

President's Report 2009-10

It is with pleasure that I present my third President's Report covering the period October 2009 to October 2010, that is, over the last 13 months.

Forward Plan

As in the past the Committee's activities have been guided by the Forward Plan. The plan was revisited in mid-November, 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'. This major task has been finalised. Although available for the Christmas sales period the book was officially launched by the Chief Minister on 16th February 2010. I am delighted to say that the book is selling well. The Manager of the Botanical Bookshop at the Australian National Botanic Gardens reports that it has been the best selling book of the year! To date sales have not yet exceeded publication costs but we hope that this will occur in 2011.
- 2) Production of a new 2 CD set of Bird Calls of the ACT region. As reported in the last President's Report there has again been little progress with this project. Recently, a bird recording workshop was organised and attended by four members. A major change in approach was decided upon whereby instead of recording species and then producing a CD, calls recorded by members would be made available on the COG website as they come to hand, and from this a CD set could eventually be produced. It is hoped that this approach will encourage those interested to participate in this project.
- 3) Undertake a scoping study to examine the feasibility of updating the ACT Bird Atlas. It is recognised that it will not be possible to repeat the *ad hoc* approach followed for the data collecting of the first Atlas published in 1992. It has also been recognised that a more systematic approach is needed in order to make statements on the changes in the status of birds in the ACT. An important consideration is to determine what the data collected since 1992 can tell us. Given that 20% of records last year were collected during the 'Blitz' weekend in October it is pertinent to ask if it would be possible to produce an Atlas of the birds of the ACT based on a series of 'Blitz' weekends run at different times of the year. Nick Nicholls and Barbara Allan continue to examine this possibility using data collected over the past five surveys.
- 4) Provide on-going financial support to the Mulligans Flat/ Goorooyarroo ecological community research project. Grants provided in 2009 from COG and from the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund have been used to fund equipment required for the successful 2009 release of 43 translocated Brown

treecreepers into the Reserves. We look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the project. COG members continue to survey the two Reserves thus providing valuable information for the ANU, Fenner School, Ecological Restoration Project.

- 5) Develop sets of display material. No progress has been made in this area over the past year. Instead, this item has become integrated into the project to examine the feasibility of redesigning the COG website (see below).
- 6) Birds Australia Campout- April 2011. A sub-committee has been formed to organise the event, exploratory trips have been made and approval has been given by Bush Heritage Australia to base the Campout on their property 'Scottsdale, just north of Bredbo, NSW.

Of the smaller tasks:

- 1) Bird Routes brochures No 1 is now available and judging by the number remaining from the first print run this has been a most valuable addition to information provided by COG. Bird Routes No. 2 covering Black Mountain to Callum Brae will be available shortly. Many thanks to Sue Lashko for running this project.
- 2) A sub-committee has been set up to examine the feasibility of updating the COG website. Beth Mantle has been the main driver for this project. We are now at the stage of calling for tenders to provide the basic framework for the new web platform. There will be no changes to the COG E-mail Discussion List (Chat-line) but it is envisaged that there will be new facilities available. Although listed as a minor task this has now been updated as a major consideration for COG with the project continuing into the next year.
- 3) COG continues to support the initiatives of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) to reduce populations of the Indian Myna. In particular, we continue to support their website and COG members continue to help in the surveys required by the on-going Ph.D. project into the impacts of the Indian Myna. It is of interest to note that the Garden Bird Survey again indicates a continuing decline in numbers.

Committee

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 2009-10 Committee. Unfortunately we were again unsuccessful in filling the role of Vice-president. Sandra Henderson, as Secretary, has completed her third year whilst Lyn Rees is unable to continue in her role as Treasurer. I would like to acknowledge the large amount of work that Lyn has been able to put into this position over the last two years and I wish to thank her very much for all her efforts. Many of 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, Sue Lashko as Editor of Gang-gang and Meeting Room arranger, Beth Mantle on the Sales Desk and finally to Lia Battisson, Tony Lawson, Michael Robbins, Con Boekel, Dan Mantle and David Rees who have all at various times been involved 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.

Conservation

The many items of conservation concern have this year been dealt with by a sub-committee consisting of Jenny Bounds, Con Boekel, Michael Robbins and myself. COG has had an input into many issues including the following:

- Submission of an application to declare the Glossy Black-Cockatoo a 'Vulnerable' species in the ACT. Jenny, in particular, put a considerable amount of work into this application. I was very pleased to see that the species was declared threatened in the ACT by the Minister on 22nd October 2010. Advice has been provided to the ACT Government on the strategic planting of Drooping She-oak in Canberra Nature Parks and elsewhere and we are delighted that the International Arboretum has planted out a block of this critical food specifically for the Glossy Black-Cockatoo.
- COG provided a submission to the Commissioner of Sustainability and the Environment on the Canberra Nature Park, Molonglo River Corridor and Googong Foreshore and on the proposed Urban Forest Renewal Program. During February, COG, in association with the Commissioner's office ran a one-day forum and workshop at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems to discuss these issues.
- In December COG provided a submission concerning the removal of the Kingston Foreshore Electrical Sub-station to a preferred location north of the present Jerrabomberra Wetlands car park. COG has objected to the recommended location but is happy with the proposed removal of the electrical pylons in the area. We await final decisions on this issue.
- Silver Gull breeding and the restoration of habitat on Spinnaker Island, LBG involving discussions with the National Capital Authority and 'RiverSmart'.
- Submission on the re-alignment of the King's Highway.
- Provided a submission on the Draft Molonglo Valley Strategic Assessment called for in April 2010.
- In June 2010, COG was invited to apply for positions on the Interim Boards of Management for the Mulligan's Flat Sanctuary and for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. I am pleased to announce that COG is now represented on both Interim Boards.
- Provided a submission on the Draft Tidbinbilla Plan of Management.
- COG was again represented at the two-day Bird Interest Group Network (BIGnet) meetings held in mid-April 2010 in Sydney and attended by Jenny Bounds and again in September 2010 in Wyong and attended by Con Boekel.

Outings

Once again COG has been able to run a very comprehensive outings program. Unfortunately, Matthew Frawley had to resign from the position of Outings Officer in late February for personal reasons. Matthew was responsible for setting up the 2010 program. I would like to thank both Matthew and Dan Mantle who subsequently took on this very important role.

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 30 outings this last year. Of these, ten have been outside the local region ranging from birding around Ulladulla, Nangar National Park, on a private property 'Spring Forest' near Cowra, Booderee National Park, a pelagic trip from Eden, Oolambeyan National Park, Little Forest Plateau Ulladulla, Monga National Park, Croajingalong National Park, and a weekend in the Goulburn area. Six specific purpose outings including the Blitz, Nest workshop, Bush Birds for beginners, Waterbirds for Beginners and the Winter Birding by Bus have again been run. There have been outings to five 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.

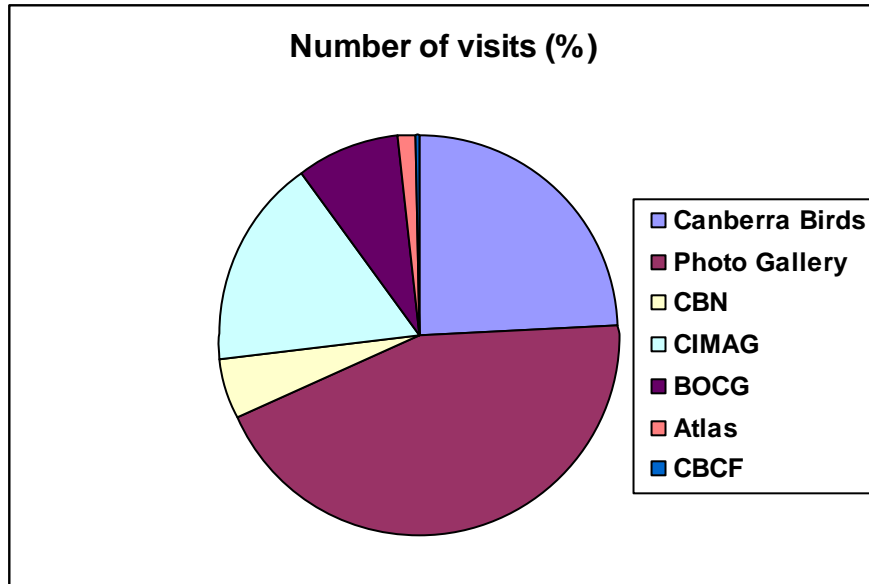
Communications and Publications

Gang-gang. Many thanks to Greg Ramsey and Sue Lashko who have continued with editing and publishing our newsletter. Also, I would like to thank Judy Collett and helpers for the mailing of the newsletter. After over five years of being responsible for the mailing of the newsletter and Canberra Bird Notes, Judy has decided to stand down. I am delighted that Brian Fair has been able to take on this responsibility. I would particularly like to again thank Jack Holland, Ian Fraser and Martin Butterfield for their regular contributions.

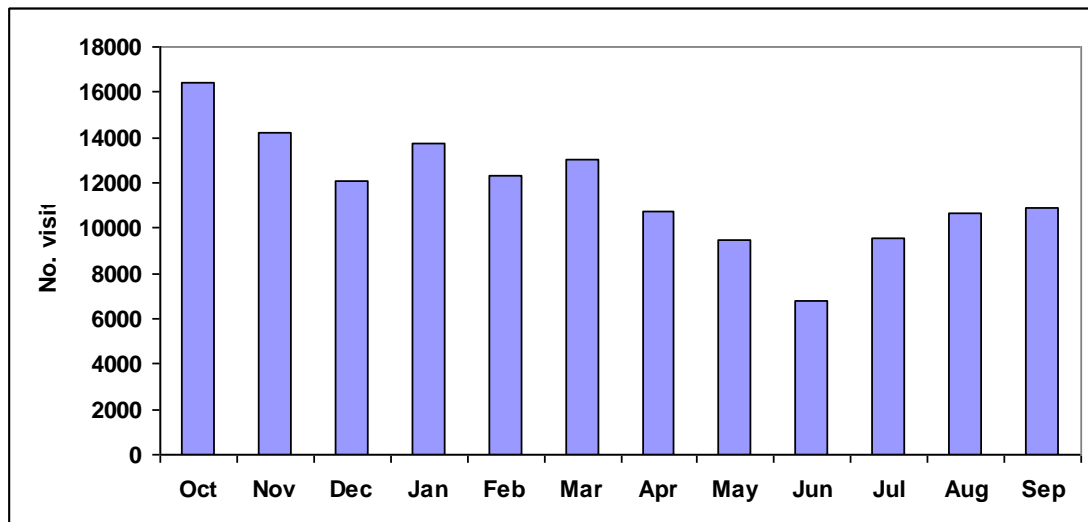
Canberra Bird Notes. This year there have been three editions of CBN produced by Anthony Overs as Editor. After nine issues of CBN Anthony has, due to work pressures, had to stand down. I am delighted that Beth Mantle has put her hand up to take over the position for the December 2010 (Volume 35 Number 3) issue. Major publication items included the 2008-09 Annual Bird Report and articles on a survey of Indian Mynas around Murrumbateman, examining the relationships between GBS site bird data and Google Earth derived environmental data, raptors in the ACT, effects of trapping on Indian Mynas, nesting by Tawny Frogmouths, the 2009 'Blitz' and an article on honeyeater movements. I would again like to thank *Tyto javanica* and *Stentoreus* for their regular contributions over the past year.

Annual Bird Report. Paul Fennell was responsible for the 2008-09 ABR published in Volume 35, March 2010 Canberra Bird Notes. Thanks to the ABR compilers Barbara Allan, Dan Mantle, Con Boekel, Steve Holliday, David McDonald, Ian McMahon, Harvey Perkins, David Purchase and Nicki Taws with each contributor, as usual, responsible for a group or groups of species.

Website. David Cook continues to provide an excellent website. Over the year there have been 139,834 visits to the site, a reduction of 5% over the previous year. Overall there has been a reduction in traffic to the Canberrabirds and Photo Gallery pages and an increase to the Canberra Bird Notes, Birds of Canberra Gardens and to the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group pages.



Over the past 12 months the highest amount of traffic occurred in October 2009 and the lowest in June 2010.



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 243, an increase of one 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.

Surveys and record management

Surveys undertaken by COG members over the past year include the continuation of the woodland surveys at 15 sites across the ACT that documents species in the threatened Yellow-Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands. Dr. Ross Cunningham of

Statwise Pty Ltd. was contracted to analyse the data which now includes records for over 10 years from many sites. A report titled 'A Statistical Analysis of Trends in Occupancy Rates of Woodland Birds in the ACT 1998-2008. The Ten-year Data Analysis' has been completed. The Report, written by Jenny Bounds, Nicki Taws and Ross Cunningham, with input from Alison Rowell, has been provided to the ACT Government. The project continues to be run by a management group comprising, Jenny Bounds, Nicki Taws Alison Rowell and myself with data entry by Helen Mason.

A survey of possible breeding habitat for the threatened Superb Parrot in the proposed Gungahlin suburbs of Kenny, Jacka, Moncrieff, Throsby and Kinlyside was completed with help from 26 COG members. A report titled 'Report on the distribution, abundance and breeding status of the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) during the 2009-10 breeding season, Gungahlin, ACT' was compiled by Chris Davey and provided to the ACT Government. The Superb Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve was run for the seventh year, as usual on the third weekend in June.

The GBS is now in its 30th 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, via the new data input program. Many thanks to all. Over the past 12 months there were seven requests for data. A new print run of GBS charts was required for the 2010-11 year and Martin took the opportunity to reorder the more common species listed on the charts to reflect the ever changing pattern of garden birds in the ACT.

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

Up to 21 COG members were involved in the inaugural K2C bird surveys in April and again in October covering 23 properties in the area between Williamsdale in the north to Bredbo in the south. It is envisaged that COG will continue to contribute to this long-term study.

COG was invited to participate in the annual Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) Forum held in Leeton in mid-September. I would like to thank Nicki Taws for attending and presenting information on the importance of COG bird surveys to government decision making in the ACT.

The COG database continues to expand with 535,883 observations from 34,855 datasheets in the General Observations database, with 2726 sheets added during the year; 65% 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 again 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 five requests for data.

Records of observations collected since February 1985 from the ANU Women's Club have now been processed and 1040 datasheets have now been added to the COG database. The data collected over 23 years consist of species recorded in 15 hand-written diaries during monthly visits to many spots throughout the ACT and local region.

Monthly meetings

Jack Holland has again been responsible for a most successful and varied program of speakers. We have been provided with presentations on the identification of various local species and we have heard about various research projects including the work at Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves, and the Molonglo Valley, a garden bird project, an update on the recent taxonomic work from the Australian National Wildlife Collection, a Ph.D. project on the Australian Owlet-nightjar, how birds communicate about danger, the Eclectus Parrot and the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. We were provided with presentations on the birds of Sweden, the Yellow Sea and southern Peru and we experienced a whimsical tour of the birds of Europe. We heard about the value of Google Earth, the birds of the Iron Range, experiences of a pelagic trip and a review of the COG Blitz. Finally, we were provided with our first father/son evening with Bruce and David Lindenmayer providing details on how to identify thornbills and work in the Victorian wet forest. My thanks to all of the presenters for giving of their time and expertise.

A continuing feature of the monthly meeting is the Sales Desk. The Desk this year has again 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.

With Anthony Overs unable to continue as CBN editor, Beth has undertaken to take on this role. At the end of the financial year she handed over the responsibility of the Sales Desk to Roy Harvey, with help from Anne Holmes, who kindly offered to again take on the role after 12 months away from Canberra.

I would once again like to thank Julianne Kampad with occasional assistance from Lia Battisson 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 390 visits to the CBCF web page this past 12 months. This is a small reduction from the previous year. During the year a grant of \$1,000 was provided for research into parental provisioning calls to nesting scrubwrens with money being used to purchase components for manufacturing robotic nestlings. A grant of \$1,500 was awarded for research into a project titled 'The reduction in the body size of Australian birds as a response to climate change'. The Fund continues to be managed by David McDonald with a Committee of Management consisting of David, Geoffrey Dabb and Penny Olsen.

Summary

In summary, 2009-10 has been a busy year for COG with numbers static at just over 305 members. I believe though that our audience is much greater as free public

access is provided both to the Chat-line and, via the COG website, to facilities such as Gang-gang, CBN and the Photo gallery.

Outings and meetings continue to be the most popular activities with conservation issues continuing to be an area of increased activity.

I note from last year's President's Report that there was a summary of where COG was heading for the 2009-10 year and I am pleased to report that a tick can be placed alongside all proposed activities.

But what for the 2010-11 year?

- As in the past the committee will review the COG Forward Plan. Suggestions are always welcome from the membership but as usual items can only progress given the financial and more importantly personnel inputs required.
- Hopefully progress will have been made on the redesign of the COG website thus offering new avenues and opportunities for COG membership participation.
- The committee looks forward to running the Birds Australia Campout in April 2011 and we urge as many COG members as possible to participate in the various activities yet to be arranged.
- Financially we continue to hold our heads above water and it is of interest to note that in this regard the small bird groups are progressing better than the larger national organisations. We will need to continue to watch the space concerning the likely BOCA/Birds Australia merger and whether our continuing affiliation with BOCA will provide advantages to COG membership.
- Finally, we will continue to provide support to those activities that are important to the membership.

COG in our own way is a very active volunteer organisation on the Canberra scene and as in the past I have reason to thank the many individuals who have worked tirelessly in their various ways to provide services to members. Finally, I would again like to thank the 2009-10 Committee for all their hard work and to thank you all for your support over the past year.

Chris Davey,
10th November 2010