

Gang-gang

May 2011

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.5.11

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 meeting will begin with **David Rees** presenting his DVD of “**Birding in the North Island of New Zealand**”.

The main presentation will be by **Jodie Dunn**, Shorebird Recovery Coordinator, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, entitled “**The South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program**”

This program was established in 1999 by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to reduce the rate of decline of threatened shorebirds (**Hooded Plover**, **Pied** and **Sooty Oystercatcher** and **Little Tern**) and to recover populations by enhancing breeding success. Two Shorebird Recovery Coordinators are employed by NPWS on a full-time basis from October to March to coordinate the implementation of recovery

(Continued on page 3)

What to watch out for this month

It was a real pleasure when the March 2011 edition of the *Canberra Bird Notes* with the latest (2009-2010) *COG Annual Bird Report* (ABR) unexpectedly lobbed in my letter box with the April *Gang-gang* early last month. As usual I perused it eagerly, and once again I was impressed by the enormous effort that goes into completing this very valuable summary of the bird life in the ACT over this period, not only by the team that puts it together, but by all the observers who contributed the valuable sightings data. I was also again struck by how the impressions I had formed from my local scene don't necessarily reflect what others had seen, sometimes from places not too far away. So every observation counts, and I encourage all of you to keep reporting your sightings, and make a plea to those who aren't yet doing so to please start soon.

I also can't help wondering how different next year's ABR will be, covering the first wet year after nearly a decade of dry ones. One aspect that might not feature (since only individual species are summarised) is the prominence of mixed feeding flocks (MMF) so far in the autumn of 2011, certainly the best in my GBS site over the past two months for many years. Though the total bird numbers in them seem to be diminishing, and they appear to be moving through more quickly (possibly due to the using up of the food sources), they certainly have been a daily feature. One interesting aspect has been that in mid-February the **Striated Pardalote** was the main species, followed by the **Spotted** in late March, and most recently the **Silvereye**, which from all reports seems to have been coming through the ACT in large numbers.

A surprise during April has been reports of a number of species I thought had long left Canberra for warmer places. One was a very late breeding record by Michael Lenz of nearly fully grown dependent young **Rufous Songlark** being fed north of Gundaroo on 1 April (no joke he assures us). Michael tells me there were at least eight breeding territories there, one of the few sites in the COG area of interest (AOI) where this species was present in any numbers this season (it was still there on 18 April). The other main area was in COG grid cell H11 where Roger Curnow was still recording up to three birds close to mid April. As I've noted several times before in this column, this species does overwinter in our AOI, but can be very inconspicuous, skulking around in the understory, with its rufous rump the best diagnostic feature in an otherwise pretty plain brown bird.

(Continued on page 2)

Everyone welcome



Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
(*Chalites lucidus*)

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

Most birds of this species move away by early February, along with the **White-winged Triller** which was reported in the extreme south of the COG AOI during the K2C survey on 9 April, following on from one reported at nearby Scottsdale on 26 March. I understand both were males still in breeding plumage. Other species still recorded lingering on well after they were expected to have long gone were **Tree Martins** in H11 in mid April, a juvenile **Brush Cuckoo** in the Mt Majura woodland survey on 30 March, a **Pallid Cuckoo** (again on the K2C survey) and possibly less surprising a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** in the Goorooyaroo woodland survey on 4 April, and two at Shepherd's Lookout the next day. **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** are also still being reported, but this species is the least migratory cuckoo in this area.

Another surprise in April has been two further reports of juvenile **Eastern Koels**, the first in Scullin of one calling persistently on 2 April by John Brannan, and the second on 6 April in Curtin by Martyn Moffat of possibly the same bird he reported in March, but after a fortnight's absence, and no longer making begging calls; rather it sounded more like a bowerbird. To my knowledge these are the first records of this species in Canberra in April. Perhaps they are overlooked if no longer calling, but I suspect the last of them has finally headed north after a bumper 2010-2011 **Koel** season. There have

also been further reports of **Superb Parrots** on the north side of Canberra in April, in particular over Easter. This species is much more likely to overwinter than the above.

Of the species that leave at the end of March/early April there were no further reports of **White-throated Needletails** or **Fork-tailed Swifts**, confirming that numbers of these have remained low despite the much wetter conditions. The last reports of the **Mistletoebird** and **Western** (including one very insistently-begging dependent young) and **White-throated Gerygone** were in early April. The **Leaden Flycatcher** was more frequently reported up to the second weekend of April, but again there have been none of the **Satin Flycatcher** passing through. By contrast there were a number of reports of **Rufous Fantails**, **Rufous Whistlers** and **Noisy Friarbird** up to mid April.

Reports of migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** indicate that they seemed to have peaked by about the second weekend of April, with, as expected, the proportion of **White-naped Honeyeaters** increasing in the smaller sized flocks after that. My impression is that numbers (compared with those historically) have been moderate at best, despite the very much better breeding conditions.

Continue to keep an eye (and ear) open for all of the above species, and also for the following migratory species traditionally the last to leave Canberra (though all of them do overwinter in varying numbers), the **Grey Fantail**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Dusky Woodswallow** (lots were seen to the south of the ACT during the Birds Australia camp-out) and **Olive-backed Oriole**. All of these were still regularly being reported up to and including over Easter.

Of 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 **White-eared Honeyeater** was quite conspicuous and calling widely by mid April, and the **Golden Whistler** and the **Scarlet Robin** have been regularly reported. However, there have been only several reports of the **Flame Robin**, which over late Easter had still not been recorded in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge and the southern part of Narrabundah Hill. They have been regular mid autumn/winter visitors there since the fires, but I suspect the grass is too long and rank for them to be there in any numbers this year. Closer to Canberra the reports have only been of the female/immatures, though we did see a male in the Bumbalong Valley during the Birds Australia Campout. As yet there have been no reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** (look and listen for these from the start of May) and the **Rose** and **Pink Robin** (most likely to be seen as passage migrants through Canberra in May or August), or further reports of the **Swift Parrot** (perhaps there's too much flowering elsewhere for this species to be bothered to come to Canberra this winter).

All significant observations of species mentioned above, especially if outside of the time they usually are considered to be present, as well as any late autumn/winter breeding activity (**Black-shouldered Kites** have not yet been reported despite the growing mouse numbers) should be reported for inclusion in the COG database, so that the 2011-2012 ABR can be even better than before! — **Jack Holland**

(May Meeting — Continued from page 1)

ery actions during the breeding season and to report on results. One coordinator (Jodie) works out of Ulladulla NPWS office and covers the region from Wollongong to Batemans Bay. A second coordinator works out of Narooma NPWS office, covering the region from Batemans Bay to the NSW/Victorian border. Jodie's talk will cover the biology and behaviour of the four shorebird species, threats to their nests and chicks, protection and management techniques, local volunteer recruitment/training and raising public awareness, as well as discussing breeding success results from the last decade of the recovery program.

Field Trip Reports

5 & 6 March — Eden Pelagics

Nineteen COG members made the trek down to Eden for a weekend of pelagic birding aboard *Connemara* with skipper Richard Buckingham. We departed both mornings at 6am with the aim of watching the sunrise as we left Twofold Bay. And getting out to the shelf edge as early as possible.

Saturday summary: We departed Eden Wharf in the near dark and headed south-east towards Green Cape and then directly east to the top of the continental slope. The journey across the shelf allowed everyone to brush up on their **shearwater** identification skills as six species were observed (**Flesh-footed, Fluttering, Hutton's, Short-tailed, Sooty** and **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**), and **Shy, Black-browed** and **Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** and a lone **Fairy Prion** also provided interest on the outward journey.

We stopped to berley towards the top of the continental slope as there was a decent concentration of birds in this area. We had soon attracted a small group of **Wedge-tailed** and **Short-tailed Shearwaters**, a few **Pomarine Jaegers**, the first **White-faced Storm-petrels** and a single **Great-winged Petrel**. Within ten minutes the albatross numbers had risen considerably and most of the smaller birds stayed further from the boat from this point on. The first **Buller's Albatross** soon drifted in and was a tick for several on board. It was then joined by a second bird and allowed the photographers on board to get some great shots in the overcast conditions.

We had been burleying for less than 15 minutes when 'Steve' Stephenson calmly asked me what the bird sitting at the back of the boat was. My answer



Great Shearwater
(*Puffinus gravis*)
Photo by Tobias Hayashi

wasn't nearly so calm as I scrambled to get the call out that there was a **Great Shearwater** sitting only a few feet from the back of the boat. This stunning rarity made four or five close passes of the boat over the next 45 minutes, although it spent much of



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**2-7 April 2011
Laos**

Bald-faced Bulbul tour

**8 – 23 April 2011
Sabah (Northern Borneo)**

**13 – 28 May 2011
Gulf Country**
Cairns-Atherton-Cloncurry-Mt Isa

**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
Yorke Peninsula, Lake Gilles, Ceduna

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2011
26 & 27 November
10 & 11 December
New Year's Eve 2011 Plains-wanderer Weekend

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this time sitting on the water about 100 metres away – presumably digesting the large chunks of fish it had greedily snatched from behind the boat.

The albatross numbers continued to build until we had over thirty **Shy Albatrosses** on the water around the boat but petrel numbers remained low and we never had more than two **Great-winged Petrels** or three **White-faced Storm-petrels** at the one time.

On the way back to port we had time for a quick tour of Twofold Bay to search for **Black-faced Cormorant** and to pick up a **Sooty Oystercatcher** on a sandy beach and several more **Arctic Jaeger**.

(Our **Great Shearwater** sighting followed closely that of a bird off Eaglehawk Neck in late February – these records constituted about the 7th and 8th records for Australia. They proved to be the precursors to an unprecedented influx of the species into Australian waters with further reports from NSW, Tas, Vic, and SA, including up to 50 on one Port MacDonnell pelagic trip in mid April)

Sunday summary: We again departed Eden at 6am but this time headed directly east to the shelf edge. We started our berley in slightly deeper waters than yesterday (150 fathoms) and soon drifted out to over 250 fathoms. We again used a chum of tuna oil, sharks' liver and fish scraps. This tasty mix soon attracted the first petrel of the day - a dark **Procellaria** with an extensively white-tipped bill (slightly dusky mandibular unguis), a dark chin (absolutely no white feathers), and a fairly stocky, thick-necked build. At first we thought this may have been a **Black Petrel** but later on realised it was a **White-chinned Petrel** lacking any hint of a white-chin and slightly duskier bill tip than normal. I forwarded the images onto the relevant experts who also considered this bird was *probably* a White-chinned Petrel albeit with a shorter, slighter bill than average and that this may be due to it being an immature.

The numbers of albatross were markedly down from the previous day and the light winds kept many birds on the water. However, the diversity was still reasonable and early on we had seven birds of six species on the slick! Two **Buller's Albatrosses** were again the pick of the albatrosses but an adult '**Campbells' Albatross** (*T. melanopris impavida*) was also much admired. There were more **White-faced Storm-Petrel** today and some showed well on the slick close to the boat but again only a quick fly-by of a distant **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**. A second definite **White-chinned Petrel** also made a quick close pass of the boat.

Before leaving the shelf edge we just had time to check out the seabirds gathered behind a small fishing vessel. There were more of the same albatrosses along with a single **Wandering Albatross** (probably *gibsoni*) and the first concentration of **Great-winged Petrels** for the weekend, with up to 15 birds sitting together on the water and a single **Flesh-footed Shearwater**.

The weekend's excitement wasn't over as ten minutes into the return journey a cracking pale morph **Kermadec Petrel** appeared off our port side and gave great views as it passed within 70 metres of the boat.

— Dan Mantle & Anthony Overs

6-9 April — Birds Australia 2011 Campout, Scottsdale

The annual Birds Australia Campout run by the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) was held at the Bush Heritage property Scottsdale from midday Wednesday 6th to midday Saturday 9th April. There were 38 participants from all over Australia with two from New Zealand. The weather was perfect throughout the Campout and all events and outings went as planned.

The first outing was on Wednesday afternoon to an Apple Box woodland TSR at Strike-a-Light Creek, a few kilometres south of Bredbo on the Jerangle Road. The evening started off with a BBQ hosted by COG followed by a welcome address from Birds Australia CEO, Graeme Hamilton. Chris Davey, President of COG, gave a short presentation on the autumn movement patterns of birds in the area and then Peter Saunders, Manager of Scottsdale, gave a brief introduction to Bush Heritage and to Scottsdale. The evening's events concluded with a presentation from Sandy Gilmore, a Bush Heritage ecologist responsible for assessing the abundance, distribution and status of mammals and birds on a number of Bush Heritage Reserves including Scottsdale.



White-chinned Petrel
(*Procellaria aequinoctialis*)
Photo by Tobias Hayashi

The next morning Sandy Gilmore showed the party around Scottsdale, visiting various habitats including Apple Box and Yellow Box - Red Gum woodlands and riverine habitat along the Murrumbidgee River. The **honeyeater** migration was in full swing with counts ranging from 20 to 50 birds passing per minute. The afternoon was spent travelling over the badly burnt Tinderry Ranges and on to the Tallaganda State Forest. After an evening meal the party split into two and spent a couple of hours spotlighting for **Powerful Owls** in the cool temperate wet forest. Some members of one of the groups were lucky enough to get a fleeting glimpse of an owl flying overhead and all participants were able to get good views of Greater Gliders.

Friday morning was delayed by fog but this soon gave way to a good morning's birding with 53 bird species recorded at Bumbalong, a small village situated a few kilometres north of Scottsdale on the Murrumbidgee River. The late afternoon was spent at North Ridge Park in Cooma, a *Callitris* woodland with a well developed understorey. The highlight of this outing was a pair of **Gang-gangs** with a young male that allowed wonderful close views of this beautiful bird, one that many of the participants had expressed a wish to see. The day was concluded by COG member Mark Clayton with a bird quiz which provided much amusement. Questions such as: name the bird with the longest bill in the world, and 'are/were there any poisonous birds?' caused much head scratching.

Again, due to early morning fog, the K2C survey was delayed but by midday on Saturday the survey of 38 sites over 23 properties was completed. Saturday was the 20th anniversary of the formation of Bush Heritage and to celebrate this milestone the Campout participants and COG members involved in the K2C survey were, along with over 100 invited guests, treated to a lunch-time BBQ hosted by Bush Heritage.

The participants broke camp after the BBQ with a few returning to Canberra for the night. The next day dawned wet and miserable. The visit to Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve was attended by a few participants who were able to drive to the visitors centre where they were given a presentation by Jenny Bounds. Jenny outlined the history of the Reserve and the work that is being conducted by the ANU. The proposed afternoon visit to the Australian National Botanic Gardens was cancelled due to the weather.

Our aim at the Campout was to show some of the habitats and associated bird fauna to be found on the Southern Tablelands and to show the honeyeater migration that passes through at this time of the year. There were 98 bird species recorded during the Campout. For me, the two outstanding features were the abundance of threatened woodland species and the continuing presence of some migratory species that would normally have departed the area.

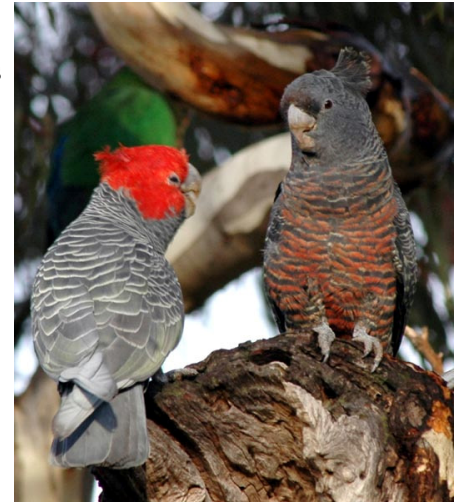
I would like to thank Sandra Henderson, Lia Battisson and Jenny Bounds who led outings and manned the camp, Sue Lashko and Nicki Taws for their help with the BBQ, Martin Butterfield for helping with the Tallaganda outing, Jack Holland for leading the outing to Bumbalong, Sue Lashko and Mark Clayton for the bird quiz and Nicki Taws for arranging for Campout participants to take part in the K2C survey. Finally I would like to thank Peter Saunders and Sandy Gilmore, both of Bush Heritage, for their assistance in the running of a most successful event. — **Chris Davey**

Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) survey - 9 April 2011

The survey monitors 39 sites across 25 properties in an area stretching from Williamsdale in the north to south of Bredbo. It aims to monitor birds in woodlands and grassland where conservation actions are being undertaken, and to provide feedback to landholders involved in K2C on the outcomes of their conservation actions.

This third survey was held in conjunction with the Birds Australia campout based at the Bush Heritage Australia property 'Scottsdale'. The 14 COG participants were joined by 21 BA members and grouped into small teams, each to survey a number of sites across two or more properties during the morning. Conditions were foggy to begin with for some sites but this soon cleared to a sunny day although with increasing wind later in the morning.

A total of 89 species were recorded for the morning, which included 46 woodland-dependent species, eight waterbird species, and seven threatened species. Nine of the species had not been recorded previously in K2C surveys: **Australian**



Gang-gang Cockatoo
(*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
Photo by Stuart Harris

Owlet-nightjar, Brown Goshawk, Chestnut Teal, Double-barred Finch, Little Black Cormorant, Olive-backed Oriole, Rock Dove, Satin Bowerbird and White-winged Triller.

Honeyeaters were migrating during the morning, although not as consistently across the sites as last year, possibly because of lingering fog. The most noticeable migration was at sites in the Michelago area where several hundred birds per 20 minute count were recorded. Flocks were made up almost entirely of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** with only the occasional **White-naped**, and a couple of small flocks of **Red Wattlebird**.

Spring/summer migrants still lingering in the region included many **Dusky Woodswallow**, a few **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Fan-tailed** and **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **White-winged Triller**.

Other significant sightings were **Hooded Robin** on six properties, **Diamond Firetail** on seven properties, **Brown Treecreeper** (four properties), **Gang-gang Cockatoo** (two properties) **Speckled Warbler** (three properties), **Scarlet Robin** (seven properties), **Varied Sittella** (two properties), **Southern Whiteface** (four properties), **Restless Flycatcher** (seven properties) and **Crested Shrike-tit** (one property). Another interesting sighting over Guises Creek at Williamsdale was of a flock of 300 **Little Raven** flying northward (to Canberra?)

The survey finished at Scottsdale for a wrap-up of the morning's findings and a barbeque lunch hosted by Bush Heritage Australia in celebration of their 20th birthday. A big thank you to the 35 COG & BA participants, the landholders involved, and Bush Heritage Australia.

The Spring survey is scheduled for Sunday, 16 October. — **Nicki Taws**



Hooded Robin
(*Melanodryas cucullata*)
Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

20 April — Wednesday walk — Red Hill

A convivial group of 21 members and guests met in the NW of the Red Hill element of Canberra Nature Park. (The area became densely populated when we crossed with a slightly larger group from Walking for Pleasure!)

The highlight was two sightings of **Speckled Warbler**, the first of which was carrying a dead moth. Since it did so for some minutes and flew off with moth in beak it was generally agreed that this was a CF breeding record. Other sightings which raised pulses were:

- a large flock of mixed **Pardalotes** (estimated as at least 60 birds, 50 Spotted and 10 Striated);
- a huge flock of **Silvereyes** (estimated as at least 100 birds);
- 10 **Red Wattlebirds**;
- two groups of **Satin Bowerbirds** including at least two blue birds (a resident showed us the last known site of a bower but although a lot of pegs and other blue material was visible, it appeared to be very overgrown); and
- 23 **Little Ravens**.

We recorded 31 species overall, including 6 species of parrots/cockatoos. The **Eastern Rosellas** were forming up into flocks with 19 the largest number seen at one time. **Gang-gangs** and **Australian King-Parrots** were present in good numbers.

Thanks to Marion for leading us round her patch

. — **Martin Butterfield**

Banding trip

Iron Range — mid-November 2011

Anyone who is interested in the bird banding trip to Iron Range on Cape York Peninsula in mid November please contact me chollop7@bigpond.com asap.

Please note I will be in Indonesia in mid May.

— **Mark Clayton**

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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.

Saturday 7 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens (Beginners walk)

This morning walk will be the first for 2011 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. **Anthony Overs** will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours from **9.15am, meeting at the bus shelter**.

Please book your place with **Anthony (6254 0168, or anthony.overs@gmail.com)**, who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please also don't forget to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Wednesday 18 May – Brooks Hill and Bungendore area

The May Wednesday walk will be to Brooks Hill near Bungendore and the road to Smiths Gap. Details including a map will be circulated to the chatline and to the WW email group (ww@canberrabirds.org.au) closer to the date.

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

Each autumn/winter a number of bird species come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas. Examples of these are two species of **red-breasted robins** (**Scarlet** and **Flame**), plus two species which are much less common (**Rose** and **Pink**), a number of

(Continued on page 8)



Eastern Spinebill
(*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*)
Photo by David Cook

species of **honeyeater** including the **White-eared**, **Fuscous**, **Brown-headed**, **Crescent** and the **Eastern Spinebill**, and the **Golden Whistler**. Several other species such as the **Dusky Woodswallow**, the **Grey Fantail** and the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** will overwinter in the ACT in small numbers. The aim of this outing is to learn about them and to try to observe as many of these species within the ACT in the one day. Some passage migrants might also still be moving around in late May to add to the interest.

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland will lead the outing. Transport will be by two 12-seater buses. This involves a total of 24 people, and a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles; otherwise the outing becomes logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am. This is quite central, and where the parking is free. It will run until mid afternoon so that the buses can be returned late that afternoon, so please bring morning tea and lunch. The costs will be \$20 per person,

including the COG admin fee. This will be payable on boarding the bus. To book please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au). Note that one bus is already full, and the second is filling fast.

This annual outing has been brought forward a couple of months to the end of autumn, as the species are often more conspicuous when they first arrive. We will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these species are likely to be present. As usual, the exact itinerary will not be determined until very close to the day, and will depend on recent reports of where these birds are, though there will be an attempt to stay within the ACT boundaries.

NOTE: Cancellations at short notice which cannot be filled from a wait list may have to pay the full fare if a loss to COG results.

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

The Canberra Ornithologists Group has invited members of the ACT Down Syndrome Association to join us for this field trip to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This area is one of the most valuable wetland habitats in the ACT and is of regional importance.

We are meeting at 9am at the carpark at the end of Dairy Road. After an introduction and an opportunity to meet each other, we will visit the bird hides overlooking Kelly Swamp, where we can sit down and watch birds without disturbing them. We will break after about an hour to enjoy some morning tea and to socialise, and then continue some more bird watching, finishing by midday.

This field trip is a unique opportunity to meet some interesting new people of all ages, including some with limited experience with birds, so if you are interested in sharing your knowledge, your participation will be very much appreciated.

To register, or for more information, please contact Matthew Frawley at frawley.matthew@gmail.com or telephone 6296 1026.

Sat-Mon 11-13 June – Long weekend campout

CANCELLED

Saturday 18th June — Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Superb Lyrebird survey

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 year's 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.



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 banding 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 (ONLY ONE SPACE LEFT) but an additional trip. October is very pleasant in this region, especially now the drought has finally broken.

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

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 (only differences will be if we include some catering on top). 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. Please contact Daniel Mantle (danmantle@hotmail.com or 0413 554 500) to book your place.

Autumn Woodland Survey Report

Mulligan's Flat NR - Sunday 27 March

Jenny Bounds and team had a very pleasant morning in fine and mild conditions with a bit of a breeze as the morning progressed. There was plenty of activity with birds moving around, including small flocks of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** moving through on autumn migration, a few of the summer migrants still around - **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Pallid Cuckoo** - and some of the winter birds starting to come into the reserve. **Scarlet Robins** were recorded at nine sites (more than usual for autumn) and **Golden Whistler** at several sites. **Pardalotes** of both species were numerous. **Brown Thornbill** numbers seem to be up with records at three sites. Highlights included: five **Superb Parrots** near the main entrance off Forde and another on the large dam circuit, a **Southern Boobook** on the western ridge, **Speckled Warblers** at two sites, and an **Eastern Yellow Robin** at site 17 on the eastern side of the reserve near the large dam woodland, the first sighting of this species on a survey at Mulligan's since 2004. No **Hooded Robins** were recorded; our last survey record was in April 2009, and it's possible this species may be gone from Mulligans. Grass and shrub growth is very evident from the wet spring/summer. A total of 46 species was recorded.

Goorooyarroo NR North - Saturday 2 April

Nicki Taws surveyed on a day that was cold and somewhat misty at sunrise but warmed up quickly. As soon as the sun hit the treetops they came alive with **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** at every site. Very few migrating honeyeaters seem to cross through Gooroo, and more **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills** feeding on flowering mistletoe were recorded than **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** passing through. Summer migrants still present included **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Grey Fantail**, **Mistletoebird**, a silent **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** and several **Western Gerygone**, including one very insistently-begging dependent young. **Golden Whistler** were also present, as well as several **Speckled Warblers**, and flock of **Varied Sittella**. Several **Scarlet Robin** were seen, but **Red-capped Robins** seem to have left the district and no **Hooded Robins** were found.

Goorooyarroo NR South - Sunday 3 April

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley, with Dave and Kathy Cook, had a lovely day for the survey. Birds were reasonably plentiful although only a few mixed flocks were encountered. Four **Red-browed Finches** were a first for this survey, and species not often reported included **Silvereyes** (5+) and **White-browed Scrubwrens** (3+). Others of interest were **Wedge-tailed Eagle** (2), **Brown Falcon** (2), **Nankeen Kestrel** (2), **Common Bronzewing** (1), **Speckled Warbler** (1+), **Dusky Woodswallow** (3), **Grey Currawong** (1) and **Leaden Flycatcher** (1 female). **Honeyeaters** were rather scarce but we did have a few small groups of **Yellow-faced** moving through. There were plenty of **pardalotes** and **thornbills** at some sites.

Reptiles were few but included a Shingleback and a calling Whistling Treefrog (*Litoria verreauxii*). Perhaps the most interesting sighting of the day was a Black Jezebel (*Delias nigrina*) butterfly, a fairly common species on the south coast but a rarity in the ACT; like others in this genus it is a mistletoe feeder.

Majura Field Firing Range - Wednesday 30 March

Paul Fennell's survey started early just after the sun appeared over the horizon in superb birdwatching conditions. The Grenade Range site was a little busier than usual, with an unusually high count of 20 **Eastern Rosellas**, but also 40 **Common Starlings**. A single **Australian Hobby** was perched on a dead tree, clutching its prey, which appeared at a distance to be a **Starling**. Paul and helpers were under orders to clear that area well before the grenade throwing began at 9:00 am. **Grey Butcherbirds** were present at three sites, with a **Pied Butcherbird** heard not far from one site. Unfortunately there were no **Hooded Robins** sighted, although the Defence Environmental Officer thought she spotted one while driving. There were no **Brown Treecreepers** spotted, but good views were had of a juvenile **Brush Cuckoo**. **Honeyeaters** were a little more prevalent than usual, with **Yellow-faced** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** at two sites, and **Noisy Miners**, **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Eastern Spinebills** also observed. **Common Bronzewings** were spotted at two sites, and there was one mixed flock (**Weebills**, **pardalotes**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Scarlet Robin** and **White-eared Honeyeater**) at another site. As well as the Grenade Range activity, there was a veritable fusillade on the main target range, so a wide detour had to be made around the eastern and northern perimeter of the range, high up

among the ridges and gullies, along twisting rocky tracks - great 4-wheel driving experience! The drive was worthwhile, because the three northern sites yielded excellent birdwatching, including a flock of about 30 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** at one site.

Campbell Park - Tuesday 29 March

Michael Lenz surveyed in pleasant weather conditions, in the woodlands of Campbell Park and Mt Ainslie NR East. **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** were widespread, but only in small groups, as well as **Grey Fantail**, with **White-throated Gerygone**, **Rufous** and **Golden Whistler** at and between a couple of sites. Also seen were one **Fuscous Honeyeater**, and small numbers of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, one **Mistletoebird** and, to Michael's delight, two sites with **Speckled Warblers**, the first for a while during the woodland survey. On the way back to the car park, he added **Diamond Firetails**, two **Jacky Winters** (with the male repeatedly in full song) and two **Buff-rumped Thornbills** feeding one begging young. Several sites have become very weedy, although rabbit numbers appear to be down.

Newline - Saturday 2 April

Sue Lashko did the survey in perfect sunny, calm conditions. Access to some sites was rather difficult with dense, wet, long grass up to the thighs and weeds were rampant. All dams were full, with **Australasian Grebes**, **Grey Teal** and **Wood Duck** on some dams. Apart from **Starlings**, **Eastern Rosellas** were the most common species. Flocks of **Silver-eyes** were feeding on the seeds of tall weeds, along with **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** or **Red-browed Finches** at two sites. Unusual sightings for Newline included **Varied Sittellas** and a family of **Grey Shrike-thrush** with two adults and two juveniles. **Stubble Quail** were recorded at one site and **Brown Quail** at two places between sites. Migrants included **Grey Fantail** at several sites, five **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Golden Whistler**, but no migrating honeyeaters were seen. Raptors were well represented with two **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, two **Nankeen Kestrels**, and **Brown** and **Peregrine Falcons**, plus a flock of 19 **Little Ravens**.

Red Hill NR - Sunday 27 March

Harvey Perkins & Stuart Harris surveyed on a lovely autumn morning which produced a fairly typical result, with overall numbers of birds and diversity pretty much spot on average for Red Hill for the time of year. There was an abundance of **Grey Fantails** and dispersed small flocks of mixed **pardalotes** were common, with **Spotted** and **Striated** in roughly equal proportions, most of them young ones. **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers** were also evident, though mostly between sites and all either female or young birds. There was no evidence of any concerted honeyeater migration, but a single **White-eared Honeyeater** and three individual **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were recorded. A single female **Scarlet Robin** was a highlight, as was the **Southern Boobook** that flushed from site 4 - it's just over ten years since a boobook (could it be the same one?) flushed from an *exocarpus* roost at that site.

Jerrabomberra West NR (woodland) - Tuesday 29 March

Jenny Bounds reported on the survey on a fine morning, with a good total of 46 species, all the usuals found on autumn surveys. Several flocks of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** moved through mid-morning, there were several flocks of small birds (**Weebill**, **thornbills**, **Grey Fantails**, **Speckled Warblers**), a **Scarlet Robin** at one site (only recorded occasionally in this reserve), a few **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Varied Sittella**, and two **Flame Robins** on the grassland edge.

Symonston (Callum Brae NR sites) - Tuesday 29 March

Sandra Henderson did the survey in beautiful weather, reporting it was a pleasure to see that the **Flame Robins** are returning with single birds recorded at two sites. The highlight in terms of survey records was a flock of 13 **King Parrots** flying into the first site. Between sites, **Diamond Firetails** were recorded at three separate locations, one in an acacia behind the brick building (old pumping station), up next to the quarry fence. The same smallish acacia had two **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** and a **White-plumed Honeyeater** (all put to flight by several trucks passing on the track behind). Only a single **Dusky Woodswallow** was sighted all morning, although there are at least a dozen known to still be in residence at CB. The two **Australian Hobbies** put in an appearance, although not within a survey site. One of the two juvenile **Australasian Grebes** on the small dam had disappeared. There would seem to be a number of **Grey Butcherbirds** around as they were heard at most survey points, and on another recent visit three were around.

Woodland near Tharwa - Friday 8 April

David McDonald conducted the autumn survey and was amazed at the growth of the native grasses and weeds, as well as the way the formerly-distressed Blakely's Red Gums had responded to the wetter conditions. He had perfect **honey-eater** migration conditions: cool, sunny and still. They were on the move, mostly **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, migrating towards the east and south-east. The highlight was **Speckled Warblers**, with two inside one of the sites and four inside another. A **Little Corella** was heard outside the survey site: this species is rare in the Tharwa area, but could be part of the corellas' southward expansion, with records over the last 12 months from southern Tuggeranong. Disappointingly, no **Brown Treecreepers** were observed, although they bred there last summer. The **Red-rumped Parrots** that were resident, and bred there each year over the two decades, disappeared towards the end of the drought period and have not (yet) returned.

Please HELP TEST the redesigned COG Observation Record

If you are a new member of COG or a member who has rarely (or never) submitted a paper record of a bird sighting on the COG Observation Record sheet or if you're a COG member who sometimes/often submits paper records of bird sightings on the COG Observation Record sheet, but is not already involved in the redesign and are willing to help test the redesigned sheet please email Michael Robbins- mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au (or phone him on 6231 7391 before 14 May).

Testing can involve:

- as little as filling in one sheet, AND letting Michael know if you would suggest any changes to the new design, OR
- testing the sheet on several occasions, in different circumstances, AND letting Michael know how easy/difficult you found following each instruction and filling in each data entry field.

NOTE: changes to the COG on-line data entry system will follow once the redesigned paper form has been tested and the final version agreed.

The three main changes to the previous COG Observation Record sheet are:

- The "Weather" and "Habitat" sections have been dropped. Observations on Weather or Habitat of note can be written into the "Notes" field.
- The text for names of birds has been made bigger.
- Grid squares (eg L14) have been dropped. Geocoordinates (a latitude/longitude pair) will be the preferred way of reporting observations. To ensure a lat/long pair is entered into the COG database, the observer will need to provide either:
 - a standard location from the COG Gazetteer, for which the observer will not need to enter the predefined lat/long pair. (*Note: The COG Gazetteer will contain the names of all suburbs and elements of Canberra Nature Park, as well as known "good birding" spots. The COG Gazetteer will be made available on the COG website when the redesigned Observation Record is published for general use*), OR
 - a lat/long pair (determined with a GPS or Google earth) and a proposed new location name.

A draft standard set of locality names (including known "good" birding spots), i.e. a sample from the proposed COG Gazetteer, will be provided to each "helper" along with the number of copies of the redesigned form they request.

— **Michael Robbins**

for Redesign of Observation Record sub-committee - Chris Davey, Martin Butterfield, Paul Fennel & Michael R

An Exceptional Year?

Recently in the context of some late breeding events, Geoffrey Dabb asked the question: was 2010/11 **an exceptional year**?

For up to 10 years the local bird scene has been shaped by local and distant drought. We had influxes of species normally found more to the west of us (such as **White-browed Woodswallow**, **Masked Woodswallow**, higher numbers of **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous** and **Brown Songlark**), and we have seen declines in some of our local breeding birds; at least breeding success has often been poor. With the rains since late 2009 things have changed markedly. Importantly, conditions inland are now very good. This has meant that there was no need for inland species to move east to find suitable conditions for breeding. Hence, no **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow** have been recorded in 2010 in our area, and to judge by sites I visit, many **Dusky Woodswallows** have also left their former breeding areas here, and no doubt have moved westward. Further, I have not recorded this species this autumn over my GBS site while at the same time last year they passed through often.

White-winged Triller and both species of **songlark** were present in quite small numbers during the last breeding season; most birds had no need to come eastwards, but sites that had those species present here probably present optimal habitat for them.

We had notable influxes of **Stubble Quail** in summer, and it seems both species of **pardalote** and **Grey Fantail** had very good breeding success to judge by high numbers recorded everywhere this late summer/autumn. Most pleasing were more sightings of **Speckled Warblers** this year during woodland surveys than in previous years. Numbers of **Diamond Firetails** have also increased. Bruce Lindenmayer reported at the April COG meeting a concentration of seven **Willie Wagtails** at one site and recently I had 12 of them around a small flock of sheep near Tarago. No doubt there are many other similar examples of sightings of birds in good numbers, indicating at long last better breeding success.

The rains in early 2010 triggered late breeding not just in waterbirds, but also in a number of woodland species, most notably in **thornbills**. It seems that we may not see the same success this autumn. However, some species, especially the **Red Wattlebird**, had an extended breeding season (although I still think that a very wet 2010 spring often resulted in failed first broods for this species; when I raised this once on the chat line, I had both confirmation and statements to the contrary, so the impact may have been patchy), and the **Koel** made good use of these late broods and a notable number of late **Koel** fledglings were reported. This is quite intriguing. Are late broods more vulnerable to parasitism? (Perhaps adult hosts have to spend already more time foraging than in spring/summer, hence nest attendance may be lower, giving the **Koel** female more opportunities to deposit an egg?)

In the 2010/11 breeding season **Noisy Miners** have bred from early spring well into autumn at all sites I have visited. In 2009/10 late broods were only recorded from one population.

The widespread good rains had another amazing impact – this time on waterbirds. At urban and farmland water bodies, **Australasian Grebes** and **Wood Ducks** had a good and extended breeding season, with the latest breeding record for the latter at the ANU from Robin Hide recently. Although both Lake George and Lake Bathurst partially filled (I am always astonished how much more it has to rain before the lakes would properly fill; both lakes have still a very long way to go and right now they are shrinking again), this was not matched by numbers nor species composition of waterbirds. Shortly after the initial partial flooding, good numbers of birds were recorded, but soon most waterbirds moved inland with only relatively small numbers of ducks and swans staying behind. Notable though were several concentrations of **Pacific Black Ducks** at smaller bodies of water.

Apart from one record of a **Golden Plover** by Dan Mantle, we had no records of any northern hemisphere waders at Lake Bathurst and Lake George for the last wader season (matching stories of much lower wader numbers than usual being reported from key wader sites in southern Australia). However, Australian waders have done well locally. **Banded Lapwings** were recorded in good numbers, **Black-winged Stilts** have bred, and **Masked Lapwings** formed larger flocks at both lakes.

It was certainly a fascinating time to watch birds and to follow whatever may unfold in our local (and further afield) bird fauna. More than ever we need many, many records from COG members documenting the changes and events, so that we can answer questions such as whether or not a given year is exceptional or not. — **Michael Lenz**

Garden Bird Survey Notes

The chatline has had several GBS sightings this month!

- **Rufous Fantail** in Cook on two occasions
- Migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** from several sites, including migration central in Jerrabomberra.
- A flock of 100 **Spotted Pardalotes** leaping in Ainslie.
- **Southern Boobook** mobbed by 25 **Pied Currawongs** and 'a dozen or so' **Red Wattlebirds** in Florey;
- **Australian Owlet-nightjar** in O'Connor.



Southern Boobook
(*Ninox novaeseelandiae*)
Photo by John Walter

Where do all the baby birds go??

When we resided in New York a topic for discussion in birding groups was "Where do all the baby birds go?" The idea behind this question was based upon each pair of birds raising two chicks on average each year (which is possibly a simplification but is close enough to illustrate a point). If one assumes there were 'x' birds at the start of the year this implies there should be 2x (less deaths) birds in the following year. However, within the accuracy needed for this mind game, there are more or less the same number of birds each year.

Another way of looking at this is that a number of birds, equal to the number of birds in the US at the start of the breeding season, die before the next breeding season. Why is the US not covered by a carpet of dead birds? The conventional short answer is that many of them die over the Gulf of Mexico when undertaking the stressful migration flight.

I thought it might be interesting to look at the GBS to see whether it could support or refute the view that the number of birds was "more or less" constant in the area covered by COG members. As the GBS is based upon a survey site equivalent to 3Ha, if the statement is true the number of birds reported per site week should be "more or less" constant each year. I decided that there were a few issues with reporting of **Common Starlings** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** so deleted those species from the analysis.

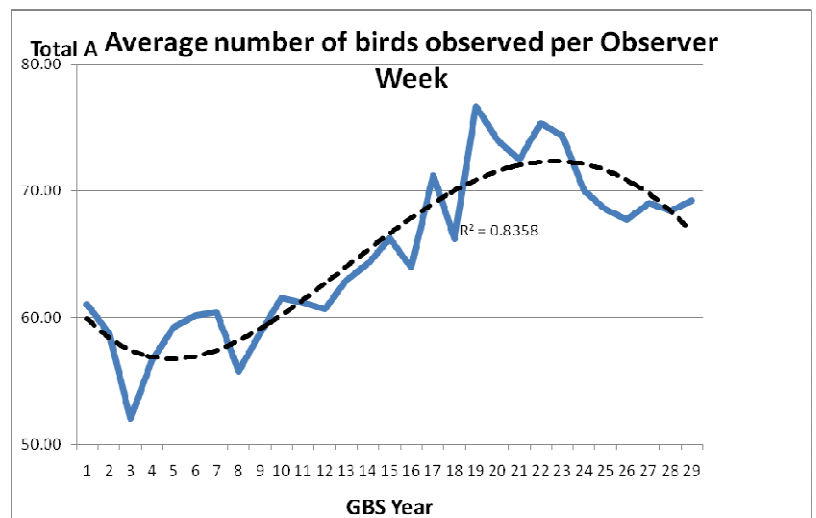
The graph shows an increase over the earlier years (perhaps increasing skills by observers?) followed by a decline (drought effect?) more recently. However, if there had been a steady 2% (let alone 200%) increase per year the value of Total A should have reached 108 rather than peaked at close to 80. Thus the short answer is that the aggregate number of birds is not far short of constant, given that the COG AOI is a small area and birds can fly in and out as they choose.

What happens to all the dead birds is a question I have not yet been able to solve!

Uses of GBS data

Information on **Spotted Dove** has been provided to the ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee, for use in discussions regarding management of this invasive species.

— **Martin Butterfield**



BIGnet Bi-annual Meeting

BIGnet, the Bird Interest Group network, held their bi-annual meeting on Sunday, 3rd April, 2011 at Lake Parramatta Reserve in Sydney. BIGnet invited Piers Higgs, the ALA's Citizen Science team leader, to talk to them about the Atlas of Living Australia. BIGnet is a network of birding groups in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, and members from across the region, plus representatives from Birds Australia, came to Sydney for the meeting.

Piers gave a presentation "How can the ALA help BIGnet" (PDF, 6MB), which provided an overview of the Atlas of Living Australia, and demonstrated the citizen science software (the Biological Data Recording System, or BDRS) being used by Birds Australia. Through the partnership between ALA and Birds Australia, an offer was made to the BIGnet groups that they could use the Birds Australia instance of the BDRS software to help manage their own records.

The Birds Australia instance of the citizen science software has been operational for over twelve months. During this time, the main focus has been on the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo project, where almost 1,000 people have recorded over 4,300 sightings of this species. Birds Australia staff are working on other projects, such as the Black-Cockatoo Night Roosts and Hooded Plover projects, to provide tools for them to capture their data using the Biological Data Recording System.

The BIGnet groups were also interested in some of the other areas that the ALA is working on. Several groups expressed an interest in sharing images through the ALA's work on Morphbank, while others were keen to look at ways to migrate their data using the built-in uploader in the Citizen Science software, or with the support of the ALA. In the coming weeks, the ALA and Birds Australia are working out ways that the BIGnet group can use the existing web form to records, manage and share their wide range of data about birds with Birds Australia, the ALA and the wider community.

— Tony Lawson



Graham Stephinson posted this photo to the Chatline with the following message

One of the "apple stealing" bowerbirds came to a sticky end, sadly.

Window fatality. The attached shows the beauty in its design & feathers.

Diamond Firetail
(*Stagonopleura guttata*)
Photographed by Tobias Hayashi
on Cooleman Ridge



Committee News

- Membership fees will not rise for the 2011-2012 financial year. They remain at \$35 for an individual or family membership, and \$17.50 for fulltime students. A membership form is also available on COG's website, and fees can be paid at COG meetings (please have the correct money).

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 interested in any of the following COG activities

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

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

☐ *Gang-gang*

☐ *Canberra Bird Notes (CBN)*

Revised 12 April 2011

Planting for Glossy Black-Cockatoos

Planting on Isaacs Ridge

What and Why? Help ACT Parks and Conservation Service and Greening Australia plant 2,500 *Allocasuarina verticillata* on Isaacs Ridge to provide food for Glossy Black-Cockatoos. The Glossy Black-Cockatoo is declared as vulnerable to the threat of extinction in the ACT and depends on the availability of seed from these trees to survive.

When? Wednesday 18 May. Time is still to be finalised, but in the morning and followed by lunch

Where? On the top of Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve (near the trig). Transport to the top will be provided from somewhere in Isaacs (probably Isaacs Shopping Centre in Farr Place)

What to bring? Please bring hat, sunscreen, long sleeves, gardening gloves, long pants, sturdy boots, and water bottle. Holes will be pre-dug but there will be some digging still required (mattocks provided)

RSVP essential: Contact Greening Australia, admin@act.greeningaustralia.org.au or 6253 3035



Photo by Stuart Harris

Planting on Tuggeranong Hill

What and Why? Help ACT Parks and Conservation Service and Greening Australia plant 2,500 *Allocasuarina verticillata* in the eastern section of Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve to provide food for Glossy Black-Cockatoos. The Glossy Black-Cockatoo is declared as vulnerable to the threat of extinction in the ACT and depends on the availability of seed from these trees to survive.

When? Sunday 5 June (World Environment Day), 9:30am to 12:30pm followed by lunch

Where? Eastern section of Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve. Parking will be off Callister Crescent Theodore. Look for Greening Australia signs

What to bring? Please bring hat, sunscreen, long sleeves, gardening gloves, long pants, sturdy boots, and water bottle. Holes will be pre-dug but there will be some digging still required (mattocks provided)

RSVP essential: Contact Greening Australia, admin@act.greeningaustralia.org.au or 6253 3035

(Whimsy — Continued from page 19)

didn't feature on the 85-species yard list from Turner; sadly one was a **Spotted Turtle-dove**, anathema to me, but the other was a **Sacred Kingfisher** that flashed down, seized something (I hope not one of 'our' skinks) and flashed away again. Another highlight was a couple of **Yellow-tailed Black-cockies** which landed briefly in the banksia only metres away; yet another was the **Collared Sparrowhawk** which flashed through the foliage and swooped up over the house as I watched from the window, then perched the next day on a branch in front of my study. I've a long way to go to the old yard's 85 species mark, but then 25 years was a long time to accumulate them.

Our yards, like the rest of our lives, develop around us, sometimes in surprising ways. I am comfortable in my new yard and my new life, and look forward to enjoying them both evolve, and evolving with them. And the birds will come, in their own time.

**If you're fortunate enough not to have been already sentient in the 60s, you'll need to consult your Favourite Search Engine.— Ian Fraser — calochilus51@internode.on.net*

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

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

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

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

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

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

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

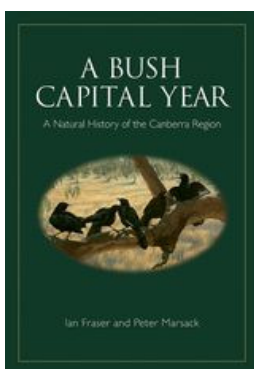
South Rosedale

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@grapevine.com.au

COG SALES

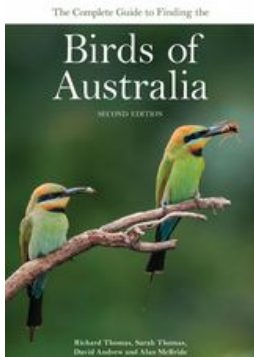


A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region Ian Fraser , Peter Marsack

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

What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife? David Lindenmayer

Based on thirteen years of intensive research, the book breaks the discussion into chapters on key environmental and vegetation assets and then discusses how to make these assets better for biodiversity. The work encompasses information on vertebrates and invertebrates on farms and their relationships with significant vegetation and environmental assets: woodland remnants, plantings, paddocks, rocky outcrops and waterways. A chapter is dedicated to each asset and how it can be managed. Members price \$27

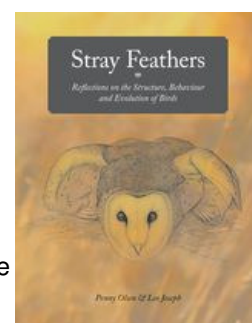


The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed Richard Thomas , Sarah Thomas , David Andrew , Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.

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 – expected for the June meeting



Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): *Kookaburra*, *Australian Magpie*, and many more.

Avian Whimsy #88: Memories of a Garden or The Yardbirds*

It was a big Turner yard, with an odd shape – a triangle funnelling in from the street, though one angled side fence kinked as it approached the back fence, forming a narrow square ‘nose’ instead of a point. That square was a useful area to fence off, and for a while it formed a duck pen. Until I roofed it, the **Australian Ravens** got their share of the eggs; one remarkably (and unendearingly) worked out where the eggs were coming from and I found it on one occasion perched on an unfortunate duck’s back, pecking at its tail to encourage production. That was the trigger for the roof. It was a dog rather than the ravens which finished off the ageing ducks however, and their space reverted to garden.

Initially, in the mid-1980s, it was sparse and bleak; the only native plant in the entire blank expanse was a tiny self-sown *Acacia mearnsii* among the weeds. A quarter century later it’s still there, a favourite gathering place for the **Gang-gangs** before they launch themselves down to seed or water. In time it got big enough to rain seeds down onto the shed roof and somehow the **Common Bronzewing**s found out and foraged on the roof and even along the footpath out the front, where other wattles also dropped their bounty. Sadly they only came from 1994 to 1997, then abruptly stopped.

Creating the garden was tough – to plant every single one of the scores of native trees and shrubs required a crowbar to break the clay – but the birds responded amazingly in those long ago days, before the Big Drought and the Big Fires. **Scrubwrens, fairy-wrens, Weebills**, three different **thornbills**, **Scarlet Robins** were all there in the increasing foliage in the early years, back when rain was reliable and one could even wish that it would stop! When Black Mountain burnt in 1991 once-in-a-yardtime visitors included a **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo** and, surprisingly, a **Satin Flycatcher**. **Pelicans, ibis, ducks, a Wedgie, Little Eagles and Peregrines** flew over.

My study faced the front garden, where an old saucepan hung from a Black Sallee to form a bath. Through the winter of 1995 **Fuscous** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** visited it regularly; on one memorable Attenboroughesque moment I watched open-mouthed as a young **Grey Butcherbird** hurtled into the bathing flock of **White-naped**s, drowned one and flew off with it, the outraged flock in pursuit. None of those three species ever reappeared in the yard.

Another honeyeater which dropped in unexpectedly in 1994 was a single **Noisy Miner** which poked around, seemed unimpressed and returned to the ANU across the road. Unfortunately it must have filed a report, because a decade later its descendants returned en masse, probably dispossessed by the massive expansion works in the uni grounds, and took over the yard. Another that was still a bit of a novelty in the mid-90s was a **Koel** – that seems a long time ago now, does it not? - which I’d not yet seen in the ACT. Someone rang me when I was on the afternoon ABC and told me of a **Koel** in her yard in O’Connor; I arranged to drop by en route home to see it, but it had fled. When I got home it (or one very like it) was calling from the ornamental plum tree just over the back fence. Also in 1994 a male **Rose Robin** stayed for much of winter in the yard; he – I’m sure it was him – came again nearly each year until 2004, but not thereafter.

In 2001 my life changed dramatically, as lives do, but the first decade of the 2000s changed things in even more profound and broader ways. The drought ruled throughout, The Fires came in early 2003 and in my yard the **miners** muscled in. Numbers and diversity of small birds at number 43 were never again as they had been.

Nonetheless there were some very memorable sightings in that time. So much of birding seems to be chance, happening to be in the right place at the right time (though of course another way of putting that is that the more hours you put in, the luckier you’re likely to be!). In October 2006 I left my desk, slightly reluctantly, to investigate an avian ruckus outside – and saw my first (and only) ACT **Barn Owl** blinking confusedly in a tree outside the back door, just before it panicked and was seen off the premises by the mob. Perhaps even more astonishingly, six months later a **Painted Button-quail** turned up and spent a week in the yard – fortunately I have a photo to prove that one! And in February of 2006 I sat and watched enthralled until darkness hid from me the sky that was full of **Fork-tailed Swifts**, from horizon to horizon.

Early this year came the time for me to start the next phase of my life, and I moved to a much smaller yard across the lake, but one already well-endowed with native plants. My study looks over a balcony to the foliage and our bedroom seems almost within the big *Banksia marginata*, now coming into full flower. Already I have seen two species that

(Continued on page 17)



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COG welcomes the following new members:

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NEXT NEWSLETTER

May deadline

Wednesday 25 May 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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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.

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www.canberrabirds.org.au

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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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