



Gang-gang

October 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday 13 October

Details pg 3

Contents

Field trip reports	1
Woodland Surveys	2
Report from COG meeting	4
Future field trips	5
From the Committee	8
Avlan Whimsy #25	10
GBS Central #6	11



Red-capped Robin Male (*Petroica goodenovii*) Photo courtesy **Helen Fallow**

Field Trip Reports

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve 5 September 2005

It was a perfect day on 5th September when twelve COG members joined me at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. We were welcomed by a nesting **Welcome Swallow** at the entry to the Visitors centre and wandered around this area initially then met with Ranger Lara Woolcombe who gave us a most informative talk about the recovery of the reserve and the plans for its future.

It is anticipated that most areas of the Reserve will be open to the public by the end of the year. The focus in restocking kangaroo enclosures will be on local rather than more extensive kangaroos. The koala enclosure has problems as the epicormic growth does not offer much support for tree climbers. Lara mentioned mammal surveys being undertaken which have discovered Greater Gliders and Brush-tail Possums as well as an Eastern Pygmy Possum being discovered at the reserve. She also mentioned the Corroboree Frog husbandry which has had a hugely successful hatching from the eggs collected earlier. The captive breeding program may be re-established for the Brush-tailed Rock-Wallabies which COG members saw in numbers en route to the bird sites. The business case for the future plans for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve has been developed and feasibility studies will be undertaken soon. Comments are most welcome.

We surveyed the sites that the Friends of Tidbinbilla are monitoring both in the wetlands and at Nil Desperandum and throughout the morning managed to see 59 species including lots of **Dusky Woodswallows, White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Flame and Scarlet Robins**. There were masses of ibis (200) starting to build their breeding condominiums and lots of **Hardheads** (44) and a nesting **Black Swan** in the wetlands. There was a report of an Emu chick but we didn't see it on the day. We did see a **Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle** and two **Nankeen Kestrels** for those with a passion for raptors.

The numbers are still down in comparison with pre fire surveys but there is a steady increase. Some expected species were not seen on the day and some, such as Red-browed Treecreepers and Bowerbirds have not been seen at any of the sites.

The reserve is recovering well, although a lot of the more dangerous burnt timber has had to be removed, and COG members were lucky to get good views of Rock Wallabies and Platypus on the day. There were lots of frogs making a spring chorus to accompany us on our tour around the newly replaced boardwalks in the wetlands area. The recent rains have greened the place up well and spring flowering should start soon.

Many members had not previously seen Nil Desperandum although some had used the heritage building to enjoy weekends out in the bush and were heartened that there are plans for its

rebuilding - if the remaining parts are structurally sound. They noted the regrowth of the experimental camellias up there as it was expected that these would not survive the fire.

Unfortunately we did not see the Rose Robins that used to be around Nil - but better luck next time.

All in all it was a most interesting morning - which ran on a bit late - next time we will make sure people bring lunch to make a day of it as the picnic areas are open again.

Jonette McDonnell

Lake Road, near Bungendore, 19 September 2004.

17 Members participated in a walk along Lake Road on a mild, still, initially cloudy Sunday morning. The walk concentrated on that part of the road where the bottom of the escarpment runs close to the road. This area features many very old large trees full of nesting hollows. In wetter times the shoreline of Lake George would be nearby, but, alas, that is currently just a memory. 44 species were observed, none of which were water birds!

Among the raptors a **Little Eagle** put in an appearance along with several **Wedge-tailed Eagles** riding the thermals at the top of the scarp. A group of four **Nankeen Kestrels** were seen flying together. A **Pallid Cuckoo** was seen and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** heard. A highlight of the walk was the sighting of two female and one male **Rose Robin**. Several **Speckled Warbler** were seen in a paddock along with **Red-browed Finch** and domestic chickens! Among **Honeyeaters**, large numbers of **Yellow-faced** were present along with smaller numbers of **White-naped, White-eared and Brown-headed**, as well as **Eastern Spinebill** and **Red Wattlebird**. An interesting impact of the drought was the extensive die-back of the plentiful mistletoe in both eucalypts and wattles. The party was amused by the 'rites of spring' as practised by what could only be described as an orgy of **Striated Thornbills** rolling about in the grass and on the road. Extra birds kept coming right to the last with **Silvereyes** and a **European Goldfinch** added to the list at the spot where we parked our cars.

David Rees

Woodland Surveys

South Gooroo Woodland Survey Friday 24 September 2004

Kathy and I undertook the September Woodland Survey in south Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve on a perfect Canberra spring day - about 20 degrees, sunny and still (no rain, unfortunately!). The first observation of note was the erection of a stylish new advice and information booth for the reserve since our last visit, featuring maps of the reserve and Helen Fitzgerald's excellent *Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands* poster.



New Gooroo Signage

Photo courtesy **David Cook**



Introducing our small well serviced birdwatching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre.

All prices include three star accommodation and meals.

For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

October 2004

Dear Gypsy Point near Mallacoota 18-23th \$ 1580
Start **Canberra** End **Canberra** Leader Alan Morris

December 2004

Tasmanian Endemics 4-9th(excludes airfare) \$ 2280
Start Hobart End Hobart Leader Alan Morris

January 2005

Alpine Birds and Plants 22-26th \$ 1485
Start **Canberra** End **Canberra**
Local Plant and Birdo Expert : Leader Jules Gold

February 2005

Divine Lord Howe Island 12-16th (exc. airfare) \$ 1750
Start Lord Howe End Lord Howe
Leader the Lord of Howe himself : Ian Hutton

March 2005

Newcastle Waders Weekend 12th & 13th \$ 470
Early morning Pick Up **Canberra** Leader Alan Morris

May 2005

Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfield 2-8th (exc. airfare)\$ TBA
Start **Canberra** End **Adelaide** Leader Alan Morris

Visit our website or telephone for more Information

Follow That Bird - sydney's birding company

Tel 02 9973 1865 Fax 02 9973 1875

email tours@followthatbird.com.au

website followthatbird.com.au

The difference between this survey and that carried out in June was quite marked, not least of all the temperature – birds were both prolific and vocal. There were many returning migrants present, including **Grey Fantails**, **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Rufous Whistlers** and **Olive-backed Orioles**; but probably the most vocal and widespread were **Western** and **White-throated Geryones**, both of which were observed/heard at and/or between the 9 survey sites. Having just returned from Western Australia, where we saw and heard the western sub-species of **Western Geryone** *Gerygone fusca fusca*, the difference between the two calls was quite apparent, that of the west being a much slower call cf. “our” Western Geryone *G.f.exsul*. Other birding highlights for the day were **Speckled Warbler**, **White-winged Triller**, 2 **Little Corellas**, **Mistletoebirds**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, several **Pallid Cuckoos** calling, a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and all five local **Thornbills** – **Buff-rumped**, **Brown**, **Striated**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Yellow**.

Unfortunately the lone Brown Treecreeper (probably the last in the entire Mulligan’s Flat/Goorooyarroo Reserves, as reported by Jenny Bounds in the July *Gang-gang*), was not located. All told, there were 51 species recorded for the day.



White-throated Gerygone (*Gerygone olivacea*). Photo courtesy **David Cook**

Non-birding highlights included a beautiful **Bearded Dragon** enjoying the morning sun, and a **Jacky Lizard** that was busy escaping the attention of two **Pied Currawongs**.

David Cook

Highlights at some COG sites

Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

A group of 11 volunteers joined me for the survey on a sunny spring day. Many of the spring migrants were back, with reports of both species of **Gerygone**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Pallid Kingfisher**, plus some honeyeaters moving through. It was a **Varied Sittella** morning with three sightings of this threatened species, including one carrying food or nesting material – these sightings were in or around the dry woodland and ridges (Red Stringybark) which they seem to prefer. Other highlights amongst 59 species for the morning were: **Hoary-headed Grebes** and **Black Swan** on the large dam, which is about a third full, and **Scarlet Robin** nesting. **Hooded Robins** seem to have deserted their former nesting sites near COG plots on the eastern side of the reserve. Thanks to the regular and new volunteers who helped with the survey. The next survey date will be Sunday 12 December.

Newline

Sue Lashko with **Julie McGuinness** did the surveys on 25 September at this site near the airport. Newline is an important area of Yellow Box/Red Gum woodland at the end of a significant woodland corridor which runs through Majura Range, Mt Ainslie/Mt Majura complex, Goorooyarroo and Mulligans Flat reserves, and around the northern end of the ACT to Hall environs. Newline also has the only remaining group of **Brown Treecreepers** we know of close to an urban area. Highlights were **Brown Treecreeper** which are usually found in the front paddock, **Speckled Warbler**, **Double-barred Finch** and **Southern Whiteface** at the site near the dump, and an **Australian Hobby**. Total 40 species.

Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve

COG has 18 monitoring points in the reserve, 9 in the north and 9 in the south, over a range of vegetation structures in Yellow Box/Red Gum woodland. At the northern survey points, **Nicki Taws** reports the highlight was a pair of **Hooded Robins** nest building in a **Blakely's Red Gum**. This is a known territory in a large area of

October Meeting

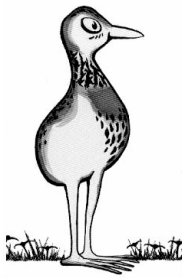
**8 pm Wednesday
13 October 2004**

*Canberra Girls Grammar School
cnr 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 carpark is
full, enter using Chapel Drive.*

Our **short talk** for October will be on the Mistletoebird, by **Dr Michael Braby** of the School of Botany and Zoology at the ANU. Michael is an entomologist, so his perspective on this favorite bird will be interesting to hear.

Our **main speaker** will be **Dr David Hollands**, the well-known Victorian-based author of books on, variously, Australian birds of prey, then owls, frogmouths and nightjars and, most recently, the kingfishers. The title of David's talk is "OWLS - Journeys Around the World". Many of you will know that David is a retired country doctor, UK born and educated but in Australia since 1961. He has been a self-confessed 'bird nut' from about the time that he learned to walk; he tried to take his first bird photograph at the age of eight. Depending on the vagaries of customs clearance, David may have copies of his new book on owls to sell at the meeting and in any event, will have copies of the others. He is kindly providing one for our raffle and has agreed to autograph members' copies of his previous works, if you care to bring them along.

Please come along.
It should be a great evening!



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria
Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 0417 310 200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2005 Birding Tours

12 -28 February: New Zealand
NZ options: 11 Feb pelagic for
NZ storm-petrel; 1-2 March Kapiti
Island for **little spotted kiwi**

9-14 March: Tasmania bird &
mammal tour, including Bruny Island &
pelagic trip

16-23 March: Kangaroo Island, SA.
Great Ocean Road – Coorong NP

18-29 May: Gulf Country Q'ld
Cairns Karumba Georgetown Mt Isa

4-19 June: Top End incl. Kununurra

3-10 July: New Caledonia
(rescheduled)

Comprehensive birding tour seeking
all endemic, plus the near-endemic,
species on Grand Terre and nearby
islands of the Loyalty group. Birds
include the incredible **kagu**, plus
**cloven-feathered dove, horned
parakeet, crow honeyeater, white-
bellied goshawk, red-throated
parrot-finch, NC imperial pigeon**
*A little bit of France in the tropics, 2.5
hours from Sydney, with reputedly the
richest biodiversity per square
kilometre in the world.*

8-26 August: Outback trip
The 20th Strzelecki Track tour

Plains-wanderer Weekends

11 and 12 **December 2004**
18 and 19 **December 2004**
26 & 27 March (Easter) 2005

www.philipmaher.com

complex structured woodland with
a more open paddock adjacent - the
paddock is often used for
foraging. Nicki also reported
Southern Whiteface at the
southern end of the reserve as she
was leaving. Dave and Kathy Cook
did the surveys at the
southern monitoring points (report
previous).

Naas Valley

At COGs new monitoring site in the
Naas Valley, Julie
McGuiness reported **Brown
Trecreeper, Southern Whiteface,
Speckled Warbler, Jacky Winter,
White-Throated Gerygones** and
Mistletoebirds everywhere, **Varied
Sitellas**, a pair of **Brown
Goshawks**, 3 cuckoo species and 9
Diamond Firetails. This should be
an interesting site for the Woodland
Project, as it includes an area
burned in the January 2003 fires,
and still has a good range of
threatened and other birds of
interest.

Jenny Bounds

Report of September COG Meeting

The short talk, entitled 'Dead
Parrots' Society – the allure of the
Paradise Parrot', was given by
Penny Olsen. This extinct parrot,
also known as the Beautiful,
Scarlet-shouldered and Soldier
Parrot, is a member of the genus
Psephotus and so is closely related
to the Hooded and Golden-
shouldered Parrot. The Paradise
Parrot was the largest, and was
found in southeast Queensland in
the Darling Downs area; the
Golden-shouldered is found on
Cape York, while the Hooded is the
smallest, and is found in
Arnhemland. All three species nest
in termite mounds. The Paradise
Parrot made a horizontal tunnel and
a large 30-60cm cavity inside. The
honeycomb-like material of the
termite mound was then stomped
down to make a smooth floor, on
which 4-5 eggs were laid. John
Gilbert, a major collector of birds
for John Gould, collected Paradise
Parrots from the Darling Downs in
1844. Birds that survived the trip
back to England were popular as

caged birds, although the last one in
captivity probably died by about 1880.
In 1915, the RAOU called for action on
three parrots which were in trouble.
The journalist, Alec Chisholm, took up
the cause of the Paradise Parrot, giving
talks, writing articles and chasing up
sightings. Cyril Gerrard, who lived on a
farm on the Darling Downs and was
interested in nature, rediscovered the
parrot in 1922. He observed it closely
and photographed it. Unfortunately the
Paradise Parrot was last seen in 1927.

What caused its demise? Several
factors have been cited, including the
use of fire by both Aborigines and



Mistletoebird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*)
Photo courtesy **David Cook**

farmers, as well as drought. Foxes and
prickly pear may have played a minor
role, but neither had spread into the
Darling Downs until after 1902, by
which time the parrot was already in
serious trouble. Large numbers of
termite mounds were collected to be
used as very durable and moisture-
resistant flooring in huts, and to create
ant-bed tennis courts. Whatever the
reason, the Paradise Parrot is lost
forever.

By contrast, the main talk focussed on
restoring habitat and the resultant
influx of birds. Judy Harrington, Park
Ranger at Sydney Olympic Park, spoke
on 'Rubbish to Restoration'. Olympic
Park covers 425 hectares, and includes
remnant and constructed fresh and
saltwater habitat, woodland, wetlands
and parkland. Previously, the area was
home to the Newington Armaments
depot from 1882 to 1996, abattoirs
from 1907-88 and the State Brickworks
from 1911-88. Between 1965 and 1988,
huge amounts of landfill, some legal
and some not, were dumped at
Homebush Bay, and included industrial
and household waste. This rubbish has
been capped with clay surrounded by
leachate drains to protect the
woodlands and wetlands from

pollution. Such work would not have been possible without the influx of money that became available when Sydney was chosen as the site for the 2000 Olympic Games.

The Wanngal Wetlands in Newington Nature Reserve, which has restricted access, have become a haven for Arctic migrants since tidal flow was reintroduced. **Sharp-tailed and Common Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Greenshank**, among others, are regular visitors, and a Ruff was recorded in 2003.

The Badu Mangroves, the last mangroves in Sydney Harbour, are a waterbird refuge and the site of a field study centre. The Fishway in Bicentennial Park allows fish to move from saltwater to fresh water. The Narawang Wetlands attract **Latham's Snipe** in the warmer months, as well as **Black-winged Stilt, Buff-banded Rail, Baillon's Crake and Black-fronted Dotterel**. This variety of habitats has been closely monitored since 1995 with surveys of shorebirds, nesting birds, bush birds and pest birds. The latter include **Purple Swamphen**, which pull up plants, and **Sacred Ibis**, about 500 of which are being discouraged because of the mess they make and the danger of bird-strike by aircraft. Birds have not been the only beneficiaries of Olympic Park: the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog and the 'heritage' hares have also increased in number. However, there are threats to Olympic Park, such as invasive species and algal blooms in mudflats and wetlands, and increased visitation and urban pressures from the huge new suburb at adjacent Newington. Judy assured us that the Olympic Park Management Plan includes measures to deal with these problems. So, when next you are in Sydney, a day's bird watching at Olympic Park should be high on your list.

Sue Lashko

Future Field Trips

Bundidgerry; Sunday 17 October 2004, morning on private property

A couple of years ago COG visited this delightful property near Murrumbateman. The property has a mixture of woodland and open pasture

COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

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

on undulating land, and has a stream and a small dam. The variety of landscape provides potential for a wide variety of species to be seen. The **Hooded Robin** has recently returned after a period of absence. The owners are continuing the process of rehabilitating the land, so it will be very interesting to see the effects these improvements have on the birdlife.

The walk will be over land that is undulating and including a steepish hill, as well as across the paddocks. Please could you bring along some drinks and morning snacks, as well as binos, good shoes and a hat. We'll meet at 7.30 am at the carpark at the corner of Constitution Ave and Allara St (now that the one adjacent to the Griffin Centre no longer exists), to arrive at Bundidgerry at about 8.30 am. Bundidgerry is located 1.5 km along John Jobbins Road, off Dick's Creek Road, as indicated on the map in last months *Gang-gang*. We will use the right hand gate and proceed the 1.6 km to the cabin. Although not essential, it would be appreciated if intending participants could contact the leader Alistair Bestow (6281 1481 A/H) beforehand.



Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*)
Photo courtesy **David Cook**

Taylor's Creek; Sunday 24 October 2004- atlassing opportunity on private properties – NEW OUTING

Taylor's Creek catchment lies between Tarago and the east side of Lake George, an area not often frequented by COG members or birders in general. The Taylor's Creek Landcare Group members are very keen to know of the birdlife on their properties, and this outing aims to help them find out. We will have access to a number of private properties and who knows what gems are hidden away amongst the rarely visited forest and woodland remnants. This outing is designed so that COG members will form small survey teams, each visiting a number of sites on different properties during the morning. We will finish with a sausage sizzle courtesy of the Landcare group, and a roundup of the findings for the morning. Anyone is welcome to attend, however, we will need some experienced birders to form the nucleus of each survey team. If you are interested in joining this outing, exploring some new territory and meeting some enthusiastic landholders, please contact Nicki Taws, on 6251 0303, Mobile 0408 210736 or on ntaws@austarmetro.com.au.

Bellmount Forest; Sunday 31 October 2004 - morning/early afternoon visit to private property

This will be a visit to the property north of Gundaroo of long time member Pauline Wicksteed, where COG has not been for a number of years. Pauline also has a keen interest in plants so that the focus will be on both birds and plants. As it will be mid spring both should be out, and all summer migrants should have returned by then. We'll spend the first part of the morning looking at these on her property, which consists of natural woodland and planted areas. We'll then have a look at the nearby TSR 48, which usually supports a good range of declining species, before coming back for lunch. If participants are interested a number of other spots in the area will be visited after lunch.

To get there take the Federal highway to the Gunning turn-off, then through Sutton and Gundaroo towards Gunning, 13 km past Gundaroo Village you

reach Bellmount Forest, continue on the main road a further 100 metres to where a 100 km speed sign is and the gate is directly opposite to the right, number 5202. Drive in and meet Pauline (Ph 4845 1174) at 8.30 am. The driving time from Civic is approximately 40 minutes. Members may wish to arrange for some car pooling between themselves.

Callum Brae woodlands, Sunday 7 November 2004 - morning local outing

A morning walk to look for nesting birds and spring/summer migrants in the new nature park taking in the Callum Brae woodlands. Geoffrey Dabb, who knows this area very well as he has been regularly monitoring the birds there for the COG Woodland Survey, will lead this outing. If there is interest and time permits another woodland survey site on the west of Mugga Lane will be visited also.

Meet Geoffrey (6295 3449) at 7:30 am in Narrabundah Lane, about 300 m east of its intersection with Mugga Lane.

Campbell Park; Sunday 14 November 2004– Morning Nest workshop

This is a repeat of the very successful outing held one year ago at Campbell Park, arguably the best bit of grassy woodland in Canberra. It has been timed to co-incide with the peak of the breeding season. The aim of the morning is to brush up on members' skills and will involve a short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, how to find nests or nesting behaviour. It will be followed by several hours looking for signs of nesting, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching. Let's hope this year is as successful as last year was.

If you interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). Meet at 7.30 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. While Jack will be conducting and leading this event, he is keen to hear of anyone who knows the area well who can assist. He'd also be grateful for tips on where birds are nesting shortly before the day.

Goulburn; Saturday/Sunday 20-21 November 2004- Overnight visit (Amended outing)

This trip is a follow up to our very successful outing to the Pejar Dam etc in February with the Goulburn Field Naturalists (GFN), and replaces the advertised outing to the Bumbalong Valley. The focus will be on some of the now Greater Argyle Council sites where special permission is needed for access. It is expected that some participants will want to travel to Goulburn for a Saturday afternoon's birding and to stay overnight, and others may want to come up on Sunday morning.

On Saturday afternoon we expect to visit the Gorman Road sewage ponds (where **Spotless Crake**, **Musk** and **Pink-eared Duck** were seen in June) as well as to make some brief visits to some sites at Towrang, to the east of Goulburn.

On Sunday we will commence with a revisit to the Kenmore Dam, followed by a much longer walk starting at the nearby Kenmore Quarry and along the northern bank of the Wollondilly River along the southern edges of the ranges leading to the Blue Mountains National Park to Murrays Flat. **Spotted Quail-thrush**, **Freckled Duck** and **Diamond Firetail** were seen here on a recent GFN outing.

The COG co-ordinator/leader will be Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au), while the leader/organiser from the Goulburn Field Naturalists will be Rodney Falconer. Some final details such as place and time to meet, and where to stay overnight are still being negotiated. In the meantime please contact Jack if you are interested in participating.

Wednesday Walk

There is an informal walk on the third Wednesday of each month. These are gentle outings to nearby places starting at 9 am and finishing by lunchtime. The mid week walk for October will be **Wednesday 20 October at the Australian National Botanic Gardens**. Meet at 9 am at the bus stop in the car park. We will be looking for Satin Bowerbirds, which have recently been reporting nesting there, as well as other spring inhabitants of the gardens. Bring morning tea.

Longer trips

Cocoparra National Park; Monday 25 to Friday 29 October 2004 weekday campout

Joan and Trevor Lipscombe welcome members and guests to join them and avoid the crowds on this weekday Springtime trip for leisured COGgies to this varied National Park about 30 km east of Griffith. They'll be looking for breeding birds and summer visitors both in the Park and at other locations in the area. These include the **Blue Bonnet**, **Mulga Parrots**, **Mallee Ringnecks**, **Crested Bellbird**, **Budgerigar**, **Crimson Chat**, **Pink Cockatoo**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Woodswallows**, **Cuckoos**, **Honeyeaters**, **Babblers** etc. There's plenty of space on the campground for campers, caravans and tents, and we should have the place to ourselves. There are pit toilets but otherwise you will need to bring everything in and take everything out. email Trevor and Joan Lipscombe for details at TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com or phone 6262 7975.



Red-capped Robin Male (*Petroica goodenovii*) Photo courtesy **Helen Fallow**

Possible longer COG specific trip for 2005

As members are aware COG did not run one of the above in 2004 for a variety of reasons, one being the very low level of interest in the one Emu Tour that was advertised late in 2003.

Despite this several members have contacted me about the lack of opportunity to join other COG members on tours starting/finishing in

Canberra. Consequently I have been discussing the possibilities with Janene Luff of Follow That Bird based in Sydney, a bird tour company which doesn't appear to be well known in COG circles.

We have discussed a tentative COG specific trip next winter. The proposal we favour as the best destination at the time of year is for a trip along the NSW coast to Coffs Harbour, and a return journey with different stops. This is briefly outlined below:

"The Green Gold and Blue of Coffs Bird Routes" 6 day/5 night - Canberra Coffs Harbour Canberra with different locations on the return journey

One of the most attractive parts of the east coast of Australia, an area of diverse landscape with much to offer the cold weary Canberra birdwatcher.

Long stretches of beautiful sandy beaches separated by rocky headlands and backed by numerous peaceful lakes, these waterways hold nesting cormorants at this time of the year. So engaging in their habits of parental change over; with exercise, feeding and calling making time stand still.

South West Rock's surrounding inlets offer the unique, large-eyed **Beach Stone-curlews**. Nambucca and Scott's Head have the beautiful **Brahminy Kites** at nest, their soaring unequal in colour or beauty. Woolgoolga Flora Reserve our most northerly point, promises to be a highlight - among the many of Alan Morris' special spots.

June 28 to July 3 2005 are the preferred dates as a perfect time to get away from the Canberra cold. Alan Morris, who is well known to COG members, is the expert guide and he is flattered at the chance to spend time with members of COG.

Approx Cost depending on minimum no. of people - 6 persons \$1800.00 approx.

At this stage the main aim is to gauge whether there would be sufficient interest in such a trip to make it viable. This needs to be known before Xmas to allow more specific plans to be developed. So if you are interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Jack would also be interested in feedback as to what kind of longer commercial trip members may be

interested in.

Iron Range, November 2005

Advance notice is given that Mark Clayton's bird banding crew will be visiting the Iron Range in North Queensland late in November 2005. Members will be welcome to participate but will have to make their own way up there. If there is sufficient interest it may be possible to organise some transport from this end. If you are interested please contact Mark Clayton on 6241 3620 (A/H). Mark can also be reached at Mark.Clayton@csiro.au, but see comments above. While this is still some time away Mark would like indications of interest now or as early as possible, given the extensive organisation it will involve.

2005 Calendar

The sub-committee will meet early in October to draft this and it will be circulated for comment with the November *Gang-gang*. So if you have any places that you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit, past outings that you think ought to be repeated, or comments on the types of outings that should be included in our program, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) asap. Offers to lead outings in 2005 will also be gratefully accepted. This year's program has run very smoothly because members have been happy to help organise and lead one, or at most two, outings for the year. That's all it takes folks, so please let's continue this co-operative spirit!

From the COG Committee

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 11 November 2004 at the usual monthly meeting venue, the Canberra Girls Grammar School.

Agenda

1. Opening of meeting
2. Apologies for non-attendance
3. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
4. Presentation of Annual Report

5. Adoption of Annual Report
6. Presentation of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts
8. Election of officers (President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary) and ordinary committee members
9. Other matters for which notice has been given
10. Closing of meeting.

Committee nomination form on page 11 of this *Gang-gang*.

Report from September meeting

Amongst the more routine items of business, the following matters were considered at the September committee meeting:

- The pocket guide to the Birds of the ACT has arrived! Birds Australia members will have already received their copy in the September issue of *Wingspan*; it will be distributed to COG members with the next available *Canberra Bird Notes* and copies for your friends or visitors will be available from the COG office on Tuesday mornings or from Carol's sales table at meetings. Copies will also be available from the tourist bureau and at centres such as Tidbinbilla.
- *Gang-gang* editor will be investigating the possibility of emailing subscribers of each month's email-*Gang-gang* a link to the pdf on the COG website, rather than emailing the pdf. This will ease the megabyte load of home emails. If any email subscribers wish to comment on this proposal please contact Tanya and Sue on gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
- COG has made a submission to ACTPLA on the development of East Gungahlin. Copies of all COG's submissions can be viewed in the COG office on Tuesday mornings or, if you are interested, contact either of our conservation officers, Jenny Bounds or Julie McGuiness.
- BIGnet Meeting 11/12 September. Jenny Bounds attended on behalf of COG, the meeting of the Bird Interest Group Network of NSW/ACT, held at Sydney Olympic Park. Dr Stephen Garnett (co-author of the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000), addressed

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Bird-watching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle.

Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week.

Further details contact - Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 - 62583531) for further information.

HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

Guerrilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

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

the meeting about the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Project he is coordinating through the Birds Australia Research and Conservation Committee. This is a project to identify and protect a network of sites critical to the long term viability of native bird populations. IBAs have already been identified for many other areas in the world, and the information layer has proven very useful to focus conservation efforts and planning in places like Europe and Africa. There are criteria which must be met and the Action Plan for Australian Birds is the basis for identifying birds which are nationally endangered, vulnerable or near threatened in terms of the criteria. Dr Garnett has already started a similar project in North Queensland. The BIGnet clubs have agreed to set up a working group to identify potential sites which meet the criteria and to undertake the initial drafts.

- Preparation of a 'Bird Songs of the ACT' CD, compiled by sound gurus Peter Fullagar and Ed Slater, is well advanced and we hope to be able to launch it at the November meeting, just in time for Christmas presents! It will probably contain calls and songs of about 80 species – only those for which quality recordings are currently available. But the compilers are planning a new edition every year, to contain more and better recordings of more species. Final costings have not been established but we can assure you it will not be \$29.95! Expressions of interest in purchasing the CD will be sought at the October meeting, so that we can get a rough indication of the numbers to produce.

COGs Conservation Role

Julie McGuinness and I are COG's Conservation Officers and we thought it would be useful to outline our role as part of the regular report under Committee news. While COG is an apolitical organisation, we do have in our objectives a role to conserve native birds and their habitats, and achieve this in various ways. Julie and I collaborate and share what can be at times quite a lot of work with short timelines for submissions and other responses.

Some of the ways COG progresses the conservation of birds and their habitats are:



Red-capped Robin Female (*Petroica goodenovii*) Photo courtesy **Helen Fallow**

- provides submissions to a range of draft strategies, management plans and Preliminary Assessments on developments impacting on birds, mainly those issued by the ACT Government, but it can include the Commonwealth Government (EPBC legislation relating to developments threatening nationally listed birds), and organisations undertaking work for government
- makes its bird data available for research and bird conservation related purposes
- liaises with academics and government scientists on research and management programs concerning threatened, and introduced, bird species, eg Minimising Mynas project
- sends representatives (usually Julie and/or I) to consultative forums on draft plans and strategies impacting on birds
- has a presence in BIGnet, the Bird Interest Group Network, which includes all the bird clubs in NSW/ACT; meetings are held every six months and broader conservation issues across NSW and the region are discussed in that forum
- is represented on the Conservation Council for the SE Region and Canberra, a community organisation representing a range of community and environmental groups in the Canberra region which seeks to influence better environmental outcomes for the Territory

I am a COG delegate and Julie formally represents another group (the

Wilderness Society)

I am also a Vice-President of the Conservation Council, and use bird issues to progress broader conservation objectives and improve community awareness.

Most recently we have provided a detailed submission on the Preliminary Assessment for East Gungahlin (including new suburbs) which has implications for the Mulligan's Flat and Gorooyaroo Nature Reserves. We considered this PA inadequate in a number of respects, for example, the bird related information was inadequate and out of date, there was inadequate assessment of impacts from large-scale urban development on the reserves and threatened and declining birds in the reserves, and we recommended the highest level of environmental assessment (Environmental Impact Assessment) be undertaken. In general, we believe there are deficiencies in the current system of assessing environmental impacts under ACT planning legislation, that bird related issues and impacts are poorly dealt with, and that PAs fail to take a holistic approach to things like habitat loss in the broader landscape.

If members have bird conservation issues they would like to raise with us or discuss, we have a COG email address which reaches both of us: conservation.officers@canberrabirds.org.au

Jenny Bounds

Other surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

The Eurobodalla NHS are happy to have COG members along on their usual November outing to look at nesting Little Terns. The local "carers" will be in attendance to explain how they fence off the nests etc. A good range of other estuarine birds are usually to be seen.

This will take place on Sunday 28 November looking at the Tuross Estuary or Brou Lake. So if you are in the area meet at Potato Point turn-off in Bodalla at 9 am. Leaders Barbara Allen and Tom Green; Ph 6247 0630

Notices Notices

Bespoken birds

I am delighted to report a modest response to my call for members to adopt a bird. My idea was to publish the names and contact details of the adopters, so that (wearing jointly my CBN hat and my finder-of-speakers hat) I could approach the adopters to 'participate', but also so that members who see said birds in unusual locations, in unusual numbers, in unusual plumages or who, in the case of the more elusive species, even see the birds at all, could report the news to the adopter. Persons with a known interest in a given species have been unilaterally awarded the species!

Common Koel, Darter
Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520
allanbm@ozemail.com.au

Painted & Regent Honeyeaters,
Brush Bronzewing Jenny Bounds
ph 6288 7802

Hooded Robin
Bill Graham ph 6292 1325

Satin Bowerbird, Silver Gull
Jack Holland ph 6288 7840

Pied Currawong, Leaden Flycatcher,
waterbirds, Australian King-Parrot
(roost flight, breeding in CNP).
Michael Lenz
michael.lenz@csiro.au

Little Corella, Peacock
Geoff Dabb ph 6295 3449

Spotted Turtle-Dove
Harvey Perkins ph 6231 8209

Another couple of hundred species are awaiting 'owners' – please let me know if you'd like to 'adopt' one of them for the purposes mentioned above.

Barbara Allan

Final call for 2003-04 datasheets

Are you still trying to hatch any 2003-04 (or heaven forbid, older?) bird records for COG's area of concern? If so, please disgorge them asap so that they can be processed in time to be included in the 2003-04 annual bird report. Drop them into the red box at meetings, or send them to our post office box if you can't get to meetings. PLEASE!

And please note, if you have BA

records for areas outside of our area of interest (particularly the south coast) do not leave them in the red box for COG to post – send them directly to Birds Australia. Eric Andrew, the BA regional coordinator for the Eurobodalla region, is only interested in seeing your BA records if you don't put in separate records to the Eurobodalla Natural History Society (to recorder Margaret Hunt, 190 Congo Rd, Moruya 2537; tel 02 4474 3833) AND you have seen something unusual, or in an unusual location or in unusual numbers. Call him on 02 4471 2228 for clarification; or send records to him, 7/3 Drinnan Close, Surf Beach, 2536.

Barbara Allan

Avian Whimsy # 25

Why isn't it Emu Island?

Having recently spent a couple of very rewarding (albeit damp) weeks on Kangaroo Island, I have found myself pondering on birds and islands. And as usual, as soon as I start pondering, I get puzzled! The history of this spectacular island is similar to that of Tasmania, in that it was part of the mainland during the past (and previous) glaciations, when ocean levels were much lower with vast amounts of water being locked up in the polar ice caps. Most recently, it has only been an island again for less than 10,000 years. Unlike Tassie though, there are no living endemic Kangaroo Island bird species (compared with some 45 endemic plants).



Dromaius baudinianus from the **Musee d'Histoire Naturelle** in Paris

I specify 'living' because the one known endemic bird species has disappeared in European times, albeit very early in them. The dwarf Kangaroo Island Emu (*Dromaius baudinianus*) was reported by Flinders in 1801 from Nepean Bay, near the eastern end of the island, and at about the same time by Baudin nearly 150kms away to the west, where he named the Ravine des Casoars (ie cassowaries) for it. Baudin captured two unfortunate emus alive (along with 27 kangaroos) and this leads to one of the things that puzzles me. The most estimable *Handbook of the Birds of the World* asserts that the species is represented by just one skin. The Natural History Museum of the City of Geneva agrees – and claims that it has it. (This is supported by COG member Murray Delahoy, who has seen it.) Curiously though, the Musee d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris has a skeleton, which is actually the type specimen; *D. baudinianus* was only described in 1984 by the late and superb South Australian Museum ornithologist Shane Parker. It's logical that Paris should have a specimen, but why Geneva? Are they the skin and skeleton of the same bird? Either way, how did the *Handbook* know about the skin but not the type specimen?

As usual though the more interesting questions concern the living bird. Why did it become extinct? This happened very rapidly; one report had it as being still abundant in 1819, but it had apparently gone by about 1827. Claims that it was hunted to extinction by one landowner seem at best far-fetched; apart from anything else he could hardly have covered the whole of the densely wooded island, and vast numbers of kangaroos were slaughtered for decades without removing the species. Perhaps changes in burning regimes unacceptably altered its habitat, though it's not clear how – any open areas produced by excessive burning might be thought to favour it. Maybe too many nests were burnt?

Another curious fact about Kangaroo Island might be relevant, though I can't at the moment think just how. Humans inhabited it only until about 4000 years ago. Their disappearance may well be related to the 'loss' of the adjacent rich Murray estuary, as it retreated north with the shore line. It is reasonable to suggest that many of the people would have followed it, thus leaving the pre-

island. We know, from evidence in the form of falling water levels in lagoons and drier vegetation, that about 4000 years ago the island became drier, which could easily have further reduced the human population to below sustainable levels.

However it happened, it is quite plausible and even likely that a major prey species such as the emu might have adjusted its ecology accordingly. (I'm making this up as I go of course, as usual.) If these changes though meant that it had lost defences against human predation previously acquired, then extinction is not unlikely. This was certainly the lot of many other flightless island birds.

And while writing this, one other pertinent piece of evidence occurs to me. The only other distinct emu species, the King Island Emu (*D. ater*) also became extinct very soon after European contact – and King Island too had lost its indigenous human inhabitants before Europeans settled in Australia. This is probably not an original thought, but I've not seen the suggestion anywhere else. Of course without a proposed mechanism, it's not very helpful!

But I've done the groundwork for you – why don't you seize the satisfaction of coming up with a suggestion?! At least in that way, if in no other, I'd know someone's read this.

And, not for the first time, I've got to

the end of my allotted space without getting past the first topic of what I thought were going to be several! Ah well, another time perhaps.

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

GBS Central #6

Having undertaken a few collection control processes (thank you to everyone for their patient responses to my nagging) the number of charts completed in year 23 is now set at 57. This (obviously) compares well with the 58 charts completed in year 22.

For the current year (24) we currently have 59 known active charts. I would expect (hope?) that at least a few more charts will be started up especially as newer members join us during the year. As I have commented in the past, new observers would be especially welcome in the newer areas of Canberra (S Tuggeranong and Gunghalin). Longer term coverage in these areas could give some valuable insights to changes in birds as suburbs develop. A site in (upper) Weston, close to Oakey Hill, commenced 10 days ago and recorded a hooded robin – the 17th GBS record with one or more weeks of observation of this species.

However, I feel we are looking pretty good for the future.

The data entry task is close to completion (see photo of Kay using her Chart-drum!) and some initial forays



into the processing system appear to have been successful.

Several of the reports of activity in GBS sites have related to returning migrants and it appears that most of the usual suspects have re-established themselves. Other reports suggest that there will be a good crop of breeding records with several involving actual nests for this year.

At my site I was optimistic that at least one pair of white-browed scrubwrens would breed but they have gone very quiet recently: it is probably not a coincidence that currawongs have been very evident. Quiet is not the word to describe the hollow inspections carried out by sulphur crested cockatoos and galahs. They have inspected the same hollow in a *Eucalyptus rossii* each of the 15 years that we have been in residence here, but haven't taken the process any further (yet)!

Martin Butterfield



Committee Nomination Form

Nominations for the election of officers and ordinary committee members should be submitted, in writing, signed by two members and the person nominated, to

The Secretary, Canberra Ornithologists Group
PO Box 301
Civic Square ACT 2608

by 3 November 2004.

We hereby nominate

for the position of

on the Committee of Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Nominated by and

COG welcomes the following new members

Mike Barth, Yarralumla
Sandra Berry and Ian Smith, Curtin
Robin Brown, Yarralumla
Bill and Anne Coupland, Yarralumla
Roger Curnow, Higgins
Nola de Chazel, Bungendore
Robert Flynn, Queanbeyan
Peter Franklin, Deakin
James Gara, Griffith
Mike Grigg, Campbell
Rodger and Anne Hall, Isaacs
Andrew Hedley, Hoskinstown
Ken and Fay Kerrison, Pialligo
Stuart Magee, Kambah

Lorraine Mitchell, Hackett
Nicki Munro, Aranda
Verity Newlove, Downer
Barbara & Andrew Podger, O'Connor
Judith Reid, Aranda
Peter Scott, Hackett
Bruce Semmens, McKellar
Milton Smith, Isabella Plains
Phil Straw, Rockdale
Teh family, Red Hill
Drude and Bob Townshend, Dickson

*We hope you will become active
members and enjoy participating in
COG activities!*

Next newsletter

NOVEMBER deadline
Wednesday 27 October 2004

Please send updates, articles,
advertisements etcetera to
Editors *Gang-gang*
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
or send 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.
Print photographs with or without articles
are encouraged and welcomed.

COG info

President

Jack Holland, ph 6288 7840 (h),
email jack.holland@deh.gov.au

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520

Membership inquiries

Contact Alastair Smith 6281 3221 (h)
or alclare@netspeed.com.au for
changes of address or other details

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and Sue Lashko

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battisson and helpers

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG membership

**2004-2005 membership: Individuals,
families and institutions: \$35. school
students (under 18): \$17.50.**

Office (6247 4996)

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

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

**Office volunteers are not in
attendance for regular opening
hours. Members access by prior
arrangement.**

COG E-mail Discussion List

**COG has an email announcement
and discussion list for members and
friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.
Join the list by sending an empty
email message to [canberrabirds-
subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-
subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).**

Editor Canberra Bird Notes

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au



Gang-gang

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

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**