

# Gang-gang

**November 2010**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## NOVEMBER MEETING

**7:30pm Wednesday 10.11.10**

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

After the AGM, Christina Zdenek, a graduate student at the ANU's Fenner School, will give the first presentation entitled "Vocal individuality, photo-identification, and conservation of Palm Cockatoos on Cape York Peninsula".

The main presentation will be by Nicki Taws entitled "Bringing Birds Back - for the long term."

For ten years COG has been involved with Greening Australia in a project called Birdwatch, monitoring the habitat value of native revegetation on farms. The first surveys in 2000-2001 covered 132 sites of which 102 were revegetation. After eight years the sites were surveyed again to investigate changes in the bird communities as the revegetation develops.

Nicki will present the results from the data analysis.

**Everyone welcome**

## What to watch out for this month

Any notion that the drying conditions in the first half of the month marked the beginning of the return of the drought were dispelled by the two very wet days in the middle of October. Even so, some of the winter altitudinal migrants lingered on in Canberra suburbs into the first half of the month, notably **White-eared Honeyeater**. Another surprise was the recording of some **Swift Parrots** reluctant to return to Tasmania, with a single bird seen in Cook as late as 19 October.

The later arriving spring migrants have been slow to get here too, with only a few posted observations of **Eastern Koel**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Dollarbird**, and only a single report of **Rufous Fantail** and **Satin Flycatcher**. By contrast, **Leaden Flycatcher**, which had not yet arrived a month ago, now seems to be present in good numbers. However, there has been only a single report of **White-winged Triller**, by Matthew Frawley at Namadgi Visitors Centre, and none so far of **Rufous Songlark**; these two species are no doubt enjoying the wetter conditions in their preferred surroundings inland. This also applies to **Brown Songlark** and **Horsfield's Bushlark**; again I predict few if any of these normally inland species will be reported from the ACT this spring/summer. Likewise there have been no reports of **Cicadabird**, a few of which are usually reported stopping briefly in Canberra on their way to the mountains to breed.

A couple of weeks ago I particularly enjoyed partaking in the K2C surveys along the length of the Monaro Highway from Guise's Creek to Bredbo. Surveyors recorded a good number of our threatened species, and on one of my sites we had **Hooded Robin**, **Brown Treecreeper** and **Diamond Firetail**, as well as several birds whose repeated "fear, fear, fear" call had me puzzled for a long time, until

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb



**Leaden Flycatcher**  
(*Myiagra rubecula*)

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(Continued from page 1)

they were finally tracked down and identified as the thinly spread **Crested Shrike-Tit** rather than the **Brush Cuckoo** I had suspected (another spring migrant to the higher country for which there are only a few, if any, records so far).

I believe to the southeast of Canberra is a relative safe haven for these species, and an area I used to very much enjoy atlassing before the 2003 fires, after which other priorities took over. While you won't be able to pick the best spots on private land as we were, if you're looking for some good birding over the next couple of months pay a visit to Kelly Road (the first bend over the railway at the north end, or the TSR and the kilometre of road beyond halfway down). If you're looking for somewhere a bit different than this well known COG spot try around the big dam after about 400 metres on Ryrie's Hill Road, or the rise up to Cunningham's Gap or the TSR on both sides of the Bredbo to Jerangle Road west of the Strike-a-light River. Alternatively join me for the Bumbalong camp-out on 20-21 November, where a very good range of species is guaranteed.

The weather continues to be favourable for a very good breeding season locally as conditions seem better than they have for quite a few years. Evidence of breeding is one of the most important activities that can be entered into the COG database, so please make sure you do so, with observations taken over time during a breeding event particularly valuable. Learn more about local breeding and how to find nesting activity and behaviour by joining in the Nest Workshop at Campbell Park on Sunday 14 November.

As always make sure all your significant sightings of breeding activity, or of arriving migrants in your local patch, are provided to the Records Management Team and can be considered for the *2010-2011 Annual Bird Report*. — **Jack Holland**

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## Field Trip reports

### 1-4 October — Long weekend campout, Thurra River, Croajingalong National Park

Eight enthusiastic campers joined Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer at the picturesque Thurra River campground, nestled in coastal forest with adjacent sweeping beaches and vast sand dunes, in Croajinglaong National Park. We took advantage of the superb weather with various walks exploring the local landmarks. Saturday's highlight was a walk to Point Hicks Lighthouse, which marks the first place in Australia sighted by Captain Cook. From the headland we



Photo by David Cook

Southern Emu-wren  
( *Stipiturus malachurus* )

spotted Humpback Whales and a sun-baking Australian Fur Seal, and an ascent of Australia's tallest and possibly most decorous lighthouse proffered excellent views of **sea-eagles** gliding past at eye-height or below. Sunday's walks comprised a stroll through teatree forest to an extensive dunes system, and a walk along a secluded beach to Mueller Inlet, returning through spectacular coastal heathland and mahogany.

About 65 bird species were recorded for the weekend, with highlights including **Pilotbird, Hooded Plover, Southern Emu-wren, Scarlet Honeyeater, Australian Hobby** and **Peregrine Falcon**. Our campsites were secluded and our meals graced by **Yellow** and **Rose Robins, Satin**



Photo by Kathy Cook

**Bowerbirds, Wonga Pigeons and White-browed Scrubwrens**, at times happily bouncing around our feet. A large goanna seemed perfectly at home, scavenging for titbits. A night walk yielded Ringtail and Brushtail Possums, a water rat and a Green and Golden Bell-frog, much bigger than I expected.



**Maroonhood Orchid**  
Photo by Charles Buer

The flowering plants throughout the park were at their peak and often received more attention than the birds. Numerous orchid species, including brown beaks, *Caladenia latifolia*, dark heart fingers and maroonhood, kept us fishing for our cameras and flicking through our field guides. Steve Holliday astounded us yet again with his wide-ranging identification skills, from reptiles to flower wasps to sea

shells. Thanks also to Margaret (the 'tick magnet') and Charles (the 'orchid man') for an excellent and social weekend (and I haven't even mentioned the delicious damper and Saturday night's feast).

— Kathy Cook

## 17 October — K2C Survey

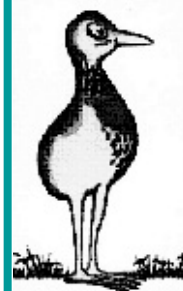
The second round of surveys in the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) region around Bredbo were held on Sunday 17 October. The morning was cool and sometimes windy but a definite improvement on the preceding few days when over 50mm fell across the region. Some challenges were faced reaching the sites due to boggy access tracks and broken dams, however the 20 COG members and friends were dedicated to the task and all surveys were completed.

Over 90 species were recorded during the morning, including many of the summer migrants which were absent for the autumn survey such as **Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-throated Gerygone, Noisy Friarbird, Leaden Flycatcher** and four **cuckoo** species. Plenty of honeyeaters were present but there was little evidence of the migratory movement reported by Henry Nix in the recent CBN.

**Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper and Diamond Firetail** were again reported at a number of properties.

The most interesting sighting of the morning was a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** near Michelago. A species normally found well inland, it is occasionally recorded in the ACT but usually when it is particularly dry inland, conditions which certainly don't apply at the moment.

Breeding was recorded for 14 species, including **Scarlet Robin, Varied Sittella, Dusky Woodswallow, Restless Flycatcher, Fuscous Honeyeater** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, all seen on nests.



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**2010: Celebrating 30 years of  
Plains-wanderers**

**2-7 April 2011  
Laos**

**Bald-faced Bulbul tour**

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

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

**22 June — 5 July 2011  
Top End  
Darwin-Kakadu NP-Katherine-  
Kununurra**

**10 — 17 July 2011  
Alice Springs**

**6 — 13 August 2011  
Pilbara (Western Australia)  
Karijini and Millstream & Chichester  
National Parks**

**3 — 22 September 2011:  
Strzelecki Track, Outback**

**13 — 22 October 2011  
Yorke Peninsula, Lake Gilles,  
Ceduna**

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

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

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



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The morning finished with a well-earned bbq lunch at Scottsdale and a wrap-up of the findings of the survey. Thanks once again to the birdwatchers, landholders, Bush Heritage and Lauren Van Dyke, the K2C facilitator. — **Nicki Taws**

### Wednesday Walk — 20 October — Reserves of Mountain Creek Road

Our October Wednesday Walk (WW) visited the three TSRs (Cavan, The Mullion and Tinkers Creek) along Mountain Creek Road, on the western side of the Murrumbidgee. 16 members joined in the trip in various coloured Subaru Foresters. Within the three Reserves we recorded 51 species - I think a record for a WW. Breeding at various levels was recorded for 8 species.

We began at Cavan, the furthest away, and recorded 29 species, with **White-winged Chough** (ON) being the sole breeding record. The extensive eucalypt blossom had attracted several **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds** to the canopy.

Moving to The Mullion we recorded 35 species of which five were engaged in breeding activity. Highlights were excellent views of a **White-throated Gerygone** nest building and a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** feeding young in a nest. Other breeding records were **Weebill** (DY) and **Australian Magpie** (ON) and a prolonged demonstration of CO by two consenting adult **Crimson Rosellas**.

Our third formal stop was at Tinkers Creek where 33 species were recorded. The highlight was the very large number (at least 10) of **Leaden Flycatchers**. Breeding records were **Grey Fantail** (NB) and **Varied Sitella** (DY).

Between the formal stops, we observed a number of other species including: **Rainbow Bee-eater** perched beside the road; **Wedge-tailed Eagle** soaring over the foothills to the west of The Mullion; **Hardhead** (and several other waterbird species) on The Mullion homestead dam; and **White-fronted Chats** at Stromlo Forest Park.

**Next Month's Walk**— It is intended that next month's Wednesday Walk, on 17 November 2010, will be to the Hall TSR (and perhaps the nearby woodlands). Meet at the TSR beside the Barton Highway at 9am. — **Martin Butterfield**

### 23-24 October — Goulburn

Under threatening skies and a forecast for rain, six members plus a guest from Braidwood joined me and a similar number of Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS) members to inspect the site of the proposed wetlands project at the old brick pits just south of the city. We did a two hour circuit through these and the neighbouring golf course, returning along the north bank of the Mulwarree River.



Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

**Australian Raven**  
( *Corvus coronoides* )

A total of 37 species were recorded, highlights being a **Black-shouldered Kite** hovering, a pair of **Sacred Kingfishers** and two **Eastern Koels** calling persistently. A number of species also had dependent young, including **Pacific Black Duck**, **Dusky Moorhen**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Australian Raven**. Numbers of waterbirds were perhaps lower than expected due to the low water levels in the brick pits; these should be improved if the aim of the wetlands to make the habitat more attractive for waders etc is achieved. An added bonus is that it is located in COG grid cell Z1; thus it will provide another opportunity to see these species within the northeast corner of COG's area of interest.

This was followed by a dash out to the Pejar Dam which COG had not visited since February 2004 due to low water levels, but

which are returning now (but nowhere near as high as currently in the ACT water storages). This confirmed that the **Great Crested Grebe** was still present in good numbers. Unfortunately the front finally moved across and the rain and strong winds prevented us from having a better look at the area. We retreated back to the city and enjoyed our traditional meal with our hosts, this time at a local Thai restaurant.

Next morning broke under grey drizzly skies but nevertheless we set off in convoy to Arthursleigh, about one hour's drive to the northeast of the city, through the very open country of the research farm, to arrive on the banks of the Wollondilly River, which at this spot is fringed with very large river oaks, in my experience always very productive bird habitat. This it proved to be as we walked slowly upstream for about a kilometre to the newly erected bird hide overlooking a very broad reach of the river. This has been a labour of love for GFNS members, being manually carried up in sections for this distance. As well as birds, the platypus can also be viewed from this spot, though only a few participants obtained brief views.

Highlights of the walk included good views of **Restless Flycatcher** in the more open area where we parked the 4WDs, and of a very obliging male **Mistletoebird**, some open but distant views of an **Olive-backed Oriole** (which called often) and, for a lucky few, brief views of a male **Leaden Flycatcher**. The **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was only heard



**Rufous Whistler**  
( *Pachycephala rufiventris* )  
Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

calling, doing its characteristic switch mid way. Unfortunately the dull day meant the light was rather poor which made positive identification of the smaller birds, such as the thornbills moving through the trees, difficult. Those who returned to the cars a bit earlier for lunch were rewarded by great views of a **White-throated Gerygone** and a male **Rufous Whistler** (which seemed to be calling everywhere but again were hardly seen). Those who stayed near the hide a bit longer found a dependent young **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** being fed by **White-browed Scrub-wrens** about one third its size, as well as a **Silvereye** on a nest in the Casuarinas.

All participants thoroughly enjoyed being at this hard to access spot (apart from the very wet boots!), and agreed COG should visit it again as an overnight camp-out in late 2011. Our thanks again go to our hosts, in particular Rodney and Bill for organising the program. On behalf of COG I wish the GFNS every success with their efforts in developing the proposed wetlands so that this currently neglected piece of land becomes valuable bird habitat which all the community can enjoy. — **Jack Holland**



**2011**  
**Bird Calendar**  
by  
**Julian Robinson**

My all new bird calendar includes not only twelve large bird photos, many from the Canberra area, but also features...

- spiral binding so it lies flat
- thick, high quality paper
- many extra photos on the date pages
- the famous Gang-gang mating sequence!

**63 photos in total**  
**Ideal gift for everyone**



**\$20**  
Available from COG sales desk at the  
November meeting or contact me  
directly

Tel: (02) 6239 6226  
julian.robinson@internode.on.net

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## Future Field Trips

The Guidelines for the conduct and advertising of COG field trips are published on the COG web site. Both trip leaders and members/participants should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. In particular, the Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.

### Sunday 14 November, Morning — Campbell Park — Nest Workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past seven 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 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 is a "hot spot" where most of the nesting occurs. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland by email on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au) or phone 6288 7840 after hours. Jack would also appreciate any tips of where nesting is occurring in the week leading up to this outing.

Meet at 8:00 am 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 web site under the *Maps, Forms and Lists* button.

### November Wednesday Walk

It is intended that next month's Wednesday Walk, on 17 November 2010, will be to the Hall TSR (and perhaps the nearby woodlands). Meet at the TSR beside the Barton Highway at 9am. Contact Martin Butterfield email: [martinflafb@gmail.com](mailto:martinflafb@gmail.com) or phone 62382637 or 0425012840.

### Sat-Sun 20-21 November - Bumbalong Valley campout on private property

This is a repeat visit to this spot following COG's camp-outs there in February 2002, November 2006 and March 2009. 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.

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

We will be camping overnight on the local property at the north end of the valley where we camped in March 2009 (and saw 52 species), on a take everything in, take everything out basis. Participants should aim to arrive mid afternoon on the Saturday, and it is expected we'll stay until mid Sunday afternoon. Car pooling will be encouraged, so if you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)).

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## For Sale

Leica 10 x 42 binoculars, 6 years old, \$1200. Phone 62470630

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## Saturday 4 December – Yanununbeyan (near Captains Flat)

There will be 6-7 planned stops within Yanununbeyan for general bush birding that will include off-track walking. Common sense appropriate to the Australian bush in summer is required – carry water, sunscreen and a hat. See Martin's blog (<http://franmart.blogspot.com/2010/10/planning-cog-trip-to-yanununbeyan-sca.html>) for the full day plan, maps of the meeting point and planned route and a list of birds previously recorded in the area. This list includes a wide variety of **honeyeaters, thornbills, parrots, cuckoos** and **raptors**.

Meet at 8:00 am at the Spotlight carpark (off the Bungendore Road) in Queanbeyan for car-pooling. Could someone please volunteer to manage the coordination of the car-pooling (please contact Martin as directed below). Martin will join the group at the junction of Captains Flat Road and Briars Sharrow Road.

To book your place, or for further information please contact Martin Butterfield phone 62382637 or 0425012840 or email: [martinflafb@gmail.com](mailto:martinflafb@gmail.com).

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## News from the Committee

- COG is providing input to discussions on the future of Throsby, the urban identified land between Mulligans Flat and Goorooyaroo Nature Reserves, which has **Superb Parrot** breeding sites.
- All members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting will be held at the start of the November meeting. Some copies of key reports will be available at the meeting, and the draft minutes of the 2009 AGM are available on COG's website (see the meetings page). Nomination forms will be available at the meeting for those wishing to stand for the committee.
- A very successful stall was held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens Open Day on 24 October. There were many questions from young and old visitors, and some new memberships were received. Thanks are due to Lia Battisson, Phillip Veerman and Sandra Henderson for representing COG at this event.
- We have heard that the **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** nomination as a vulnerable species has been approved; there was no official announcement about this. Some work is being done in Government to identify suitable sites for habitat restoration.

— Sandra Henderson (Secretary)

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## Woodland Spring Surveys

### Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team did the survey on Sunday 19 September. Many of the spring migrants were back including **geryones, Rufous Whistler** and a number of **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoos**, but some winter migrants, **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater**, were still around. Highlights of 51 species included several sites with **Scarlet Robin, Olive-backed Orioles** at several sites (possibly moving through), **Varied Sittella** at one site, and **Brown Treecreeper** heard in the area of the quartz ridge.

### Gooroo NR North

Nicki Taws reported on a breezy and somewhat stormy looking morning on 2 October. Vehicle access to the reserve had re-opened after a wet and boggy September, but the ground was still very soggy in places. As usual, the more open sites had mostly only the larger birds - **rosellas, Magpie, Noisy Miners**. The smaller birds were concentrated in the better woodland sites where both **geryones, Rufous Whistler, Grey Fan-**

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tail, **Spotted Pardalote** and **Weebill** were common. The various **thornbills** weren't as apparent as in autumn or winter but that is usual. Male **Red-capped Robins** were at two sites, and a male **Hooded Robin** and a couple of **Brown Treecreeper** were recorded between sites. **Mistletoebirds** were found at most sites, and the mistletoes were loaded with fruit although none of it seemed ripe yet.

## Gooroo NR South

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley reported on their survey on 26 September in very pleasant conditions. 51 species were recorded with no less than five raptors: **Whistling Kite** (first record for survey?), **Brown Goshawk** (2), **Kestrel** (2), a noisy, displaying pair of **Brown Falcons**, and **Wedge-tailed Eagle** (2). Returned migrants included **Shining & Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Nosiy Friarbird**, **Dusky Woodswallow** (6+) and **Tree Martin**. Others of interest were **Varied Sittella** (3), **Mistletoebirds**, **Grey Butcherbird**, a handful of migrating **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Speckled Warbler** (2) and **Golden Whistler** as well as breeding records for **Choughs** (ny) and **Buff-rumped Thornbill** (on). Reptiles included a **Cunningham's Skink** and a **Shingleback**.

## Majura Field Range

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan did the survey on 5 October amidst great excitement at a colony of spider orchids in a known location at site 3, plus more at site 4 that hadn't been recorded before. A good range of birds was seen, but no **Hooded Robins**. However, there were **Brown Treecreepers** on two sites, where they have been rarely recorded. There appeared to be **White-throated Gerygones** everywhere, many more than usual, while one **Western Gerygone** was heard calling. There was a higher numbers of parrots than usual, including **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, and **Red-rumped parrots** at Site 2. Recorded for the first time at Site 2 were two **Nankeen Kestrels** taking in the early morning sun on an large dead gum tree. Summer migrants such as **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Olive-backed Orioles**, **Rufous Whistlers** and **Leaden Flycatchers** were seen, as were a **Golden Whistler** and a **White-eared Honeyeater**. Other honeyeaters were few and far between, but included **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds**, but no **Yellow-faced**. There were a few **Pallid** and one **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and one **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** about. There were not too many little brown birds, but **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills** and one or two **Grey Fantails** were recorded.

## Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie reported they did their surveys over a number of days in the last week of September. Highlights and things of interest included: numerous **King Parrots** and **Eastern** and **Crimson Rosellas** feeding on mistletoe fruit at sites 6 and 7 (two of the generally least interesting sites); good numbers of **Brown**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** at a number of sites; a family of five choughs with dependant young; one **Sacred Kingfisher** and a **Horsfields Bronze-Cuckoo** at one site. Unfortunately no **Speckled Warblers** were seen where they are normally in at least 2 sites. There were plenty of **Acacias** flowering.

## Mt Ainslie NR

Michael Lenz surveyed the sites on 26 September in fine conditions. Highlights included: two pairs of **Brown Goshawk**, one **Whistling Kite** and **Mistletoebirds** (including two pairs), widespread (all mistletoes loaded with fruit). At one site **Jacky Winter**, **Varied Sittella** and the only **Speckled Warbler** were recorded while **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Western Gerygone** were at several sites. Both at and between sites there were hardly any **thornbills**; even the normally widespread **Weebill** was absent from several sites.



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## Newline

Sue Lashko reported there was plenty of breeding activity on the survey on 26 September, but most of it was by **Common Starlings**. Each year they seem to spread further through the woodland and this year the **Tree Martins**, which usually nest in at least two different trees in the front paddock, seem to have abandoned Newline altogether. **Willie Wagtails** were busy lining their nests, a **White-winged Choughs'** nest with two babies was closely attended by five adults and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** were building low down among the bark of a Yellow Box. **Superb Fairy-wrens** popped out of almost all the many *Pyracantha* bushes that have grown rapidly with the rains. All dams were full, producing the best waterbird list for years, including a male **Chestnut Teal**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Grey Teal**, **Pacific Black Duck** and **Wood Duck**. **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Southern Whiteface**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Dusky Woodswallows** and a single **Rainbow Lorikeet** (which may be nesting) also made for an interesting morning, as did four species of raptor: **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Brown Goshawk** and a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels**. Surprisingly, no **Speckled Warblers** were seen but perhaps they are nesting, and **cuckoos** and **whistlers** were also absent.

## Callum Brae NR

Sandra Henderson did the survey on 30 September, and recorded some interesting species in a total of 37 recorded: **Little Raven** (eight birds), **Gang-gang Cockatoo** pair, **Red-browed Finch**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Rainbow Lorikeets** at three sites, including on a nest, and 30 **Dusky Woodswallows**.

## Jerrabomberra West NR (woodland)

Jenny Bounds did the survey on 1 October, a cool and overcast day, with 44 species recorded, the usual species for this time of year, but not the usual numbers of small birds like **Buff-rumped Thornbills** or **Weebills** (maybe they were quietly nesting!). Spring grass growth was still low, but weeds like saffron thistle were starting to emerge. A **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** was unusual. **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Dusky Woodswallows** (at the two sites abutting the open grasslands), and **Tree Martins** were back. An **Olive-backed Oriole** made an appearance at site 7 where, interestingly, it is often recorded over spring/summer, as well as **Speckled Warbler** at that site. **Skylarks** and **Pipits** were recorded in the grasslands area on the way in. A pair of **Brown Goshawks** were actively calling around the woodland patch but not yet in aggressive (nesting) mode – it could be interesting on the December survey!

## Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson did the survey on 3 October, a mild, calm, overcast day. More birds were observed this time than in any survey in the last five years. Site 3 was the most productive, with 13 species, including **Rufous Whistler**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and a **Noisy Friarbird**. The **Galaks** which are regularly seen at Site 2 were missing; maybe the bees that have taken up residence in their tree have something to do with that. There were fresh chewings under a *Casuarina* at Site 1. Two **Common Bronzings** at Site 7 also made it into the survey. Other highlights for the morning, but not in the sites, were **Satin Bowerbird** carrying nesting material, **Grey Butcherbird** and **Leaden Flycatcher**. Other breeding records were **Striated Pardalote**, **Eastern Rosella** and **Australian Magpie**.

## Woodland north of Tharwa

David McDonald did the the survey in good conditions on 25 September. There was very little tree flowering, though some mistletoes had lots of fruit. Once again no **Brown Songlarks** nor **Red-rumped Parrots** were recorded. The latter is sad as they bred there annually for many years. The great news is the **Brown Tree-creepers**: five seen at sub-site 1 and an additional 4 between sub-sites 1 & 2, a massive increase over previous years. **Speckled Warblers** were encountered on three sub-sites, two of which were places that they do not usually occupy.

## Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 November 2010**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

### Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2009 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of president's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2010-2011
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (a nomination form is printed below and forms will also be available on the night of the AGM)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given.
11. Close of meeting

## Wingspan

A large number of copies of *Wingspan* magazine (Birds Australia) covering approximately 2004-2009 are available to interested members.

Please contact me if you want a set of the available issues.

A number of sets will be available at the November meeting.

Pick them up in the tea-room at the meeting.

Please contact me if you want to make other arrangements to get these magazines.

**Sandra Henderson**, ph 6231 0303 or [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

## COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate .....

for the position\* of .....

(\*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)

on the 2011 COG Committee.

(Name): .....

(Signature): .....

I second the nomination.

(Name): .....

(Signature): .....

I accept the nomination.

(Name): .....

(Signature): .....

*(Nomination forms may be submitted any time up to immediately before the AGM at the November monthly meeting. Nominations can be submitted by mail to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608. Forms submitted by mail must arrive in the PO Box by 29 October 2010. All nominees and nominators must be financial members of COG.)*

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## Garden Bird Survey Notes

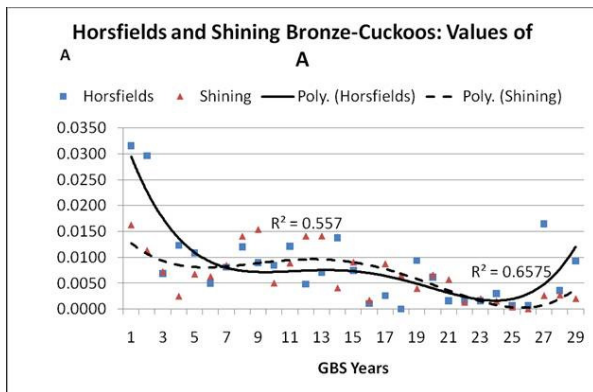
A first point is to thank Ian Fraser for his kind words about the GBS on ABC radio on 26 October.

As the weather has warmed up there have been a few chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant:

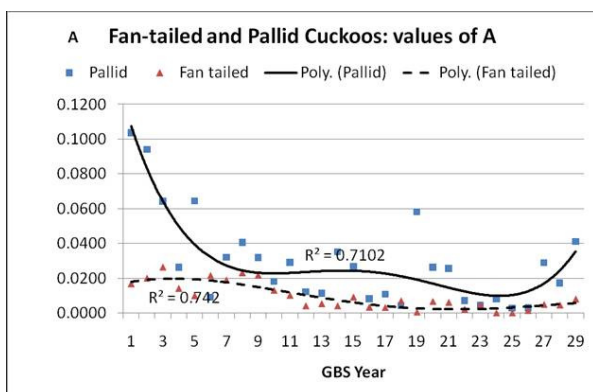
- **Eastern Koel** in Page and Griffith;
- **Swift Parrots** in Gordon;
- **Rainbow Bee-eater** high overhead in Holt; and
- **Latham's Snipe** in Giralang

### A tale of Four Cuckoos

In recent past years my impression – largely from my GBS sites - has been that **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** have been more common than **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** and **Pallid Cuckoos** more common than **Fan-tailed Cuckoos**. However, in the last four months the opposite has been the case. Obviously it will be 12 months before there is any aggregate data about the current GBS year but I thought it might be interesting to look back at the past. I have included in this analysis values of A for year 29, based on the charts included in the database so far.



Looking first at the two **Bronze-Cuckoos**, while there is a lot of variability in the annual values of A, the long term polynomial trend ( $R^2$  being 'reasonable') shows that in the recent past **Horsfield's** is more abundant than **Shining**. In the medium term they were very similar. Both species show a 'kick-up' in the most recent years.



For the **Fan-tailed** and **Pallid Cuckoos** the trend (with somewhat stronger  $R^2$ ) confirms that the **Pallid** has been more abundant than the **Fan-tailed**. While the **Pallid** also shows a 'kick-up' in the most recent periods this is barely evident for the **Fan-tailed**. This makes the high number of reports of **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** in Geoffrey Dabb's Winter Survey even more interesting

### Charts

A good number of members have taken up charts for Year 30, although not quite as many as last year. If any other folk would like to join the Survey team please email me ([martinflab@gmail.com](mailto:martinflab@gmail.com)) and I will arrange to get a Chart to you. We are close to completing processing of the 86 Charts for year29 that have been returned. If any readers still have a Chart it would be appreciated if they could return it and the data will be incorporated in the DB for the benefit of future analysis: however, it may not be possible to consider that data in the Year 29 version of the Annual Bird Report.

— **Martin Butterfield.**





Although it may not show up well in black and white, the photo above is of **Albatrosses** breeding on Bounty Island in the sub-Antarctic. It was taken by Barry Baker who takes up the story:

This photo is one of 500 I took of the seven islands in the Bounty Islands group that has colonies of **Salvin's Albatross** breeding on them. Almost all of the global population of Salvin's breeds on the Bountys. The photos will be used to develop a photomontage of each island, and then all birds will be counted. Also present on this photo are **Erect-crested Penguins** and NZ fur seals. If you look closely you may even find a **Bounty Islands Shag**. These photos were taken at 1,500 ft.

Early COG member Gerry van Tets camped on the Bounty Islands in 1978 with Chris Robertson of New Zealand. They were the first party to camp on the islands in 170 years, and it is believed that only two other ornithological parties have camped there since.

The work that Gerry and Chris did in 1978 is still the only reliable population estimate for **Salvin's Albatross**. The current survey hopes to update that through its' photographic work. Gerry and Chris estimated there were 76,000 pairs nesting in 1978.

COG members would be interested to know that there is a plaque in memory of Gerry van Tets on Montague Island. — **Geoffrey Dabb**



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(Continued from page 15)

Another local poet and conservationist, also sadly gone from us, was Bob Brissenden who had clearly listened to the whipbirds, in *Birds about the House*;

*All day the forest rang  
With the male-birds' brilliant drawn-out whistling lash  
And their consorts' echoing song.*

And how could anyone but a bird-watcher have written, as David Campbell did, of Fairy Martins;

*Flitting a little tipsily,  
Kissing their image in the mirror  
Of lakes and ruffled dams.*

Or of Magpie Larks, in *Mudlark*; *Humping wings at each note.*

Campbell was yet another local, running the family property at Wells Station after WWII, then moving to Bungendore. A friend of his, with whom he spent much time fishing the streams of the Monaro, was Douglas Stewart, born a Kiwi but settled in Sydney. Some of his verse plays, dealing with epic themes such as Scott of the Antarctic (*Fire on the Snow*) and Ned Kelly, were huge in scope but he too had an eye for natural details, as any bird observer needs. In *The Finches* he is evidently writing about Red-brows from first-hand experience; *a flurry of soft green bodies, red beak and tail*. He returns to them in *Firetail Finches*; *And finches dart and take their places, Like crimson blossoms on the bushes.*

And his evocation of *A Flock of Gang-gangs* surely qualifies him as an honorary local!



*There is the sound of granite in their voices,  
Of rocks in ice, high up and harsh and wintry,  
And yet in their soft plumes summer rejoices  
In flame and charcoal, so they fit the country.*

**Gang-gang Cockatoo**  
( *Callocephalon fimbriatum* )  
Photo by Julian Robinson

As per my initial disclaimer, I have no standing whatever in this field, but I do love the work of the small selection of poets I have introduced here – and all of them wrote much more about birds than I have room to describe. I hadn't intended to limit myself to local poets, but as so often this Whimsy took its own direction. However that does leave us scope for future explorations in the area; unless of course you're averse (*Editor's note: Groan!*) to the idea. — **Ian Fraser** (ianf@pcug.org.au)

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

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

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

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

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

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

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

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

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

**Contact:** Greg or Sallie Ramsay  
6286 1564 or  
gramsay@grapevine.com.au

## COG SALES



Birds of  
Canberra  
Gardens

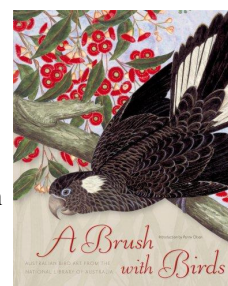


***Birds of Canberra Gardens*** (\$20.00 for book only or \$25.00 with ***Bird Calls of the ACT*** CD included - members prices only)  
Nearly 230 bird species have been recorded in and around Canberra suburban gardens over the past 27 years in the COG Garden Bird Survey. The life and times of most of these birds are described in this book, illustrated with brilliant photographs and abundance graphs. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* describes the abundance and distribution of birds and discusses how and where to find them throughout the year. It also provides some ideas on how your garden may be made more attractive to native birds. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* is an excellent introduction to the birds of Canberra.

***Boom & Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country*** Edited by Libby Robin, Robert Heinsohn and Leo Joseph - \$27.00 for members.

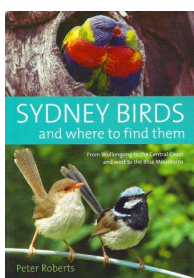
***A Brush With Birds*** with Introduction by Penny Olsen (\$23.00 for members).

The paintings of Australian birds in *A Brush with Birds* are by artists whose work is represented in the National Library of Australia. They span the years from first settlement to the 1970s, telling us about the times as well as the birds, and showing how the style of bird art has evolved. This book is lavishly illustrated with vibrant and luscious art and it includes the stories of the artists behind the paintings.



***Owls: Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia*** by David Hollands (\$55.00 for members)

***The Owls of Australia: A Field Guide to Australian Night Birds*** by Stephen Debus, illustrated by Jeff Davies, photographs by David Hollands (\$20.00 for members)



***Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them*** by Peter Roberts (25.00 for members)

Covering the Sydney Region from Wollongong to the Central Coast and West to the Blue Mountains, *Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them* features the 30 top bird-watching localities in and around Sydney. These birding hot spots stretch from Tuggerah Lakes on the Central Coast to Lake Illawarra near Wollongong and from the Blue Mountains in the west to some surprisingly accessible sites tucked away in the heart of the city. Each locality entry lists the key species to look out for, including rare and seasonal visitors. It describes how to access the location, both by public transport and road, and what amenities to expect; maps are featured wherever necessary.

Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series (\$27.00 each for members):

**Kookaburra  
Cockatoos**

**Tawny Frogmouth**

**Australian Bustard (coming soon)**

**Australian Magpie  
Albatross**

**Herons, Egrets and Bitterns**

**Wedge-tailed Eagle  
Mound-builders**

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

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## Avian Whimsy #86 — Birds in Line

It's now over three years since I offered a few brief thoughts on prose writing about birds (#56 — *Birds in Words*, September 2007); I ended it with a promise that 'Another Whimsy must host an introduction to the rich field of Australian bird poetry.' It's time, as someone rather more eminent than I once put it. As with pretty much anything I write I claim no particular expertise – some of you certainly know more about the topic than I do – but as they say, I know what I like...

As I did three years ago with prose, I am going, for today, to put aside poems that 'use' birds purely as metaphors, though that is not an easy line to define. Which side of it falls AD Hope's rivetting and wrenching *The Death of the Bird*, the drama of an unidentified migrant whose '*guiding spark of instinct winks and dies*' during her last journey? As previously my criteria for these sparse selections are that the poet clearly knows the birds well enough to bring them to life for those of us who also know them.

I don't believe that anyone did it better than the wonderful Judith Wright (McKinney, but her collected work *Birds* was republished in 2003 as Wright). She lived much of her life in Queensland, but spent her last thirty years near Braidwood, commuting regularly to Canberra. One of the great Australian poets, passionate conservationist and land rights activist, she was a luminously special person. Certainly most if not all of her bird poems are also metaphorical as well as often anthropomorphic (of a **currawong**, '*he is a gangster, his wife's a moll*').



**Pied Currawong**  
( *Strepera graculina* )  
Photo by Harvey Perkins

But she *knew* the birds.

*Wild and impermanent  
as the sea-blown foam,  
the dotterel keeps its distance  
and runs alone.*



**Black-fronted Dotterel**  
at Stromlo Park  
( *Elseyornis melanops* )  
Photo by Lindell Emerton



**Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo**  
at Womboin  
( *Calyptorhynchus funereus* )  
Photo by David Cook

She has walked that beach and followed the bird, as have we all in this forum.

And I can never hear the **Yellow-tailed Black-cockies** without thinking of Judith and her closing lines from the breath-takingly evocative *Black Cockatoos*;

*the wild black cockatoos, tossed on the crest  
of their high trees, crying the world's unrest.*

(Continued on page 13)



## 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](http://www.visitnsw.com.au) (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

**COG welcomes the following new members:**

**J Bissett, Carwoola**

**D King, Melba**

**C Patterson, Macquarie**

**M Joyce, Campbell**

**All members:** unless you have paid your 2010-2011 membership fees you will receive no further newsletters from COG.

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

### December deadline

**Wednesday 24 November 2010**

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

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

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

## COG info

**President**—Chris Davey, ph 6254 6324  
**Email:** [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

**Vice President**—TBA

**Treasurer**—Lyn Rees  
[lynlev@iimetro.com.au](mailto:lynlev@iimetro.com.au)

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

*Address for correspondence*

**The Secretary**  
COG, PO Box 301  
Civic Square, ACT 2608

*Newsletter distribution*  
**Brian Fair and helpers**

### *COG membership*

**2010-2011 memberships:**

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

### *Membership inquiries—*

**Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303**  
[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:membership@canberrabirds.org.au)  
for changed address or other details

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

### *COG website*

[www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au)

### *Office*

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

### *COG E-mail Discussion List*

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

### *Editor Canberra Bird Notes*

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

If undeliverable, please return to  
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PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

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