

Gang-gang

November 2008

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday
12 November 2008**

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

The first presentation will be by
Kate Grarock titled "**Does remov-
ing Indian Mynas benefit Austral-
ian Native Birds?**"

This will be an overview of her PhD
project to date on the Common
Myna including its introduction to
Australia and Canberra, followed by
what she is doing in the ACT to
answer the above question, includ-
ing a description of her study de-
sign.

The main presentation will be by
Anja Skroblin on the
"**Conservation Biology of the Pur-
ple-crowned Fairy-wren.**"

The beautiful and elusive Purple-
crowned Fairy-wren (PCFW) is re-
stricted to dense riparian vegetation
that fringes the rivers of northern

Continued page 2

Everyone welcome

Annual General Meeting

The 2008 AGM was held in October. Chris Davey's President's report high-
lighted a number of COG achievements over the past year:

- a review of the GBS has been completed;
- a very successful program of outings was undertaken;
- comments and submissions were made on a number of government proposals;
- *Canberra Bird Notes* has been digitized by Alastair Smith, and much of this information is now accessible on the COG web-site;
- the regular surveying of 15 woodland sites continued;
- COG's finances continue to be healthy; and
- the first of a series of bird route brochures is now available on the website.

Chris thanked outgoing committee members Jack Holland and Lia Battisson for their contributions. The incoming committee is:

President: Chris Davey

Secretary: Sandra Henderson

Treasurer: Lyn Rees (not nominated at time of AGM but has subsequently volunteered to take on this important role)

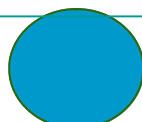
Committee members: Jenny Bound, Sue Lashko, David Cook, Tony Lawson, Anthony Overs, Beth Mantle

Sandra Henderson, Secretary

What to watch out for this month

By the end of October most of the regularly visiting spring/summer migrant species seemed to have arrived, with the exception of few or any **Satin Fly-catchers** or **Rufous Fantails** being reported being on transit to their breeding areas in the wetter parts of the mountains. Perhaps these were found there during the blitz, as was the **Cicadabird** by several of my group in the Cotter Hut area. There have also been reports of **White-browed** and **Masked Woods**

Continued page 2



Monthly meeting (continued)

Australia. Its naturally fragmented habitat is being degraded over large parts of the tropics by intense fires, cattle and weed invasion.

As a result, PCFWs have disappeared from some areas and are now listed as *Vulnerable* by the Commonwealth. Anja, a PhD student at the School of Botany and Zoology at ANU, will describe how her research, which focuses on the interaction between habitat arrangement, dispersal patterns and population structure, will help to inform the conservation of this stunning fairy-wren.

What to watch out for (continued)

wallows, mainly over the weekend of 18-19 October, though like last year most seemed to be moving through or over quickly, rather than attempting to stay and breed. Birds both usually associated with much drier country to the west of Canberra, the **Black-eared Cuckoo** and **Red-backed Kingfisher**, have also been reported over the past month.

Certainly it is clear that, despite some well spaced rain earlier in the month, the drought has returned, if it ever went away. From observations in my local area (despite the successful beginners' walk written up elsewhere in *Gang-gang*), and from feedback from the blitz participants etc, species numbers seem to be even further down this spring. For the first time since we returned after the January 2003 fires there are no **Rufous Songlarks** at the NW end of Cooleman Ridge this year, and I've seen only a couple of **White-winged Trillers** there. In previous years both species were very conspicuous by their calling at this time of year. The group of **Dusky Woodswallows**, in whose company they have bred in previous years, are still there, though in lower numbers. Interestingly, while they are known to show site fidelity, they are again preparing to nest in a slightly different spot this year. Over the past four years this gradually shifted from a slight gully up the slope to a very dry and uninviting rocky patch last year. Currently both of these spots are almost devoid of any birds.

Postings on the chat line have confirmed the low numbers of species seen before and during the blitz, though this can be very patchy with some observers recording very few **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails**, while these were relatively common at other sites. Conversely **Noisy Friarbirds** are very common at some sites, but largely absent at others. The flowering red boxes in my local patch at Cooleman Ridge seem to have drawn the **Red Wattlebirds** out of gardens into the Nature Park possibly attracted by the accompanying insects.

I agree very strongly with the calls on the chat line to monitor the Canberra Nature Park and other blitz sites in a consistent fashion each year as one way to be able to discern trends and the effects of weather etc. It is only in this fashion that we will be able to clearly tell what is happening with our bird numbers. As a surveyor for over the past 30 years beginning with the first RAOU Atlas, it is my distinct impression that numbers of many bird species have declined, but only robust data can confirm and support this.

It is not yet clear to me whether the drought is having an effect on local breeding this year. For those who haven't done so to date, and also for previous attendees, I'm strongly recommending participation in the Nest Workshop at Campbell Park on Sunday 16 November. This will be the sixth year in a row this workshop will be held, and it is the only event on the COG calendar that focuses on breeding. It is also now starting to allow a comparison of the breeding success of nesting seasons under different conditions, yet another example underlining the importance of keeping regular records in order to be able to properly monitor trends. Please do so, as birds are important sentinel species, and it is so important that any declines or major changes are detected early, before it is too late. — **Jack Holland**

Field Trip reports

Long Weekend 4-6 October— Around Round Hill

Our entry into Round Hill Nature Reserve was rather dramatic as a massive grey cloud rose from the ground into the blue sky and broke up into seemingly hundreds of **Masked Woodswallows**. Just a bit further along the road a daddy **Emu** dawdled across the road followed by his chicks. One look at us and he shunted his charges into the mallee/spinifex

woodland where they 'disappeared'. Charles and I were the first to arrive at Whoey Tanks (or 'Twin Tanks' as they're often referred to); it was almost 40°, cold-shower temperature. **Red-capped Robins** did their mobile-phone calls around camp and **Apostlebirds** waddled by to make sure we weren't too threatening. Later, when more COGer's arrived, the setting up of the COG canopy became interesting as we battled huge winds and eventually torrential rain. As we all fought to hold onto the tarp we thought we'd end up being transported far from camp (Kansas?). A wet night was followed by a wet morning which made bird-watching rather difficult for a while. We climbed Round Hill and then down the other side. Just beginning to flower on the slopes of Round Hill was Sikh's Whiskers *Pterostylis boormanii*, a stocky brownish-mauve orchid.

Eventually the weather improved and we were rewarded with views of **Mulga Parrots** and **Mallee Ringnecks**, a couple of **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos**, **White-winged Trillers**, **Hooded Robins**, and a fleeing **Owlet-nightjar** which disappeared into a hollow never to be seen again – by us, that is! Nearer camp a handsome male **Splendid Fairy-wren** 'strutted its stuff' in a flowering *Eremophila* bush, followed by hordes of adoring females. My goodness, if I was a female Splendid Wren I'd follow him to the ends of the earth – he was **gorgeous!!** Just after this we saw what we all thought was a bird in a bush, but it turned out to be a **Central Bearded Dragon** sunning itself. In its cool condition I was able to pick it up for us all to admire its good (albeit grumpy) looks.



Spotted Bowerbird
(*Chlamydera maculata*)

Photo by Julian Robinson

Back in camp, Julian Robinson shared his discovery of a **Spotted Bowerbird's** bower sheltered under a weeping Wilga. The bird had collected all types of weird objects. Amongst other items was a large piece of stocky chain, the spring from a clothes-peg, quandong fruit and the elongated seeds pods of Wonga wine (*Pandorea pandorana*) adorning his 'love chamber'. Of particular interest to me were pieces of purple glass. The small

bottle remains included the round neck and glass stopper, probably (hopefully!) a much-prized possession. Later in the afternoon Martyn Moffat alerted us to his discovery of an incredibly spunky spider. This spider was stand-out red, with a black velvety abdomen trying to hide from us amongst the leaf-litter. I managed to capture it on film – ha, gotcha! The day ended with 'happy hour' under the COG canopy followed by a gastronomic pig-out.

Sunday - an early start to the day, welcoming daylight saving. At the nearby old wheat-field site in Nombinnie Nature Reserve the group flushed a **Chestnut Quail-thrush** after following its distinctive call. We all saw **Southern Scrub-robins** which are very curious – they love the noise from dangling car keys – as they checked us out time and again. A **Shy Heathwren** lived up to its name as it flitted fast through the undergrowth and across the road. **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters** chased each other crazily through the tree-tops acting like hyped-up delinquents. We also had a fleeting view of a male and female **Black Honeyeater**. Some had great views of a scolding **Gilbert's Whistler**, but despite lots of tramping through mallee and spinifex we were not rewarded with views of (but we did hear) the elusive **Red-lored Whistler**. Gotta have something to come back for - *maybe* Monday morning?



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2008

2008 Plains-wanderer Weekends

29 & 30 Nov; 6 & 7 Dec; 20 & 21 Dec
2008; 3 & 4 Jan 2009

2009

22 — 28 February 2009
Tasmania birding & mammal tour
including pelagic & Melaleuca flight

17 April — 2 May 2009

Vietnam birding tour
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

3 May — 9 May 2009
Thailand Pitta tour
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

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

13 — 25 June 2009
Top End birding tour
Kakadu NP, Katherine, Kununurra

26 June 2009
Mitchell Plateau — Black Grass-wren tour

8 — 26 August 2009
**Strzelecki Track
Outback Tour**

www.philipmaher.com

After a much-earned breakfast back at camp we all headed off to Shepherds Quarry on the southeast side of Round Hill but out of the Nature Reserve. This quarry was the source of the ballast for the railway line to Broken Hill (information courtesy of John Goldie, but dates and details unknown). In one flowering Eucalyptus four species of honeyeaters fed beak-by-beak. **Brown-headed, Yellow-plumed, Singing** and **White-fronted Honeyeaters** were gorging on the massive creamy blobs of blossoms. Amongst the ruins of the quarry buildings ‘tin-lifting’ disturbed a gorgeous Prickly Gecko and a very plastic-looking centipede that was *definitely* not synthetic! A partly demolished National Parks sign lying on the ground altered us to the fact that the broom-looking wattles were in fact a very threatened species, *Acacia curranii*, not found in many locations. At the nearby dam in the quarry the resident Peregrine Falcon was not a happy chappy when we all arrived. Soaring around screaming ‘rude words’ at us the Peregrine was obviously nesting in the cliff-face that had been carved out by explosions. At least the great scar is now serving a purpose as opposed to all the rubbish and introduced plants littering the area.

Lunch on Booberoi Creek was interrupted by calls of “*coo-ee, owl*” by Carol Macleay. The cacophony of cranky **Noisy Miners** led us to the **Boobook** attempting to hide behind leaves, where it was being constantly dive-bombed. It looked very embarrassed by all the attention it was getting. Our chauffeur was returning to camp so we parted company from the rest of the group who went ‘magnum-hunting’ into Euabalong. They **did** find ice-creams but more importantly they returned with an impressive list of bird highlights. Apart from **Pratincoles, Zebra Finches** and **Banded Lapwings**, to name just a few, they found **Orange Chats** in ‘Chat Alley’, and a kilometre or so up the road, saw **Orange, White-fronted** and **Crimson Chats** in one binocular view – “Three Chat Alley” seemed like a good name!.



Photo by Julian Robinson

Orange Chat
(*Epthianura aurifrons*)

Meanwhile back at camp I’d observed the signs of warm-weather behaviour - birds carrying food to demanding bubs, small lizards scurrying through leaf-litter, fat shiny black-armoured native cockroaches roaming around looking for a lover or two or maybe more. A large dark unidentified snake slinked by our tent, disappearing to goodness-knows where while I found my camera. I was *fairly* sure it hadn’t hidden in our roof-top tent. Later at night, but not *too* late, some of the still-awake COGers ventured out into the night. Apart from the diamond-sparkling eyes of spiders there was not much else, and even the spiders scampered down into their holes before we could see them. Eventually, like the spiders we *too* retired into our ‘holes’ to listen to the all-night calls of the **Pallid Cuckoo**.

Monday - the group (minus me and a few others) returned to the old wheat-field in Nombinnie in the early morning. Again, despite tramping through the bush, playing tapes and being very patient, the once-again elusive **Red-lored Whistler** didn’t co-operate. As I said, “*gotta have something to come back for*”. Later in the morning most of us departed to leave all these creatures to return to their activities uninterrupted by twenty pair of pounding feet, tents of various sizes and colours scattered over ant homes and massive four wheel-drives squashing tiny unseen critters. A pathetic squished gecko was testimonial to the latter, but at least it wasn’t wasted as ants chomped it up into take-away sized pieces to take home for *their* gastronomic pig-out.

Thanks to Sue Lashko for a well organised trip. Let’s do it again some time soon. After all there’s that elusive **Red-lored Whistler** to tick off! The weekend tally was 104. Not bad! — **Margaret McJannett**

Saturday/Sunday 11/12 October — Bungonia —overnight campout on private property

A main aim of this repeat visit to a property belonging to members of the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS) was to camp there overnight to ensure the possibility of picking up the maximum number of species, hopefully under better conditions than the windy morning when we first visited in 2006. Despite the threat of a thunderstorm as we arrived mid Saturday afternoon, this aim was achieved, with subsequent balmy weather enjoyed with limited breeze and a very dewy/part foggy Sunday morning maximising bird activity. As a result we recorded 70 species, well up on last time.

Highlights included five species of cuckoo, compared with only one last time. Unfortunately these were mostly heard rather than seen. As we arrived the **Brush Cuckoo** could be clearly heard close by the camp site, and despite continued loud calling during our 24 hour presence and a number of attempts to locate the calling birds, only fleeting views were

obtained. The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** commenced at dusk, and continued to call loudly in the camp site for much of the first half of the night, as opposed to the **Brush Cuckoo** which became more prominent towards dawn, including giving its “demented” call. The **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** also called often during our stay, but again stayed out of sight with only some participants managing to see the latter. By contrast the **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo** was only heard on a single occasion, but was also not seen despite a search of vantage points near to where it was heard.

After setting up camp COG participants were joined by five members of the GFNS and did a circuit to the east of the farmhouse to close to the border of Morton National Park, through some allocasuarina forest and other relatively dry woodland where a range of species typical of this habitat were found.

Highlights included good views of a very vocal **Sacred Kingfisher** and confirming a **Jacky Winter**, a species missed last time. On our return a patch of trees close to the house contained a number of nesting species, including an **Australian Magpie** still sitting.

At nightfall a **Southern Boobook** started calling very close by, but surprisingly did not continue as opposed to frogs and other species such as the **Australian Owlet-nightjar** which called very noticeably after midnight, with several birds estimated. The **Eastern Yellow Robin** was also very noticeable in the dawn chorus, giving its very loud “chyop chyop” rather than the more familiar piping call. A **Tawny Frogmouth** was also heard by some of the lighter sleepers in the party.

After breakfast, during which some other species such as the **Mistletoebird** were recorded, we repeated a leisurely circular walk of nearly six hours through the property to the west and southwest of the farmhouse, taking in some of the varied habitats including the best parts of the Jacqua Creek. Highlights included good views of a quiet pair of **White-winged Trillers** and very close views of a calling **Jacky Winter**, whose mate was soon found sitting on a nest. Also seen were the **Australian Reed-warbler**, **White-throated Gerygone** and a **Specked Warbler**, the latter very close to where it was located last time. The big surprise was seeing a couple of large birds circling on a thermal in the distance, which were identified by their fully white necks and prominent white patches on the leading edge of their wings as **White-necked Herons**. None of the participants could recall this species acting in this manner.

As is appropriate for a joint outing, we also examined closely the local flora, including many flowering species and some orchids. Some of the area’s very interesting geology was also pointed out, including the ancient sandhill that runs close by the house, and the evidence for a tsunami that had occurred in ancient times. Wombat holes/warrens were common.

While there was only a relatively small COG contingent everyone thoroughly enjoyed the visit, with some inclined to linger on through the afternoon. The shared evening meal under perfect conditions was another highlight. To me it once again underlined the great value of being able to access private property, particularly in the company of owners who are very sympathetic to the environment. These are without doubt my favourite type of COG outing. Again many thanks to



The Round Hill Mob
Photo by Julian Robinson

2007-2008 Annual Bird Report — A Reminder

A reminder to all members to submit their 2007-2008 observations as soon as possible; that is up to the end of June 2008. The *Annual Bird Report* is published around March each year and the deadlines are always tight with those responsible for the write-up of various species traditionally taking the break between Christmas and the New Year to complete their analyses. For this to occur all observations need to be submitted by early November to ensure that the data are entered into the database, rarities submitted to the Rarities Panel and records compiled and sent out to the various COG members, who then spend a considerable amount of time compiling the records for each species.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to include those interesting observations mentioned on the chat-line but for which no records have been entered via the on-line data entry system or through the COG Observations Data Sheet.

The Annual Bird Report is one of the most important documents that COG produces for it is not only a way to check the validity of the records in the database but it is also a synthesis of past observations that will be of critical importance to future COG members, policy makers and land planners. — **Chris Davey**

Diana and Ken for being such generous hosts, making us so welcome and proudly showing us around their property, particularly given the very difficult personal circumstances. — **Jack Holland**

Saturday 18 October — Cooleman Ridge — birdwatching/walking event for the public

Sixteen people, the large majority non-members, joined me on a warm but calm morning on this bird walk for the public held as part of Parks Week. My expectations for unusual sightings were not too high as the NW end of Cooleman Ridge has been quieter than for the past few years, but very soon we observed at least six **Tree Martins** circling, inspecting hollows and also alighting on dead branches, allowing good views of their diagnostic head colour. This species has been largely absent since the 2003 fires, and was spotted while we were admiring the nest of the **Maggie-lark** in which young were being fed. This was another new discovery, and the size of the mud nest could be compared with that of the nearby **White-winged Chough's** from which young had been recently fledged. Good views were also obtained of a pair of **Red-rumped Parrots**, firstly exchanging food and then drinking at the edge of the dam.

We moved along a couple of hundred metres until we came upon our first **Dusky Woodswallow**. These proved to be quite common in one spot of about 100 metre radius, where we watched two nests being built, and it appears the loose colony of about eight birds will breed here this year as opposed to about 400 metres south of here in 2007. A **Sacred Kingfisher** was first heard and then briefly perched on a dead branch above us, before being mobbed off by a variety of birds; again this was a first observation here for this spring. Also at this time we watched a very dark **Wedge-tailed Eagle** spiralling overhead, and followed a **Nankeen Kestrel** circling quite high.

After moving several hundred metres further we made a collective decision not to attempt to complete the circular 2.7 km Nature Trail walk but to return to the spot where several species had been briefly seen, hopefully to allow the whole group to get better views. Being patient, keeping reasonably still and allowing the birds to come to us, plus the benefit of 17 pairs of eyes, paid off handsomely with eventually four **Diamond Firetail** being recorded, with lovely views of them perched on dead branches but in particular as they fed on the ground close in front of us, together with two **Southern Whiteface**. Nearby was a pair of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** building a nest in a dead mistletoe, and also a female **Rufous Whistler** feeding among some regrowth. Unfortunately the male, despite being very vocal, was less willing to be admired. Also, the three **Double-barred Finches** seen by several of the party earlier could not be relocated. This species is also uncommon on Cooleman Ridge, but had been seen near here recently.

Altogether, about 35 species were seen, with good views being obtained of most by the whole group, including of the more common species appropriate for beginners' walks. It was a good illustration of what can be achieved even with a largish group, some without binoculars, if you are prepared to be patient, even when the habitat doesn't look that inviting. A thoroughly enjoyable morning for all, with appetites whetted for more bird watching, and some potential COG members. — **Jack Holland**

Sunday 19 October — Taylors Creek

For the third time in four years COG ventured out to the Taylors Creek catchment on the east side of Lake George to conduct an atlassing survey. The survey has been designed to provide an inventory of the Landcare group area, and to monitor the birds of specific habitats such as remnant woodlands and tree plantings. The survey also provides COG with a snapshot of this area which is otherwise rarely visited by birdwatchers and it affords us a wonderful opportunity for access to private land. Surveys were conducted on 6 properties with additional sightings made along roadsides and homestead gardens.

The first bird survey of the Taylors Creek area in October 2004 ended in torrential rain, while the 2006 survey was held during a hot, dry autumn spell. The 2008 spring survey was held in warm and eventually windy conditions. The total of 86 bird species for the morning was similar to totals for the previous surveys (89 in 2004, 82 in 2006).

Some highlights for the morning included a group of three **Latham's Snipe**, two sightings of **Diamond Firetail**, several records of **Southern Whiteface**, several **White-fronted Chat** sightings, **Stubble Quail** calling at a couple of sites, and a **Satin Flycatcher** in one of the Brittle Gum remnants. On the first of the dams surveyed, nearly 300 waterfowl were counted, with over 200 of these being **Hardhead**. Ten species were recorded breeding, including **Black Swan** with three different nests, and two separate records for **Southern Whiteface**. Interestingly, no woodswallows or robins were recorded, raptors were sparse and the dams were too full for shorebirds around the edges.

A definite highlight of the morning is always the post-survey barbeque provided by the Landcare group at one of the properties of the area. Thankyou to everyone who participated and to the Landcare group for hosting us again. — **Nicki Taws**

Saturday/Sunday 25-26 October — Bird Week Blitz — all day atlassing

A **HUGE** thank you to all who participated in COG's bird blitz. I hope you enjoyed yourself as much as I did, though I ended up so tired I resorted, like some others, to drinks in the garden and an early night. I was surprised by the relative lack of **fantails** and **whistlers**, especially in the urban areas, but was mightily relieved that the **Brown Quail**, **Superb Parrot** and **Rainbow Lorikeet** put in appearances. There is nothing more frustrating to this blitzer to check her local patch for a known resident and not find it! Thanks are due to Barrie Pennefather, who so ably navigated the Naas fire trail with Catriona, a lame Stuart Harris and me in tow, enabling us to watch in awe as a **Hobby** knocked off a **Starling** before our very eyes, and to enjoy excellent sightings and hearings of four **cuckoo** species, plus two "vulnerables" in the form of **Brown Treecreeper** and **Hooded Robin**. Thanks too to all the other behind-locked-gates blitzers who all managed this year to let me know they were back safely. I await your datasheets with eager anticipation. Either drop them in to me, put them on COG's electronic data input system (and tell me, please), mail them to COG, PO Box 301, Civic Square 2608, or let me know you'll be taking them to the November COG meeting. I'll provide updates on the COG Chatline as I process them. — **Barbara Allan**

September Woodland Surveys

Mulligans Flat — 28 September — After all the activity during the preceding week, hopes were high for some very good sightings. Alas the elements conspired against, with a very strong wind greeting us as we arrived round 7 am, the first poor birding morning in about a week.

A total of 46 species were recorded, but with surprisingly few migrants, the most abundant (by far) of these being the **Noisy Friarbird**, a pair of which were already nest building.

Both **gerygones** were present as is usual. A **Dollarbird** was also seen, the first for the season to my knowledge.

A couple of **Superb Parrots** and single **Pallid** and **Fan-tailed cuckoos** rounded off the highlights. My thanks to all those that helped survey in such disappointing conditions - it was a pity that the one morning we were out there in three months was less than ideal. — **Jack Holland**

Mt Ainslie — 28 September — On the eastern side of Mt Ainslie the highlight was a male **Red-capped Robin**; also the first **Leaden Flycatcher**; **Mistletoebirds** although only few mistletoes with berries. Most widespread were the **Noisy Friarbird**, including one nest half-complete (but notable that in the suburb of Ainslie at this stage only passing birds). Many of the smaller birds were only in low numbers, e.g. no **Buff-rumped Thornbill** at any of the nine sites. They were sighted just once on the walk between two sites. I feel the drought effects on bird numbers are showing through more and more. — **Michael Lenz**

Newline — 27 September — A still clear morning. Lots of breeding activity - unfortunately a lot of it by **Common Mynas** and **Starlings**, both of which seem to be encroaching further into the woodland, rather than just on the edges. **Tree Martins**, **Galaks**, **Eastern Rosellas** in hollows, **Yellow Rumped Thornbills** nest-building, **Magpie-lark** on nest. **Fantails** at almost every site, **Noisy Friarbirds**, at least two **Peaceful Doves**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Jacky Winter**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Brown Goshawk** to name a few. Also a single **Brown Treecreeper** behaving crypticly, hopefully because the other half of the pair was on the nest. The **Fuscous Honeyeaters** reported by Benj last week were nowhere to be seen, but lots of YFHE present. — **Sue Lashko**

Gooroyarroo Nature Reserve (South) — 21 September — Surveyors were Dave and Kathy Cook, Prue Buckley and Steve Holliday. Weather was mostly good, a little windy later in the morning. Some recordings: female **Rose Robin**, **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, the latter building nests under an overhang in an eroded creek line in the grazing land adjacent to the reserve, **Pallid Cuckoo** (only cuckoo recorded), **Superb Parrots**, **Kestrel** and **Brown Falcon**, **Sittellas**, **Dusky Wood swallows**, nesting **Choughs**. We did find some small birds, although not in big numbers — both **pardalotes**, four species of **thornbill** (although not Yellow), **Weebills**, **Mistletoebirds**, and both **gerygones**. — **Steve Holliday**

Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve (North) — 29 September — I carried out the Woodland survey in much better weather than on the 28th. Despite being ideal conditions, like Michael at Campbell Park, I was surprised at the low numbers of small birds. All **thornbills** were thin on the ground (and in the trees) whereas they are usually very numerous at Gooroo. Even **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** were relatively sparse. No **Robins** sighted. In contrast, **Mistletoebirds** were plentiful, and there is lots of mistletoe fruit although none of it seemed ripe just yet. Give it a month or so and it could be **Painted Honeyeater** heaven. **Crested Shrike-tit** and three **Superb Parrots** (a bit passe in that part of the world now) were the highlights. —**Nicki Taws**

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.

Sunday 9 November — Callum Brae

Join Jenny Bounds for a morning walk in the woodlands of Callum Brae, targeted particularly at new members and those beginning bird watching. The reserve has a good range of woodland species. Terrain is flat to undulating, a gentle hill or two, and will be around 3-4 km. Meet at the main entrance of the reserve on Narrabundah Lane in Symonston at 7.15am (Narrabundah Lane is off Mugga Lane, just past the Mugga Lane/Hindmarsh Drive intersection; and on the same road as the Therapeutic Goods Admin offices). There is a limit on numbers to ensure the best opportunity to see and hear the birds and bookings are necessary: up to 25 October to Jack Holland (ph 6288 7840), from 26 October to Jenny Bounds (ph 6288 7802). Expected to finish around 10.30am, with morning tea provided afterwards - please bring a mug or cup.

Sunday 16 November — Campbell Park — Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past five years at Campbell Park. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual very short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, looking for signs of nesting etc, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

This workshop, led by Jack Holland, with assistance from Anthony Overs, is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to birdwatching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Though every year has been different it is expected we won't be walking very far as there is usually a "hot spot" close to the car park where most of the nesting occurs. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@environment.gov.au), who would also be grateful for any tips on where birds are nesting shortly before the day.

Meet at 8.00am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the map on the COG website under the *Maps, Forms and Lists* button.

Wednesday 19 November — Midweek walk

Meet at 9.00am at McDermot Place, Belconnen for a walk around Lake Ginninderra, focussing on the western end of the Lake and the Peninsula.

Sat/Sun 22-23 November — Bumbalong Valley — Camp-out on private property

This is a repeat visit to this spot following COG's successful camp-outs there in February 2002 and November 2006. The Bumbalong Valley is a very sheltered valley straddling the Murrumbidgee River about 10 km north of Bredbo. The area is generally not accessible and COG is very fortunate to have the opportunity to again visit in spring to maximise the number of species that can be recorded.

Last visit we recorded a very impressive total of 87 species in less than 24 hours, including nearly all the spring migrants such as four **cuckoo** species, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Dollarbird**, **Dusky** and **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Rufous Songlark**, **White-winged Triller**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Leaden Fly-**

catcher and **Clamorous Reed-warbler**. Also seen were many of the declining species such as **Brown Treecreeper**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Hooded Robin**, **Restless Flycatcher** and the **Speckled Warbler**.

After setting up camp mid Saturday afternoon we propose to do an inspection of the birds on the property and the adjacent river. On Sunday morning we will proceed on the road north along the river to survey along the road, and probably access a couple of properties to identify the birds. There may be some interest to venture up the steep slope to the west to do atlas surveys of two grid cells for which access is otherwise very difficult.

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

Sunday 7 December — Hospital Hill — Extended morning

The last formal COG outing for 2008 will be held in this popular nature reserve to the south of Canberra, and will be a repeat of the highly successful 2006 trip. We will again be parking and using the toilets at Yankee Hat car park, then walking in. Entirely within COG grid cell H25, we'll do a longish circular or figure-of-8 walk following both the road and the creek, lurching on the creek again at the 'historic' c1966 Hospital Creek Hut. We can be flexible about the exact route, which will depend on where the birds are and the weather on the day.

On the previous walk to this area we dipped on the **Turquoise Parrots** that had been seen a week before, but were treated to a **Brush Cuckoo** that sat in full view of the lurching crowd for a considerable time. Other highlights were **Brown Treecreepers** and **Dusky Woodswallow** with dependent young, two **Australian Hobbies**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Brown-headed** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, **Satin** and **Leaden Flycatchers**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and for a lucky few, a **Red-browed Treecreeper**.

The walk will be around 11 km and some of it cross country, so you will need to be moderately fit. If you are interested in participating, please contact Julian Robinson (6239 6226 or by E-mail on julian.robinson@internode.on.net). We will meet at the Kambah Village shops at 7:30 am, so we can consolidate cars and get to the Yankee Hut car park well before 9 am.

Committee news

- A letter from Mike Kelly MP has been received in response to COG's letter to the Federal Government about Newline. The response indicates that the Government is aware of the conservation importance of Newline. The ACT Government has also contacted the Federal Government, requesting transfer of the Newline site to the ACT Government.
- COG is donating funds to a research project looking into the feasibility of **Brown Treecreeper** re-introduction.
- COG members are reminded that recording equipment is available for loan, for those prepared to undertake recording of bird calls. Contact Anthony Overs for information.
- Two surveys have been completed at Stromlo Forest Park, where **White-fronted Chats** are being seen regularly. Information prepared by COG is being made available on the SFP website, and information is being provided to mowing contractors and others.
- New data sheets have been prepared using the new names and species order as presented in the 2008 edition of Christidis and Boles, and are available on the website.
- The checklist of ACT birds will be amended, to update names, and also to include accepted rarities. A supplementary list will include species known only as escapees or in historic records.
- Recently the Committee asked for volunteers to assist with some important functions, and the following roles have now been filled: **Conservation Assistant**: Michael Robbins; **Editor Canberra Bird Notes Assistant**: Terry Korodaj; **Outings Assistant**: Matthew Frawley

Other items of interest

Rarities Committee

At its September meeting, COG's Rarities Panel agreed to a revised 2008 list of unusual birds, reports of which must be endorsed by the panel before than can be published as official COG records. This list will be placed on the "rarities" section of the COG website shortly, when it has been revised to accommodate Christidis and Boles (2008). It is essentially the list which was previously aired for comment. — **Barbara Allan, Secretary, COG Rarities Panel**

A donation from the estate of Brian Fitzgerald.

COG has recently received some books, bird call tapes and miscellaneous items from the estate of Brian Fitzgerald.

Brian was a member of COG for many years and a member of the committee for seven years either as Assistant Editor of CBN, Assistant Secretary or Treasurer. In 1984 and again in 1985 he held the position of President. After his term as President Brian took over the reins of the Rarities Panel and was Secretary for the next six years. As President, Brian was involved with the start of the COG Newsletter and had a major input into reformatting CBN as the publication that we know today. His years as President were busy times with survey work along the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee Rivers and various conservation issues. There was plenty of water around then and COG was busy surveying all the urban lakes and Lakes George and Bathurst. During this period COG was commissioned to survey the Yarramundi Reach for the Museum of Australia site. The area was subsequently abandoned in favour of the Acton Peninsula.

Many of the older members of COG will have fond memories of Brian. During his term as President I was Vice-president and it was always a pleasure to work closely with him on various committee matters. I remember well appearing before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the ACT (prior to self-government) with Brian, Henry Nix and Alistair Drake on an issue relating to the location of the cycle path at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, see CBN Vol. 9, pp 147-9. This is well worth a read given the present situation with the Kingston Foreshores Development. How little times have changed!

I wish to thank Brian's family for the donations. The items will be deposited in the COG library for present and future members to appreciate. — **Chris Davey (President)**

Bredbo Landcare Group presents a Grassland Extravaganza Day on Sunday 23 November 2 at Thistlebrook Park, 237 Jerangle Rd, Bredbo (2.37 k off Monaro Highway at Bredbo). Entry by gold coin donation. The programme starts at 9.00 am with a tour of the seed and propagation area and a short talk by owner Sue Connelly. At 9.30 the group will climb to the Kangaroo Grass patch and from 1.30 pm participants maywander across native grasslands. There will be opportunities to talk to vegetation and wildlife experts all day and you can find out what the K2C project has to offer landholders in the region.

Lunch will be available: BBQ sausages, sandwiches, cakes and drinks can be purchased.

Forthcoming talks — There are a number of talks that may be of interest to COGers

At the Australian National Botanic Garden

6 November, 12:30 pm — 'How Evolution Works', Adrian Gibbs

13 November 2008, 12:30 pm — 'Tasmania - Cryptogam Heaven', Chris Cargill

20 November 2008, 12:30 pm — 'The Evolution of the Australian Flora', Michael Crisp

27 November 2008, 12:30 pm — 'Coral and Carbon Dioxide'. Malcolm McCulloch

Also on 20 November, 7:30 pm at the **Blue Gum School Friends Lounge, Hackett shops**, the Friends of Mount Majura have arranged for Susan Trost and Jerry Olsen of Canberra University to speak on 'A Secret Life. Southern Boobook Owls'. Entry is free, however a gold coin donation to support the Friends' volunteer work at Mt Majura would be much appreciated.

DRAFT PROGRAM - COG 2009 FIELD TRIPS

Date	Place	Type of Event
Sun 18 January	Brindabellas	All day
Sun 1 February	Jerrabomberra wetlands	Morning
Mon-Thu 16-19 February	Durras (birding by canoe)	Post School Holidays mid-week accommodated
Sat 21 February	Monga NP	Day trip
Sat-Mon 7-9 March (9/3 is Canberra Day)	Goulburn area (with Goulburn Field Nats)	Long weekend campout
Sun 15 March	Molonglo Reach	Morning boat cruise
Saturday 4 April	Private property near Mungah Scrub NR	Extended morning
Fri-Mon 10-13 April (Easter)	Weddin Mountains	Extended long weekend camp-out
Sun 19 April	Honeyeater migration	Morning
Sun 10 May	Botanic gardens	Beginners morning
Sun 24 May	Molonglo – Finch central	Morning
6-8 June long weekend	South coast – Moruya & Narooma	Campout
Sat 20 June	Tidbinbilla NR	Lyrebird survey
Sun 5 July	Local nature park	Morning
Sun 19 July	Winter birds	Day bus trip
Sun 9 August	Lake Ginninderra	Beginners morning
Sun 23 August	Private property on ranges between Braidwood and Bungendore	Morning
Sun 30 August	Mt Taylor	Morning
Sun 13 September	Aranda Bushland	Morning
Sun 20 September	Goorooyaroo NR	Morning
Sun 27 September	Tinderry NR	Extended morning
Sat-Mon 3-5 October long weekend	Wagga and Albury area	Camp-out
Sat-Sun 10-11 October	Mittagong	Camp-out on private property
Mon-Fri 19-24 October	Oolambeyan NP	Mid week campout
Sat-Sun 24-25 October	Bird Blitz	All day atlassing
Sun 8 November	Tuggeranong Hill NR	Extended morning
Sun 15 November	Campbell Park	Nest workshop
Sat-Sun 21-22 November	Frogmore	Camp-out on private property
Sun 6 December	Bungendore TSRs and reserves	Extended morning

Please forward any comments or suggestions to Anthony Overs, anthony.overs@gmail.com

Platypus Watch in the ACT

Do you walk or cycle along the rivers on a reasonably frequent basis? Would you like to keep a look out for platypus? The platypus is one of Australia's most iconic animals. However, very little is known about how this unique mammal is actually faring in rivers and creeks in and around the ACT. To address this issue, ACT Waterwatch and the Australian Platypus Conservancy are joining forces to monitor this fascinating species and are looking for volunteers to help.

ACT Waterwatch will be hosting an information session about the new community-based platypus monitoring program on Monday 10 November at 7:30pm at the Queanbeyan Council Rooms. Contact Tanya Noakes for more information: Phone 6207 2246 E-mail tanya.rucoskynoakes@act.gov.au — **Matthew Frawley**

SOSSA Pelagic Trip — 19 October

Suzi Bond and I went on the deepwater pelagic trip run by the Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA). We went from Ulladulla on the MV Banks, which SOSSA charters a couple of times a year to go out well beyond the continental shelf. Our Canberra resident seabird expert and SOSSA guide, Peter Milburn, was on board too.

On the way down to Ulladulla we stopped at Racecourse Beach to find a **Hooded Plover**. We promptly found a pair, about ten metres from the “Shorebird nesting area” sign. A new bird for me and a great start to the trip.

We arrived in Ulladulla, found the boat and loaded our bags on board. The boat left the harbour at 9.30pm and headed east at a steady ten knots or so, on a reasonably calm sea. By the time we woke up at 5.30am we were about 100 nautical miles off the coast.

The birding action started pretty soon after first light and it was all go. I saw an incredible eight new species in the first hour. I guess that wasn't really much of a surprise as it was only my second pelagic trip. I saw **Little Shearwater, Great-Winged Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Cape Petrel, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-Bellied Storm-Petrel, Black Petrel** and **Mottled Petrel**. The Mottled Petrel became number 500 on my Australian list. All this before egg and bacon rolls for breakfast!

Other new birds for me over the two days were **Providence Petrel, White-Faced Storm-Petrel, White-Chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Northern Royal Albatross and Hutton's Shearwater**. We also saw plenty of **Black-Browed Albatross**, including the Campbell's race *impavida*. Enormous groups of **Short-Tailed Shearwaters** were seen heading south. A single **Yellow-Nosed Albatross** and a single **Fairy Prion** were spotted. A single **Kermadec Petrel** was seen too but by the time I got onto it the bird was too far away for me to identify. Closer to the continental shelf we caught up with many **Shy Albatross**, and on the way back closer to the coast, we picked up **Fluttering Shearwater, Brown Skua, Crested Tern** and **Australasian Gannet**.



One of the main objectives of the trip for SOSSA was to band some birds so we got straight into catching and banding some Wandering Albatross. An obvious highlight for me as a bird bander was to hold, band and measure a Wandering Albatross and a Campbell's Albatross. Apparently the grin on my face nearly pushed the ears off my head!

At one stage there were more than 40 albatross sitting in the water around the boat. We ended up catching more than 30 Wandering Albatross and two Campbell's Albatross. We got some very interesting retrapped Wanderers: one wearing a South African band; one wearing a French band, probably from Crozet Island; one banded on the NSW south coast in 1985.

We saw several species of mammal too: Killer Whale, Short-Beaked Common Dolphin, and Humpback Whale. We also saw several blows that were characteristic of a Sperm Whale.

The MV Banks was a fantastic vessel to travel on. It is a large (100 feet), stable vessel. Sleeping on a moving vessel was an interesting experience, but the very comfortable beds made it very good. The crew were very friendly and helpful and the food was excellent. Only a couple of people got crook, on the first morning, but they got through that and ended up having a good time too. I'm pleased to say that I do indeed have good sea legs, although it took me a couple of days to regain my land legs!

I can thoroughly recommend the trip to anyone that is interested in seabirds. Check the SOSSA website for details. Remember that it's birders like us that help fund SOSSA's research by going on these trips. — **Anthony Overs**

Garden Bird Survey Notes

Some GBS-relevant highlights from the chatline for late September and October include:

- **White-browed** and/or **Masked Woodswallows** over Page, Aranda and Curtin;
- **Swift Parrots** in Aranda and **Superb Parrots** in Scullin.
- **Eastern Koel** calling in sites in Ainslie and Page.
- **Nankeen Night-heron** being harassed by **Galahs** over Curtin;
- **Stubble Quail** and **Satin Flycatcher** seen (in different weeks) in Rivett;
- While the Ainslie **Tawny Frogmouth** has produced a chick (a Pollywogmouth?), the Carwoola representative continues to sit tight, and concealing its productivity from the nearby Pied Currawongs.

Applications of GBS data

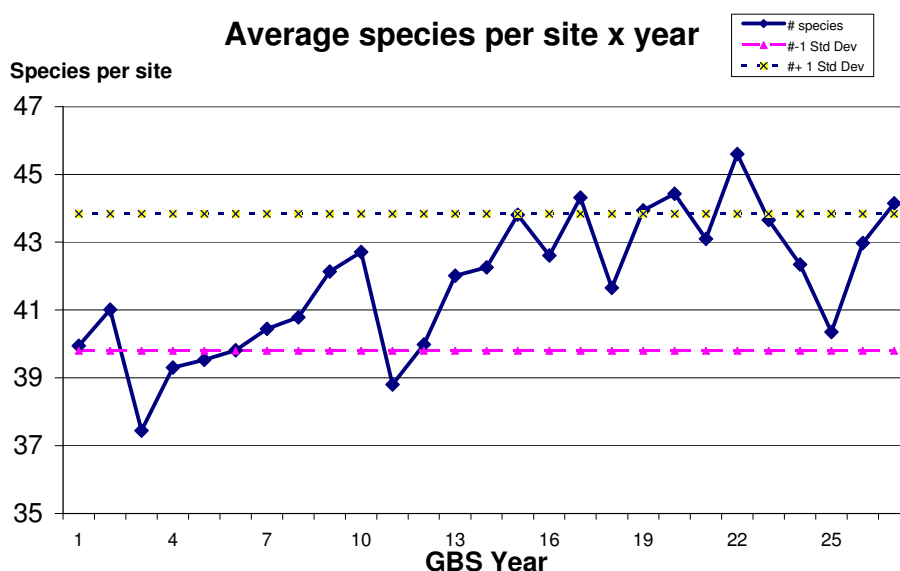
GBS information on **Spotted Doves** (pity about the change of acronym) has been provided to ACT TAMS, hopefully contributing to a program to control this species in the Territory. If anyone obtains any breeding data on this species in the ACT could they please put a message on the chatline so that the information is immediately available. If the breeding attempt is ultimately unsuccessful that should also be noted.

The data for the first 26 years was used to partially address a query from University of Canberra regarding trends in Southern Boobook. The data was inconclusive as to whether there was a reliable long term trend, although the seasonal pattern still matches closely that shown in the ACT Atlas.

Year 27 Charts

We have now received and entered 73 completed Charts containing 3179 records (species X site) and 55,885 observations (species X site X week).

The Chart shows the number of species per chart together with the value of the 27 year average \pm 1 standard deviation. The latest value is not significantly different to the average and there is no significant trend.



I have commenced the analysis of the Year 27 information for Annual Bird Report (ABR) purposes and expect to have finalised the reports by the end of the month. Reference material (common names, scientific names and taxonomic order) has been changed to reflect COG's adoption of the new version of Christidis and Boles. — **Martin Butterfield**

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

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

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

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

Contact:

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

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

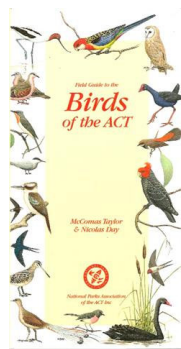
Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

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

Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

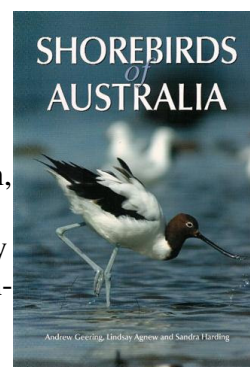
6286 1564 or
gramsay@actewagl.net.au

COG SALES

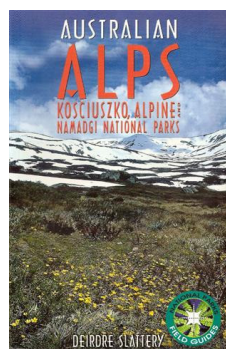


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT (Taylor & Day) - \$16.00 — Bird identification in the ACT has just become much easier! Here are all the birds of the ACT in colour, with easy-to-follow text and key biological data, in a compact field format that will fit easily in your pocket.

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



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



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

Watching Wildlife (Chris) - \$24.00

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

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

LIMITED STOCK: Messent Bird Calendar 2009 - \$8.00

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

Avian Whimsy #68 — Dealing with a Noisy Minerity

In recent times my yard has been largely taken over by a mob of incorrigible quidnuncs. I can't go outside without having my every move scrutinised, analysed and reported on very loudly and comprehensively. Not that I'm being singled out – the same treatment is afforded to any other vertebrate which visits the yard, and the majority of them are seen off the premises with very little evident ceremony. In the absence of anything else to harass, they fill in the time by chasing each other. The presence of this masked gang has coincided with a strong apparent decline in the number of smaller birds in my yard, but while I have my suspicions, I'm wary of leaping to hasty conclusions regarding cause and effect.

Such suspicions however are certainly not baseless. Work in Victoria in particular has established that the presence of **Noisy Miner** colonies in degraded forest remnants leads to a very rapid decline in smaller insectivorous species. It is not a question of these species simply not liking the habitat, as they returned when miners were experimentally removed. It is a snowball effect with regard to the degradation of the forest sites too, as the exclusion of the little insect eaters led, naturally enough, to an increase in defoliating insects and further decline in habitat quality of the site. The miners don't like dense understorey or large forest areas, so by moving in to my place they are making a definite and embarrassing statement about the more general habitat quality of my yard! (I'm continuing to work on that by ongoing shrub plantings.) I think their sudden presence here after many years without them is due to the vigorous development program in the grounds of the ANU across the road, with open treed habitat being replaced by more buildings and carparks.

As usual of course, the underlying problem is not the miners but human-driven habitat degradation. The birds themselves, as is ever the case, are fascinating. It took a Canadian ornithologist, Douglas Dow, to show us the complexity of their social system back in the 1970s. He was watching a pair of Noisy Miners feeding chicks and was impressed by the rate of their nest visits; then he noticed differing moult patterns and realised that the 'pair' actually comprised five birds! Colonies are huge – they may contain hundreds of individuals. Within it, females occupy small and defined territories (or 'activity spaces'), within which they breed. Males on the other hand formed loose groupings which didn't defend a space, but within that were tighter male 'coterie' which did hold a territory. Several males feed a nesting female, and Dow went on to suggest that this was a highly promiscuous society, with females using sex to recruit male helpers. (But how likely was that in Queensland in the 1970s and 80s?!) More recent DNA work however has rescued their moral reputation, showing that virtually all broods of more than one chick had only one father, usually the dominant bird in the coterie. This is despite the opportunities apparently afforded by the fact that breeding males have overlapping territories; in human terms she is a model of monogamous virtue.

A more recent study looked at the more specific roles of the male helpers and found something very interesting. While 60% of them were general dogsbodies, mucking in with either feeding the chicks or fighting the border wars, the other 40% were specialists, with roughly half of these either avoiding the blokey rough stuff or the equally demanding domestic duties. Even in such a formidable environment as a Noisy Miner colony, nest predation can be significant and curiously nests further from the ground are more at risk; it would seem that the greatest dangers come from the air.

This is a controversial bird at a number of levels, even to the origin of its name. One (apparently quite unsubstantiated) assertion is the black mask was reminiscent of a coal miner's cap. Another (favoured by recent, but not earlier, Macquarie Dictionaries) is that it is a corruption of 'myna', due to a superficial resemblance. Like Joan Armatrading I am open to persuasion, but it would need to be fairly convincing I must confess – the similarities are pretty vague. Would the Asian mynas have been that generally familiar in the early colonial times? Actually and predictably, the settlers were far more imaginative and used terms that reflected the birds' pugnacious and vociferous approach to life, and their adaptation to human-shaped habitats. Soldier Bird, Mickey, Snakebird, Garrulous Honeyeater and Cherry Eater were (and in some cases are) widely used.

Larrikins in the best Australian tradition, they exasperate me sometimes, but they're only doing what we enable them to do. But having created yet another problem, have we the moral fortitude to manage it?

— Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au



WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com

phone 02 6251 3136

www.visitnsw.com.au (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

NEW MEMBERS

COG welcomes the following new members:

S Nelson, Ngunnawal
P Curtin, Spence
E Smith, Duffy
P Christensen, Queanbeyan
B Harris, Woden
M Richardson, Garran

NEXT NEWSLETTER

December deadline

Wednesday 26 November 2008

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.

COG info

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Email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Vice President— TBA

Treasurer—Lyn Rees
lynlev@iimetro.com.au

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cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

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Newsletter distribution
Judy Collett and helpers

COG membership

2008-2009 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for changed address or other details

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund
Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

Office

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

COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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Greg Ramsay

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Gang-gang

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