

Gang-gang

September 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

What to watch out for this month

If the postings on the COG chat line (my main source of information) are any guide, it has been a very quiet August for bird sightings. One reason may be because Geoffrey Dabb's survey has finished and members have been less motivated to report sightings. Another may be the cold, windy and wet month which has not been conducive to either bird activity or bird watching. Certainly I feel my own efforts in my local patch have diminished because of these two reasons, and it has even been hard to find **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** which was so readily observed there in the second half of July. There have been further reports of **Australian Reed-Warbler**, including some calling, though it is difficult to be certain whether these are new arrivals or over-wintering birds just starting to call.

Clearly there seems to have been no major influx of migrants up to the time of the Gang-gang deadline of 25 August. Of the species that didn't over-winter in greater than usual numbers there have only been some reports of **Pallid Cuckoo** (all in NSW to the NE of the ACT), a single early report of a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, and one of a very early **Latham's Snipe**. Except for one late posting of many at Lake Ginninderra, **Welcome Swallows** are either not being reported, or haven't arrived yet (though there was also one report of this species incubating young at the beginning of the month). To my recollection there have been no or very few reports of either **Fairy** or **Tree Martins**, and there have been only a few reports of **Noisy Friarbird** or flocks of **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. My conclusion that the spring migration hasn't really started yet is tempered with the uncertainty of whether these species have arrived but are simply not being reported. Watch out for them; often they turn up unexpectedly overnight, so I suspect there may well be movement during the dark.

Breeding activity has also only been sporadically reported, though a couple of early nests of **Grey Currawong** have been notable, but its more notorious

relative the **Pied** does not seem to have started yet (you need to watch carefully as it is a very surreptitious nest builder). However, the **Tawny Frogmouth** nesting season seems to have started a couple of weeks early; Stuart Rae tells me this is possibly due to the good food supply, especially frogs in the wet conditions.

Other migrants to arrive during September are likely to be **White-throated Gerygone**, **Mistletoebird** and **Leaden Flycatcher**, and perhaps some early **White-winged Trillers** or **Rufous Songlarks**. However, I expect that the two last-named species may not be as abundant this year due to the improved conditions inland.

During the last full weekend in August there were still a few **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins** in my local patch, typically female or immature birds that seem to linger longer, and hadn't yet departed for higher altitudes or the mountains. The **Crescent Honeyeater** in my garden area departed at the end of July, though it could still be heard occasionally in the general area, and those observed elsewhere in Canberra stayed at least until the middle of the month.

Even though there are still lots of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** feeding on the road verges or median strips, spring can't be very far away as the **Common Blackbird** started singing in my GBS site well before dawn in the last week of

SEPTEMBER MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 08.09.10

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

See details on page 2

Everyone welcome

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

Field Trip reports

18 August 2010 (and beyond) — Wednesday Walk - Molonglo Gorge

13 members gathered at the Molonglo Gorge car park and compiled a list of birds, including an Eastern Spinebill (the only one of the day) and the first of several Eastern Yellow Robins.

We merged into three carloads and headed off to Blue Tiles picnic area. The first birds noted on arrival were 5 Gang-gang Cockatoos perched in the tree under which we parked. Our first move was back along the walking trail towards the car park. Red-

SEPTEMBER MEETING 7:30pm Wednesday 08.09.10

The first presentation will be by George Olah, a Ph D

on Macaws etc."

student at the ANU's Fenner School on "An introduction to the Tambopata Research Centre in SE Peru and its general work

Mark Clayton will give the main presentation entitled "Bird-watching and

Mark notes "I have been lucky enough to have developed a great friendship with a Swedish family after they spent a year in Canberra in 1993. With them, I have visited Sweden three times since 2001 and have

some birds in the hand in Sweden."

birded extensively in the country and banded in several different parts of Sweden. A pictorial presentation of my travels is tonight's offering."







Nankeen Kestrel

Eastern Rosellas

Turquoise Parrot

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browed Finches were seen in the shrubbery and a Collared Sparrowhawk in the canopy. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo was calling in the valley and several Brown Thornbills were identified as we moved along. After turning back, **Whitenaped Honeyeaters** were seen crossing the river and a Brown-headed Honeyeater was heard.

After returning to the area where we had parked we continued on a track parallel to the river before taking a rough track out along a peninsula. At the point of the peninsula we obtained very good views of two groups of 6 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. Heading back we saw a pair of **Australasian Grebes** in breeding plumage and a Feral Goose. Several of the group also saw a Platypus in the river. On returning to the cars we found the **Gang-gangs** had increased in number to 7 and had basically covered on cars in nipped off eucalyptus buds!

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 22 August 2010 – Nursery Swamp

After meeting at the Kambah Village to reduce the number of cars in use, thirteen members set out for Orroral Valley. By the time we arrived at the car park adjacent to the base of the track to Nursery Swamp the fog had lifted and we had the promise of a very nice day ahead. Two members decided that they would do their birding in the region of the car park, so the rest of us set out along the track, which traverses four COG grids. There was evidence of the ample rains we have had in recent times, with the track being wet underfoot in places. We took our time climbing

the gentle slope, stopping to enjoy the birds as they presented themselves. Over lunch, as we sat in the sun on the edge of the sedge, we had a discussion about the current name of the Nankeen Kestrel and David explained the origin of the word 'Nankeen'. It all makes perfect sense now! It was a privilege to visit this very interesting site. We saw 31 species in all. Highlights were Scarlet, Flame and Eastern Yellow Robins, and a mixed flock of small birds which included Brown, Yellow-rumped, Striated and Buff-rumped Thornbills and Brown-headed and White-naped Honeyeaters. White-eared Honeyeaters were most prevalent all along the track. On the way back we considered visiting the rock art site but by then the weather was looking a little unreliable, so we decided against travelling the extra distance. A side-trip for another time perhaps! Thank you David and Noela, for organising this most enjoyable trip.

Lia Battison

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.

Fri-Sun 3-5 September Little Forest Plateau nr Ulladulla

This trip focuses on birdwatching in the heathland of Little Forest Plateau and the rainforest of Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve near Ulladulla. We will stay in a caravan park at Lake Conjola that has cabins and campsites. Participants will need to arrive by Friday night ready for an early start on Saturday. Be aware that the road to Little Forest is gravel and car pooling is encouraged for the drive to the Plateau. We hope to find a variety of heathland birds including **Beautiful Firetails** and **Southern Emu-wrens** as well as various rainforest birds such as **Black-faced Monarch** and **Green Catbird**. The walk at Little Forest Plateau will be easy to moderate grade. The walk into Yatte Yattah will require a moderate level of fitness as the descent into the gully can be tricky, but if you are unsure please give us a call to discuss. Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au. We will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the day.



Australian

Ornithological Services P/L

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Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2010: Celebrating 30 years of Plains-wanderers

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Fri-Sun 17–19 September - Monga National Park (4wd and tents only)

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This delightful section on the lower edge of Monga NP is situated at the base of the famous Corn Trail. Instead of having to walk to this spot we'll be driving in. The final very small section of this track is marked as 4WD only. It's not a difficult descent, but it does require crossing the small rocky (generally shallow) Buckenbowra River at the bottom before arriving at the pretty campsite. The restricted sized campsite requires us to limit the

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numbers of 4WD's. One of the delights of this place is the early morning bird chorus. You'll also have **Rose Robins** hopping around in the Casuarinas above your tent. Last year we camped here and had the most splendid display of Rock Orchids, which is one of the reasons that we've timed it at this time of year. We'll do some easy walks, exploring the Buckenbowra River, nearby forests and *maybe* start up the Corn Trail and see how far we get. More information when you book with leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer. Email: mcjannett9@hotmail.com or PH: 6161 3450

Fri-Mon 1-4 October - Croajingalong Nat. Park, Vic.

We'll be camping at the gorgeous Thurra River campground, situated south of Cann River. Amongst the many highlights of this trip will be a walk to the nearby Point Hicks Lighthouse. The campground and surrounds offers a variety of habitats and scenery, including the picturesque Thurra River running out to sea, the clean shell-littered beach, and forest featuring large old Banksias hovering over pretty campsites. Nearby heath might offer us a glimpse or two (!) of **Ground Parrot**. A drive through the National Park will find us amongst some very pretty and floristic sites away from camp. This camp can be for three or four days depending on when you arrive. If you're interested in birds, beaches, lighthouses, flowers, scenery then this is a MUST!

More information when you book with leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer. Email: mcjannett9@hotmail.com or PH: 6161 3450

Sun. 17 October — K2C bird surveys, Bredbo region.

COG undertook the inaugural K2C surveys in April this year. The surveyed properties proved to be rich in 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.

Sat-Sun 23-24 October - Goulburn area - overnight campout/accommodated [note the change from the earlier advertised date of 9-10 October]

This trip will be the joint outing for 2010 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, looking at, inter alia, their new bird hide at Arthursleigh on the Wollondilly River, as well as the proposed wetlands at the old brick pits close to Goulburn. As usual we will have dinner with our hosts on the Saturday evening. There will be the opportunity to camp, or for those who prefer, motel/hotel accommodation in town. To book your place, or for further information please contact Jack Holland. E-mail: jack.holland@environment.gov.au or PH. 6288 7840 (AH)

Meeting to plan field trips for 2011

A short meeting will be held at the cafe at the Street Theatre in Childers Street, Civic, on <u>Wed 22 September</u> at 5.30pm to plan the COG field trip programme for 2011. If you have favourite local birding spots that would be suitable for morning or day outings, or places further afield that could be visited for a 2 or 3 day weekend (either camping or caravan park/motel accommodation), we would welcome your input. If you are unable to attend, but would like to contribute ideas and/or offer to lead trips, please contact Dan Mantle on <u>danmantle@hotmail.com</u>.

News from the committee

The government has released the Eastern Broadacre Study, about further industrialisation of the Majura and Jerrabomberra Valleys. Jenny Bounds and Con Boekel will prepare COG's response.

Tony Lawson will represent COG in a process to develop a Conservation Management Plan for Weston Park.

Garden Bird Survey Notes

There have been a few recent chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant:

16 Gang-gangs in Carwoola;

Several references to returning migrants-

Fan-tailed Cuckoo in Carwoola;

Pallid Cuckoo in Wamboin; and

Rufous Whistler and Yellow-faced Honeyeater in Cook

The Ultimate Passerine

This appellation was sometime used, when I started in birding in the UK about 50 years ago, for *Passer domesticus*, the House Sparrow. It is now well known that this species is in decline in the UK and Australia. I was thus surprised to note when entering some Year 29 GBS Charts that quite high numbers of House Sparrow (hereafter 'sparrow') were reported on a few Charts. This led me to ferret around in the database to see what the situation is with this species.

Sparrow A	# sites	Sparrow A	# sites	Sparrow A	# sites
>1	4	<.7 and >.59	24	<.2 and >.09	13
1	52	<.6 and >.49	21	<.1 and >0	17
<1 and >.89	94	<.5 and >.39	23	0	25
<.9 and >.79	29	<.4 and >.29	17	Total	364
<.8 and >.69	26	<.3 and >.19	19		

Vale Rosemary Bell

Long-time COG member Rosemary Bell passed away suddenly on August 4. Rosemary was an enthusiastic participant in COG meetings and outings, including the recent July winter bus trip and the July Wednesday walk, and was a regular contributor to the October bird blitz.. Her ready smile will be much missed by the other regulars. Rosemary was a retired librarian, with many years experience in the Parliamentary Library. She was a woman of many interests apart from birding. She loved travel, not just on birding tours, and this year had visited Burma and Sri Lanka and had trips planned to Peru, Chile and Antarctica. Another of her interests was classical music; Rosemary was often encountered at concerts and recitals. Rosemary had a love of textiles and was an accomplished seamstress and knitter. Retirement gave her time to volunteer as a guide at Old Parliament House and she was an active member of her local ALP branch.

A first step was to investigate the site specific abundance of sparrows by calculating a value equivalent to A (ie average number of sparrows seen per observation week) for each site. I have called this Sparrow A in the table. A little over 40% of sites have recorded an average of more than 0.9 sparrows per week. Only 25 sites have never recorded a sparrow. In terms of regions, Queanbeyan had the highest Sparrow A (1.009) with Kambah second at 0.873. Other regions all fell in a reasonably tight band between 0.73 and 0.56 sparrows per week.

Charts

A good number of members have taken up charts for Year 30. More will be available for distribution at the September Meeting and/or (if people need one but can't make it to the meeting) they could be picked up from Barbara Allan and Kay Hahne (northside) and Anne Hall (southside). A good number of Year 29 Charts have been returned and we are



well into processing. It is becoming urgent that all Year 29 Charts are returned and it would be greatly appreciated if people could bring their completed charts to the September meeting or contact me to make other arrangements.

One Chart was passed by the owner to another member for handing in. Unfortunately the recipient's dog felt that diet supplementation by GBS Chart was the go. See image. The dog's owner was able to use Extreme Scrapbooking skills to reconstruct the Chart which is now part of history.

— Martin Butterfield.

Canberra Bird Notes from 2005 till now are available from Sylvia Cleland. If you would like them ring 62477912.

COG SALES



Birds of Canberra Gardens

Birds of Canberra Gardens (\$20.00 for book only or \$25.00 with *Bird Calls of the ACT* CD included members prices only)

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

It demonstrates graphically the delights of nature that are available to us here in Canberra, as long as we open our eyes and ears.

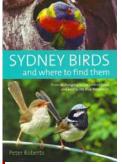
Boom & Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country Edited by Libby Robin, Robert Heinsohn and Leo Joseph - \$27.00 for members.

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

The paintings of Australian birds in *A Brush with Birds* are by artists whose work is represented in the National Library of Australia. They span the years from first settlement to the 1970s, telling us about the times as well as the birds, and showing how the style of bird art has evolved. This book is lavishly illustrated with vibrant and luscious art and it includes the stories of the artists behind the paintings. Enter the colourful world of birds such as the King Parrot, the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, the Satin Bower Bird and the Red Goshawk, and be inspired by their beauty.

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

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



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

Covering the Sydney Region from Wollongong to the Central Coast and West to the Blue Mountains, *Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them* features the 30 top bird-watching localities in and around Sydney. These birding hot spots stretch from Tuggerah Lakes on the Central Coast to Lake Illawarra near Wollongong and from the Blue Mountains in the west to some surprisingly accessible sites tucked away in the heart of the city. Each locality entry lists the key species to look out for, including rare and seasonal visitors. It describes how to access the location, both by public transport and road, and what amenities to expect; maps are featured wherever necessary. The main section gives precise details about where to look for certain birds. There is also a handy list of Sydney birds, each entry providing information on the best spots to find it, its rarity, and helpful tips about its habits and haunts, such as where it roosts or nests. This invaluable guide will take you to some beautiful places, many of which you may never otherwise discover.

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

Kookaburra Herons, Egrets and Bitterns Mound-builders Australian Magpie Cockatoos Tawny Frogmouth Wedge-tailed Eagle Albatross Australian Bustard (coming soon)

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

Brush

AvIan Whimsy #86 Sadly, no Whimsy this month. — Ian Fraser (ianf@pcug.org.au)

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2010

Yes, it is on again, on the weekend of 30-31 October - COG's annual effort to record over the last weekend in October 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. COG 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 blitz@canberrabirds.org.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, 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 and are willing to take passengers.

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

- 1. a 20-minute survey over 2 hectares (rectangle of 100 m x 200 m; or circle of radius 80 m)
- 2. a survey within 500 m of a central spot, time unlimited but 20 mins or more
- 3. 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 following codes: ih (inspecting hollow); co (copulating); nb (nest building); ny (nest with young); cf (carrying food); dy (dependent young). *Only* record species you are sure about. If you see a bird species on COG's "unusuals" list, take a photo of it, if at all possible; take copious field notes of all the details you observe and any features you didn't see; then either submit a completed "unusual bird report form" (available on the COG website) with your hard-copy datasheet or email it to rarities@canberrabirds.org.au.

Datasheets are available at COG meetings; from the organiser; or from the COG website under "forms" – the COG observation record sheet is the general-use form. This year you may also use COG's electronic input option for your blitz records, using the standard ABA code not a specific blitz one. [This means that any ACT bird record entered over the blitz weekend will be treated as if it were a blitz record]. If you aren't already a user of the online data entry system and would prefer to enter your blitz records this way, please contact Paul Fennell our database manager for details – ptf@grapevine.com.au or 6254 1804. If you use hard-copy datasheets, please mail them to COG blitz records, PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608; deliver them to Barbara; or hand them in at the November COG meeting.

While most of us find the act of going out and recording birds rewarding enough in itself, it is good if we can offer modest incentives such as participation "lucky draw" prizes. If you are prepared to donate books, wine, DVDs, native plants or anything suitable as a blitz prize, the organizer would love to hear from you!

There will be regular blitz updates on the COG website, including lists of unloved sites awaiting adoption, so do check it out. And join us for a fun weekend of birding for a cause.

Barbara Allan



WONGA

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COG welcomes the following new members:

Wenger family, Macgregor

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

NEXT NEWSLETTER

October deadline

Wednesday 29 September 2010

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

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

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

COG info

President—Chris Davey, ph 6254 6324 Email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Vice President—TBA

Treasurer—Lyn Rees lynley@iimetro.com.au

Secretary—Sandra Henderson 6231 0303 cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence The Secretary COG, PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

Newsletter distribution Brian Fair and helpers COG membership

2010-2011 memberships:

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

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

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

COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au

Office

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

COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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Gang-gang

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