripping Rock' homestead ruins had been badly vandalised, and when we visited the park in early 2010 the homestead had been completely vandalized; ie demolished! Birds once hung around here, living off the remains of the garden and collected water – maybe some might still hang around. Given enough interest and 4WD's we'll do a 13km drive to the top of Mount Nangar which provides spectacular views to the north.

Apart from birding and walking we'll also venture out for some night-time spotlighting. A special attraction will be a visit to 'Escort Rock', where Australian history was made, when the gang led by Frank Gardiner held up the gold escort coach and escaped with a huge amount of money. Included in the gang was the "infamous" Ben Hall. Sit in the shade and relive the moment.

Participants must be prepared to camp in the park and you must be fully self-sufficient and carry adequate water. A 'composting' toilet is on site.

Join leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer for an exhilarating long-weekend; this enigmatic park will have you hankering to go back again and again!

This campout will be limited in numbers, so get in early. More information will be emailed to participants. To book; phone Margaret & Charles: 6161 3450 or email [mcjannett9@hotmail.com](mailto:mcjannett9@hotmail.com)

### Sunday 14 March – Molonglo Reach – morning boat cruise

This will be the last outing/cruise for 2009-2010 on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River and Jerrabomberra Creek, where early autumn is the peak time for nesting, with three species of cormorant and darters known to breed there. The area is also rich in other water birds, and a variety of land birds can be seen on the banks. The clearing of the trees on the north bank in May 2008 seems to have had limited influence on the breeding.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We will travel in the MV "Darter" which can carry 16 people, and though it has a motor it is very quiet at slow speeds, so allows both a close 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).

As this trip was nearly fully subscribed at the Gang-Gang deadline, we have now arranged to also use the electrically powered boat, the EL Cygnet, which means an additional 10 places have become available. These are expected to be taken up quickly, so please book your place on the boats with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)) at your earliest convenience.

### Sunday 28 March — Gossan Hill

Park at the intersection of Haydon Drive and Purdie Street. The walk departs at 8am at the reserve directly opposite Purdie Street and will last for 2-3 hours. Easy walking. Gossan Hill Nature Reserve is surrounded by urban develop-

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ment. It has varied habitats including grassland and woodland. The walk will focus on urban pressures affecting the natural values of Gossan Hill Nature Reserve and to observe which species are coping with the pressures. A particular focus will be to see whether Speckled Warblers survive in the reserve. Leader: Con Boekel, ph 6247 2419. Registration is not required.

### **Fri-Mon 2-5 April – Easter campout now on a private property at Cowra**

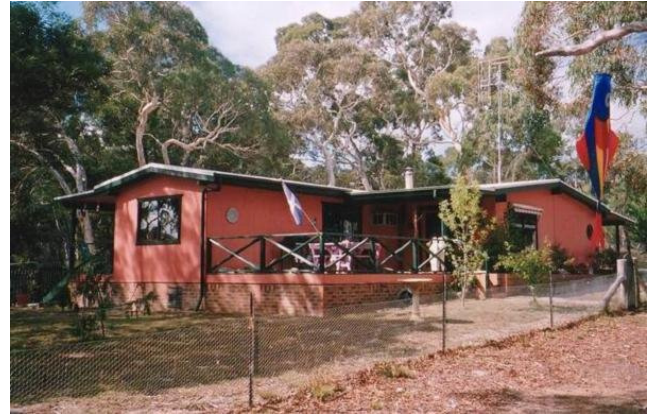
The Easter campout set for 2-5 April has been arranged for the Cowra area on private property. COG has camped in the same area on previous occasions and apparently the area is alive with birds. **Unfortunately to date we have not been able to find a COG member who is prepared to lead the outing. Anyone interested to lead or to find out further details please contact Chris Davey 62546324 (h) or [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)**

#### **Moon Cottage**

#### **Bush Retreat**

#### **Secluded**

#### **Self-contained**



**3 bedroom cottage near Braidwood.**

**Private walking trails thru 160 acres of bush.**

**Enjoy the birds, river gorge and platypus.**

**Close to Monga Rainforest and Budawangs**

**Ideal for families or small groups**

**\$100 per night**

**Phone: Toni on (02) 6247 8785 or email [todayid@webone.com.au](mailto:todayid@webone.com.au)**

### **Saturday 10 April 2010 - Evening spotlighting – Brindabellas**

Kathy Walter and John Goldie are leading an evening of spotlighting for owls and other nocturnal animals such as Greater Gliders in the Brindabellas. We hope to see Tawny Frogmouths and Boobooks and we will try for a Powerful Owl.

The outing will start at Bulls Head at 5.30pm. Bring something for a quick and easy dinner at the picnic shelter while we wait for dark. Please book with Kathy and John on 6241 7639 or by email to [walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au](mailto:walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au).

Numbers will be limited to 5 cars and the outing will be weather dependant.

### **Sunday 18 April — K2C bird surveys, Scottsdale and surrounds.**

Many COG members would have heard of, and may have visited, the Bush Heritage Australia property 'Scottsdale' near Bredbo. 'Scottsdale' protects a range of vegetation communities including native grasslands and box woodlands which are home to several threatened species such as **Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. Bush Heritage through 'Scottsdale' is also part of a wider regional conservation partnership called Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C). COG has been asked by Bush Heritage to help monitor the results of conservation actions on a number of properties involved in K2C in the area surrounding Scottsdale.

We will undertake a morning of bird surveys in 'blitz' fashion, that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com), ph. 6251 0303.

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## News from the committee

- Over January, COG sent submissions on a couple of planning issues, including a response to the EIS on the re-location of the electrical sub-station near the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- COG, with the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment hosted a forum of experts to discuss birds issues for the OCSE Investigations into the Urban Forest and Canberra Nature Park. COG will be providing a submission on the latter.
- Jenny Bounds attended the *Bush on the Boundary* meeting on 9 February, at which the sealing of the Mulligans Flat Road between the nature reserves was a major issue discussed. There are still concerns with the design of the northern section (too many trees to be removed), which are being followed up by BoB members with Roads ACT.
- The draft report on the 10 Years Data analysis of woodland data surveys is nearing completion.
- Lai Battisson is coordinating a COG display at the *Festival of the Forest* being held at the Arboretum in mid-March.
- The habitat re-assessments at the woodlands locations are nearly completed.
- COG has been advised that the Leeton Birdfair will be held in September 2010 (not November as in the past).
- Daniel Mantle has volunteered to take over the role of outings coordinator for the next few months.
- The COG Forward Plan was discussed at the February meeting. A number of the initiatives in the plan have now been completed, including the publication of *Birds of Canberra Gardens*, updating of the COG data-base system, and the digitisation of *Canberra Bird Notes*. There has been progress on a number of other matters, including the preparation of bird route brochures, information on bird-attracting plants, and a review of COG's display materials. New initiatives for the Plan include improving the user-friendliness of available information about map tools, and starting to plan for the 2011 Birds Australia camp-out, to be held in our area.

— Sandra Henderson (Secretary)

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## THE NATURE OF SOUTHERN PERU



This is one of the richest parts of the world for a naturalist and birder. In a country smaller than the Northern Territory there are three times as many bird species as in Australia!

This September, come with COG member and *Avian Whimsy* author Ian Fraser to discover it for yourself, in company with two superb local guides. From the high treeless puna to the beautiful cloud forests of the Andes, and deep into the rainforests of the Amazon basin, accessible only by boat, this is an adventure not to be missed. **Hoatzins, macaws, toucans, 30 different hummingbirds, quetzals, tanagers, Cock-of-the-Rock**, and monkeys, Giant Otters, caimans, maybe even Jaguar! (Nor do we ignore the cultural aspects, including the truly fabulous Machu Picchu.)

For a full itinerary, costings and booking details, contact Ian Fraser on 6249 1560, or [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au).



**And for a preview, come to the April COG meeting!**



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## Journals available

The Library at the Australian National Botanic Gardens has a number of journals which were donated but are unable to be retained. If you are interested in any of the following, please contact Sandra Henderson (see back page) for the Librarian's contact details. You will need to be able to call in to the ANBG Library during business hours (9.30-4.30 Mon-Fri) before the end of March if the issues you want are still available.

**Ibis** – Journal of the British Ornithological Journal (1950s to 2000s)

**The Auk** – A Quarterly Journal of Ornithology (1950s to 2000s)

**Journal of Field Ornithology** (1950s to 2000s)

**Bird Banding**

**The Wilson Bulletin** (1970s to 2003)

**Notornis** – Journal of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (1950s to 2003)

**The Condor** (1950s to 2003)

**Corella** (1997-2000)

**American Birds – Operating Field Notes** (1974-1975)

**Bulletin of the Ecological Society of Australia**

**The Victorian Naturalist** (1890s, 1970s to 1980s)

**Ring and Migration** (1970s to 1980s)

**Ornithological Monographs** (numbers 54-58)

**Bird Behaviour** (1980-1981)

**The Sunbird** – Journal of the Queensland Ornithological Society (1997)

**Australian Birds** – NSW Field Ornithologists Club (1995-1997)

**The Australian Bird Watcher** – Journal of Field Ornithology (1997-2001)

**Southern Bird** (2004-2005)

**Habitat Australia** (1987-1989)

**Bird Observer** (1998-2000)

**Colonial Waterbirds** (1978-1992)

**The Colonial Waterbird Society Newsletter** (1984-1990)

**Victoria Wader Group Bulletin** (numbers 13, 14, 17)

**New Zealand Bird Notes** – Bulletin of the Ornithological Society of NZ (1940s)

**Australian Wildlife Research** (issues from 1981, 1983)

**American Zoologist** (1991)

**Australasian Raptor Association News** (1988-1990)

**An Occasional Stint** – Tasmanian Shorebird Study Group (1992-1996)

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## Help required

The 'Friends of Mt Majura' are intending to arrange a guided walk of the area and would like someone who knows the local birds to help. No dates have been set at this stage so if there is anyone interested in helping could you please contact Chris Davey (62546324 or [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)) for further details.



### TENT FOR SALE

**Tornado Extended T 10TX Canvas tent for sale** (no centre pole), in excellent condition. Sleeps 4, but ideal for 2.

Includes large awning which can be erected on either side, and heavy duty plastic bags for the poles. \$500 ono.

Please contact Barb or Chris de Bruine on 0262583531 or email [barbdebruine@hotmail.com](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com)



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## Garden Bird Survey Notes

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

- juvenile **Dollarbird** and juvenile **Eastern Koel** from a site in Griffiths (other juvenile **Koels** reported on the chatline have been outside GBS sites);
- **Wedge-tailed Eagles** flying low or perching at Jerrabomberra and Carwoola;
- **Mistletoebird** breeding at Hoskinstown;
- **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** (note plural) and subsequently **Grey Goshawk** at a site in O'Connor; and
- before the deluge, a number of comments about possible early migration and/or formation of feeding flocks.

### A late breeding season?

On the mid-week walk in February there were a number of occasions on which the group thought birds' behaviour looked almost as though they were thinking about breeding. We wondered if this was the start of a second round of breeding brought on by the two recent rain events. So I had a look at what is in the GBS DB for evidence of breeding in weeks 5 to 8 inclusive.

Looking over the whole 28 years there are 2328 breeding observations in that period. 1566 observations (69%) were DY and a further 580 observations (25%) – mainly before year 13 – were the broadly equivalent code F (dependent Fledgling, not to be confused with the *Annual Bird Report* summary statistic F, for Frequency).

The 182 records with breeding codes other than DY or F relate to 33 species. 70 % of these records are covered by six species: **Crested Pigeon** (35 observations); **Common Myna** (26); **House Sparrow** (23); **Magpie-lark** (16) **Common Blackbird** (15) and **Red Wattlebird** (12).

### Uses of GBS data

The second edition of *Birds of Canberra Gardens* has been launched to the public! GBS data was used by Chris Davey in a presentation at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems on birds on the Urban Forest. A PhD student from the Fenner School has made initial contact regarding the use of GBS data in her research into birds and development. .

### Charts

At present I am aware of 96 people having Charts for Year 29. Four additional sites have been started in the last month!!

— **Martin Butterfield**.

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## Launch of *Birds of Canberra Gardens*, 2nd Edition

The second edition of the COG publication *Birds of Canberra Gardens* was launched on Tuesday 16 February. The launch at the Botanic Gardens was opened with a few words from the President followed by words of thanks and acknowledgements from the editor, Paul Fennell.

The book was then officially launched by the Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope, who welcomed this second edition published with an additional 10 years worth of data obtained from the Garden Bird Survey. Martin Butterfield, the present GBS coordinator, provided a display of material from the GBS including charts from the first and last survey period — a span of 27 years.

The event was attended by members from all sections of the political spectrum and the Chief Minister congratulated COG on a most valuable contribution to the knowledge of birds in the ACT.

— **Chris Davey (President)**



**Jon Stanhope and Chris Davey  
in discussion after the launch of  
*Birds of Canberra Gardens***

Photo by Sandra Henderson



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## NSW & ACT TWITCHATHON 2009 PRIZEWINNERS

The 2009 Twitchathon raised around \$23,000 for this year's project "Monitoring the Important Bird Areas of western NSW".

The Winners of the Main Race were the **Menacing Monarchs** (Robert McDonald & Michael Kearns) who with 247 species, were well ahead of the 2nd place getters in the Main Race, the **Hunter Home Brewers** (Mick & Steve Roderick & Craig Anderson) who saw 234 species.

The Prize for the team with the lowest ratio of kms travelled per bird seen (minimum 180 species, excluding 1st & 2nd place getters), went to the **Raven On team** (Matt Hinze, Amelia Marshall, Tony Bischoff, Ethan Marshall & Henry Siems) who saw 181 species and were in the Twitch for the first time.

Winners of the Champagne Race were the **Varied Wrenegades** (Chis & Liz Herbert, Robert & Janeen Greig) with 197. 2nd Prize went to the **Crested Shrike-twits** (Lorna Mee, Paul Baird & Jim Smart) with 169 species. The Prize for the team with the lowest ratio of kms travelled per bird seen in the Champagne Race went to the **Warbler Specklers** (Frances Czwarlina, Andrew Patrick and Cathy Goswell) with 131 species.

Independent expert Dion Hobcroft chose the **Painted Snipe** seen at Dubbo as the "Rarest Bird", by Frank Hemming of the **Bumblng Bee-eaters**. The Biggest Dip Prize went to Greg Clancy of the **Black-necked Stalkers** whose team saw a **Black Noddy** moments before the start of the Twitch but the bird could not be found at 4 pm! The Lucky Twitchers Prize was won by Greg Dowd of the **Liarbirders** Team. This prize was drawn from the hat at a Birding NSW Central Coast Group activity by a Non Twitcher!

In the Childrens Section, Little Curlews Division, the **Pigeon Pair** team of Sophia & Sam Heinsohn won with 71 species and took out the prize for the most funds raised, while in the Dollarbirds Division, the **Red-necked Dorks** (Liam Trice & Brad Bolt) with 130 species, won the prize over the **Dubbo Ducks** (Eliza, Alice and Henry Smidt-Geering) who saw 97 species but Eliza took out the prize for the most funds raised in the Dollarbird Section.

The Winner of the Prize for the Most Funds Raised was David Eldridge, from the **Bumblng Bee-eaters** Team, and he raised \$3154.50, a great effort as this was the first time that any of the team members had taken part in the Twitchathon.

Finally as we had done so well both financially this year and in the numbers of participants, it was decided to award two more prizes! The first was for the team that travelled under 100 kms and saw over 100 species. The **Red-faced Parrots** (Judy Harrington, Charlie Andres and Jon Irvinve), travelled 16 kms mostly on foot and on bicycle and saw 101 species! Secondly, it was decided to recognise the team that raised the most money. This was won by **Chicks with Altitude**.

Clubs should be putting their thinking caps on for Twitch 2010 and give consideration to proposing the bird conservation project for which the Sponsorship Funds can be directed. Each alternate year, the Clubs who enter teams can submit proposals to the organiser, and he will bring forward a recommendation to the next BIGnet Meeting which will be held in Sydney on 10-11 April 2010. Please contact the organiser direct if you have a proposal.

**Alan Morris.**

**NSW & ACT Twitchathon Co-ordinator**

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***Birds of Canberra Gardens* editor ,Paul Fennell with  
Legislative Assembly member Mary Porter, after the  
launch.**

**Photo by Sandra Henderson**

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

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

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

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

Contact:

Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531, [barbdebruine@hotmail.com](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com), or see <http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

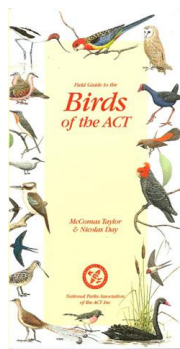
*Arupingi* is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

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

Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

6286 1564 or  
[gramsay@actewagl.net.au](mailto:gramsay@actewagl.net.au)

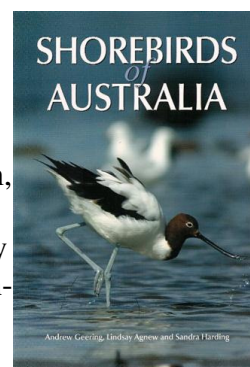
# COG SALES



**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.

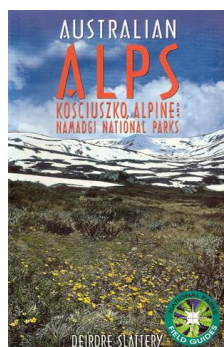
**Shorebirds of Australia (Geering, Agnew & Harding) \$33.00** — This title brings to-

gether 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.



**Birdwatching on the Far South Coast** (see

<http://www.thebegavalley.org.au/6224.html>) This spiral bound title is well presented, easy to read and is available from the Sales Desk for \$16.00. The inside front cover provides a quick guide to the towns and localities referred to in the text. All sites have been tried and tested and it is recommended that the guide be used in conjunction with a district map.



**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 80 — Well Royalled Birds

It would be fair to say that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – when most Australian birds got their formal names – the official attitude towards royal personages could easily have been mistaken for sycophancy. This certainly extended to the taxonomic scientists who were involved in the naming. It goes without saying however that the birds weren't asked if being monickered with an aristocratically foreign name suited them. At the most basic level are those birds simply dubbed as Royal, with no particular individual in mind. As usual I want to know why, and as usual I'm never going to. What is especially regal about a **Royal Spoonbill** as compared with an apparently plebeian **Yellow-billed** one? And what sort of class tensions must that cause around the waterhole? Or for that matter in the fig tree where a **Rose-crowned Fruit-dove's** specific name *regina* implies that its plumage is somehow queenlier than that of a mere **Superb Fruit-dove**?

Most royal names however are rather more specific. Perhaps surprisingly, no Australian bird that I can think of got lumbered with *georgei* or *edwardi*, but Victoria features. **Victoria's Riflebird** (*Ptiloris victoriae*) was so honoured, depending on your viewpoint, by Gould in 1849. Her husband Albert (or if you're a pedant about such things, The Prince Consort, formerly His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Duke of Saxony) got another Queen-slander, the dinkum long-time Australian we must now call **Albert's Lyrebird** (*Menura alberti*). And I would be derelict in my duty if I were not to inform you that the author of this name was not only a Frenchman, but a nephew of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte. (And how does *that* work? Are Emperor's nephews normally princes? Ah, I am a mine of ignorance of such things.) Actually the **Magnificent Riflebird** of Cape York has the sub-specific name of *alberti* (to distinguish it from the Papua New Guinea birds) and for a while was known as Prince Albert's Riflebird.

Victoria and Albert's daughter-in-law, Alexandra Caroline Marie Charlotte Louise Julia of Denmark, also scored. The glorious and elusive **Princess Parrot** was described in 1863 by Gould – again! truly a *bête noir* of any republican birds out there – as *Polytelis alexandrae*. Specifically he intended it to mark her marriage to the then Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, who was (very much!) later to become the British King Edward VII. I note with some amusement that at that stage the parrot was promoted, at least among those *hoi polloi* who referred to it by its then fuller common name, from Princess Alexandra's to Queen Alexandra's Parrot.

Not all the royal birds were named for contemporary aristocrats though. One of the less obvious is the genus *Arses*, represented in Australia by the **Pied** and **Frilled Monarchs**. Arses was the son of Artaxerxes Ochus, a Persian King of some 2300 years ago when Persia ruled Egypt; he came to power when his dad was chopped up by an Egyptian slave eunuch for being rude about Egyptian gods. For some reason Arses retained this slave, one Bagoas, but shouldn't have been surprised that when he tried to sack Bagoas three years later he got poisoned for it. And would you believe that in turn *his* son also kept Bagoas on?? If we had to lumber the bird-monarchs with a human name, maybe Bagoas had a better claim. Even the Combined Royals Guild would hardly nominate Arses and his immediate male relatives as among their best and brightest.

The **Sarus Crane** is *Grus antigone*, for Antigone the daughter of King Laomedon of Troy and Priam's sister. She apparently upset Hera (wife – and older sister – of Zeus) by not being respectful enough of Hera's hair and was turned into a crane. Or maybe a stork. Or perhaps Hera turned Antigone's hair into snakes and someone else did the crane trick to do her a favour. Or whatever, it depends what you read. I got a bit bored with trying to unravel that one I'm afraid, so feel free to explain the true story to me.

There are some second-hand royalty names too. *Charadrius alexandrinus* – **Kentish Plover** to its mates – was named for Alexandria in Egypt, which in turned took its name from Alexander the Great. The specific name of the **Australian Swiftlet**, *Aerodramus terraereginae*, is I'm sure just a literal translation of Queensland, which in turn was named for Victoria (queen, not state, see above ...). Another derived one is *isabella*, as in *Siltia isabella*, the **Australian Pratincole**. In this case *isabella*, means greyish-yellow. It is purported to derive from Isabella of Spain who in a flash of optimism undertook not to change her 'body linen' until besieged Granada fell in 1492. It took an unfortunately long time, and your imagination may do the rest. (There is some confusion here; the esteemed Oxford Dictionary tells me that it was another Isabella – of Austria – and that the siege was of Ostend in 1601, from which the word could not have derived thus as it appears in 1600. Curiously the Oxford doesn't mention the earlier Isabella or her siege.)

That might be as good a place as any to leave this Whimsy. If the regal-eyed among you spot any more examples, please let me know. — **Ian Fraser** (ianf@pcug.org.au)

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## WONGA Bawley Point South Coast of N.S.W.

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## COG welcomes the following new members:

**S Free, Nicholls**

**J Casburn, Duffy**

**E Brown, Fadden**

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**April deadline**

**Wednesday 31 March 2010**

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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*Vice President*—TBA

*Treasurer*—Lyn Rees  
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*Address for correspondence*

The Secretary  
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

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## Gang-gang

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