

President's Report 2010-11

It is with pleasure that I present my fourth President's Report covering the period November 2010 to September 2011, that is, over the last 11 months.

Forward Plan

As in the past the Committee's activities have been guided by the COG Forward Plan. The plan was revisited and published in the March 2011 Gang-gang, covers the period 2011 to 2013 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) Update the COG website
To date we have not been able to progress this major item. After defining the requirements for the new website and COG signing a contract with a web design company they unfortunately decided to pull out as key personal moved overseas. To date we have been unable to locate another company that is prepared to cover our specifications and so this item has been put on hold for the time being
- 2) Encourage the recording of local bird calls
Calls from the CD 'Calls of the Birds of the ACT' have now been placed on the Photo Gallery on the COG website. This will not only value add to the site but it will hopefully encourage members to borrow the COG recording equipment and collect the calls that are missing.
- 3) Undertake a scoping study to examine the feasibility of updating the ACT Bird Atlas
Talks with various members interested in this item have been held to discuss the possibility of initiating a long-term survey that will examine the distribution and abundance of birds in the ACT in relation to habitat type. It has been recognised that an update to the 1992 publication 'Birds of the ACT-an Atlas' is not possible and we have not been able to find anyone who could drive this large project. An additional major problem involves differences in habitat classification between the ACT and surrounding NSW. The ACT vegetation map is in the process of being redefined to bring it in line with NSW classifications and until this has been done it is not possible to develop a survey based on habitat. This project has therefore been put on hold for the time being.
- 4) Continue to improve sets of display materials
Before embarking on the updating of display material the Committee decided that a first priority was to look at the possibility of improving and/or updating the present COG Gang-gang logo. With the help of Julian Robinson we are in

the process of talking to graphic designers to get their ideas and possible costs associated with this item.

5) Birds Australia Campout- April 2011

This item has been successfully completed with a summary written up in the May 2011 Gang-gang. I would like to thank Sandra Henderson, Jenny Bounds, Lia Battisson, Sue Lashko, Nicki Taws and Alison Russell-French who made up the organising committee and to Jack Holland, Mark Clayton and Martin Butterfield for help during the Campout.

6) Nominate species in decline in the ACT as threatened in NSW but not listed in the ACT

This work is in progress with Jenny Bounds working on the nomination for the Scarlet Robin

7) Redesign of the 'COG Observation Record' data sheet

Michael Robbins with help from Martin Butterfield, Paul Fennell, Steve Wallace and Geoff Alves has put a considerable effort into this task. This apparently relative simple item has opened up other areas of data collection that need to be examined including the need for a gazetteer. This task is on-going and progressing well.

Of the smaller tasks:

- 1) Bird Routes Brochures No 2 covering Black Mountain to Callum Brae is now available and can be found on the website. Many thanks to Sue Lashko for running this project. Work is now advancing on Brochure No. 3.
- 2) 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 during the year COG members continue to help in the surveys required by the on-going Ph.D. project into the impacts of the Indian Myna.
- 3) An improved map to support COG atlassing has been placed on the COG website.

Committee

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 2010-11 Committee. The Executive consisted of Matthew Frawley as Vice-president, Sandra Henderson, who completed her fourth year as Secretary and Noel Luff as Treasurer. Many of the other members of the Committee have been involved in other roles essential to the running of the Group. Jenny Bounds continued as Conservation Officer with help from both Con Boekel and Michael Robbins. Sue Lashko continued as editor of Gang-gang and meeting-room organiser, Dan Mantle as Outings Officer and Beth Mantle as CBN Editor. Beth due to work commitments had to resign from the Committee in February but was able to continue as Editor. As mentioned previously Michael Robbins has been busy with the redesign of the 'COG Observation Record' data sheets. Lia Battisson was able to stand in for the Treasurer whilst he was away for a number of months. Many thanks also to Tony Lawson and David Rees for their contributions to the working of the 2010-11 Committee.

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:

Submissions to various Federal, NSW and ACT government departments

- Planning the Eastern Broad-acre Area. Discussion Paper- Majura and Jerrabomberra Valleys
- ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the ecological carrying capacity of the ACT and region
- A review of the use of ACT Nature Reserves
- Development of the suburb of Throsby
- Review of the ACT Nature Conservation Act 1980 Discussion Paper
- Comments on the Draft ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy 2011-21
- Molonglo River Corridor. Investigations by the Office of Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment. Input to the Conservation Council submission
- Representation on a working group for the ACT Woodland Restoration Implementation Plan

There have been meetings with the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts concerning the proposed development of the suburb of Throsby and likely effects on the Mulligan's Flat/Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves with additional talks on the proposed Molonglo River Park and development within Molonglo in general.

The Birds Australia Campout made a small profit and this will go towards the purchase of Allocasuarina seedlings specifically for the threatened Glossy Black-Cockatoo. The seedlings will be planted at the Bush Heritage property 'Scottsdale' where the Campout was held. We have received a grant to pay for fencing and tree guards and the planting will go ahead later this month.

Outings

Once again COG has been able to run a very comprehensive outings program. I would like to thank Dan Mantle who has been responsible for this very important task.

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 with outings every month of the year. These mid-week walks are very popular and many thanks to Martin Butterfield and others for organising these events

Not including the Wednesday outings, there have been 24 outings this last year. In addition to visiting local hotspots in the ACT and surrounds, members paid a visit to the Australian National Wildlife Collection based at CSIRO, Ecosystem Sciences, Gungahlin whilst further afield there was a pelagic trip out of Eden and a visit to Willandra National Park and the Little Forest Plateau near Ulladulla. We ran 2 outings for children, both to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The first, organised by

Sandra Henderson, was for the Jerrabomberra Joey Scouts and the second, organised by Matthew Frawley, was for the ACT Down Syndrome Association.

Many thanks to the organisers and leaders and to those who wrote up the trip reports for Gang-gang.

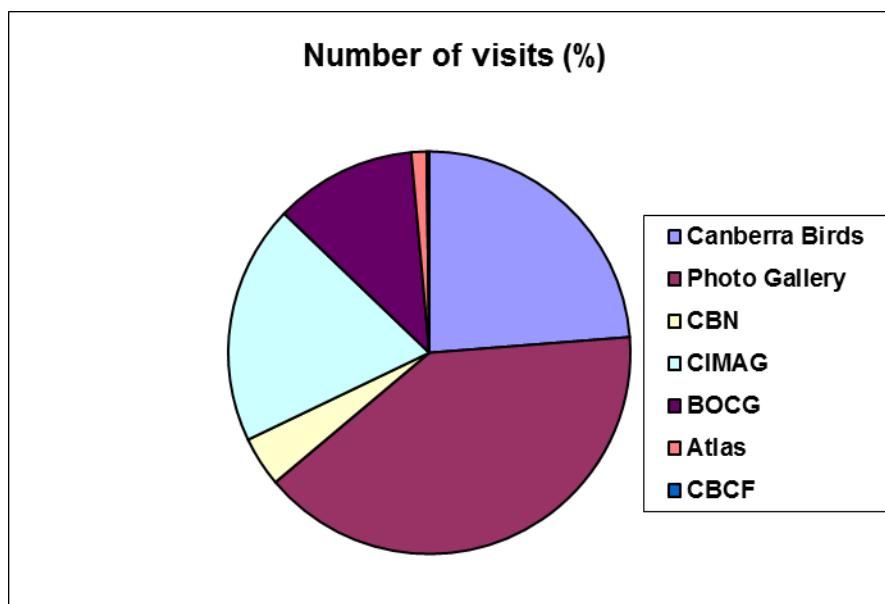
Communications and Publications

Gang-gang. Many thanks to Greg Ramsey and Sue Lashko, with occasional help from Tanya Rough, who have continued with the editing and publishing of our newsletter. Also, I would like to thank Brian Fair and helpers for the mailing of newsletters and Canberra Bird Notes. I would particularly like to again thank Jack Holland, Ian Fraser and Martin Butterfield for their regular contributions.

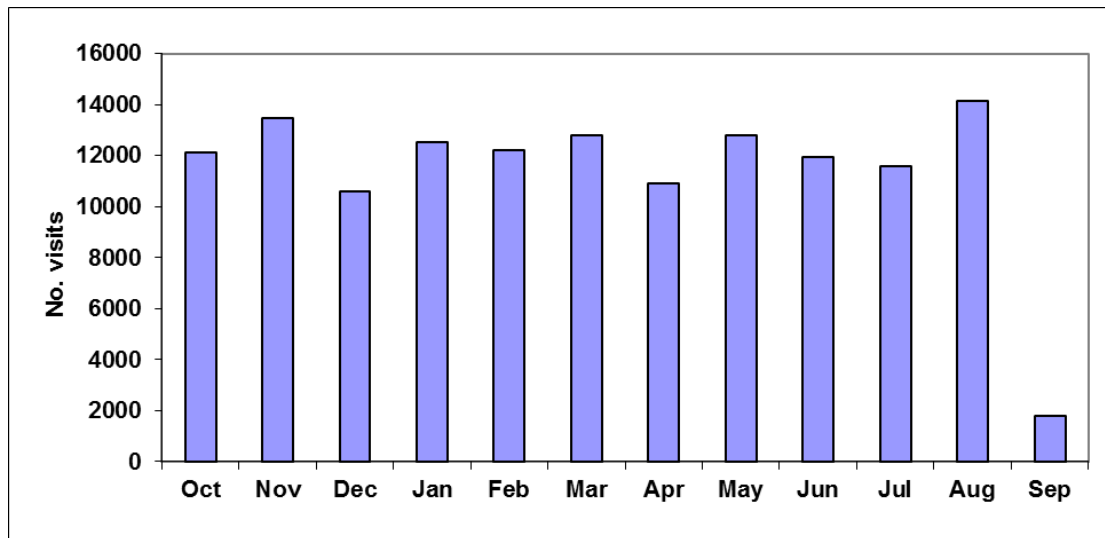
Canberra Bird Notes. This year there has been three editions of CBN produced by Beth Mantle as Editor. Due to work pressures Beth will stand down as Editor and I am delighted that Michael Lenz has put his hand up to take over the position for the December 2011 (Volume 36 Number 3) issue. I would again like to thank *Tyto javanica* and *Stentoreus* for their regular contributions over the past year.

Annual Bird Report. Paul Fennell was responsible for the 2009-10 ABR published in Volume 36, March 2011 Canberra Bird Notes. Thanks to the ABR compilers Barbara Allan, Dan Mantle, Con Boekel, Steve Holliday, Matthew Frawley, David McDonald, Ian McMahon, Harvey Perkins and Paul Fennell 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 136,839 visits to the site, a reduction of 2% over the previous year. Overall there has been a reduction in traffic to the Photo Gallery, Canberra Birds Conservation Fund and Canberra Bird Notes pages and an increase to the Birds of Canberra Gardens and to the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group pages.



Over the past 12 months the traffic has been consistent throughout the year. The low September figure is due to an incomplete reporting period.



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 259, an increase of 16 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.

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. has completed the data analysis of bird observations and habitat changes and a report is now being prepared by Jenny Bounds, Nicki Taws, Alison Rowell and Ross Cunningham. 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 second survey of possible breeding habitat for the threatened Superb Parrot in the proposed Gungahlin suburbs of Kenny and Throsby was completed with help from COG members. In addition, a large area of Goorooyaroo was also surveyed. A report titled ‘Report on the distribution, abundance and breeding status of the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) during the 2010-11 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 eighth year, as usual on the third weekend in June.

The GBS is now in its 31st 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. Many thanks to all. Over the past 12 months there were five requests for data. In May a Data Provider Agreement was signed between COG and the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) for the transfer of GBS data to the ALA portal.

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

COG members were again involved in the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) bird surveys in April and again in October covering 23 properties in the area between Williamsdale and Bredbo. The April survey was run to coincide with the BA Campout

The COG database continues to expand with 556,593 observations from 36,175 datasheets in the General Observations database. There were 1320 sheets added during the year down from 2726 the previous year with 57% entered on-line. It needs to be remembered that last year 1040 datasheets from the ANU Women's Club were processed which greatly added to last year's total. Even so, a reduction in observations entered to the database is of concern and it is hoped that the redesigned 'COG Observation Record' data sheet will go some way to reversing this trend. 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, Helen Mason and many others for data entry and to the members of the Rarities Panel consisting of Richard Allen, Jenny Bounds, Grahame Clark, Dick Schodde, Nicki Taws and Barbara Allan (Secretary), all who have offered to continue in their various roles.

Monthly meetings

Jack Holland has again been responsible for a most successful and varied program of speakers. The Members Night held at the January meeting was a great success, despite the fire alarm, with presentations covering trips by members to Dirk Hartog Island WA, a trip from the U.K. to Australia via the Trans-Siberian Railway and visits to Madagascar, NewHaven NT and Lake Eyre.

The COG policy covering costs for those speakers from interstate has again been worthwhile with very popular presentations on Palm Cockatoos, Swift Parrots, nectarivory in Sunbirds, Tasmania's endemic and threatened species and conservation issues for bird life on Lord Howe Island.

Other subjects covered have included presentations on the Greening Australia project 'Bringing Birds Back', Plains Wanderer, South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program, Birds at Moruya, coevolution between Australian cuckoos and their hosts and reintroducing Brown Treecreepers to the ACT. Members have provided presentations on the Quail and Button-quail, the Koel and Channel-billed Cuckoo, visit to the Connie Sue track, two video presentations on the birds of North Island NZ, the Garden Bird Survey and the 2010 Blitz.

My thanks to all of the speakers for giving of their time.

A continuing feature of the monthly meeting is the Sales Desk. The Desk this year has been managed by Roy Harvey, greatly assisted by Annie Holmes. Many thanks to them both for providing such a valuable service to COG members.

I would also like to thank Roy and Annie for coming to the rescue of the December COG Christmas party. Roy and Annie offered the use of their house after unfavourable weather at the last minute caused a cancellation at Black Mountain Peninsular.

I would once again like to thank Julienne 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 274 visits to the CBCF web page this past 12 months. This is a reduction from the previous year. There were no grants made during the year. 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, 2010-11 has been a busy year for COG with income from membership similar to previous years. 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 2010-11 year and I am pleased to report that a tick can be placed alongside most proposed activities.

But what for the 2011-12 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.
- It is becoming obvious that we need to revisit ways to encourage members to contribute to the General Observations database. We need to review the methods for data collection and look at ways to provide facilities that members require to access data in a more user-friendly way.
- Financially we continue to hold our heads above water and it is of interest to note that in this regard the small bird groups continue to progress better than the larger national organisations.
- Membership appears stable or on a slight decline. Whether this decline is due to a lack of appeal or because those interested in COG activities can access all that COG has to offer without becoming a member is unknown. The COG Committee will need to examine this issue more carefully in the coming year.

- As you may all be aware COG is affiliated with BOCA. With the merger of BA and BOCA to create a new bird organisation 'BirdLife Australia' in January 2012 there will be major changes to the structure of the new organisation. COG, as with other affiliated groups, share the insurance cover provided by BOCA. Despite requests to BOCA we are still unsure of the position that COG could find itself in at the end of the year. There are three possibilities:
 - Insurance will continue to be provided through the new organisation,
 - Insurance will be provided but the cost will need to be shared,
 - COG and other affiliated groups will need to find their own insurance

Letters expressing our concern have been sent to BOCA and BA and the issue has been raised at the 'BIGNET' meeting held at Ulladulla last month. We wait to hear the position that will be taken by BirdLife Australia on this issue.

COG in our own way continues to be a very active volunteer organisation on the Canberra scene. We have worked hard to educate the general public, managers, planners and developers on the benefits of caring for our birds and the natural environment. I wish 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 2010-11 Committee for all their hard work and support over the past year.

Chris Davey,
12th October 2011