

Gang-gang

October 2011

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 12.10.11

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 speaker after the AGM will be Associate Professor Darryl Jones of the Environmental Futures Centre, Griffith University Queensland, with a presentation entitled “**Heaven and Hell: Why some birds love cities and most don’t**”.

Urbanisation is now regarded as the most pervasive form of human impact on the planet, with the process predicted to be the leading cause of extinction this century. Furthermore, for the first time in human history, most people now live in large cities worldwide, a trend that is accelerating. Although scientific interest in the ecology of urban areas is relatively recent, the importance of understanding the reasons that species either avoid or exploit the opportunities and challenges associated with cities is quickly being appreciated. From some early generalisations (e.g., cities have more animals but less diversity), contemporary urban ecology is discovering that the response of species to urbanisation can be extremely complex and unpredictable. In this talk Darryl will summarise some of the key findings of recent urban bird studies, including the significance of human connection with birds, even in the most human-dominated places.

Members may be familiar with Darryl’s research, in particular his work on magpies and feeding birds in gardens, so you won’t want to miss this presentation.

Notice of COG

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 12 October 2011**, 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 2010 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 2011-2012
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (a nomination form is on page 11 and forms will also be available on the night of the AGM)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given.
11. Close of meeting

NOTE: Neither the President nor the vice-president will be seeking re-election. For information on these positions contact Chris Davey—phone 6254 6324

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

While we're nearly a month into spring, the pattern for the kind of season we'll be having seems far from clear. For more than the first two weeks of September it seemed very slow with the numbers of some migrants quite low, but some warmer weather and a series of unexpected events/observations in about the 10 days before the *Gang-gang* cut off threw this all into doubt, with the signs being that we might be having quite a different spring from that expected, and compared with those in recent years.

The trigger for this seems to have been the report by a number of observers of a mixed flock of up to 50 **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**. Typically these were moving through and, after probably roosting somewhere in the vicinity of the Pinnacle, have not been sighted again. While this behaviour is well known, it was a surprise and does suggest that conditions inland are perhaps not as favourable as I had thought, and have dried out much more (it's not easy to get a clear picture).

Some further evidence of this was the sighting of first a **Glossy Ibis** and then two **Painted Snipe** at Kellys Swamp, as well as several reports of the **White-necked Heron**. All three of these species are well known to move when conditions inland dry out. Reports of the **Rufous Songlark** at two different locations (both silent and skulking down low), were quite early for this spring migrant and a surprise to me as in my August column I had predicted very few this year. This was further confounded by the observation during woodland surveys of **White-winged Trillers** at two spots on the last weekend of the month.

Prior to this it seemed that there were good numbers of the early migrants, in particular of the **Grey Fantail**, the **Noisy Friarbird** and the **Dusky Woodswallow** (though I've yet to see the last named in my local patch) and, to a lesser extent, the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Olive-backed Oriole**. The other species to be present in surprisingly large numbers is the **Superb Parrot**, with up to 65 having been seen in its usual spots to the N or NW of the ACT, and some suggestions that pairing and possibly breeding is already happening.

By contrast, apart from the **Red Wattlebird**, reports of migratory honeyeaters indicate that the spring return of the **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** has hardly been noticed throughout Canberra this year, with most of the postings on the COG chatline of birds moving through being from outside of the ACT. While this may reflect the local situation only, I have concerns about the apparent drop in numbers of these species for both inward and outward migration over the past few years, perhaps as the result of the bush fires, and ask whether anyone is studying this apparent phenomenon? There also have been no reports in September of the **Eastern/Pacific Koel**, but this is consistent with Geoffrey Dabb's presentation at the September COG meeting, where he noted that the first arrivals are usually in mid-October.

While lots of **Silvereyes** seem to have been coming through, and both **Tree** and **Fairy Martins** are being reported, it does not seem to be a good spring for **cuckoos**, with a few reports only in September of the **Pallid** and **Fan-tailed**, and only one and two reports of the **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**, respectively. Surprisingly two **Brush Cuckoos** have already been reported calling in Wamboin. There have only been a few reports of the **Rufous Whistler**, **Western Gerygone** and **Mistletoebird**, but the **White-throated Gerygone** seems to have arrived in good numbers from about the third weekend of the month. **Latham's Snipe** are back, with seven flushed at Kellys Swamp late in the month. While there has already been one report of an early **Sacred Kingfisher**, there have been none so far of the **Leaden Flycatcher** or **Rainbow Bee-eater**.

And we've still to look forward to the usual October arrivals, the **Dollarbird**, **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail** and **Cicadabird**. Usually a few of the last three are reported stopping briefly in Canberra gardens on their way to the



Nankeen (Australian) Kestrel
(*Falco cenchroides*)

Photo by Margaret leggoe

mountains to breed. Finally, dare I predict few, if any, of the normally inland species the **Brown Songlark** and **Horsfield's Bushlark** will be reported from the ACT this spring/summer?

In keeping with the very mixed season so far some of the altitudinal winter migrants were still reported during September, with a large flock of **Flame Robins** seen at Tidbinbilla on their way to the mountains early in the month. The **Scarlet Robin**, which seems to move only a little way out of the suburbs and surrounding bushland to breed, has also been reported, as has the **Golden Whistler** which often stays in the Canberra area much longer, like the Eastern **Spinebill**. The **Crescent Honeyeater** was still present in the Botanic Gardens mid-month, and the mainly passage migrant, the **Rose Robin**, was observed in woodland a number of times during September.

Postings of observations of **Barn Owls** were mainly confined to the beginning of the month, when the RSPCA was reported as having taken in 15 birds over several days. Almost all of these were said to be as a result of exhaustion/injuries inflicted by other birds (rather than from taking baits or poisoned rodents) and generally are able to subsequently be returned to the wild.

Probably in response to my call last month there have been a few more postings of observations of **Black-shouldered Kites**, but given the mice availability this species does not seem to be as numerous as might be expected. On the other hand from the images posted on the chat line the **Nankeen Kestrel** seems to be enjoying catching mice including passing them to their partners and probably also their young.

While Canberra and surrounds are drying out, conditions are still good and the spring breeding season is well underway, with **Australian Wood Duck** and **Noisy Miner** young already reported as well as the **White-faced Heron** observed sitting on the nest at Campbell Park a full two months earlier than last year.

The next couple of months are always the most exciting times on the ACT birdwatcher's calendar, and based on the reports above, this year is shaping up as the best in several years with other unusuals reported including **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** and a **Striped Honeyeater** to the north of the ACT. Who knows what will turn up next? Keep your eyes and ears open and as usual. Please record all significant observations of the above species, as well as all breeding activity, and ensure these are reported for inclusion in the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

Field Trip Reports

3-4 September—Little Forest Plateau

Fifteen lucky birdwatchers joined leaders Kathy Walter and John Goldie for a relaxing weekend enjoying lovely birds and flowers in the Ulladulla region. Our first stop on Saturday morning was Little Forest Plateau in Morton National Park. Our walk to Florance Head was gentle and provided stunning views of the coastline and Budawang Wilderness areas. Just a couple of metres onto the track some people spied an **antechinus** carrying leaves. The early part of the walk was marked by large flocks of honeyeaters, mainly **Yellow-faced**, **White-naped** and **Red Wattlebirds**. We soon encountered a **Beautiful Firetail** preening unconcernedly in a low tree which provided plenty of photo opportunities. A little further on, amongst some flowering heath, we were



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2011 tours

Plains-wanderer Weekends

26 & 27 November 2011

New Year's Eve 2011

2012 tours

9 — 25 January

New Zealand

4 — 11 February

Tasmanian bird & mammal tour

Mid May Gulf Country

Cairns, Georgetown, Karumba,
Gregory R, Cloncurry & Mt Isa

1 — 13 July Top End

Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra

17 — 23 July

Alice Springs/MacDonnell
Ranges

6 — 25 September

Strzelecki Track, Outback

31 Oct — 7 Nov

New Caledonia

11— 19 November

SW Western Australia

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buzzed by male and female **Southern Emu-wrens**, although (despite Charles' valiant efforts) we missed out on finding the **Ground Parrot**. Towards the end of the trail we were dwarfed by corridors of stunning pink boronia, and at Florance Head lookout we were entranced by a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** undertaking a number of consecutive flypasts, swooping low while calling to each other and then returning to their perches.

On the way out we stopped at some spectacular rock faces to twitch for some **Rock Warblers**. While unsuccessful on this quest we were rewarded with some beautiful flowering rock orchids.

We called in at Lake Conjola where the highlights were **Hooded Plovers**, **Pied Oystercatchers**, two **White-fronted Terns** and a nesting **Little Wattlebird** right next to the track. Then at Ulladulla Warden Head lighthouse, we watched a **Black-browed Albatross** swooping low over the waves, while three **White-bellied Sea-eagles** engaged in close contact and staged several close fly-pasts in the perfect evening light.

An early Sunday morning walk around the headland next to our caravan park at Ulladulla provided excellent views of a number of bush birds, including **Eastern Whipbird**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Red-browed Finch**, **New Holland Honeyeater** and **Variegated Fairy-wren**. A flock of about 40 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** caught our attention on our return.

After breakfast we visited the nearby South Pacific Headland Reserve, where the birds took a back seat to the magnificent floral display including many species of orchid and stunning waratahs at their peak. A couple of well-fed red-bellied black snakes also focussed our attention away from the birds, which totalled 78 species for the trip.

A very big thank you to Kathy and John for such a well-organised, friendly and all-in-all thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

— **Kathy Cook**

Sunday 11 September – Lake Road, Bungendore

A chilly and breezy morning did not deter 13 members and friends from joining me for a leisurely walk along Lake Road, which runs along the south-west corner of Lake George.

In the distance, the large expanse of water on the eastern side of the lake bed was so far away that we could identify nothing more specific than “ducks”. However, birds were plentiful and much easier to see along the roadside. One of the resident **Little Eagles** did two fly-pasts, revealing its underwing pattern very clearly. **Grey Fantails** were the friendliest birds of the morning, but we also had excellent views of **White-naped** and **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **White-throated Treecreeper** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**. **Yellow Thornbills** matched the colour of the flowering wattles, as did a male **Golden Whistler**.

As we stopped for morning tea, a flock of 15 **Dusky Woodswallows** flew over and later gave us very close views as they fed beside the road and perched on nearby weed stalks, rocks and trees. A pair of **Galahs** disappeared into a nesting hollow and **White-browed Scrub-wrens** were carrying food into a dense bush. We heard several **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** and one **Superb Lyrebird**. Other highlights included **Speckled Warbler**, **Brown Quail** and **Red-capped Robin**.

We were well satisfied with a total bird list of 43 species, as well as close up views of a Shingleback trying to find a sunny spot. — **Sue Lashko**

21 September — Narrabundah Hill

This morning's mid month walk to Narrabundah Hill (formerly known as Duffy Pines) saw 13 members and guests gather in excellent weather to record 43 species of birds (a full list will be appended to the Trips page on the COG website). Of these species, seven were recorded as undertaking some form of breeding activity: **Magpie** and **Australian**



Beautiful Firetail
(*Stagonopleura bella*)

Photo by David Cook

(Continued on page 10)

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.

Saturday 8 October – Lyrebird and Cascade Trails, Tidbinbilla (morning walk)

This will be a morning walk in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve along the Lyrebird and Cascades Trails that have been rebuilt after the 2003 fires. We will be looking for the birds that are using the rapidly regrowing wet forest of the eastern slope of the Tidbinbilla Range. Please note that registration for this trip is essential as the number of participants has to be limited. Bookings may be made by phoning the trip's leader David McDonald on 6238 3706 or by emailing him on david@dnmcdonald.id.au. Registered participants should meet David at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve car park (adjacent to the Visitor Centre) at 8.00am. The usual vehicle entry fee to the Reserve will apply. Come prepared for changeable weather conditions. Bring morning tea if you wish; we will finish well before noon.

Sunday 16 October – K2C bird surveys, Bredbo region.

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin and Speckled Warbler. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or PH. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

Saturday 5 November – Braidwood

The Braidwood Landcare group has contacted COG to see if we would be interested in surveying five to six properties where some revegetation has been done. We will not only survey the revegetation sites, but also remnants and riverine areas. 10 to 12 surveyors are required for Saturday morning, beginning at 7.30am, and must be sufficiently experienced to undertake what we hope will become an annual survey. Please contact Sue Lashko on 62514485 or smlashko@gmail.com if you are interested and to receive further details.

Sunday 13th November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

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

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to birdwatching, although more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Although every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually a "hot spot" where most of the nesting occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H) by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au. Anthony Overs will be assisting as usual.

Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the map on the COG web site under the *Maps, Forms and Lists* button.

Saturday - Sunday 19-20 November - Goulburn area - overnight campout

This trip will be the joint outing for 2011 as part of our continuing links with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS). We will be travelling to Goulburn early Saturday afternoon, returning mid Sunday afternoon, camping overnight at Arthursleigh on the Wollondilly River. This is a lovely, otherwise hard to get to, river oak-lined stretch of the

river where the GFNS have their bird hide, and where we picked up 44 species on a morning visit in October 2010. This will be a 'bring everything in, take everything out' campout. On the way we will stop in Goulburn to view progress with the proposed wetlands at the old brick pits. As usual participants will contribute a dish to a communal dinner, along with our hosts, on the Saturday evening. To book your place, or for further information please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

News from the Committee

- Work on updating the COG logo is being undertaken.
- There have been a couple of unidentified membership payments into the COG bank account. If you forgot to identify yourself, and did not email the Secretary at the time, you will no longer be getting Gang-Gang or notifications of its online availability. Contact cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au if you think you may be one of those affected.

(There was no September committee meeting because a number of committee members were unavailable).

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2011

We're making good progress with the adoption of sites for COG's bird blitz on 29-30 October. However, lots of prime locations have still not been spoken for. If you can spend some time on that weekend counting birds in any of the following locations – or others shown as unclaimed on the Excel spreadsheet under the blitz icon – let me know on blitz@canberrabirds.org.au or by phone – 6254 6520.

Nature reserves: Woodstock; Mt Ainslie; Percival Hill; Mt Rob Roy; Goorooyarroo;

Other prime birding spots: Orroral Valley; Shepherds Lookout; Yerrabi Pond; ANBG; Smokers Trail; Glendale Crossing to Brandy Flat Hut; Yankee Hat. — **Barbara Allan, Blitz coordinator**

New procedures for Delivery of Salvaged Birds to CSIRO

Some members of COG will have learned that recent changes to CSIRO's Gungahlin site, where the Australian National Wildlife Collection (ANWC) is housed, have resulted in severe inconveniences to some members wishing to lodge salvaged birds with the ANWC. We do apologise for this and the purpose of this note is to try and set up some new procedures. By way of explanation, however, I would point out that following CSIRO's recent merger of the Divisions of Entomology and Sustainable Ecosystems into a new Division called Ecosystem Sciences, the decision was taken to move all staff from Gungahlin into Black Mountain. That was recently completed with the exception of the ANWC. As a result just four permanent ANWC staff are on site and, as a moment or two's reflection will help show, there are often occasions when just one of us (or even none) are actually on site. This is the kind of situation that has led to the recent problems.

So, to help things in future, can we suggest the following possibilities?

1. Call Rob Palmer or Leo Joseph at the ANWC on 6242 1639 or 6242 1689, respectively, to arrange a time when we will be there and so that we can advise you if our plans have to change.
2. Call or visit Chris Davey at 24 Bardsley Place, Holt, (6254 6324), and leave the specimen(s) with him as he will be able to drop them in every Monday.
3. Call or visit Mark Clayton at 81 Maribyrnong Avenue, Kaleen, (6241 3620 or 0419 482 341) and see whether he's in town and whether he can bring specimens out.

I'd take the opportunity to thank COG members again for contributing any specimens that are in reasonably good condition and accompanied by basic data of locality, date and collector(s). All specimens are valuable no matter how common a species they may be from and no matter how many we may have so we do appreciate members' efforts to bring in and donate such valuable material.

Finally, I do apologise again for the inconvenience caused recently and I hope that these procedures might help fix the problem. — **Leo Joseph, Director, Australian National Wildlife Collection, CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences, Canberra**



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Working Bee

Planting for the Glossy Black Cockatoo

After the Birds Australia Campout held in early April 2011 at the Bush Heritage Property 'Scottsdale' we ended up with a small surplus which has been put aside for the purchase of *Allocasuarina verticillata* seedlings to provide cones on which these birds depend. We have now heard that we have also been successful in obtaining a 'Small Communities Grant' to purchase tree guards stakes, etc.

Accordingly, a working bee has been organised for Friday 21 October 2011 at the Scottsdale Reserve, Bredbo.

What and Why? Help Canberra Ornithologists Group, Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia plant trees and shrubs to enhance and connect habitat for threatened bird species. Plantings will include *Allocasuarina verticillata* to provide food for the **Glossy Black Cockatoo** which depends on the availability of seed from these trees to survive.

Where? Scottsdale Reserve, Bredbo. Transport within the Reserve to the planting site will be provided for those who do not have a suitable 4wd vehicle.

When? Friday 21 October.

Arrive at Scottsdale shearing shed at 9.00 for 9.30 welcome and briefing, before moving to the planting site by 10.00. Planting will be finished in time to return to the shed for a BBQ lunch (provided).

What to bring? Please bring hat, sunscreen, long sleeves, gardening gloves, long pants, sturdy boots, and water bottle.

RSVP essential: Contact Nicki Taws, ntaws@bigpond.com, 0408 210736. Please mention if you have a 4wd vehicle.

Photo ops 5

Birds as art



Sooner or later most bird photographers flirt with the idea that it might be possible to produce photos that could be considered artistic. Some – sensibly – quickly give up on the idea while a very few manage to fill artistically oriented coffee table books, hold successful exhibitions of their work and establish websites and reputations based on their bird-art photography. Most of us end up producing the occasional photograph that receives favourable comments from friends and leaves us wondering whether that makes it art and is that important and what the hell is art anyway?



I was inspired to write on this topic when I came across one of Margaret Leggoe's photos of the **Glossy Ibis** currently camped at Kelly's Swamp. The bird is caught preening in a slightly exotic pose, beautifully displaying a genuine symphony of dark greys, browns, iridescent greens and purples against the contrasting background textures of swamp vegetation and water reflections. My first reaction was "whoa, what a great image!" It had an impact on me and I found myself exploring it not for the technical content but for the shapes, colours, lines and textures. I reckon this could well be art.

What makes a photo art is one of those questions that suits port-fuelled late-night discussions and fills books and entire U3A courses, but there's nothing to stop us from having a go. At the outset I have to declare that despite using them to illustrate this discussion, I truly don't think any of my photos are real art. They certainly don't pass the wall test discussed below.

The only certainty about art is that there will always be plenty of disagreement on the subject. When I asked Margaret if I could use her photo for this article she replied by sending several others that she thought were better. The website commenters who wanted more space at her ibis's

feet would probably have agreed with her. But I didn't; I liked this one.

A popular view is that to be art, an image has to cause an emotional response in the viewer. This has a lot going for it although it does give a hugely unfair advantage to any image containing a dozen cute fluffy ducklings. While almost guaranteed to cause an emotional response, it would not necessarily be art. So in the end my own definition of an art shot is the one I'd like to hang on the wall, one you can walk past many times and still find pleasing and satisfying. Im-



plied in this are compositional qualities that cause the ‘pleasing’ response – leads the eye, balances well and so on – and that it evokes a response beyond the pure subject matter.

A lesser test is the calendar test. Photos that look good on a calendar are likely to be interesting more than arty and usually not strong enough for long term wall display, so I’d call them ‘near-art’.

One thing that separates many arty photos from other good photos is that there is a degree of simplification involved, a restriction to few shapes and lines or the merging of complexity into a single texture or colour. This works because it removes the confusion or randomness that would otherwise distract from the pleasing compositional elements. Photography is harder in that sense than painting – the painter can

deal with complexity by placing every element just so, while a wildlife photographer mostly has to make do with what is before them. Simplification is often the only way to make this work and possibly explains why most birds-as-art photos are of large birds, usually waders. The simpler backgrounds and muted colours of water and sky, the flowing shapes of a big bird on the wing and the relative predictability of these slower birds all lend themselves to the greater probability of creating a pleasing image.

Bush birds by comparison are more difficult to make into ‘art’. Photographers most often end up resorting to narrow depth of field to blur the background and create the simplification that’s needed – a sharp bird against a soft unfocused background. This is easy to do but also easy to overdo and results in the repetitive ‘bird on a stick’ photos that fill websites; it’s a one-trick pony that doesn’t in itself guarantee an engaging result.



Perhaps it is better suited to field-guide photos than images to hang on the wall. A variation on ‘bird on a stick’ is the ‘bird on a wire’ shot and there’s an example of each here – the female **Scarlet Robin** and the **Rainbow Bee-eater**.



Trying to make arty images with complex backgrounds is less common because it is harder still. Probably my best effort and one that demonstrates the intrinsic problems is the **Kookaburra** that nicely framed itself in a mango tree. Another that tantalised but doesn’t quite make it is the **Grey Fantail** in golden surroundings.



An alternative approach that cheats but has the potential to provide some insight to the subject is to make images that mimic the style of recognised painters. My example is the Rembrandt-esque **Figbird** at the top (in which the similarity to the master is supposed to lie in the lighting, not the tasteful frame that was added for this article). An early experiment in the same vein was the pseudo-Japanese print of an Ikebana **Goldfinch**.

In the end maybe what counts is that I don’t have a single arty bird photo on my wall. I don’t know anyone else who does either. Perhaps birds (as art) suit drawing and painting but not photography? Calendars but not art?

[People interested in arty bird shots might like to google ‘Arthur Morris birds as art’. Arthur monopolises the phrase ‘Birds as Art’ and has some beautiful photos mostly of waders. Older blog posts are recommended - try www.birdsasart-blog.com and look for Postlist in the menu]. — **Julian Robinson**

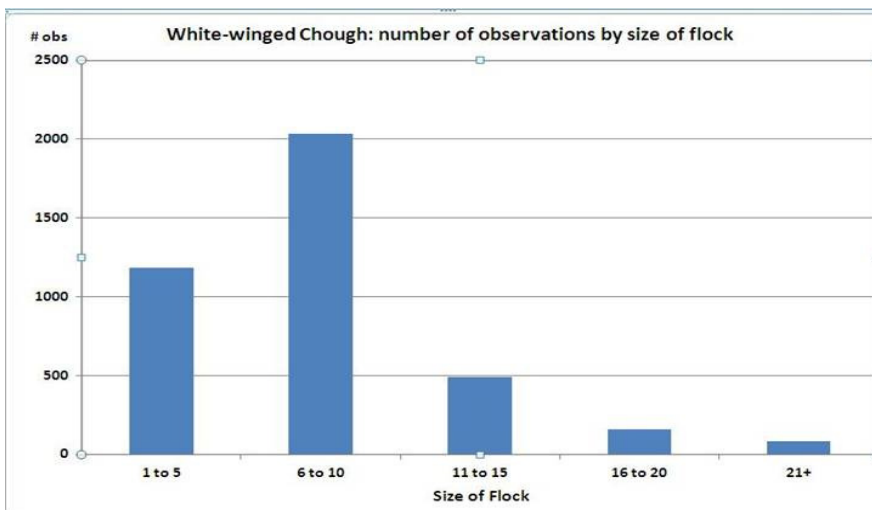
Garden Bird Survey Notes

The chatline has had several GBS sightings in this period including “first returns” of several species plus

- Many **Superb Parrots** in Page and Hawker;
- **Little Corellas** in Carwoola

How many Choughs does it take?

On recent outings there has been some discussion about the group size of **White-winged Choughs**. In discussing this species the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* (HANZAB) – unusually - describes the social organisation as “well known”. The minimum group size for successful breeding is four birds with seven or more needed to raise more than one chick.



Over the 29 years of the GBS the average flock size of the **White-winged Chough** is 8.02 birds placing it 17th of 156 ‘more common’ birds. The spread of flock size is reasonably tight with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.02: the ratio of SD to average is 13.4%, placing it in the top third for that value. The graph shows the distribution of flocks by size.

It appears that both the average and the most common group size are sufficient to allow for the raising of more than one chick.

Years 30 and 31

75 charts have thus far been received for Year 30 and processing is well in hand. **Could anyone who still has a chart contact me to make arrangements for collection.** Completed sign-up sheets and other notifications show some 86 Charts are being compiled for Year 31.

— **Martin Butterfield**

(Continued from page 4)

Raven on nest (different ones of course); **Common Starling**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Striated Pardalote** were all inspecting hollows; a **Galah** was carrying nesting material; and a **Pied Currawong** was carrying food.

The "best" birds were, IMHO, **Southern Whiteface**. They are not very common and we saw them in three different locations, suggesting three flocks (although we only saw one or two birds in each location). Four **Brown quail** were flushed from rank grass amongst regenerating pines and four **Diamond Firetails** in some scrappy hawthorns (a favourite location for this species).

One large, and old, Eucalypt had plenty of hollows which were definitely being inspected by **Common Starling** and **Striated Pardalote** with **Tree Martin**, **Eastern Rosella** and **Nankeen Kestrel** also lurking in the vicinity.

Thank you to Jean for leading us to her local patch. We should all be so lucky! — **Martin Butterfield**



Tree Martin
(*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

Photo by Lindsay Hansch

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

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

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

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

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

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

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

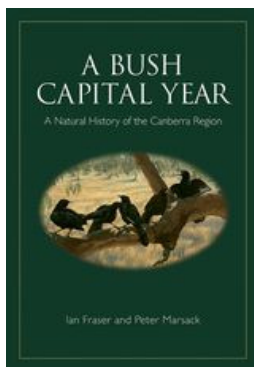
South Rosedale

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

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

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

COG SALES

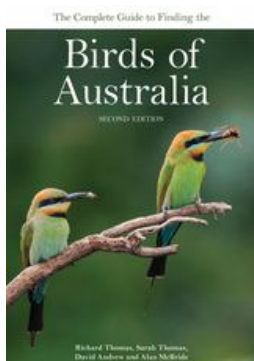


A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region Ian Fraser , Peter Marsack

A Bush Capital Year introduces the fauna, flora, habitats and reserves of the Australian Capital Territory and includes the most recent research available. It also emphasises often unappreciated or even unrecognised urban wildlife. For each month of the year there are 10 stories which discuss either a species or a group of species, such as mosses and mountain grasshoppers. While never anthropomorphic, many of the stories are written from the organism's point of view, while others are from that of an observer. Beautiful paintings complement the text and allow better visualisation of the stories and the subjects. Members price \$32

What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife? David Lindenmayer

Based on thirteen years of intensive research, the book breaks the discussion into chapters on key environmental and vegetation assets and then discusses how to make these assets better for biodiversity. The work encompasses information on vertebrates and invertebrates on farms and their relationships with significant vegetation and environmental assets: woodland remnants, plantings, paddocks, rocky outcrops and waterways. A chapter is dedicated to each asset and how it can be managed. Members price \$27

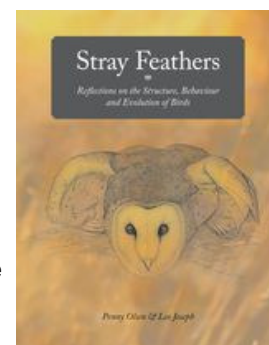


The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed Richard Thomas , Sarah Thomas , David Andrew , Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.

Stray Feathers: Reflections on the Structure, Behaviour and Evolution of Birds Penny Olsen , Leo Joseph

Stray Feathers showcases some of the remarkable adaptations of Australian birds. A brief introduction describes how evolution shapes form and function, followed by a series of vignettes illustrating the wondrous variety of forms and functions shaped by evolution. For example, did you know that barn owls can hunt in absolute darkness and that cuckoos commence incubation before their egg is laid? Members price \$39 – expected for the June meeting



Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): *Kookaburra*, *Australian Magpie*, and many more.



WONGA Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

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

patricia.walker@bigpond.com
phone 02 6251 3136

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

COG welcomes the following new members:

W Dimond, Giralang
H Rowlands, Calwell
K Hutchison, Charwood
L Randall, Watson

NEXT NEWSLETTER

October deadline

Wednesday 28 September 2011

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

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

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

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Newsletter distribution
Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership
2010-2011 memberships:

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

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

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

COG website
www.canberrabirds.org.au

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

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

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Gang-gang

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