

Gang-gang

November 2003

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 12 November

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THE BIRDS

Our pallid winter days are marked,
 commas around a phrase,
 by a passing flock
 of yellow-tailed black cockatoos.
 Bold and clamorous they fly –
 towards the sun at first light,
 back through the western sky at dusk.

We wake to the sound of squeals,
 contact calls, as they beat a path
 to the forest rim on Mugga ridge.
 Moving and murmuring,
 they work over tree after tree,
 strip the bark for grubs in red-gums
 and gorge themselves on pine-cones.

As the day draws in we hear them,
 shrill and pure as children's play;
 the sated birds flap slowly home
 to gullies in the hill behind us.
 Their shapes define our limits:
 warn of the time to embrace
 the other world;
 or when to lower blinds,
 build up the fire
 and crowd together in the roost.

Suzanne Edgar 1/10/03

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo
(*Calyptorhynchus funereus*)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

'From the membership officer'

From time to time I receive muted
 whispers that people haven't
 received their monthly newsletter
 Gang-gang. While I do my best to
 ensure that a mailing label is
 created for all current members
 each month, I do make mistakes.
 Most often this is caused by a
 delay in the processing of
 subscriptions and me updating the
 membership database. To a lesser
 extent this happens because no
 mailing label is created for a
 particular member due to some
 vagary in Microsoft Access. For
 those affected I apologise.

Another reason you may not have
 received your *Gang-gang* is
 because your subscription has
 expired. All memberships run on a
 financial year basis, i.e. from 01
 July to 30 June, irrespective of
 when the subscription is paid. The
 committee allows 3 months grace,
 but after 30 September each year,
 members who have not paid their
 subscription are made inactive.
 The currency of your subscription



Pink-eared Duck

(Malacorhynchus membranaceus)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

appears on each and every mailing label so please take a moment to read the label. What you can do to help me is to ensure your membership remains current is to pay your subscription before the end of the financial year. This year, less than half the COG membership paid their subscription by the June deadline. Often I receive membership renewals right up until Christmas.

At any time, if you do not receive a *Gang-gang* or Canberra Bird Notes, *in the first instance* please call me on 0401 993 381 or email me at alclare@netspeed.com.au. I can tell you on the spot if you are a current member and if a mailing label was printed for the offending mailout. If there has been a problem I can then take action to ensure a copy is sent out to you.

Regards
Alastair Smith Membership Officer

Field Trip Reports

GOLDEN SHOULDERED PARROTS - NOT JUST A TICK

What more auspicious start to an adventure could there be than to see Geoffrey Dabb, in full birding gear standing at the entrance to the park giving us a dignified and correct military salute in farewell!

A couple of days later, just before dawn, four of us were installed in comfy chairs beside a dam on Cape York hoping that **Golden-shouldered Parrots** would come in to drink soon after dawn. The waiting was time for a wonderful concert of one of the best dawn choruses I have ever heard. (I must admit that for a bird watcher, I am not always good at rising early enough to actually hear this aural delight.) I heard **Yellow-**

throated, Whited-throated, Brown & Blue-faced Honeyeaters among the earliest callers soon joined by **Bar-shouldered Doves, Orioles and Pardalotes**. A **Blue-winged Kookaburra** started to wind up, but after a few brief notes quickly realised how out of tune he was with all the others, and gave up.

The light increased and birds started to come in for a drink. Eight **Pale-headed Rosellas** decorated the limbs of a dead tree, displaying their creams and blues to perfection in the growing light. A little to the right three **Red-winged Parrots** arrived to add a splash of brilliant colour.

Then a quiet voice behind me, "The first pair have arrived - on your left". Klaus had told us earlier that the parrots, if they came in to drink, would probably come to one of the trees near the dam, sit around for a while, come down to drink, and when all were done, fly off to feed. So head swivelled as far to the left as I could get it, I glimpsed the hint of a bird up high. A minute or so later, "They are coming in, from behind. Don't bother to crick your neck." Six/seven minutes and about 10 or more (I was too busy looking to count!) moved to a small tree at the edge of the waterhole, right where my chair was pointed.

After giving us a reasonable view they flew down to join the other parrots and doves drinking. The females and juveniles went first, with a full coloured male appearing to supervise or stand guard from the rear. Most of the parrots had taken their drink when

suddenly all the birds left the water's edge in a great hurry and returned to their previous perch. Everything went so quiet, so quiet I felt I should hold my breath. Then in swooped a **Peregrine Falcon**. The **Golden-shouldered Parrots** did not move – no alarm calls, no agitation, just stillness.

A long time after the brief visit of the Peregrine Falcon a juvenile male and a full coloured male flew down for their drink, then returned to the tree. Instead of going off to feed all the parrots decided to stay in the safety of the tree. We were able to watch and quietly pass the scope from one to the other to identify the juveniles and full coloured adults.

We also kept an eye on a pair of **Striated Pardalotes** busy with their nest in the bank of the waterhole in front of us.

Eventually all the parrots departed. How fortunate we had been, not only to see the birds but to have circumstances such that they stayed so long. Finding the Golden-shouldered Parrot was not just another tick, but an unforgettable two-three hour experience.

Mary Jones

MULLIGAN'S FLAT SURVEY SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2003

The spring survey was in fine and sunny weather, after a cold night. 59 species were recorded. Highlights were a pair of **Hooded Robins** back at site 21 (we had not recorded them there for a while), and a pair of **Crested**

Shrike-tits at the same site, six **Masked Woodswallows** on the eastern side of the reserve (a flock of 20 had also been reported on the COG email list in the weeks before the survey), **Speckled Warblers** and **Scarlet Robins** at several sites, and **Latham's Snipe**, a **Hoary-headed Grebe** and a **Little Corella** at the large dam, which has some water in it now even though the wall is not yet repaired. Interestingly, I saw one Red-necked Wallaby at the northern end of the reserve near site 10; I have occasionally recorded this species before at Mulligan's but not for several years - it has commonly been found in the forest areas of the Brindabella ranges. Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted with the survey, now in its 9th year. The next survey is Sunday 30 November, volunteers please leave a phone message for me on 6288 7802 in the week before the survey if you are available - bring mug for morning tea, clipboard, pencil etc, and wear sturdy shoes.

Jenny Bounds

NEWLINE SURVEY SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2003

Sue Lashko assisted me to survey the nine sites at Newline, on a cold and windy afternoon - the only time I had available in my schedule. It was relatively quiet, with only 35 species recorded and few spring migrants around. The big highlight was four **Brown Treecreepers** in the front paddock (usually we get a pair there, and occasionally more, maybe they have bred recently?), plus **Speckled Warbler**, **Southern**

Annual General Meeting

8 pm

Wednesday

12 November

*Canberra Girls Grammar School
cnr Gawler Cres and Melbourne
Ave, Deakin*

AGM Agenda

1. Opening of meeting
2. Apologies for non-attendance
3. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting (copies of the minutes will be available at the door)
4. Presentation of Annual Report
5. Adoption of Annual Report
6. Presentation of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts (enclosed in this *Gang-gang*)
7. Adoption of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts
8. Election of officers (President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary) and ordinary committee members
9. Other matters for which notice has been given
10. Closing of meeting...then on to the fun stuff...

The main speaker will be COG member **Reid McLachlan**, on '**Identifying ducks in flight**'. Reid has been involved in waterfowl identification testing for sporting shooters in New South Wales and will show us video footage used in the process and highlight the finer points of identification. **Geoffrey Dabb** will follow with a Round Hill video extravaganza.

Don't miss it!

Whiteface, Jacky Winter and one **Masked Woodswallow**. One of the biggest flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** I have seen on a woodland survey, around 160 birds, was feeding in one paddock.

Jenny Bounds

KELLY ROAD/TSR 36 **12 OCTOBER 2003**

When within 5 minutes of getting out of our cars a group of three **Hooded Robins** landed and perched within a metre of each other on the cross bar of a telephone pole right in front of us, I knew were in for a good morning in spite of the less than perfect conditions with a very cold blustery S wind blowing. One male had a noticeably greyer hood than the other, indicative of a young bird. The group then proceeded to forage close by in typical perch and pounce fashion from fences, stones, sticks etc for at least 10 minutes, allowing the 10 members who had accompanied me to this favourite spot to see all the identification features, particularly for the much less striking female.

This sighting heralded the observation of a number of the declining species, with great views of **Brown Treecreepers** obtained soon after (with at least 10 birds for the morning), a **Restless Flycatcher**, a male **Scarlet Robin**, several **Southern Whiteface** and a **Jacky Winter** (the latter two are not common here), all seen at close quarters.

In fact at one stage it appeared there were more of the rarer than

common bird species. However, in keeping with the very slow season so far very few spring migrants were seen, mainly confined to a number of **Dusky Woodswallows**, several **Tree Martins** and a female **White-winged Triller** feeding on the ground, posing some identification problems for those who first saw it.

Both **White-plumed** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were common, with the latter typically mainly in the southern half of our kilometre or so walk down the road from the start of TSR 36. My estimate was that there were at least 20 of them, with all participants obtaining good views and also becoming familiar with their very characteristic call, given mostly during the summer period. Both species were observed nest building, with the fuscous building a very woolly structure with material obtained from the adjacent sheep paddock.

Close to 40 species were seen or heard, an impressive number given the conditions. I'm not sure what makes this particular spot so special. Perhaps it is the mix of very mature yellow and apple box trees (an unusual combination in my experience) combined with the sweet briar etc under storey or more importantly the open paddocks in which to feed. Despite the some times very cold conditions all participants thoroughly enjoyed what was a new spot for most, and I can thoroughly recommend a visit to all members, particularly in the period from October through to April.

Jack Holland

WOLLONGONG AREA **SHOREBIRD/PELAGIC TRIP,** **18-19 OCTOBER 2003**

A goodly number of COG members and friends rendezvoused on a mild, sunny Saturday lunchtime at the mouth of Lake Illawarra, near Windang (south of Wollongong), for the beginning of a most enjoyable weekend field trip. We lunched on the southern side of the estuary and, with telescopes a little unsteady in the wind, commenced the task of identifying the shorebirds that we could see some distance away on the sand flats. The **Bar-tailed Godwits** and **Eastern Curlews** posed no identification problems but a group of waders with heads and bills secured beneath their wings were not so easy. Knots, for sure. Red or Great? Resisting the temptation to decide on the basis of a majority decision (pooled ignorance?) most of us concurred with Sue Lashko, the shorebird big gun of the group, that they were **Red Knots**. Strolling along the estuary towards the sea we got onto more waders including **Red-necked Stints**, **Red-capped Plovers** and **Large (Greater) Sand Plovers**, along with **Caspian, Crested, Common and Whiskered Terns**, gulls, cormorants, etc. A rain shower somewhat scattered our party, with some participants regrouping for a visit to the sand flats on the northern side of the estuary, and then seeing what we could see around the southern shore of the Lake. The final birding event was a visit to the Heritage Park, a casuarina-dominated area of forest between the Wollongong road and the Lake. It produced a small



Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

number of species of bush birds, including **Figbirds**. Dinner at the Lake Illawarra Yacht Club was enjoyable, even though most of us were being careful what and how much we ate and drank, bearing in mind the challenges awaiting us on the morrow.

The morrow dawned and 20-odd of us met at the Wollongong inner harbour at 0645 hours to board MV Sandra K for our full day pelagic birding trip. Strong winds and rising seas were forecasted for the arvo, leaving some of us a little apprehensive. We boarded and met our skipper, Carl Loves, and our birding guides, Peter Milburn, Lindsay Smith and Mike Double from SOSSA: the Southern Oceans Seabird Study

Association (details at <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~sossa>). Milburn provided some hints on minimising the risk of sea sickness and, after passing through the Wollongong harbour, we headed NE towards the continental shelf.

Among the first pelagic species to be spotted - more accurately, to be attracted to the burley we dispensed - were the familiar 'muttonbirds': various species of shearwaters. Our guides' expertise came to the fore, not just in identifying the species for us but, more importantly, in helping us to learn how to differentiate between what sometimes looked like an indistinguishable blur of swiftly moving brown seabirds. As someone remarked, 'I bet you didn't know there were so many shades of brown!'

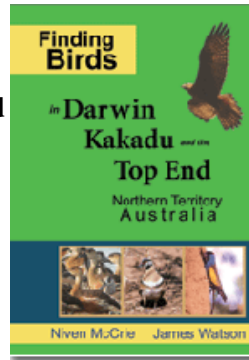
We recorded about 20 species at sea, including four species of petrel (my favourite was the delightful brown-and-white, tubby **Cape Petrel**); **six shearwater species**; one Albatross (the **Campbell Island Albatross** in the new taxonomy or Black-browed in the old); **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**; **Brown Skua**; and **Pomarine Jaeger**; along with diverse gulls, terns and gannets. Many were around the ship once we reached the edge of the continental shelf some 37 km NE of Wollongong, well east of the 151st meridian of longitude.

By the early afternoon the barometer was telling us that the forecasted change was imminent, so we headed back towards Wollongong, surfing in, as Carl put it, on following seas. With the ship being relatively stable, it was a good time for the licensed SOSSA members to do some catching, banding and releasing. How was this done? Milburn stood at the stern of the ship with a large butterfly net in his hands; Mike threw burley out; the birds came to the vessel and, with deft swishes of the net, were captured by Milburn one at a time and swung on board where Lindsay extracted them from the net, banded them, recorded the details and released them. In all, our SOSSA team banded about 20 shearwaters two of which were recaptures. Based on the numbers on their bands, these birds were probably banded 15-20 years ago, we were advised. What incredible distances they must have travelled over their lifetimes, considering that many of these birds migrate annually to the North Pacific!

COG SALES

- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **The Birds of Prey of Australia Field Guide** by Stephen Debus, \$12.50 (Special Price)
- **Messant Calenders 2004**, "Birds of Australia" and/or "Australian Wildflowers", \$8.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, SPECIAL PRICE for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$9.00
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Guide to the Bird Habitats of NSW (ACT)** NSW Atlassers -\$27.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 SPECIAL PRICE - \$45.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** by Pizzey and Knight -\$35.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens - \$25.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

COG T-shirts, Polo shirts, all above and other books on local flora and fauna available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Carol Macleay (for post and packing costs) on 02 6286 2624.



We arrived back at Wollongong harbour at 1545 hours. Most of us had seen new species, and all had had the opportunity to learn more of our pelagic birds and to trial yet more techniques of warding off sea-sickness (with differing results!). We are grateful to Jack Holland for making the administrative arrangements for the weekend; Julie McGuinness and Sue Lashko for the terrestrial leading; Milburn, Lindsay and Mike for the pelagic guiding; and Carl for keeping the Sandra K as stable a birding platform as possible, considering the conditions.

David McDonald

I saw a most peculiar man,
all giggling with glee.
Sniffing at a petrel as it swam
upon the sea.
"I love the smell of petrel,"
is all the fellow said.
I wish that there were more like
him; that darling petrel head.

Poem by *Michael Leunig* printed in the Sydney Morning Herald (27 Oct 1995) and posted to Birdchat by *Trevor Qusted*.

WEDDIN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, LABOUR DAY LONG WEEKEND CAMP-OUT, 4-6 OCTOBER 2003

Due to a variety of reasons, especially the flu, what started off as a baker's dozen of participants at the beginning of the week shrank to just 3 members who joined me at this camp-out. Following the COG camp-out here



Monga National Park

Photo courtesy David Rees

over Easter 2002, I was particularly keen to revisit this area in spring, and we weren't to be disappointed. A total of 63 species were recorded within 2 km of the camp site. While this was well down on the over 80 species seen that Easter, the many extra pairs of eyes, the extra day and the then drought may have accounted for this difference.

At the magical spot along the road about 1 km before you reach the camp site we picked up 43 species in a couple of hours birding on Sunday morning, with another 3 species added in 10 minutes as we were leaving on Monday. This spot is where the open callitris forest (with lots of fallen dead timber) abuts bare non-cropped farm land, typical edge habitat which many birds seem to forage in and then return to the cover offered across the road. A number

of the declining species such as **Brown Treecreeper**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Jacky Winter**, **Red-capped** and **Hooded Robin**, **Grey-crowned** and **White-browed Babbler** and **Double-barred Finch** were found there. However, the undoubted highlight was a **Turquoise Parrot** perched in a dead tree for over 5 minutes, which allowed us to closely approach and obtain by far the best views I've had of this normally fractious species. It was also seen or heard a number of other times, including several times flying through the camp site, but only those with sensitive ears or quick eyes managed to get a brief sighting.

On Sunday afternoon we visited Gum Swamp, where again we saw over 40 species in less than 2 hours, including 31 not seen at the Weddin Mountains. Highlights included **Freckled** and **Blue-billed Ducks**, **Darter**, **White-**

breasted Woodswallow, and a possible **Intermediate Egret**, which was too far away to allow completely positive identification.

As often happens, the best was saved until last. As we were driving out along the road for a quick stop at Holy Camp before heading home, we were alerted by some NSW bird watchers to a **Black Falcon** perched on a dead limb below a nest that was said to contain two chicks. Again this bird allowed the best views I've ever had of this elusive species. Coupled with two **Banded Lapwing** in the adjacent paddock (a pretty rare species in these parts in recent times), this provided a perfect finish to a great weekend. Thank you Stuart, Lia and Philip for sharing it with me.

Jack Holland

MONGA NATIONAL PARK NEAR BRAIDWOOD NSW SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER 2003

A total of 15 members spent the day in the recently proclaimed Monga National Park (formerly State Forest) guided by David McDonald. Weather was partly cloudy with the rain staying away until the party was leaving. The cloud cover provided some relief from the painful noise of the cicadas which had hatched out *en masse*. Forget listening for birds when the sun came out!

At the Mongalowe River which is flanked by flowering Monga warratahs (*Teleopea mongensis*) good views of both **Flame** and **Rose Robins** were had. A **Brown Thornbill** nest was found in a tree



Diamond Firetails
(*Steganopleurs guttatum*)

Photo courtesy **Helen Fallow**

close to the river. Walking back a **Red-browed Treecreeper** appeared in the path a metre a two from the group allowing us all a good look. **Whistlers** were in evidence, with **Olive, Rufous** and **Golden** being recorded. **Grey Fantails** were everywhere but many **Rufous Fantails** were also seen.

Another walk was taken to a stand of Pinkwood (*Eucryphia moorei*) a true Gondwanan remnant. High up on these trees were flowering plants of the Orange Blossom Orchid (*Sarcochilus falcatus*). Along the way a **Large-billed Scrubwren** was found, other birds of note seen were **Crested Shrike-tit** and **Black-faced Monarch**.

A walk up Monga Lane/Reidsdale Road convinced the group that the Monga Forest Preserve was serious **Eastern Whipbird** heaven, **Pilotbirds** were also heard, with possible fleeting glances. In total 39 species of birds were recorded in the day.

David Rees

**WEDNESDAY
WALK;
CAMPBELL
PARK
15 OCTOBER
2003**

Nine of us enjoyed a stroll through the Campbell Park woodlands in perfect spring conditions. We

were rewarded with good sightings of about 30 species. **Dollarbird, Dusky Woodswallow, and White-throated Gerygone** were newly arrived migrants. Good views of **Speckled Warblers** were another highlight.

Tom Green

**NEWHAVEN RESERVE
NORTHERN TERRITORY
(NT)**

In early August 2003 I joined a 4WD tag-along tour which commenced in Alice Springs and finished near Broken Hill over 5000 km later. The tour was organized by the Echuca Branch of BOCA. Two of the dozen 4WDs on the trip were crewed by COG members.

Newhaven was our first port of call. Newhaven is about 360 km NW of Alice Springs on the southern side of the Tanamai Highway. We enjoyed mild weather, no freezing nights and even copped a couple of overnight thunderstorms. Over 4 days we traversed most of the extensive number of tracks around Newhaven and visited most of the

12 bores in search of birds. Other than **Zebra Finches** we found very few birds in any abundance and our bird counts took a lot of hard work in the field to build up.

We did find lots of wild camels and signs of other feral animals such as horses. Most the property had been burnt, perhaps again and again, and our best counts of all forms of wildlife were in the few unburnt areas. As regular visitors to the NT may know Newhaven like much of the NT has suffered from the continuing practice of pastoralists and aborigines alike burning off the countryside.

By contrast elsewhere in the Centre where permanent water could be found, or in unburnt country, we obtained some good counts in no time at all. We found the bush camping facilities very good at Newhaven. The excellent combination of signs and recently graded tracks made traveling around Newhaven in our 4WDs relatively easy too. All this reflects well on the long hours and hard work put in by the new manager and various rangers over time.

My suggestion is that future visitors from COG should be aware that getting Newhaven into recovery mode as a bird reserve will take a long time. Most of the national parks we visited in western Queensland and NSW were former cattle properties a decade or two ago and they also have a long way to go before recovery there is very visible. Newhaven could be worth a side visit by travelers using the Tanamai to get to or from NW WA or by those on a

leisurely trip up to Darwin. The manager will certainly welcome any volunteers with trade skills willing to undertake one of the many jobs needed to be done on this huge property.

Chris Bellamy, Nowra

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE **15 OCTOBER 2003**

At its 15 October meeting Committee noted, amongst other things:

- a written response from the Commonwealth Dept of Environment and Heritage advising that East O'Malley woodland could not be subject to action under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act) 1999.
- a response from the ACT Govt advising that housing will not be permitted to immediately abut reserve areas at Mulligans Flat.
- that Barry Baker and Doug Laing would not be renominating for President and Secretary respectively.
- that Jack Holland would be nominating for President on the incoming Committee at the November AGM.

And agreed:

- to seek quotes for supply of approximately 300 GBS data sheets and to arrange correction of errors on existing edition.
- that publication of a new edition of *Birds of Canberra Gardens* had merit, given current low

stocks, but that detailed consideration should be undertaken by the incoming committee. Likewise with suggestions for publication of a new edition of the *Atlas of the Birds of the ACT*.

- to express gratitude to David Cook for the continued high quality of the COG website.

Doug Laing

Future Field Trips

EAST O'MALLEY WOODLAND; SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2003 - MORNING WALK

In response to calls to protect the important habitat that occurs at East O'Malley, in mid June Dick Schodde provided expert guidance to a large number of COG

Spotless Crane
(*Porzana tabuensis*)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**



members about the values of this site, in particular its population of Blakely's red gum, yellow box and other trees, as well as its birdlife. It was agreed to repeat the outing, bulldozers permitting, in the spring, when the bird life could be expected to be at its peak. While the site has since been sold, work has not yet commenced, and Dick Schodde (6281 3732) has again agreed to lead this walk. Meet Dick at the top of Callemonda Rise at 8.00 am for a couple of hours stroll to see the birds and the trees of this area. With work expected to commence early in the New Year, this may be your last chance to see it its current form.

CAMPBELL PARK; SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2003 – MORNING NEST WORKSHOP

This visit to Campbell Park, arguably the best bit of grassy woodland in Canberra, has been timed to co-incide with the peak of the breeding season. The aim

of the morning is to brush up on members' skills and will involve a short presentation including tips on how to find nests or nesting behaviour, followed by some practical exercises. There will also be plenty of opportunity for bird watching. Lets hope this spring is as successful as last year was.

Jack Holland, with help from Janet Gardner, who knows the area very well through her Ph D studies on the speckled warbler, will be conducting this event. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). Meet at 7.30 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park.

WEDNESDAY WALK – 19 NOVEMBER 2003– JERRABOMBERRA WETLANDS

On the third Wednesday of each month there is a walk commencing at 9am. There is usually a more experienced member or two along to help identify birds seen on these self-organising outings. The relaxed pace of these walks suit them to new and prospective members. A late spring visit to discover what's around at this time of year in this very good birding area. Easy walking. Meet at the carpark off Dairy Flat road next to Kelly's Swamp at 9 am. There will be an option to drive around to the main gate of the Sewage Ponds afterwards. Bring morning tea.

CALOOLA FARM/NAAS FIRE TRAIL; 21-23 NOVEMBER 2003 WEEKEND ATLASSING EVENT

This will be an atlassing event, with emphasis on obtaining data along the Naas fire trail. It will be over 2 nights, Friday and Saturday, staying at Caloola farm within an hour's drive from Canberra, where there is cottage accommodation at very reasonable rates and some overflow camping sites available.

COG has atlassed the Naas fire trail before and it will be very useful to collect more data post fires in the Namadgi National Park. The Naas Valley is a particularly beautiful spot, and one of the few places that was not extensively burned in the January bushfires, and was untouched south of Horse Gully Hut. We will be walking to some places and also doing a drive along the fire trail south through Namadgi NP in an area usually closed to vehicles. Access has been approved for entry of up to four 4WDs into the Park. We should record an excellent variety of bush and forest birds at a prime time of the year, and will be especially looking for some of the threatened and declining woodland birds, like **Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail, Southern Whiteface**. Being based right at the top of the valley will optimise the time we can spend birding, and it should be a very relaxing and interesting weekend.

Accommodation will be in a comfortable farmhouse, at \$22 per head for the 2 nights, in shared

rooms. You bring food, bed linen and towels. Communal sharing meals will be arranged where possible. If you are interested please contact Jenny Bounds (6288 7802 A/H), who will be leading and organising this outing. **While there has been some interest in this outing, Jenny is in particular still looking for several participants who can help with 4 WD vehicles.**

Participants can pay their money at the AGM in November. Jenny will provide meeting and other details, what to bring etc, at the November meeting or will post these to people after that.

BRINDABELLAS; SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2003–DAY OUTING

This is COG's traditional annual visit to the Blundells Creek/Warks Roads area of the Brindabellas, which as members know was devastated in the 18 January bush fires. In spite of this the outing will go ahead, as it will provide members an opportunity to see the fire damage and also to see what birds will be there this spring/summer. Permission for access to this still closed area has now been obtained. Meet Bruce Lindenmayer at Uriarra Homestead (cnr Cotter and Uriarra Rds) at 8.30am. Following a quick look at the water birds on the large dam there, we will car pool, and also do the usual shuffle, leaving some cars at the top of Blundells Ck Rd and some at the bottom so we only need to walk downhill. Could those intending to participate please ring Bruce (6288 5957) beforehand as due to

the sensitivity of the area and potential parking problems it has been agreed to limit numbers.

TSR 60/MOUNTAIN CREEK ROAD; SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER 2003 – MORNING OUTING

The final COG outing for 2004 will be to this popular spot to the NW of Canberra. While the main focus will be to observe the birds that live in TSR 60, a couple of other TSRs and local dams will also be visited. Meet David McDonald 6231 8904 or email David.McDonald@gpo.com.au at the large dam at the Uriarra Homestead on the corner of Cotter and Uriarra Rds at 8 am for this morning outing. Take morning tea.



Black-tailed Native-hen
(*Gallinula ventralis*)

Photo courtesy Geoffrey Dabb

Longer trips

THREDBO; CANBERRA DAY LONG WEEKEND
13-15 MARCH 2004

This visit to Thredbo over the Canberra Day Long Weekend on 13-15 March 2004 is based on our

experience with the Koscioblitz surveys. It will allow members to enjoy the early autumn atmosphere in Australia's highest country and also to see the birds that occur there. In particular it's one of the more accessible places close to Canberra where **Pink Robins** and **Olive Whistlers** can be reliably seen. There are also a number of walks of varying difficulty for members to enjoy.

As for the Koscioblitz surveys it is proposed we will stay at Boali Lodge and enjoy Michelle's legendary hospitality. We've been penciled for a maximum of about 20 people, with the option of full board or bed and breakfast. The cost for the former is \$90 for the first night reducing to \$75 for the second (\$165 for 2 nights), and for the latter is \$105 for 2 nights (\$60/45 per night). A \$6 COG admin fee will need to be added to each.

If you're interested please register with Jack Holland 6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au as soon as possible. A \$25 deposit should be paid within one month of booking, to secure your spot on this outing.

COG GOES PLAINS-WANDERING TO THE MALLEE WITH EMU TOURS
SUNDAY 28 MARCH TO SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2004

This will be a repeat of the highly successful Emu Tour of April 2003 (see write up in the May edition of *Gang-gang*), *but with an extra day spent in the Grampians*. While only a short trip it will involve visits to a

number of different habitats and consequently a wide range of birds may be seen. These include the Terrick Terrick National Park (**Gilbert's Whistler, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill**), **a day in the rugged sandstone escarpments of the Grampians (Long-billed Corella** and various honeyeaters), 3 nights at Whippey's Little Desert Lodge (**Malleefowl, Southern Scrub-robin, Shy Heathwren** and **Purple-gaped Honeyeater**), **a visit to the Kerang/Tullakool wetlands** (a variety of waterbirds/waders) and will culminate in 2 nights in Deniliquin where Phil Maher will again show COG members the **Plains Wanderer, Inland Dotterel** and his many other special birds.

As an added incentive Emu Tours are offering this longer trip at the same price as last year. They will also operate it with as few as 8 and a maximum of 12 participants. The cost will be \$1366 per person, and is based on COG's field trip policy guidelines including a COG administration fee of \$16 per person.

Accommodation will be en-suite twin share throughout, with the possible option of single accommodation on some nights for a single supplement. All accommodation, meals, transport and guiding is included in the tour cost - with the exception of lunch on the first and last days, an a la carte dinner at Halls Gap, drinks, and items of a personal nature. Travel will be in a 20 seater Coaster bus.

To book your place on this very exciting tour please contact Jack

Holland 62887840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au, who can also provide further information, including a fuller itinerary. A \$100 deposit will be needed within a month of booking to ensure your seat on the bus. Deposit cheques should be made out to Emu Tours and sent to Treasurer COG, PO Box 301 CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608.

Booking and Cancellation Policy
Emu Tours cancellation policy will apply. Refunds of monies are only made if a replacement can be found to take the vacant place or if the tour is cancelled. Travel insurance, including cancellation cover, is strongly recommended.

This is the third time this outing has been advertised, with as yet no indication from any member intending to participate. If anyone is interested please let Jack Holland know 62887840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au as soon as possible. If, as seems probable, there is insufficient interest from the COG membership to fill the bus, it will be advertised to Emu Tour's wider clientele, and unfortunately will no longer be a COG specific trip.

DRAFT FIELD TRIPS PROGRAM FOR 2004

As promised the draft 2004 COG Field Trips Program is included for members' comments. A special thank you to those members who responded so positively to my approach to both nominate and lead an outing. This has resulted in a very sound basis for outings for 2004. However, as can be seen the program is still

HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

Guerilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

Lovely, clean and quiet self contained 1 bedroom flat amid trees, own courtyard and garden, adjacent Burrewarra Point clifftop reserve. Close unspoiled walks, beaches. Over 120 bird species seen in the local area, half from the property and lots of other interesting fauna and flora. Reasonable rates. Contact Joan and Trevor Lipscombe 02 6262 7975.

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. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only few kilometers away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle. Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week. Further details contact - Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@argay.com.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick 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. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 - 62583531) for further information.

incomplete.

For a variety of reasons the basic program has been limited to two weekends per month, trying to have an outing on the 2nd and 4th weekends, one a local morning, and the other a longer day/overnight trip. One of the main reasons for this is to provide some certainty to members which weekends they might expect a COG excursion. This has occasionally been a bit hard to stick to as the program is essentially built around the long weekend camp-outs etc.

We also need to be a bit flexible to allow for opportunistic trips as has happened in 2003, for example when good spots are noted on COG-1. Further, some are advertised only as local nature park, water birds for beginners etc, with the actual venue to be decided closer to the day.

There are also still some gaps, particularly in winter - so if you have a favourite spot/trip that you think should be included, or where you think COG should go to again, or have any reasonable suggestion, there is still the opportunity to do so.

As yet no decision has been made for the Easter long weekend. In 2000 COG went to a place at Tullamore (NW of Parkes, 360 km drive), which has been suggested again. It is available and while it comes strongly recommended we would need a leader. It would either be a bring everything camp on one property, or we could use the shearer's quarters/toilets at the property across the road. Mughorn Gap, where COG has

Sun 18 January	Jerrabomberra Wetlands*	Morning
24-26 January - Aust Day long weekend	Does COG want an outing over this time?	If so suggestions/offers please?
Sat 7 February	Yarralumla Foreshores	Evening walk 17.30
Sun 22 February	Pemberton (Tuggeranong)	morning
Sun 7 March	Bibaringa	Morning – fire recovery visit
Sat – Mon 13-15 March (Canberra Day long weekend)	Thredbo	Weekend accommodation – already advertised
Sun 21 March		
Sun 4 April	Oakey Hill to Mt Taylor	Longish morning walk – car shuffle
28 March - 4 April	Plains wanderer/mallee fowl	Commercial tour with Emu Tours
9-12 April Easter	Tullamore/Mughorn Gap??	Easter Camp-out
Sun 18 April	Honeyeater migration	Morning
24-26 April (Anzac Day long weekend)	Does COG want to do something	this weekend?
Sun 9 May	East Basin/Molonglo Reach (Electric Boat)	Morning to view nesting darters etc
Sun 23 May		
12-14 June long weekend	Green Cape	Weekend - seabirds/whales
Sun 27 June	Glossy Blacks/Swift parrot search*	Morning/day
Sat 10 July	Botanic gardens*	Beginners morning
Sun 25 July	Bungonia Gorge	Day outing
Sun 8 August	Local Lake- Waterbirds for beginners*	Morning
Sat 21 August	Reveg and Remnants	Morning
Sun 5 September		
Sun 19 September	Lake Road	Morning
2-4 October long weekend	Buddigower Nature Reserve/Charcoal tank	Long weekend camp-out
Sun 17 October	"Bundidgerry" via Murrumbateman	Extended Morning
Sun 31 October	Gundaroo/Belmount Forest	TSRs, Private property – day
Sun 7 November	Canberra Nature Park – Mugga Lane	Morning
Sat/Sun 20-21 November	Bumbalong Valley (Bredbo)	Overnight/2 nights camp-out
Sun 5 December	Local Nature Park*	morning

* **Leader needed**

also been in the past, has been suggested as an alternative. Again a leader would be needed. Other suggestions are also welcomed.

There is only 1 longer commercial trip on the draft program. As noted elsewhere in this edition of *Gang-gang* this has already been advertised but there has been no interest whatsoever, despite good recent publicity for it. Since there has been low interest from members in the last 3 commercial trips offered, there will be no more trips of this kind until the situation changes (it appears that with so many other options available, COG members will only consider participating if the trip is really special).

As indicated, leaders are still needed for a number of outings. If you can help with these or have any comments or offers of a place to go and/or lead, **please let Jack Holland know** 6288 7840 AH or at jack.holland@deh.gov.au **by 17 December**. The final program will be published with the February 2004 *Gang-gang*, which will be available late January.

Jack Holland



Hardhead (*Aythya australis*)

Photo courtesy Geoffrey Dabb

Other surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

WATERBIRD IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP ;10-11 NOVEMBER 2003 and 20-21 FEBRUARY 2004

Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) is presenting two 2-day practical workshops on Wetland Restoration and Management.

On 10-11 November 2003 a practical workshop will take you

through step-by-step procedures of identification of waterbirds, you will go through curatorial specimens and field samples. In the 20-21 February 2004 workshop, you will learn about

various approaches and methods of rehabilitating and restoring waterbird habitats, with special emphasis on wader habitats.

Several site tours and case studies will expose you to practical problems and successful solutions. In these workshops attention is given to hands-on training and education in the assessment, planning, restoration, monitoring, research and management of natural and man made wetlands. Emphasis is placed on practical experiences of successful repair and restoration of wetlands in Sydney Olympic Park and elsewhere. Top experts in their relevant fields will deliver these high quality tutorials.

Who should attend? Bird lovers, wetlands and catchments technicians, managers, planners, consultants, ecologists, volunteers, coast and river carers, engineers, students, scientists, rangers and conservationists.

Participants will be expected to have some knowledge of waterbirds, wetlands and habitat management issues. Please bring a Field Guide, a pair of binoculars and gumboots and wet gear, if you have them.

Price: \$396 for 2-day workshop, lunch and Workshop Notes.

For further information and Bookings please contact Parklands Bookings Coordinator on: Ph: 612- 9714 7509 or for a Registration Form contact Tanya Rough (COG) by email at Tanya.Rough@deh.gov.au or at home by phone 61610151.

MULLIGAN'S FLAT SURVEY SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2003

See field trip reports for a report on the September Survey. Volunteers for the upcoming November survey please leave a phone message for Jenny Bounds on 6288 7802 in the week before the survey if you are available - bring mug for morning tea, clipboard, pencil etc, and wear sturdy shoes.

COWRA WOODLAND SURVEY 6-7 DECEMBER 2003

The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of 6-7 December. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on thebradybunch8@bigpond.com.

**EARLY MORNING WALKS
DURING AUSTRALIAN
ORNITHOLOGICAL
CONFERENCE (AOC)**

In conjunction with the 2nd Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC), which will be held in December at the ANU, COG is organising some early morning walks in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) and the ANU. These will run from about 6.30 am for round 90 minutes, and are proposed for the ANBG on the mornings of 11 (Thursday) and 13 (Saturday) December and for the ANU on Friday 12 December.

I am looking for assistance to help lead these walks and am in particular interested in volunteers who know the ANBG/ANU well, including those who may have early morning access the ANBG. As small groups of not more than 10 are proposed, it is expected that several leaders will be needed each day. A number of people have agreed to help, but a few more are needed. If you can help please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

**THREATENED BIRD
NETWORK / ATLAS
NEWSLETTER**

The latest TBN/Atlas newsletter (called Volunteer 17) and can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/tbn/index.html>

Avian Whimsy # 15

Recently I was enjoying a **Sacred Kingfisher** doing its bit towards the recovery of fire-ravaged Duffy. Whilst doing so it occurred to me that perhaps we take the oddly religious name for granted; as far as I know, it is only one of two bird species in the world with 'sacred' as an English name. Now be honest – have you ever wondered about why it's sacred? (Well OK, I knew that *you* would have, but I'll bet we-both-know-who has never given it a thought!).

The Sacred Kingfisher, *Todirhamphus sanctus*, even carries the 'sacred' epithet in its scientific name. It is also found throughout much of the western Pacific, New Guinea and Indonesia, and it is from the Pacific that the epithet derives. To the Polynesians, it – and other kingfishers – were responsible for tides and waves, which must have been of ultimate significance to them.

Nor were the Polynesians unique in incorporating kingfishers into their mythology. Before the Sacred Kingfisher was lumbered with its current appalling genus name, which means 'tody-billed', it was included in the genus *Halcyon*. The Greeks told of King Ceyx of Trachis, lost at sea and leaving his grieving widow Alcyone (daughter of Aeolus, custodian of the four winds, which he kept, as one does, in a cave on an island near Sicily). In an uncharacteristic show of compassion the gods united both as birds – the halcyon – which nested on the sea. In a further act

of helpfulness Aeolus even arranged for the sea to be calm during this nesting period. These of course were 'halcyon days', and *Halcyon* was of course a kingfisher.

There's more though, as they say, and I hope you jotted down some of those names! *Alcyone* was the name originally allocated to the Bismarck Kingfisher of the islands north-east of New Guinea; *Ceyx* is now a genus of small fishing kingfishers, in which the Australian Little Kingfisher was formerly included.

At a slight tangent – and yes, I know it's atypical – our Little and Azure Kingfishers are now included in *Alcedo*; *unimaginative but unequivocal in being Latin* for kingfisher. When the taxonomist Hermann named the kookaburra in 1783 he was either feeling desperate or cute; *Dacelo* is an anagram of *Alcedo*!

The only other 'sacred' bird name I know of is the Sacred Ibis of sub-Saharan Africa. (Now there's a challenge for you!) For a long time the Australian White Ibis was included with this species, and like the Sacred Kingfisher we would have searched in vain at home for the name origin. It comes from ancient Egypt – as does the word 'ibis' itself, surely one of the few common English words with such an origin. Curiously the bird has not been a regular in Egypt for some 150 years, but thousands of years ago it turned up in large numbers when the Nile flooded. This was a key event for Egyptian agriculture and by a process of reversing cause and effect, the ibis became

sacred, the incarnation of Djeheuty, known to the Greeks as Thoth. He was the god of wisdom, who invented writing and was the divine mediator. He is most often represented as a man with the head of an ibis.

For this reason the Sacred Ibis was probably the world's first bird to be declared protected – though the thousands of mummified ones may have preferred that the human Egyptians hadn't bothered.

Hopefully this should all put to rest the theory circulating in COG in November 1999 that the name Sacred Kingfisher was itself a typo of the true name. This theory was based on a COG trip report to the Strike-a-Light River, by an esteemed member of the COG committee (and it's OK JB, I won't name you). There she recorded "two pairs of Scared Kingfisher". And on that note, perhaps I should become scarce too. *Ian Fraser* ianf@pcug.org.au

Next newsletter

DECEMBER deadline
Friday 21 November 2003

Send updates to
Tanya Rough,
Editor *Gang-gang*
rough.boden@apex.net.au or
Tanya.Rough@ea.gov.au
Ph: 6161 0151 (ah)

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; 150 for Atlassing Snapshots), except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with articles encouraged.

COG info

President

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mobile 0412 484 728**

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Doug Laing ph 6287 7700 (h)

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**Contact Alastair Smith 6281 3221 (h)
or 0401 993 381 for changes of
address or other details**

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Civic Square, ACT 2608**

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battison and helpers

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

<http://www.canberrabirds.dynamite.com.au>

COG membership

**2003-2004 membership: Individuals,
families and institutions: \$35. school
students (under 18): \$17.50.**

Office (6247 4996)

**COG maintains an office in room
G5, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street,
civic.**

**Office volunteers are not in
attendance for regular opening
hours.**

**Members access by prior
arrangement.**

COG E-mail Discussion List

**COG has an email announcement
and discussion list for members and
friends of COG: 'Canberra Birding',
also known by the nickname 'cog-1'.**

Join the list at

**<http://www.topica.com/lists/canberrabirds>
or by sending a blank
email message to canberrabirds-**



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.
PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

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