

# Gang-gang

October 2008

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday  
8 October 2008**

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

The monthly meeting will follow the AGM.

The short presentation will be by **Dan Mantle** entitled **Surviving the Gobi - birding through the seasons**. Dan spent the majority of last year working in the Gobi Desert, Mongolia, as a geologist. The few birds that stay through the winter have to be superbly adapted to surviving the mean winter temperatures that approach -30°C. Spring is late, short, and very windy but an exciting time as the Gobi lies on the migration route of many birds. The desert summer is a frenzy of breeding before the autumn chill signals the approaching winter.

The main presentation will be by **Janet Gardner** on Demography and the decline of **Speckled Warblers**.

*Continued page 2*

**Everyone welcome**

## What to watch out for this month

Based on reports of sightings posted on the COG chat line to the second half of September, all the migrant species I predicted last month have arrived, though as debated on the chat line it is always hard to tell whether many of the arrivals merely stayed nearby. However, up until the last couple of days before this article was sent to the editors, the spring migrants did not seem to have arrived in great numbers, at least from my impressions from my local area round NW Chapman. I was starting to wonder whether the continuing drought, except for the odd few months of wetter weather such as the spring of 2005 when I first wrote this column, was starting to take its toll. My thinking was that perhaps for a while Canberra was an oasis for birds which usually occur further out west, but then as we have continued to dry out, birds have needed to go elsewhere.

This was reinforced by the observations after Alastair Smith's presentation at the last COG meeting that the presence of unusuals seemed

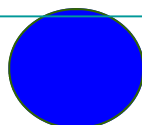
*Continued page 2*

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8:00 pm on Wednesday 8 October 2008, 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 2007 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 2008-09
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (a nomination form is at page 8 and forms will be available on the night of the AGM)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given.
11. Close of meeting



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*Monthly meeting (continued)* The **Speckled Warbler** has declined across a large part of its range in the temperate woodlands of eastern Australia and populations that remain appear to be patchily distributed in habitat remnants. Although the specific causes of decline are unknown, several aspects of the species' demography make it vulnerable to decline in fragmented landscapes. In this talk Janet will present data on the demography and behaviour of Speckled Warblers and the results of population viability analyses (PVA) that explore the effects of patch size on extinction risk.

Since completing her PhD on **Speckled Warblers** in 2002, Janet has been working as an Associate Lecturer and Research Associate in the School of Botany and Zoology at the ANU. She is currently a Research Associate at the Australian National Wildlife Collection, CSIRO.

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*What to watch out for (continued)*



Photo by Tobias Hayashi

**Regent Honeyeater**  
(*Anthochaera phrygia*)

to have completely dried up since October last year. However, what a difference a week can make, as there have been sightings of the **Scarlet Honeyeater** at the ANBG and the **Regent Honeyeater** on Cooleman Ridge, though both are possibly not drought related. One bird that does seem to have been very evident so far in September is the threatened **Superb Parrot**, including a rare record south of the lake/river, as well as hints of breeding activity. The **Common Koel** also seems to be an increasingly early spring summer visitor, with some reports already.

Also in the past couple of days there have been sightings of **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Rufous Songlark** and the **White-winged Triller**, which mostly don't come until early October. With the continuing drought it will be interesting to see whether this heralds another large influx of the last two species as for the past few years, and possibly the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows** this spring/summer, as well as of honeyeaters usually found much more inland. By the end of October most of the later arriving spring/summer migrants should be here including the **Dollarbird**, the **Leaden** and **Satin Flycatchers**, **Rufous Fantails**, the **Cicadabird** and the

**Rainbow Bee-eater**. The last four tend to be passage migrants in Canberra itself, and are usually seen "in transit" on their way to the cooler wetter areas of the mountains, or to softer creek banks south of the ACT to breed. Also keep an eye, or more likely, an ear out for the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, which has recently arrived at the South Coast, and for which reports also seem to be increasing. This bird will alert you to its presence by its very loud call, but you have to be very sharp to see it as it usually heads off urgently to unknown parts.

With many of the migrants listed above coming to the ACT specifically to breed, the season will be starting in earnest from now on. It will also be interesting to see what kind of a breeding season we'll have. I'm pleased that the **White-winged Choughs** at the NW end of Cooleman Ridge are feeding three chicks this year. However, one somewhat ominous sign in the same area was a loose flock of at least 25 **Australian Magpie**, apparently non-breeding, in mid September. As always it will be important to both record these events and to make sure they are lodged into the COG database, as breeding records are among the most valuable. — **Jack Holland**

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## Field Trip reports

### Sunday 24 August — Science Week at Jerrabomberra wetlands

45 people from the public attended the Australian National Science week activity *Waterbirds need Wetlands* on a perfect morning, with plenty of sun but no wind. Tony Lawson and Chris Davey from COG gave an introductory talk as well as instructions on how to use binoculars. The group then split into two, one remaining at the wetlands and the other visiting the Fyshwick Sewerage Treatment Works. After about 45 minutes, a morning tea was held back at the wetlands car-park and the groups swapped over to the other activity. Telescopes were set up in both the hides and at the ponds to allow people to have a closer and more stable look at various birds. The tour leaders, Chris Davey and Sue Lashko, did not just identify birds, but gave lots of extra information, and explained the importance of the wetlands habitat. The star bird of the day was definitely the **Blue-billed Duck**. Everyone was fascinated with the bright blue bill of the male. People went away with a real appreciation of the importance of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and enjoyed the ease that wetlands birds can be observed. Lots of people said that they will definitely come back to Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the Fyshwick Ponds, and a few thought they might join COG.

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COG would like to thank the ACT National Science Week Committee for including their event in National Science Week, and are very interested in running the event again next year. Many thanks to: Chris Davey, Sue Lashko, Tony Lawson, Robyn Lawrence, Leo Berzins and Alana Wilkes for their contributions towards this successful day. And to Julian Robinson who turned up late, so missed out on the morning tea and the walks, but helped pack up the marquee. — **Robyn Lawrence**

## Sunday 31 August — Kama Woodlands

The last day of winter was cool and blustery with rain about as 12 hardy souls met at the intersection of William Hovell Drive and the Coppins Crossing road. After a repacking of vehicles and managing the difficult entry into the site we were met by a group of at least 30 **Dusky Woodswallows** and many **Tree Martins** hawking in the windy conditions. Unfortunately the weather kept the birds quiet but most of us were able to pick out the colour bands on the individually marked **Brown Treecreepers**. A **Brown Falcon** had us worried with its uncharacteristic flight pattern in the blustery conditions whilst **Striated Pardalotes**, **Galahs**, **Eastern and Crimson Rosellas**, **Red-rumped Parrots**, and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were busy sorting out the ownership of tree hollows for the forthcoming breeding season. Seven **Brown Treecreepers** were observed in addition to the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Buff-rumped and Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Weebills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **Australasian Grebe**. Twenty-five species were, according to my count, recorded including an **Australian Raven** nesting on one of the electricity pylons.

Although the tally was disappointing the participants were pleased to have had the opportunity to visit the site and to see for themselves why there has been so much effort to conserve the area for future generations. — **Chris Davey**

## Sunday 7 September — Raptor Twitchathon

This is the second time that COG has run a raptor 'twitchathon' with the aim of seeing as many species of raptors as possible in the ACT on the one day. Our two minibuses were driven by the leaders Jack Holland and Jenny Bounds. In terms of the numbers of raptors, there weren't a lot around, with only four (out of a decently possible 11) species seen. However, there were other good birds as well.

The birding day started out with a visit to Jerrabomberra Wetlands, where both species of **martin** were seen along with **Clamorous Reed-Warblers**, a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and a **Lewin's Rail** (seen only by a few participants). Both eagles were seen, with a pair of youngish **Wedge-tailed Eagles** being harried by some **Ravens** and then a dark morph **Little Eagle** chased by a **Magpie**. The Sewage Ponds notably added **Blue-billed Duck**.

Then it was on to Coppin's Crossing where we spotted **Nankeen Kestrel** and **Brown Falcon**, while at Mt Stromlo we had good views of kestrel and **Sky-lark**. We lunched at Urriara Crossing, where we didn't find much except a possible **Brown Goshawk**, **Double-barred Finches**, another **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **White-faced Herons**. The day was completed by great views of a couple of pairs of **Red-rumped Parrots** peeking out of hollows in a dead tree. Thanks to Jack Holland and Jenny Bounds for organizing this outing, providing the transport and lots of knowledge. — **Tobias Hayashi**



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## 2008

### 2008 Plains-wanderer Weekends

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

## 2009

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

17 April — 2 May 2009  
**Vietnam birding tour**  
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

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

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

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

26 June 2009  
**Mitchell Plateau — Black Grass-wren tour**

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

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

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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.

### Long Weekend 4-6 October—Round Hill NR Camp-out

This field trip is at fully booked out.

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

As part of our continuing links and joint outings with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS), COG has again been invited observe the birdlife on a private property belonging to GFNS members near the historic village of Bungonia. This is a large 300 ha property bordering Morton National Park, with a topography varying between flat, undulating and hilly. About 5 kilometres of Jacqua Creek flows through it. Half of this length was virtually totally logged and has been replanted and fenced off. The remainder of the creek is not fenced off, but does contain some former riparian vegetation and beautiful waterholes.

This time we will be camping on the property to ensure we pick up all the birds we missed out on when we did a morning circular walk taking in some of the varied habitats through the property, including the best parts of the Jacqua Creek. In this time we picked up 50 species including **Sacred Kingfisher**, both **White-throated** and **Western Gerygone**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater** and **Specked Warbler**. Birds seen on a preliminary visit included **Spotted Quail-thrush**, **Southern Whiteface** and several **Jacky Winters**.

Participants should arrive mid afternoon of the Saturday. After setting up we will do some birding around the house and other selected habitats, with a similar circular walk as last time planned for Sunday. Car pooling will be encouraged. If you're interested please contact Jack Holland (by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au) or phone 6288 7840 AH). Participants are also welcome if they wish to join in only for the Sunday morning or Saturday afternoon/night events.

### Wednesday 15 October — Midweek walk

The Wednesday Walk for October will be to Cuumbeun Nature Reserve located on Captains Flat Road, commencing at 9.00am. Details of the precise location will be circulated via the chatline closer to the date. People intending to come on the walk may wish to consider carpooling, perhaps meeting in the carpark at Spotlight in Queanbeyan.

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

COG will again hold an introductory event for beginners or those new to bird watching as part of Parks Week. This will take place from 9:00am at the north-west end of Cooleman Ridge off Kathner Street, Chapman, where there are both good walking tracks and a good variety of birds. In particular the range of views of the Murrumbidgee Valley and the mountains beyond, or back into the city, is unrivalled in Canberra. Two sessions will probably again be held, at 9:00am and 11:00 am. While this is mainly aimed at the public, new members or beginners in COG are also welcome. Please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)) to book your place.

### Sunday 19 October — Taylors Creek Morning atlassing opportunity on private properties

Taylors Creek catchment lies between Tarago and the east side of Lake George. In October 2004 and again in March 2006 COG conducted a blitz-style outing for the Taylors Creek Landcare Group whose members were keen to know of the birdlife on their properties. Birds were surveyed in more than 30 two-hectare sites on eight properties across 11 rarely visited COG grids in a variety of woodland and forest types, plus wetlands and grasslands. The outing in 2008 is in spring again and will visit the same sites and follow the same format, i.e. small survey teams will each visit a number of sites on different properties during the morning. We will finish with a lunch provided by the Landcare group, and a roundup of the findings for the morning. Anyone is welcome to attend, and each survey team will have an experienced birder to form the nucleus of the team. If you are interested in joining this outing, exploring some new territory and

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meeting some enthusiastic landholders, please contact Nicki Taws, email [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com). Or phone 6251 0303, Mobile 0408 210736

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

This is our annual effort to record over one spring weekend all species of birds present in the ACT across as wide a variety of habitats as possible; and to record any breeding activity.

All COG members are warmly encouraged to participate, so that we can cover as much of the ACT as possible. Members are encouraged to “adopt” one or more grid cells, and those already adopted will be shown on our website and updated from time to time. But don’t be perturbed if your favorite location has been taken - multiple surveyors per grid cell are quite acceptable, though it would be good if you took on at least one unclaimed site as well. Think about giving an unknown area a try – it might prove exciting. In order to claim a grid cell, please put in your bid to Barbara Allan, the blitz organizer, on [allanbm@bigpond.net.au](mailto:allanbm@bigpond.net.au) or phone her on 6254 6520.

If you are very familiar with a site and regularly survey there, or do Birds Australia-registered two hectare surveys there, you would probably be the best person to survey that site for the blitz if you can. But if last years’ sites were boring or unpleasant or bird-free zones, pick somewhere new this time. Or better still, do a 2-ha 20-min survey to “cover” the grid cell, then move on to somewhere more interesting. If you are a beginner, probably the easiest way to participate is to do a survey in your local park – but remember only to record the birds whose identity you are absolutely sure of. And if work or family commitments preclude you from doing much at all, be sure to try and do at least a 20-minute, 2-ha survey of your own backyard and environs, just to support COG’s blitz.

As usual, depending on the weather and Namadgi National Park management, we hope to be able to conduct surveys beyond the locked gates in the Park. The organizer is looking for more 4WDs and competent drivers to tackle the fire trails. Please contact Barbara if you’d like to be involved and/or if you have room in your vehicle to take passengers.

It would be really good if we recorded some night birds this blitz weekend. If you have experience in call playback surveys and would like to be involved in an organized survey, please contact Anthony Overs on [Anthony.Overs.Reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:Anthony.Overs.Reps@aph.gov.au) or 6254 0168.

All standard Birds Australia survey methods are acceptable – just indicate on the electronic or hard-copy datasheet which one you used:

- a 20-minute survey over 2 hectares (rectangle of 100 m x 200 m; or circle of radius 80 m)
- a survey within 500 m of a central spot, time unlimited but 20 mins or more
- a survey within 5 km of a central spot, time unlimited (though please stay within the one grid cell).

Remember to record the abundance of each bird species seen – e.g. 2 Laughing Kookaburra – plus any indication of breeding using the codes shown on the datasheet. *Only* record species you are sure about. If you see a bird species not listed on the datasheet, if at all possible take a photo of it, take copious field notes of all the details you observe and note any features you were unable to see; then either submit a completed “unusual bird report form” (available on the COG website) with your datasheet or email it to [rarities@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:rarities@canberrabirds.org.au).

## **Sunday 9 November — Callum Brae**

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

## **Sunday 16 November — Campbell Park — Nest workshop**

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past five years at Campbell Park. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual very short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find

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nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, looking for signs of nesting etc, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

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

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

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

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

Last visit we recorded a very impressive total of 87 species in less than 24 hours, including nearly all the spring migrants such as four **cuckoo** species, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Dollarbird**, **Dusky** and **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Rufous Songlark**, **White-winged Triller**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Clamorous Reed-warbler**. Also seen were many of the declining species such as **Brown Treecreeper**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Hooded Robin**, **Restless Flycatcher** and the **Speckled Warbler**.

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

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

### **Saturday/Sunday 25-26 October — COG'S Bird Blitz**

Coggers are steadily adopting grid cells to survey for the 25-26 October blitz – but there are quite a few good birding sites still awaiting "owners" – as well as the inevitable number of grid cells of lesser charms. Have a look at the regularly updated map on our website and see if you wouldn't like to claim one or more, to help us cover as much of the ACT as possible that weekend. And remember, grid cells are quite large – about 3.5 x 4.5 kms – so that although a grid cell may be claimed, the owner may only be intending to survey quite a small portion of it, so multiple surveyors for the same grid cell are in order. Also, ownership is a moveable feast as a few habitual surveyors will be away this year while others have had to drop out in the last day or two.

Prime sites still awaiting takers include:

- Mt Franklin Rd in the Brindabellas (2WD)
- Blue Range Hut (2WD) & Mt Coree
- Hall and environs
- Queanbeyan sewage ponds
- Woodstock Nature Reserve
- Yerrabi Track, Shanahans Mtn and Mt Clear campground, Namadgi NP

- Yankee Hat, Namadgi NP
- much of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor
- Bullen Bullen Range
- Mt Rob Roy NR
- Urambi Hills NR
- Scrivener Dam and environs
- Stromlo Forest Park.

If you are one of the kind people who agreed to take what was left, or who are still deciding, or just want to talk about your options, maybe you'd like to contact Barbara Allan, COG's blitz organizer, on [allanbm@bigpond.net.au](mailto:allanbm@bigpond.net.au).

And if you really can't commit to doing anything at this stage, try and do a surprise 2-ha/20-min survey based on your own backyard or local park on the weekend of 25-26 Oct, and submit that. Or even an incidental record of an interesting raptor or a breeding record that you happen to pass – **ALL** records welcome. — **Barbara Allan**

## Committee news

- **HELP WANTED** — We again remind members of the AGM on Wednesday 8 October. Several committee positions still need to be filled with the **Vice-president and Treasurer** both stepping down. These two important positions urgently need to be filled. If interested please contact Chris Davey, Jack Holland or Lia Batterson for details or complete the enclosed nomination form.
- If there are any members willing to be a backup for the Sales desk please contact Chris Davey (62546324) or Beth Mantle at the Sales Desk.
- At the September COG Committee meeting the recommendations from the GBS review were discussed and endorsed. A few recommendations will impact on the data collection protocol but there will be no changes until the start of year 29 (3 July 2009). A short article in the June 2009 *Gang-gang* will highlight the recommended changes. If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of the review please contact Chris Davey (62546324 or email [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au))

## Other items of interest

**2008 National Waterbird Survey** — Aerial surveys of 907 high conservation value aquatic ecosystems will occur throughout October and November. The route will include major wetlands and rivers from Darwin across to Arnhem Land, Mt Isa, the Barkley Tablelands, as well as Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria. The national database of waterbird data will be publicly accessible. For more information see : [www.wetrivers.unsw.edu.au](http://www.wetrivers.unsw.edu.au)

**Public lecture by Debbie Saunders** — Debbie will present the results of a study into dynamic bird migration in response to Australia's variable climate which was conducted by Saunders, D.L., Wood, J. Cunningham, R., and Heinsohn, R. Using seven years of volunteer survey data of the movement patterns and habitat use by the **Swift Parrot**, the study, provides the first demonstration of large-scale drought related movements by a migratory population throughout its winter range. Thursday 2 October 2008, 1.00 - 2.00pm, Forestry Lecture Theatre, Forestry Building 48, Australian National University.

**Volunteers Wanted!** — ANUgreen is re-surveying bird populations on the ANU campus and its surrounds, and needs your help! The survey will be held from 6 to 9 am, Saturday, 18 October and will be followed by a big THANKYOU breakfast for participants. Please contact Coordinator of Volunteers, Beth Mitchell at [beth.mitchell@anu.edu.au](mailto:beth.mitchell@anu.edu.au) or call on 0414 801126 if you wish to participate. Write in the subject line: "bird survey"

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# COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate \_\_\_\_\_ for the position\* of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ on the 2009 COG Committee.

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

I second the nomination

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

I accept the nomination

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Print and fill out. Forms can be submitted any time up to immediately before the AGM at the October meeting. Nominations may be mailed to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608. Forms submitted by mail must arrive in the PO Box by **30 September 2008**.

All nominees and nominators must be financial members of COG.

*\*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Member*

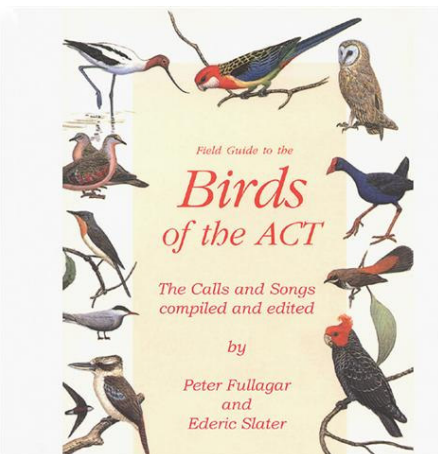
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## TWO ORANGE BOXES

It's time to get involved!

Members will know that COG has recently produced a popular CD for sale and this CD includes the calls and songs of 80 species of our local birds. However, there are many more birds that we need to include if we are to achieve a comprehensive coverage of the local region. A two CD set is proposed but we need local sound recordings to make it all happen. This is where you might be able to help.

COG has arranged for two field sound recording kits to be available for members to use. We are now looking for volunteers who would be willing to assist with collecting this important missing material. If you have not tried to make sound recordings of birdcalls, particularly if you have not been able to use professional standard equipment, then this is your chance to have a go!



We need you to go out and collect good quality sound bites for each of about 90 species for which we do not, at present, have good enough recordings on file. It is not difficult. If you can handle a digital camera then sound recording should be easy. All you need to do is get out and find some calling birds in reasonably quite surroundings and away you go!

I will do the editing so all you need to supply to me is a good representative segment or two of clean, identified, recordings and I will do the rest! You will be credited with any recordings that we do use for the final CD production.

Field kits are available either from Anthony Overs or myself. We can give you a run-down on

*Continued next page*



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## Garden Bird Survey Notes

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

- A **Rose Robin** in Florey: the report led to other reports of that species on the Pinnacle and Reid. The Florey garden also reported dependent young (DY) **Brown Thornbills**;
- **Eastern Spinebill** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** over-wintering in Scullin and a DY **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** on 6 September;
- **Tawny Frogmouth** nesting at a site in Ainslie;
- Diverse migrants arrived throughout the area in the first week of September.
- A **Lewin's Honeyeater** continues to visit a garden in Queanbeyan. This is the first GBS record since 1992, when a bird was reported from Scullin in three weeks.
- **Superb Parrots** have been gracing various Northside gardens and several recent reports referred to larger-than-usual flocks of Gang-gangs.
- A **Regent Honeyeater** at Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve.

GBS information has also been used in posts on the chatline about arrival dates of migrants including **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Mistletoebird**. Some general information classified by suburb, and some geo-coordinates of sites, has been provided to a PhD student working at ANU on **Common (aka Indian) Mynas**.

### Counting of young birds

During data entry of Year 27 Charts it has been noticed that some observers have not been including the number of dependent young in their counts of birds present. In some cases the numbers have been shown separately (in the form "+1DY"), in others the DY birds have simply been omitted. The correct procedure is to show a single number, including any DY birds, together with the code DY. Information about the number of DY birds could be noted as an attachment if required: the database contains fields to record this as part of the breeding records.

Where the young birds are still in the nest (ie status of NY) they should not be counted in the total. This reflects the difficulty of accurately assessing the number of nestlings for most species. Again, if the number of nestlings is known it can be included as a note.

### Year 27 Charts

We have now received 73 completed Charts and I intend to commence the analysis of the Year 27 information for Annual Bird Report (ABR) purposes in the very near future. If there are observers out there who still have Charts could they please let me know by email ([martinflab@gmail.com](mailto:martinflab@gmail.com)) or phone (6238 2637, 0435 012 840) and I'll arrange collection. If a Chart is received after ABR analysis has commenced it will be entered "in due course" and thus the information will be able to contribute to future analyses. — **Martin Butterfield**

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*Continued from page 8*

how to use this technology before you set off and the kits can be loaned short term if you think you can help to fill some of the gaps.

I can provide a list of the 'missing' birds but to give a taste of what is still required, locally, the following examples should give you an idea. As you can see they are not necessarily rare or difficult to find. These are the last ten names on our 'wanted' list. **European Goldfinch; Red-browed Firetail; Diamond Firetail; Double-barred Finch; Dusky Woodswallow; White-winged Chough; Australian Magpie-lark; Australian Magpie; Grey Butcherbird and Grey Currawong**. By the way I should remind you that we follow the names and the order of birds used in the pocket-sized booklet – *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT* by McComas Taylor and Nicolas Day.

If you have the time and are willing to search out good examples of birdcalls for recording then please contact either Anthony or me, Peter Fullagar, Tel: 02 61614808 or by email (preferably) at [peter.fullagar@gmail.com](mailto:peter.fullagar@gmail.com).

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

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

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

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

Contact:

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

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

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

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

Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

6286 1564 or  
[gramsay@actewagl.net.au](mailto:gramsay@actewagl.net.au)

# COG SALES

The following items plus various pamphlets (most free) and membership application forms are available from the sales desk at COG meetings.

- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** by Taylor and Day - \$16.00
- **Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change** by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- **Bird Calls of the ACT** – CD - \$12.00
- **Bird Songs of Canberra** – Cassette - \$10.00
- **COG Car Stickers** - \$2.00
- **COG Badges** – red or grey - \$5.00
- **The Long Paddock: A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW** by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **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
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** by Jo Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Grassland Flora: A Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT)** by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch: A Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region** - \$12.50
- **The Nestbox Book** by Gould League - \$12.50
- **Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape** by David Lindenmayer et al - \$34.00
- **Feather and Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art** by Penny Olsen - \$50.00

A range of substantially discounted titles, mostly from CSIRO Publishing, is also available at meetings or may be ordered via email/telephone by COG members only.

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

## Avian Whimsy #67 — The Species Mythconception

Last month I mused upon one aspect of the wonders of being in south-western Australia – the recognition of birds (and of course plants) that are familiar-but-different. They arose from populations that became isolated from their eastern relations and changed until eventually they had evolved into different but still related and similar species.

We can see the principle around us on our side of the continent too; **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins** can nest side by side, but will only ever co-exist chastely as neighbours. There is no confusion, no mixing across species boundaries. We don't doubt (and shouldn't do so) that the robins are closely related. Not so long ago lived a **Flarlet Robin**, the ancestor of both species; we'll never know how, but this population of Flarlet Robins got fragmented and each evolved in isolation from the other. In other words, by responding to different pressures and imperatives, and by being subject to random genetic changes, they each altered to the point that, when they were reunited, they no longer recognised each other as potential mates.

All very evident and satisfying – until we start thinking about the details. Sadly for our challenged little minds, nature is never so simple, even when it appears to be. Try going backwards; at what moment, or what generation, did a Flarlet Robin become a Scarlet or Flame Robin? Did one go to sleep as a Flarlet and wake up something else? Or did a pair of Flarlets hatch a Scarlet chick? We don't think so, but why not? The problem as ever is in our need to fit things into fixed categories – and our limitation in only being able to really comprehend the minute flicker of time that our own life represents. I'm no less prone to the effects of such limitations than anyone else, but some observations can help. Firstly, we need to recognise that in our day to day lives we don't in fact always demand that an ongoing event (which is precisely what speciation is) needs to be one thing or the other. When we decide to grow our hair – and surely everyone of my generation or afterwards did so at least once! – we don't expect to be able to say “there! it's just stopped being short and is now long!”. As our tea cools, there is not a precise moment at which it stops being hot and is now cool. Why should it be different with steadily but incrementally changing generations of robins? The only difference is in the time scale.

The other observation that should clarify things for us is the familiar evidence of evolution-in-progress. We regularly see examples of birds which have reunited with their formerly distant cousins before unequivocal species-hood has been achieved in the way the robins have achieved it. We've all seen **Crimson-Eastern Rosella** hybrids. We have no qualms however about still regarding the parents as separate species, perhaps because the chicks are apparently infertile (though I have some evidence of a second-generation rosella hybrid in my own yard). They represent descendants of the common ancestor (for which Richard Dawkins has coined the elegant term *concestor*) which stayed apart long enough for us to bestow the honour of species-hood on them, but only just.

We should also be able to see examples where the separation was insufficient – and of course we can, including in our back yards. **Australian Magpies** have apparently been separated for long enough for three clearly recognisable forms to have developed, one in the south-west and two that meet in our part of the world. Indeed they both meet *and* mate, producing intermediate and fully fertile hybrids. (The reason why this pool of hybrids does not spread out from the zone of contact into the 'pure' white-backed and black-backed populations however presents another nice challenge for us.) Something similar happens with **Eastern (Mallee) and Western Ringneck (Port Lincoln) Parrots** around the Flinders Ranges. In these cases the evolutionary destiny of these birds has been thwarted, but not apparently by any human intervention. This is not true in the case of **Masked Lapwings**; this name refers properly to a northern population, while the other branch of their *concestor's* family became the familiar southern '**Spur-winged Plover**'. They had differentiated physically in isolation by the time we came along, but our provision of perfect lapwing habitat in the form of large cleared short-grassed areas (paddocks, ovals, airports etc) allowed each form to spread until they met – initially in the vicinity of Townsville – and their isolation has ended, and with it the progress towards being separate species. Had we held off for another few years – a hundred thousand, a million maybe? – we could have had another tick on our lists!

Which raises the question of similar-looking birds which don't interact. How can we assert that **Nullarbor Quail-thrush** is the same species as **Cinnamon** (or even **Chestnut!**), when we – or rather they – can't test it? But perhaps that's for another day. For now, maybe we should relax a bit and enjoy nature for what it is, rather than stress too much when we can't squeeze it into one of our beloved labelled boxes.

(For a much more erudite examination of this topic, see *The Salamander's Tale* in Richard Dawkin's brilliant book, *The Ancestor's Tale*.) — **Ian Fraser** [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au)



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patricia.walker@bigpond.com

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

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

November deadline

Wednesday 29 October 2008

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.

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*Newsletter distribution*

Judy Collett and helpers

*COG membership*

2008-2009 memberships:

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

*Membership inquiries*—

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*Canberra Birds Conservation Fund*

Donations to this fund are tax deductible.

Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

*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

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