

President's Report 2008-09

It is with pleasure that I present my second President's Report covering the period October 2008 to September 2009.

Forward Plan

As in the past the Committee's activities are guided by the Forward Plan. The plan was revisited in mid-November and published in the March Gang-gang. The plan covers the period 2009 to 2011 and takes into account core COG objectives recognising two categories of tasks; major and minor. Major projects are likely to need more man-power and/or money to come to fruition whilst the minor tasks need only modest resources.

Of the major tasks progress has occurred on various fronts:

- 1) Republish a revised 'Birds of Canberra Gardens'. A sub-committee comprising Paul Fennell, Kathy Walter, David Cook, Martin Butterfield and Julian Robinson first met in February 2009 to determine the structure and responsibilities for the publication. It was decided that the basic format and layout would remain but with an additional 10 years of data. Those authors who contributed to the COG Annual Bird Report were willing to participate in updating the species texts. On receiving quotes from various printers it was decided that it was unnecessary to obtain a grant and the publication would be funded by COG. The publication has progressed steadily and is now up to the stage where a draft will go to printers for a final quote. The draft is now being proof read by Barbara Allan and Harvey Perkins. I would like to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that Paul Fennell has put into this project.
- 2) COG Database upgrade. The area of the database that needed to be revised was to improve the structure of the Garden Bird Survey and to update the data input system. A tender document was prepared and after receiving quotes and interviewing three possible candidates the contract was awarded to AA Absolute Access. Martin Butterfield as GBS Coordinator was responsible for progressing the contract and interacting with the programmer. With valuable input from Kay Hahne and Anne Hall the contract was completed within budget and on time. The 2008-09 GBS charts have now been entered using the new system. My thanks to Martin, Kay and Anne for a most successful outcome.
- 3) Production of a new 2 CD set of Bird Calls of the ACT region. Despite COG purchasing some of the required equipment there has been little progress with this project. A list of 90 species, whose calls are required for the CD, was published in the June 2009 Gang-gang with a request for members to participate in the project. To date there is one COG member that I am aware of who has taken up the challenge. I urge others to join him.

- 4) Updating the ACT Bird Atlas. There was no progress made on this project over the previous year. It is still the intention of the Committee to investigate the possibility but it urgently needs someone to take on the challenge of providing a project discussion document before any advance is likely to be made.
- 5) Provide on-going financial support to the Mulligans Flat/ Gorooyarroo ecological community research project. Due to unforeseen circumstances the research project aimed at re-introducing the Brown Treecreeper was delayed but is now back on track with birds due to be introduced in November. The funds provided by COG have now been used to purchase radio tracking and banding equipment for the project. COG is actively involved in bird survey work for the project and is presently involved in discussions concerning future governance of the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary. COG wrote a letter of support endorsing the proposed Greater Gorooyarroo project but an application for funding through the Federal Government's 'Caring for our Country' program was unsuccessful.
- 6) Develop sets of display material. I am glad to say that Julian Robinson has offered to help with this project. Julian has attended various Committee meetings with ideas and costing. We await Julian's return so that final decisions can be made on funding and the materials required.

Of the minor tasks:

- 1) Updating the COG pamphlet on bird-attracting garden plants is still required and again I would urge anyone with an interest in this area to come forward to help with this project.
- 2) Re-ordering copies of existing 'Bird calls of the ACT Region' CD. As stock was running low, a continuing high demand and the 2 CD replacement set unlikely in the near future, Committee decided to order an additional 500 copies. This was completed and paid for in March.
- 3) The first of the Bird Routes brochures was developed last year and is now available at the Sales Desk or on the web. A second brochure covering a route from the Botanic Gardens to Callum Brae Nature Reserve is in draft form and with suggestions from Sue Lashko and Julian Robinson the Committee provided funds for advice from a graphics designer. This has now been completed and the draft is awaiting publication.
- 4) With an enormous amount of work from Alastair Smith all volumes of 'Canberra Bird Notes' have been scanned and can now be found on the COG website. This has been a 10 month long task and involved 50 volumes of some 5,100 pages. The purchase of appropriate optical character recognition (OCR) software from funds approved by the Committee greatly improved the speed and accuracy of the scanning process.
- 5) COG continues to support the initiatives of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) to reduce populations of Common Mynas. Of great help to the Group have been the efforts of COG members who participate in the Garden Bird Survey. This has been able to demonstrate CIMAG's success at reducing Myna numbers within urban Canberra. COG members continue to

help with the Ph.D project through regular surveys for the Myna designated suburbs undergoing various treatment regimes.

Committee

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 2008-09 Committee. Last year two Executive positions became available. I was delighted that Lyn Rees put her hand up to take on the role of Treasurer but we were unsuccessful in filling the role of Vice-president. Sandra Henderson has completed her second year as Secretary. The other members of the Committee have all been involved in other roles essential to the running of the Group. Jenny Bounds continued as Conservation Officer, Anthony Overs as Field Outings Officer and Editor of CBN, David Cook as Webmaster, Sue Lashko as Editor of Gang-gang and Meeting Room arranger, Beth Mantle on the Sales Desk and finally Tony Lawson who I regard as the Minister without Portfolio and who helps with the many additional jobs that appear to pop-up from nowhere. My thanks to them all for their efforts and for making the President's job that much easier.

Anthony Overs and David Cook will be standing down from the Committee this year but I am delighted that David will continue as Webmaster and Anthony as Editor of CBN.

Memorandum of Understanding between COG and Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA)

In June COG and BOCA signed an MOU whereby COG would abide by the BOCA Guidelines for Leading Groups, the Code of Birding Ethics and the Code of Birding Ethics to Photography, inform BOCA of three COG committee members who are BOCA members, annually provide to BOCA the total number of COG members and facilitate the distribution of BOCA fundraising material. BOCA will, starting July 2009, provide free of charge cover to COG under the BOCA Insurance Policy. Both organisations will ensure the continued independence of each organisation, collaborate to promote enhanced awareness and understanding of all aspects of bird education and conservation throughout the community, allow members rates on sale items and provide lists of outings and survey dates.

The MOU between COG and BOCA is now used as the standard between BOCA and any other group or club that wishes to affiliate with BOCA.

Conservation

Conservation concerns within our area continue to increase and during the past year COG has had an input into many of the issues. Jenny Bounds has again been extremely busy in her role as Conservation Officer and also as President of the Conservation Council of the ACT Region. COG has had an input into many issues including the following:

- Provided input and comments to the Draft Migration Shorebird Policy set out by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. Many thanks to Michael Lenz for his input.
- Input to the ACT Cat Containment Strategy formulated by the Department of Territories and Municipal Services.
- Comments on the Draft Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Discussion document.

- Input to discussions on the route of the cycle path through the Jerrabomberra Wetlands
- Letters and discussion with various members of the ACT Legislative Assembly concerning the development of Crace and other proposed Gungahlin suburbs and the planning of the Secondary School in Harrison relating to concerns for breeding habitat for the threatened Superb Parrot.
- Joint submission with National Parks Association on concerns with the lack of resources for Canberra Nature Parks, in particular the lack of signage and policing.
- Input to the National Capital Authority concerning the timing of willow removal below Scrivener Dam.
- Provided written and verbal submissions into the Hawke Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999). In addition to the input provided by Jenny Bounds, I would particularly like to thank Michael Robbins for his role in putting the COG submission together.
- Provided comments to the National Trust on their review of the social values of Lake Burley Griffin.
- On-going discussions with the ACT Government on the Kingston Foreshore and Eastlake developments and possible impacts on the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- Provide input into the reconstruction of the large dam at Mulligans Flat and on the proposed re-alignment of the Gundaroo Road along the western boundary of the Reserve.
- Provided comments on the proposed Majura Parkway.
- Submitted nomination to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee on the listing of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo as a threatened (vulnerable) species.

In addition, Jenny Bounds arranged a most successful half-day workshop on advocacy at the BIGNET meeting held at the Hunter Wetlands, Shortlands in late March. The workshop was very much appreciated by all the member clubs that attended the meeting.

Outings

Once again COG has been able to run a very comprehensive outings program. Many thanks to all the leaders and to Anthony Overs in his role as Outings Officer. Unfortunately, due to work pressures Anthony feels that he needs to step down from this position but I am delighted to say that Matthew Frawley has agreed to take on that position and I note the enthusiasm that he brings to the position. In addition, to the scheduled outings the *ad hoc* group of Wednesday Walkers has once again operated most successfully and have managed to attract a most enthusiastic group of followers. Not including the Wednesday outings, there have been 29 outings this last year. Of these eight have been outside the local region ranging from Round Hill Nature Reserve, Bungonia, South Durras, Monga National Park, Bumbalong Valley, Weddin Mountains, Oolambeyan National Park and to the Holbrook/Wagga area. Six specific purpose outings including the Blitz, Nest workshop, Bush Birds for beginners, Waterbirds for Beginners and the Robin and Raptor twitchathons have again been run. There have been outings to eight of the local nature reserves with the remainder of the outings to local hot spots. I would like to thank the many organisers and leaders and those who write up the trip reports for Gang-gang.

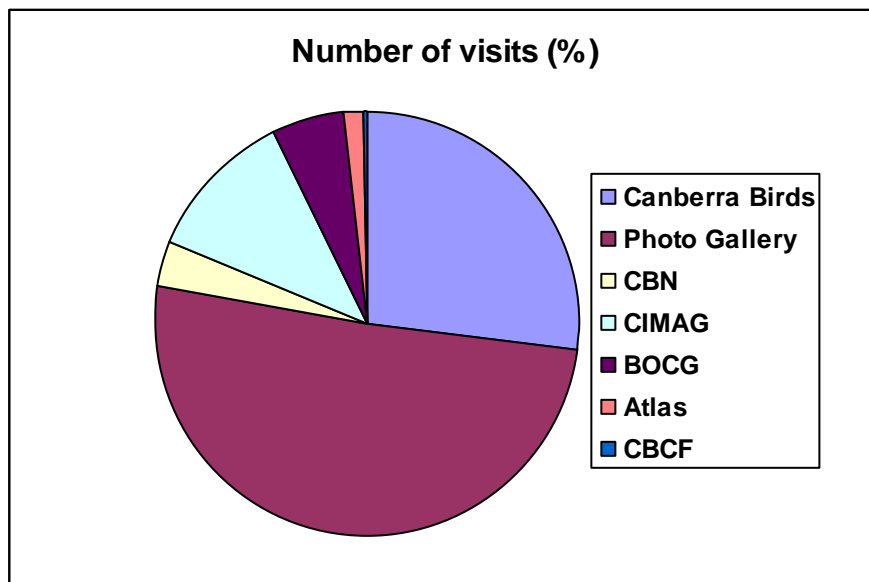
Communications and Publications

Gang-gang. Greg Ramsey and Sue Lashko have continued with editing and publishing our newsletter. On occasions Tanya Rough has stood in for Greg when he was away. Also, I would like to thank Judy Collett and helpers for the preparation and mailing of the newsletter. I would particularly like to thank Jack Holland, Ian Fraser and Martin Butterfield for their regular contributions.

Canberra Bird Notes. This year there have been three editions of CBN produced by Anthony Overs as Editor and I am delighted that Anthony is prepared to continue in this role. Major publication items include the 2007-08 Annual Bird Report and articles on Alastair Smith's 'Big Year', Royal Spoonbills, Little Eagles, Eastern Koels, White-winger Choughs, the 2008 Blitz, avian highlights around a major shopping mall and impacts on the spatial distribution of GBS sites. A revised list of species requiring endorsement by the Rarities Panel was published in CBN Vol 33, Number 3, December 2008. I would again like to thank *Tyto javanica* and *Acrocephalus stentoreus* for their regular contributions over the past year.

Annual Bird Report. Paul Fennell was responsible for the 2007-08 ABR published in Volume 34, March 2009 Canberra Bird Notes. Thanks to the ABR compilers Barbara Allan, Steve Holliday, Grahame Clark, David McDonald, Ian McMahon, Harvey Perkins, David Purchase and Nicki Taws with each contributor, as usual, responsible for a group or groups of species. Note that the 2007-08 ABR reflects the name changes that have resulted in COG's adoption of the Birds Australia recommended names. The increased use of photos in the ABR has greatly enhanced the publication.

Website. David Cook continues to provide an excellent website. Over the year there have been 148,331 visits to the site, a reduction of 12% over the previous year, with 75,438 visits to the very popular photo gallery. COG continues to support the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group website. There have been 17,529 visits to date, a 60% increase over the past year.



Discussion list and email announcements. COG's Email Discussion Forum 'Canberrabirds' continues to be managed by David McDonald. The membership to the list stands at 242, an increase of 10 from the previous year. The Discussion Forum or 'chat-line' is an excellent forum for the latest sightings, points of interest and provides an invaluable starting point for those wishing to discuss their unusual sightings. Unfortunately, a down-side of the Forum is the large number of bird sightings reported that do not get entered to the COG database.

Other communication. During October, with Adrian Manning and Sean Dooley, COG was invited to provide a verbal presentation to a display of art titled 'Bird Cry- Call from the Grassy Box Woodland' at the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery. The President spoke on the role that COG plays in providing for the better management of this threatened habitat. Remuneration for the presentation was donated to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund.

In the New Year an item on Superb Parrots was provided by the President and published in the local Gungahlin Community Newsletter 'Gunsmoke'.

Surveys and record management

Surveys undertaken by COG members over the past 12 months include the continuation of the woodland surveys at 15 sites across the ACT documenting the species in the threatened Yellow-Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands. Ross Cunningham of Statwise Pty Ltd. was contracted to analyse the data which now includes records for over 10 years from most sites. Jenny Bounds and Nicki Taws, with input from Alison Rowell, are presently writing up a report for the ACT Government. The project continues to be run by a management group comprising, Jenny Bounds, Nicki Taws and myself with data entry by Helen Mason.

Members have also been involved with a survey of the White-fronted Chat at Stromlo Forest Park and a survey of the birds of the International Arboretum. A survey of possible breeding habitat for the threatened Superb Parrot in the proposed Gungahlin suburbs of Kenny, Jacka, Moncrieff, Throsby and Kinlyside is being run over the 2009-10 breeding season. The Superb Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve was run for the sixth year, as usual on the third weekend in June.

The GBS is now in its 29th year. Martin Butterfield continues to manage the project providing feedback through regular items of interest in Gang-gang. Kay Hahne and Anne Hall continue to enter the GBS data, now via the new data input program. Many thanks to all. Over the past 12 months there were 10 requests for data.

The Blitz was run again for the fourth year in late October. Many thanks to Barbara Allan for all the hard work she puts into this project and to the many surveyors.

The COG database continues to expand with 488,579 observations from 32,129 datasheets in the General Observations database with 1308 sheets added during the year; 60% entered on-line. The databases continue to be managed by Paul Fennell and Martin Butterfield. Essential support for the COG database is provided through the Records Management Team and the Rarities Panel. I would like to acknowledge the contributions provided by Nicki Taws as Records Officer, Tony Harding and many others for data entry and to the members of the Rarities Panel consisting of

Richard Allan, Jenny Bounds, Grahame Clark, Dick Schodde, Nicki Taws and Barbara Allan (Secretary), all who have offered to continue in their various roles. Over the past 12 months there were ten requests for data.

Records of observations collected since February 1985 from the ANU Women's Club are in the process of being integrated to the COG database. The data collected over 23 years consists of species recorded in 15 hand-written diaries during monthly visits to many spots throughout the ACT and local region.

Monthly meetings

In April, after requests from members, the committee decided to start the meetings at 7.30pm rather than half an hour later as a trial over the winter period. A show of hands at the September meeting indicated that the majority wished the earlier time to continue over the summer months. The meetings will therefore now start at the earlier time throughout the year.

Jack Holland has again been responsible for a most successful and varied program of speakers. A decision was made by committee to increase spending on presentations to include travel, accommodation, taxi and a meal allowance for those speakers that had to travel to Canberra.

Presentations have varied from short talks on the identification of local cuckoos, how to tell the difference between the Fuscous and Brown-headed Honeyeater and on the Common Myna removal project. Other short presentations provided us with information on the Bar-tailed Godwit tracking program, development of the International Arboretum, seabirds along the north-west shelf, birding in the Gobi Desert and updates on the Garden Bird Survey and four years of the Blitz.

Main talks provided us with details on studies of the Speckled Warbler, Purple-crowned Wren, large forest owls, Superb Lyrebirds, Glossy Black-Cockatoos, Superb Parrots and Tawny Frogmouths whilst results were presented on the Cowra Woodland project, revisiting the Western Australian wheat belt and on revegetation for birds.

A feature of the monthly meeting continues to be the Sales Desk. The Desk this year has been managed by Beth Mantle with much help from Dan Mantle. Many thanks to them both for providing such a valuable service to COG members.

I would once again like to thank Julianne Kampad with occasional assistance from Lia Batterson who have worked quietly behind the scenes to provide the refreshments after the monthly meetings and to Sandra Henderson for taking on the responsibility of providing the raffle prizes and selling the tickets.

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund (CBCF)

There have been 571 visits to the CBCF web page since it was linked to the COG website. In addition the Fund is now promoted by the Friends of Grasslands Inc., the University of Canberra and the Australian National University. During the year a grant of \$2000 for research into Rainbow Bee-eaters migration patterns was approved whilst \$1500 was awarded to support a project assessing the role of kangaroo grazing and the conservation of grassy-box woodland fauna in the Canberra region. The Fund

continues to be managed by David McDonald with a Committee of Managements consisting of David, Geoffrey Dabb and Penny Olsen.

So, where are we heading in the forthcoming year?

- Those aspects of the Forward Plan not being worked on will be progressed once resources become available.
- This coming year David Cook and Beth Mantle will have a look at the most successful COG website with a view to updating and improving where necessary.
- We envisage that the Second Edition of the Birds of Canberra Gardens will be published shortly.
- A Sub-committee will be set up to plan for the 2011 Birds Australia Campout.
- Discussions will proceed on the long-term role of COG and the Mulligans Flat sanctuary.
- I believe it is becoming necessary for COG to help in the formation of a 'Friends of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands'. We need to decide on a role for such a group for it is becoming increasingly obvious that the area needs as much help as it can get.
- Committee needs to survey membership preference for the scanning and placing of Canberra Bird Notes, especially the Annual Bird Report onto the website rather than costly publication and distribution of the hard copy.
- Finally, we will continue to provide support to those activities that are important to the membership.

Conclusion

I would once again like to thank the 2008-09 Committee for all their hard work. I look forward to my third term as President and finally I would like to thank you all for your support over the past year.

Chris Davey,
14th October 2009