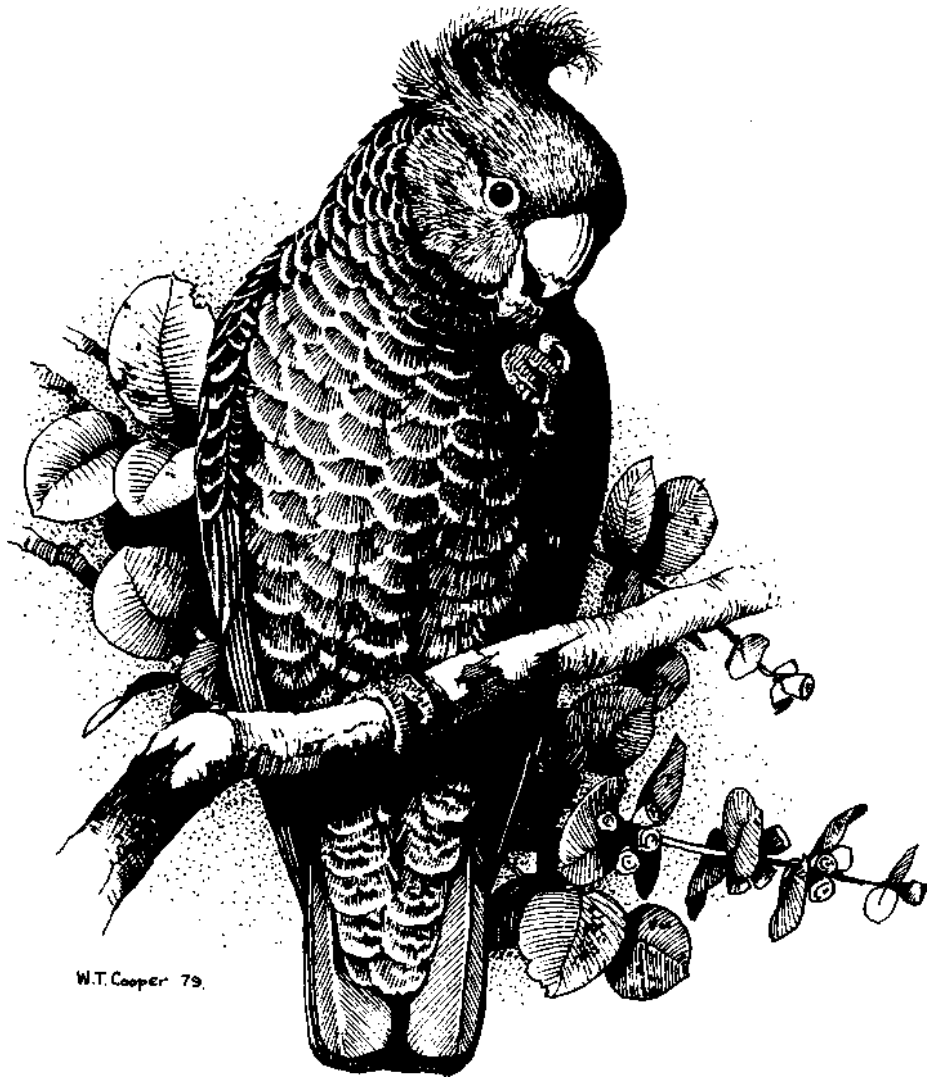


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(Continued inside back cover)

## A RECORD OF THE SCARLET HONEYEATER IN THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS, ACT

Michael Braby

The Scarlet Honeyeater *Myzomela sanguinolenta* is a small bird about 100 mm long. The males are characterised by having a brilliant scarlet head and throat, and can be separated from the closely allied Red-headed Honeyeater *M. erythrocephala*, by the scarlet areas extending down the back and breast and the whitish-grey underparts. The Scarlet Honeyeater is widely distributed along the east coast of Australia, being common in the tropical and subtropical region, whereas the Red-headed Honeyeater is confined only to far northern Australia. At the southern end of the range in the south-east the Scarlet Honeyeater is irregular and probably vagrant as birds have been recorded infrequently only between spring and autumn (Blakers et al. 1984). In the ACT, Taylor and Canberra Ornithologists Group (1992) note only five records, all between September and December, which they attribute to birds straying westwards over the Great Dividing Range from the moist coastal lowlands. Since then there have been a further four published records of Scarlet Honeyeaters in our area. These are: 1, 27.8.91, Weetangera; 2, 27.10.91, Australian National Botanic Gardens; 1, 27.10.91 Kambah Pool (Anon. 1991); and 1, 15.11.93, 17 km S Captains Flat (Anon. 1994). In the Australian National Botanic Gardens the Scarlet Honeyeater is listed as being "extremely rare" (Department of the Capital Territory 1974).

On 26 October 1995, between 1245 and 1305, I recorded a male Scarlet Honeyeater in the Botanic Gardens near the northern boundary adjacent to the CSIRO Black Mountain Laboratories. I first detected the bird by call (as I sat down to eat my lunch) and initially did not believe my hearing. However, I am very familiar with this species having lived in tropical north Queensland for five years where I noted it to be not uncommon in the lowland coastal woodlands and eucalypt open-forests at my field study sites at Cardwell. The birds usually forage high in the tree-tops and their short *tinkling* call is given infrequently, perhaps about every 3 to 5 minutes. After some persistence in trying to locate the bird responsible for the call, I eventually managed to observe with my binoculars a beautiful male high up in a Brittle Gum *Eucalyptus mannifera*. It flew quickly and repeatedly between the canopy of several adjacent trees, occasionally settling among the branches (where excellent views were made with the sun behind me) before it flew to another nearby tree. I did not observe it to forage on insects, and the bird made no attempt to feed from the nectar of the many flowering plants in the general vicinity. It remained in a restricted area for at least 20 minutes before disappearing from view.

A report for this record has been submitted to the Rarities Panel.

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## THE ETYMOLOGY OF "JIZZ"

David McDonald

The word "jizz" has been part of the language of birding, in the English-speaking nations, for a number of years. To quote some Australian examples: *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* describes the Rose Robin *Petroica rosea* as having "a more flycatcher-like jizz" than other red-breasted robins, and the yellow robins have "a characteristic 'fizz' ... they typically cling sideways low on a vertical trunk or vine" (Pizzey 1983, p. 273). The *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* describes the Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* as having a "less stocky jizz" than a Cattle Egret *A. ibis* (Marchant and Higgins 1990, p. 1017). The term was also used in *The Atlas of Australian Birds* where the authors referred to "the essential characteristics or 'fizz' of [a] species" (Blakers et al. 1984, p. xxxviii).

So what, exactly, is meant by the term "jizz" and where does it come from?

### Meaning

In an article published in the newsletter of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club, Dymond (1990) states: "Jizz is a relatively new addition to the terminology of bird identification and recognition. It is one of the characteristics ... which enables a bird to be recognised instantly... Examples are GANNET - appears large at sea, long neck and wedge-shaped tail imparting distinctive 'pointed at both ends' jizz."

Contrary to the view of many people that the term "jizz" is slang or jargon used exclusively and loosely by birders, or one which really belongs in another world such as that of the military, jizz is found in basic references, such as those referred to above and in ornithological dictionaries. For example, A *Dictionary of Birds* defines jizz as: "A combination of characteristics which identify a living creature in the field, but which may not be distinguished individually" (Campbell and Lack 1985, p. 313). The glossary in the *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* defines jizz as "A word used by 'twitchers' - avid birdwatchers - to describe everything about a bird in one, all-embracing term; the essence or 'character' of a bird in the field" (Simpson and Day 1993, p. 379).

Although "jizz" did not appear in the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), the second edition (Simpson and Weiner 1989, p. 264) defines it as: "The characteristic impression given by an animal or plant". This definition is carried across to more readily accessible versions of the dictionary such as the second edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Hughes et al. 1992). However, it did not appear in the first edition (Turner 1987) which was based on the first edition of the *OED*.

## Origin

Where does "jizz" come from? Three groups of possibilities are suggested in the literature and the opinions of birders:

### 1. General Impression of Size and Shape - GISS

Dymond (1990) suggested that: "Jizz is a term derived from the fighter pilots' acronym, GIS - General Impression and Shape".

Harvey (1985) expressed a similar view: "Surely 'jizz' is a corruption of the old Army term 'general impression and shape', used by patrols, guards and, particularly, coastal/aerial watchers? It is still in use in the US Army at least, and is written 'G.I.S.'"

In fact, as evidenced by contributions on this topic distributed on the Internet discussion list *Birdchat* in 1994, and from a number of personal conversations, the most commonly accepted origin of the word jizz is, as Dymond suggests, a Second World War acronym concerned with the identification of aircraft, both friendly and enemy. Most commonly, however, jizz is understood to have come not from GIS (as Dymond and Harvey suggested) but from GISS, a contraction of General Impression of Size and Shape.

Some birders seem convinced of this origin. Mackieman (1994) is one of these: "Nevertheless – this from RAF person who is a birder – GIZZ' does come from the 'general impression, shape and size' rule from aircraft sighting. ... And I think the Brits tend to be pretty effective gizz (or jizz) birders."

Kloot (1995) provides a fuller explanation of GISS: "During World War 2, pilots and their crew were briefed as to how to swiftly identify various aircraft, both the enemy's, and their own. ... In combat there was not time to reach for, and consult a manual, so images of planes were flashed onto a screen, and the pilots and crew were required to instantly recognise their features, contours and size; in fact, to gauge the 'General Impression of Shape and Size' of every known aircraft. So, General Impression of Shape and Size became 'GISTS'. ... And from 'GISS' came 'Jizz!'"

## 2. Pre-Second World War usage in nature studies

A quite different origin from the Second World War's GISS is found in standard sources. Both *A Dictionary of Birds* (Campbell and Lack 1985) and the second edition of the *OED* (Simpson and Weiner 1989) refer us to a book by a prominent British writer on birds, T. A. Coward, published in London in 1922, titled *Bird Haunts and Nature Memories*. This is what Coward wrote (as quoted in the *OED* (p. 246) - page numbers in the quotation are references to Coward):

"A West Coast Irishman was familiar with the wild creatures which dwelt on or visited his rocks and shores; at a glance he could name them, usually correctly, but if asked how he knew them would reply 'By their "jizz"!'. What is jizz?.. We have not coined it, but how wide its use in Ireland is we cannot say... Jizz may be applied to or possessed by any animate and some inanimate objects, yet we cannot clearly define it. A single character may supply it, or it may be the combination of many (p. 141). ... Jizz, of course, is not confined to birds. The small mammal and the plant alike have jizz (p. 143)."

Here we have evidence that jizz long predated the Second World War. According to Coward, it was used in the early part of the century, at least on the West Coast of Ireland, with the same meaning we now give to it in birding and with the same meaning as that captured by the GISS acronym.

## 3. Other origins

American correspondent Wallace (1994) had a different view, stating that it comes from the Second World War acronym GIS which stood for "General Identification System".

Litwin (1994) went straight to the point, saying that: "I thought 'jizz' was a contraction from 'just is!'"

Danca (1994) came from a different angle altogether. He suggested that jizz: "comes from a corrupted shortening of the word 'gestalt' mispronounced with a soft G as in 'jestalt'. The term jestalt has been the common element in defining jizz in nearly all the guesses that have appeared [in the 1994 *Birdchat* discussion]. That whole 'general impression of size and shape [or whatever]' origin sounds just too neat. It feels like (and probably is) a back-construction from someone who invented words to go with what he thought was an acronym. Besides. GISS would be pronounced 'jiss'. not 'jizz' (or 'gizz'). Folks, I think we have an urban legend here with this derivation. I still vote for the 'jestalt' origins."

Principe (1994) points to support for the "gestalt" origin. He reminds us that Danca's view, "is supported by Christopher Leahy in his book (*The Birdwatcher's Companion* Bonanza Books, 1982). He says 'A distinctive physical "attitude", totally apart from any specific field mark ... The origin of the term is uncertain; perhaps a corruption of "gestalt".' (Gestalt is a term used most commonly in psychology, meaning "a configuration or figure whose integration differs from the totality obtained from summing the parts" (Wolman 1989, p. 146)).

Two tasks remain. The first is to find out if GISS, General Impression of Size and Shape, was in fact used in the Second World War. The second is to find the origin of the West Coast Irishman's word jizz and to corroborate Coward's explanation.

## **The etymology of jizz**

### *1. Corroborating the "GISS" origin*

In her article, Moot acknowledges an English birding colleague as the source of her explanation which is quoted in full, above. I have contacted him and he responded, writing: "I'm sorry to have to disappoint you, but I'm afraid that I can provide you with no new information regarding the origin of the term. ...the explanation is really no more than part of birding folklore and gains more credence with each act of repetition." (Smith, pers. comm.)

An approach to the Australian Department of Defence, Air Force Office, Royal Australian Air Force Historical Records and Information Services, was unsuccessful in locating any corroboration of the use of the GISS acronym. A similar approach to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence's Air Historical Branch (RAF) met with the same negative result.

On a personal note I, too, have always believed that jizz came from the Second World War's GISS. Indeed, I have a vague recollection that, as an Australian serviceman in the 1960s, I learned the term in the context of aircraft recognition and only met it again when I came to birding in more recent years.

On Smith's suggestion I turned to the book *Birds by Character: A Field Guide to Jizz Identification* (Hume 1990). It is an excellent guide to the birds of Britain and Europe but neither defines jizz nor discusses its etymology. The author has indicated to me in correspondence that, in his opinion, while the GISS idea sounds plausible, it is more likely to be incorrect.

Despite the inability of the RAF and RAAF historical sections to locate references to GISS, and the reservations expressed by some commentators about this being the origin, or one of the origins, of "jizz", I can report first-hand evidence for GISS being used in the UK during Second World War and its drift from aircraft identification to birding. This information comes from an English birder, James West, a linguist by profession, who served in the Royal Air Force during the 1950s and is currently at the University of Washington. West writes:

"The term 'jizz' came into use while I was growing up - I watched it catch on, if you like. There isn't any doubt that it canes in the first place from GISS. This was a Royal Air Force term, but what gave it the wide currency was the Royal Observer Corps, a vast nationwide organization of volunteer aircraft spotters trained to detect the approach of enemy aircraft and report them. This made the abbreviation of the term 'General Impression of Size and Shape' a household word in Britain...

"The Irish west-coast 'jizz' is fascinating, and could conceivably have been an assimilation cognate among the Irish living in England (of whom there were many in the larger industrial cities, which were the strongholds of the Royal Observer Corps - they were the bombing targets!), but it's simply too esoteric to be plausible as the single origin of so widespread a term. Besides - I and many other Brits of that vintage watched GISS become 'jizz'..." (McDonald 1995).

West (pers. comm.) later clarified his comments, confirming that he personally observed the drift from "GISS" to "jizz":

"I heard the term 'GISS' used by one of my grandfathers, who was [a senior person in] the Royal Observer Corps ... I also heard it among kids of my own age and a bit older. and some involved adults. as our games and hobbies, even a decade after the war, reflected the excitements of wartime (one of the appalling things about war is how it does this to children). Among these users the pronunciation had already become GIZZ - a natural phonetic drift in English, especially among kids who sometimes didn't know what it 'stood for'.

"In due course, I noticed it showing up in both the conversations and the literature of bird-watching. There would have been a considerable overlap



between the people who had outdoors interests like birdwatching, and the people who belonged to the ROC during the war, or had relatives who did. I wish I could tell you when I first heard birdwatchers use the term. but I can't - which means I would have heard it pretty early on, and not have found it at all remarkable."

Although I have no reason to doubt West's first-hand explanation, I have been unable to locate any documentary corroboration of the Second World War usage of GISS. This is surprising considering the quality and quantity of the sources I have reviewed. primarily courtesy of the Research Centre at the Australian War Memorial. GISS is not mentioned in the two standard histories of the Royal Observer Corps (Winslow 1948, Wood 1976). To be fair, however, neither of these sources discussed the day-to-day techniques applied to aircraft identification; neither provides an exposition of any alternatives to GISS.

A book with the title *The Spotter's Handbook* (Chichester 1941) contains a Chapter on "Systematic Identification". It does not mention GISS nor does it apply the concept of the general impression of an aircraft. Rather it describes what was apparently the accepted aircraft identification technique, the "WEFT" approach in which observers were directed to analyse separately the Wings, Engines, Fuselage and Tail - the antithesis of the GISS approach.

The official 1946 UK War Office training manual on this topic has a section on "Recognition by Appearance". It criticises the WEFT approach (without naming it) and applies the jizz/GISS approach but without referring to this approach as "jizz", "General Impression of Size and Shape". or "GISS":

"... to the sportsman or country dweller a bird is recognized by its general appearance and method of flight (practical) - not by details of the exact shape of various parts of its body. Similarly, an aircraft is recognized by its general appearance and 'sit' in the air, not by precise constructional details." (Anon. 1946. p. 3).

Finally, a 1977 Australian Army aircraft recognition training manual (Anon. 1977) provides a brief history of the topic. It describes the WEFT system as "the first formal aircraft recognition training programme [which] was developed in England early in World War II. ... The US forces adopted the WEFT system in 1946" (p. 101). It goes on to describe how a system was developed in the USA in 1942 emphasising the "whole-image concept" (in contrast to the WEFT system). In modified form, this was adopted by the US Navy in 1942 and by the US Army Air Corps in 1943 (p. 102). (The temporal inconsistency here is in the original.)

These war-time military sources not only fail to refer to GISS but also explicitly cover the concept of GISS/jizz, even referring to the parallel to birding! (Of course, my failure to find documentary corroboration of the use of GISS in Second World War aircraft identification does not mean that it was not used. It simply provides a challenge to others to locate the sources.)

## 2. *Corroborating Coward's West Coast Irishman's origin of jizz*

As discussed below, the second edition of the *OED* (Simpson and Weiner 1989) states that the etymology of Coward's jizz is unknown; in other words, we do not know the origin of the word jizz as used by the West Coast Irishman from whom Coward learned it. Enquiries that I have made with members of the Internet Gaelic language discussion group *Gaelic-L* and the Usenet group *soc.culture.celtic* have not revealed any Gaelic origin for jizz.

An intriguing possibility exists that Coward may have made a mistake from the beginning. The *OED* and other dictionaries such as *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (Partridge 1984) contain the English language word "jism" or "gism", also rendered in other ways including "jizz". The word (with various spellings including "jizz") is frequently used in contemporary pornographic writing to mean seminal fluid. It was used in 1967 in Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, and Partridge wonders if it has a Yiddish origin. Importantly for our purposes, however, the *OED* gives an additional (and earlier) meaning, namely energy or strength, noting that the word had its origin in the USA. It provides an 1842 example of use of "gism" referring the strength or energy of a horse, and a 1937 example where a person mentioned "jism", referring to the power of a motor vehicle.

Ivan T. Draper (1985) suggested that this was the word that Coward learned from his West Coast Irishman. Draper wrote: "[The word jizz] was familiar ... to friends from Dublin and Kildare, and it was generally used to imply spirit or cockiness. Schoolboys were encouraged to 'show a bit of jizz' and a sergeant-major regularly promised to knock the jizz or jizzom (jissom) out of a squad of recruits. There was no suggestion that it encompassed any idea of 'diagnostic characteristics' ...It seems that we owe this useful term to Coward's misinterpretation of the 'West Coast Irishman's' meaning."

This makes sense, considering that no etymology can be found for the word with the "characteristic impression" meaning. One can readily visualise the Irishman telling Coward that a particular bird species was recognisable from its jizz, meaning specifically its cockiness or energetic characteristics, rather than meaning its characteristic impression as such. On the other hand, I note below some etymological arguments that suggest that Coward may have not been mistaken.

## Etymology, and similar words and concepts

In presenting Coward's 1922 meaning and source of jizz, the *OED* states that the etymology of jizz is unknown. It points to the similarly-sounding and similarly-meaning word *guise*, which it gives the meaning "manner of carrying oneself; behaviour. carriage, conduct. course of life". It points out that *guise* "is coincident in sense [with jizz] but the phonetic relationship remains unexplained and the two words may therefore be unrelated". On the other hand, they may well be related!

According to the editor of *British Birds*. in a later edition of his book (I believe it was the 1931 edition but have not seen it) Coward added: "Since the publication of the first edition, a friend pointed out that in Webster's Dictionary both *gis'* and *jis'* are given as obsolete variants of *guise*. and this seems to be the origin of the expressive word." (Anon. 1984).

Another word with a similar sound and meaning as jizz. but one which does not seem to appear in the literature on the origins of the term, is "gist". defined in the *OED* as the "real ground or point, substance or pith of a matter". A Gaelic speaker, Fergus O'Dea, suggests that *gist* may be the, or an, origin of jizz. After I advised him of Coward's West Coast Irishman's usage. he stated (pers. comm, 1995): "Being from the west of Ireland myself. my guess [as to the origin of jizz] would be that it is a corruption of 'gist'. the English word. I knew ... the word. when you wrote it. to mean 'essence' or 'gist' immediately. and had to struggle to figure out why." He apologised for not being able to suggest an Irish language origin!

Before concluding. let me intrude just one more intriguing set of facts into the puzzle. Partridge (1984. p. 419) includes the word "gizz", defining it as: "A face: Scot.: C. 19. (EDD). Perhaps influenced by *phiz*. but certainly derived from *guise* (a mask). of which it once formed a var[iant]." (Note: "EDD" is Joseph Wright's 1898-1905 *The English Dialect Dictionary*.) *Phiz* (or *phizz*), according to Partridge, was an eighteenth century jocular, colloquial abbreviation of "physiognomy" and meant a "face; expression of face".

We are left with three loose ends:

- I. The possibility of common origins for :
  - (a) the nineteenth century Scottish word "gizz" (a face);
  - (b) the eighteenth century word "phiz" or "phizz" (face. expression of face);
  - (c) the English word "gist" meaning the essence of something; and
  - (d) Coward's West Coast Irishman's "jizz" (the characteristic impression given by an animal or plant).

2. The possibility that Coward was wrong from the start and that "jizz", being the word he introduced into birding, actually had a quite different meaning from the one he grasped.
3. It would be valuable to find documentary evidence for the use of GISS in the Second World War's efforts in aircraft recognition, and for the drift in usage from that context to birding.

The lack of resolution of this puzzle provides a challenge to readers to take the etymological detective work somewhat further. It also reminds us that, in a living and rapidly changing language like English, a given word can have multiple origins and multiple meanings.

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## ODD OBS

### SUBURBAN WEDGIES

*Steve Wilson*

I have long since learned that when you hear alarm calls from birds you should quickly investigate as there is often an interesting reason.

At 10.15 a.m. on Sunday 7 January 1996, I was in my shed when the local Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita* started to call very loudly. Outside I found seven excited cockatoos calling and flying between trees and power-lines, and high up to the south were another eight calling and flying at c. 100 m trying to drive off two Wedge-tailed Eagles *Aquila audax*. There was a moderate southerly breeze and the wedgies were circling constantly and drifting slowly north without a wing beat. Their reaction to the cockatoos was to gradually increase their elevation until they were c. 300 m above our home and still circling. As they ascended their tormentors gave up the effort and returned to their territories. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos breed in this area which still has many old eucalypts.

One wedgie decided to head north and ceased circling and with up-swept wings, travelled with the wind at speed and was soon out of sight. The second bird continued its circling to the north. They were in sight for about 10 minutes.

*S.J. Wilson, 56 Harrington Circuit, KAMBAH ACT 2902*

### BROWN GOSHAWK TAKES COMMON MYNA

*Jenny Bounds*

On 27 July 1995, around 5.15 p.m., at Weston, I heard a commotion on the nature strip and saw a Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* on the ground with a Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* in its talons. Minutes before there had been several mynas perched in the tops of nearby deciduous oak trees *Quercus* sp. (as these birds commonly do in the late afternoon). I presume the goshawk had taken the myna from a tree and then dragged it to cover under an overhanging shrub. By the size and colour pattern I judged the goshawk to be an immature female.

The goshawk had the myna on its back, and was balanced awkwardly with one set of talons on the myna's chest and the other on its abdomen. The myna squawked loudly and attempted to fend off the goshawk by stabbing at the goshawk with its open beak. Over a period of ten minutes, the goshawk disembowelled and ate the myna, whose squawks and beak stabbing became more feeble. While this was going on, a family of Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen* and several Pied Currawongs *Strepera graculina* made alarm calls and the magpies made a few ineffective swoops, however these birds lost interest after a few minutes. Several cars went past within a few metres, but this did not seem to bother the goshawk. The goshawk then flew off in the direction of Oakey Hill Nature Park with the remains of the myna.

I recall raptor expert Jerry Olsen say at the July 1995 COG meeting that Common Mynas were rarely caught by Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* because mynas were quite agile. I have recorded a Brown Goshawk around my garden from time to time, and I was pleased to see this young goshawk reducing the substantial myna population in the area.

*Jenny Bounds, PO Box 403, WODEN ACT 2606*

### **MASKED LAPWINGS NESTING ON A ROUNDABOUT**

*Denis Wilson*

It is well-known that Masked Lapwings *Vanellus miles* frequently make use of man-made landscaping for feeding and breeding (for example see van Tets 1984, Masked Plover, In: *Birds in the Australian High Country*, (revised edition) (editor H.J. Frith) pp. 121-123. Angus and Robertson: Sydney).

At the junction of Parkes Way and Anzac Parade there is a roundabout (c. 75 m in diameter) which has a shallow ornamental pond in its centre. Except for the pond, the roundabout is grassed and is a popular grazing area for Australian Wood Ducks *Chenonetta jubata*. It is also regularly visited by Masked Lapwings which have bred there for a number of years.

On 29 August 1995 I saw a pair of adult lapwings with three chicks - two free-running and one sheltering under an adult. By their small size I suspect the chicks were only several days old. This is earlier than I can recall seeing chicks here in previous years and may be a result of the late winter period having been mild.

Masked Lapwings successfully breed on the roundabout despite being surrounded by busy roads. The City Parks lawn mowers have been known to place stakes around the

nest so as to avoid mowing over the eggs. The location is presumably relatively safe from predators because of the traffic. In previous years the adults have kept the chicks on the roundabout for three or four days before moving them to either the nature strip adjacent to the Anzac Park East offices or the median strip in Parkes Way. Once safely off the roundabout, they stay in the area until nearly fully grown.

*Denis Wilson, 39 Anzac Park, REID ACT 2601*

### **LONE FUSCOUS AND YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATERS KEEPING COMPANY**

*Jenny Bounds*

Based on reports made to the COG "Hotline" and COG meetings, the 1995 winter had more than the usual observations in the ACT's suburbs of honeyeaters "overwintering" - particularly Fuscous Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus fuscus* and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters *L. chrysops*. In my garden in Weston over July and August, I noticed that a single Fuscous Honeyeater and a single Yellow-faced Honeyeater seemed to turn up regularly together. These were the only individuals of these species seen in the garden during this period although small groups had been observed in May and June. The two birds seemed to arrive together, usually in the early morning, and fed together on a few grevilleas *Grevillea* spp., a young flowering Red Ironbox *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* and the exudate from scale insects (Coccidae, Hemiptera) on a Cider Gum *E. gunnii*. In the afternoon, often between 4 and 5 p.m., they came in to bathe together in one of the water bowls and sat near to each other in a Willow-leaved Hakea *Hakea salicifolia* to preen for a while. They called on arrival and then intermittently during their time in the garden, giving a single contact call (different for each species). I suspect they were the same two birds that were keeping company.

*Jenny Bounds, PO Box 403, WODEN ACT 2606*

### **BELL MINERS NEAR WARRINA INLET, LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN, ACT**

*Steve Wilson*

During the past two years there have been a number of reports of Bell Miners *Manorina melanophrys* from the Canberra—Queanbeyan area. These include a report, which is still pending endorsement by the Rarities Panel, of a small group near the Queanbeyan River on the eastern outskirts of Queanbeyan (Purchase pers. comm.) and



a report from the campus of the Australian National University (Anon. 1994. *Canberra Bird Notes* 19: 74-76). These reports are surprising as Bell Miners are rarely seen on the inland side of the Great Dividing Range and there are no earlier reports from our area.

On 11 January 1996, my son Brendan and his wife Betty cycled around Lake Burley Griffin and when between Government House and Banks Street, Yarralumla, they heard the distinctive call of Bell Miners. They stopped, and even without the aid of binoculars, were able to see the birds and identify them.

At about 6 p.m. that evening, Brendan and I went to Dunrossil Drive, Yarralumla, and walked along the cycle path towards Banks Street. As we crossed the Warrina Inlet bridge we could hear the bell-like calls of the miners. About 200 m further on we located them in a group of large *Eucalyptus cinerea* near a seat where the power lines cross the path. As we got closer to the birds we could hear the harsh unmusical calls which they make in addition to the familiar bell-like ones.

We spent about 15 minutes watching the birds and concluded that four were present. The birds were mostly in the treetops and appeared to be feeding on lerps, often hanging upside down as they worked the finest outer twigs. At times one would come down to a twig at head height and we would get a good view of its largely olive-green plumage. This, together with its yellow lores and patch of orange-red skin behind the eye, readily identify the species. Both of us are very familiar with Bell Miners in the coastal forests.

A report for this record has been submitted to the Rarities Panel for endorsement.

*Si. Wilson, 56 Harrington Circuit, KAMBAH ACT 2902*

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### **SHOPFRONT AND OFFICE**

Natural History Centre, Room G5, Griffin Centre, 19 Bunda Street, Civic ACT.  
(Together with the Field Naturalist Association of Canberra and the ACT Herpetologists Association.)

Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 10 am to 2 pm; Saturday 10 am to 1 pm.

Telephone: (06) 247 4996; answering machine after hours.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 1995**

This is my third annual report as President. I am not re-nominating for another year as I believe that after three years in this job you need a break from the responsibility and to give others an opportunity. I intend to nominate as a committee member on the "back bench" and hope to continue to be involved in a number of activities such as the field trips program, the Mulligans Flat surveys and conservation issues.

I have a basic philosophy that COG exists primarily for its members and that the focus should be on activities and education for members. During my presidency, I have endeavoured to ensure members feel they are an important part of the organisation, that new members are made welcome and that we have interesting and diverse programs of meetings and other activities for members. On the committee side, we have streamlined committee meetings and introduced better financial planning and monitoring, and finally we have a working database for our bird records, another important focus for COG.

Thank you to all who have contributed to COG in 1995, including those on COG subcommittees who have not specifically been mentioned in this report. Thank you particularly to the committee members who have been with me during my presidency; you have been an excellent team to work with. I particularly mention retiring Secretary, Robin Smith, and Vice-President Paul Fennell who have given great support. I wish the incoming President well; it is a rewarding and worthwhile experience if you are prepared to make the commitment.

### **Administration and Finance**

In 1995 the COG Committee continued to have short monthly meetings, with a break from December to January. By better planning and monitoring, we have put COG's finances on a more strategic and accountable footing and hope to continue to maintain a good level of reserve funds. As a result, COG subscriptions have been maintained at the present level for three years, although eventually there will need to be a small rise to cover ever increasing costs. We adopted a "user pays" principle in relation to some of the activities the committee organises for members, recognising the significant effort in running tours, bus trips and the like, by putting a small administrative loading on the cost of these organised activities while still keeping the total cost low for members.

Thank you to our Treasurer, John Avery and to Noel Luff and Cedric Bear who maintain the membership list.

In 1995, the first COG metal badge was produced in two colours (a red and a grey border), featuring our wonderful Gang-gang emblem. The badge was well received by members. The COG T-shirts which were first marketed in 1994 continue to sell well.

## **Meetings**

In 1995, COG moved to larger meeting premises at Forestry House in Yarralumla, a venue with no security constraints and a more social atmosphere. COG celebrated its 25th birthday in April with a meeting of nostalgia and long time members reminiscing - Stephen Marchant was the special guest speaker, and some of our original members. David Purchase, Henry Nix, Steve Wilson and Grahame Clark provided a panel of commentators. The new meeting venue has meant opportunities for more social type functions, including supper at members night in January and a get together for the Shopfront (Natural History Centre) volunteers in October. In December, the COG Xmas Party was held at Forestry House.

An excellent variety of topics has been featured at meetings, including fossil avifauna at Riversleigh, the diet of Peregrine Falcons, birds of the snow country, the effects of Common Mynas on native parrots, a debate about duck hunting, birds of Lady Elliott Island and the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project, as well as an interesting selection of bird of the month talks mostly given by members. Mark Clayton finally did the bird of the month talk on bronze-cuckoos which had been scheduled at a COG meeting 25 years ago but cancelled, a record unlikely to ever be broken! Thank you to all the speakers in 1995, who provided a high standard and excellent variety of talks, especially to Dick Schodde for his regular contributions to bird of the month. Thank you also to Jonette McDonnell who organises the raffles at meetings and to Ann McKenzie, Pat Muller, Shirley Kral and Margaret Palmer who organise the information/sales desk at meetings.

## **Field Trips Program**

In 1995, we improved the field trips program by running more bus trips, including hired, self-drive mini-buses. This is also a more environmentally friendly option than taking several cars. We had a most successful bus tour with Emu Tours to Tasmania in February, and Emu Tours provided transport for a Barren Grounds weekend in November and a day trip to the historic Corn Trail on Clyde Mountain in June. COG is grateful for this support from Emu Tours. We also hired mini-buses for the southern highlands, Jindalee and Blakney's Creek field trips; these were well patronised by members.

In October, we ran our own long weekend bus tour to north-eastern Victoria, to the Chiltern Forest and the Warby Ranges, visiting also a number of the Rutherglen wineries; this was particularly successful with the help of local guides and members of the BOCA who were camping in the Warby Ranges. Bob Ecclestone (from the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra) and John Avery were the bus drivers on the Warby tour. Also, for the second year, we ran a weekend at Eden for whale and bird watching, however, bad weather forced the cancellation of the boat trip.

Responding to members' interest, there will be more extended and weekend bus tours and day mini-bus trips in 1996, as well as the usual selection of in-town walks and traditional campouts.

John Avery and I continued to manage the field trips program, John doing an excellent job in managing the day trips program, while I have managed weekend activities and bus trips. David McDonald continued to provide valuable assistance with planning the field trips program. From September we introduced a regular mid-week walk on the third Wednesday of the month for leisured/retired members and Gwen Hartigan offered to organise this activity. Thank you to everyone who has led a walk this year.

### **Education and Special Events**

This year we did not have the human resources available to undertake a major education project like the poster competition for school children run in 1994. COG did, however, participate with displays/walks programs in various events such as Heritage Week, Environment Day Fair, ACT Alive, Bird Week and the Spring Fling in the National Botanic Gardens. COG attended a Superb Parrot Field Day in association with Australia Remembers celebrations in June in the Boorowa Shire. Margaret Palmer filled the Exhibitions Officer vacancy and she has done a very efficient job in organising displays and public events. Shirley Kral and Pat Muller have also assisted with exhibitions.

Another successful photographic competition was run for members in 1995, coordinated again by Barbara Allan. Prizes were generously donated by Emu Tours, Gipsy Point Lodge, Gurawin Plant Nursery and the RAOU. Graham Stephinson took the major prize in the photo competition.

COG ran its own twitchathon on 10 December as a fun event with beginner and experienced categories. Warren Martin kindly organised this. Members were encouraged to use environmentally friendly transport, such as walking, cycling. Around \$600 was raised by the five teams in the event and this will be used to upgrade the COG computer and software. The winners in various categories were announced at the Xmas Party on 13 December, the winning total being 143 species and the best total using environmentally friendly transport, a bicycle, 102 species.

### **Projects and Surveys**

In 1995, COG's regular surveys of Lakes Bathurst and George by a small, dedicated team coordinated by Michael Lenz continued. COG continued its involvement in the RAOU's Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project in the Capertee Valley, providing volunteers for the regular surveys. COG members also assisted Anne-Marie Wilson, from the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CRES), Australian

National University, in a project to determine the use of different habitats by birds at Ingalba Nature Reserve, near Temora, one of COG's traditional camping venues. Members also continued their involvement in the Queanbeyan escarpment survey.

In 1995, with assistance from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, COG commenced a long term survey of Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve, to record the abundance, distribution and breeding of birds, with a view to assessing the effects of urban development on bird populations as Gungahlin develops. This study, which I am coordinating, will run initially for five years, but is expected to be continued for a longer period. I also produced draft material for a pamphlet on the birds of Mulligans Flat which I hope will eventually be published.

In December 1995, a team of COG members under the supervision of Mark Clayton and Natasha Schedvin (the National Coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project) colour banded and took blood samples from seven adult Regent Honeyeaters in a small breeding colony of eight birds at North Watson, as part of the recovery project for this endangered species.

### **Bird Interest Groups Network (BIGNET)**

In 1992, the various bird clubs and related interest groups in NSW/ACT began meeting for the first time and meetings have continued on a regular biannual basis. These have been valuable for exchanging information and networking, establishing joint projects etc. In 1995, COG attended two BIGNET meetings held in Canberra and Richmond (western Sydney). COG is also providing assistance to Hunter Bird Observers Club to computerise their bird records.

### **Hotline**

Ian Fraser has again managed the Hotline this year, with Phil Hansboro relieving at times. Their efforts are appreciated by the regular group of members who use the Hotline. Ian's efforts in ensuring all bird reports from the Hotline make their way into COG's record system are to be commended.

### **Natural History Centre (NHC)**

The NHC which COG established as an office and public outlet has now been operating for three years. Gwen Hartican and Wally Brown have continued to do a valuable job in managing its daily operations. The NHC continues to serve a useful purpose as a convenient contact point for members and for public promotional purposes. The Centre has been financed by COG with the assistance of a small government grant and contributions from the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra and ACT Herpetological Association. Unfortunately, due to changes in ACT

Government grants and shrinking funding for community organisations, we have been unable to obtain any funding for the NHC in 1996. Thank you to all the volunteers who have worked in the NHC this year, thus providing valuable support to COG.

### **Records and Database Management**

Malcolm Fyfe retired as COG's Records Officer during 1995 and Andrew Newberry took over. During a substantial number of years as Records Officer, Malcolm has given much time and effort to this important role, particularly in coordinating post 1986 records for database entry.

The drafting of the Annual Bird Report (ABR) for 1991/92 is coming along slowly, and we intend to make a big effort in 1996 to complete this and develop a strategy for future preparation of ABRs. We need a new coordinator or a team to look after the ABR preparation and more volunteers to help in the drafting of technical material for the ABR. The COG database continues to increase with over 300,000 individual records on the system going back ten years. We also have to research and computerise pre-1986 records, revise the observation record sheet to make it more user friendly and develop strategies to encourage more members to record and submit their bird observations.

A number of members regularly provide their bird observations on COG data sheets but we need more support from members in this area I particularly thank Steve and Noni Wilson who regularly foray out to remote places to get bird observations for COG; they even got bogged on one recent occasion in an effort to get closer to the birds!

The COG Rarities Panel has continued its important work behind the scenes, vetting and endorsing rare/unusual bird records and ensuring the endorsed lists are published in *Canberra Bird Notes*. Thank you to the panel members for their work in 1995.

### **Conservation**

COG has continued to focus its conservation activities on local issues, particularly woodland habitat preservation. On many matters COG has collaborated with the Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra.

At the end of 1995, Bruce Lindenmayer retired as Conservation Officer (since 1991) and committee member after eight years. I would like to record the committee's appreciation of Bruce's very substantial contribution, particularly in the conservation area as well as the three years he was President.

In 1995, COG was involved in the following conservation activities:

### *1995 ACT State of the Environment Report (ACTSER)*

COG, through Bruce Lindenmayer, had input to the 1995 ACTSER which reflected again COG's concern about bush birds in northern ACT lowland woodlands and open forests. In 1994, we were unsuccessful in obtaining any ACT Government funding to undertake studies of the declining woodland bird species in the ACT, notwithstanding that the ACT Commissioner for the Environment has recognised the need for such studies in the 1994 and 1995 *ACT State of the Environment Reports*. It is disappointing that government grants programs were unable to provide assistance for such important studies, largely because of the limited pool of funds available. COG also approached academics at ANU and the University of Canberra proposing some of the declining species as suitable topics for post-graduate study, so far without success.

The 1995 ACTSER includes items on preserving natural migration corridors, the impact of weeds on native habitats and (following studies by ANU scientists) concerns about growth in population and spread of the Common Myna (which is a displacing native species in the ACT).

### *ACT Flora and Fauna Committee*

This is a committee of biologists appointed by the ACT Government to examine submissions and report to the Environment Minister on threatened species and ecological communities, and threatening processes. At the invitation of the committee, COG made a detailed submission on the Hooded Robin (a threatened species), and is currently supplying additional *material*.

### *Central National Area Planning*

COG and the Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra made critical submissions on several options developed for the National Capital Planning Authority (as a basis for long term planning in the central national area of Canberra), by a team of national and international consultants. These would have included destruction of several native bushland areas, (one of which is a refuge of an endangered plant), and a 'Ponte Vecchio' with 500 apartments near the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park at the eastern end of Lake Burley Griffin, a summer habitat of Latham's Snipe. Some of these more controversial recommendations were later dropped.

### *Weeds*

Consultants to the Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra have completed a major study of invasive weeds and modified a computer program to predict the probability of agricultural and horticultural plants becoming weeds. The

ACT Government is developing a long term strategy to combat weeds, more than 500 species of which were identified in the ACT.

### *Lakes George and Bathurst*

As a result of discussion at the March 1995 BIGNET meeting, COG submitted proposals to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for these important waterbird habitats to be nominated for inclusion on the list of wetlands maintained by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention). COG was able to provide some very good data, based on monitoring of birds on both lakes, a study program managed by Michael Lenz since 1979.

### *Superb Parrot*

The Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra with COG's assistance was involved in lengthy negotiations with the Yarralumla Shire Council which authorised and built a bushfire shed in one of the last remaining local areas where Superb Parrots occur and probably breed (just outside the ACT border). This action was taken contrary to law and no environmental impact study was undertaken. The shire later agreed to participate in a joint survey to study populations of Superb Parrots in the general area, and a small grant was provided by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency to undertake a survey of residents to establish where the parrots were found and when. The Conservation Council employed Warren Martin to do this survey in the spring 1995.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service contacted COG about assisting in a Recovery Plan for the Superb Parrot, based on the community involvement model of the Boorowa Shire. (The shire has adopted the bird as its emblem and is actively encouraging local tree planting and community involvement in preserving habitat for the bird.) Chris Davey made a significant contribution to COG's input on both of the Superb Parrot issues.

### *Jindalee State Forest*

COG wrote to the NSW Government about improving the conservation status of this forest, west of Harden, which is rich in birdlife and where several bird species listed as endangered under NSW legislation are found. The forest is regularly visited by COG and in recent years the understorey has become degraded (due largely to overgrazing by sheep). We are awaiting a response.



### *Other Issues*

COG wrote to the ACT government expressing concern at the controlled burning of areas of Canberra Nature Park in the spring period, and in relation to the need to preserve of old native trees in urban areas. Unsatisfactory responses were received from the government on both issues, however the Green members of the assembly are pursuing the latter issue.

COG responded to a Marketing and Tourism Strategy for Canberra's Nature Reserves commissioned by the ACT government and released in November 1995, declaring concern for the lack of detailed environmental considerations in the report and the emphasis on revenue raising.

COG made a submission supporting a proposal by a national team of experts for the rapid phasing out of the use of lead shot in duck hunting.

COG has also maintained an interest in a number of ongoing matters, including improving the conservation status of areas of NSW adjoining Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve, Lake George Crown Land nature reserve proposal, Federal Highway duplication, Stirling Ridge, and Lake Burley Griffin Management Plan.

### **Publications**

In 1995 Harvey Perkins became the editor of our newsletter *Gang-gang* and has done an excellent job. Mary Argall provides Harvey with valuable assistance in producing *Gang-gang*. Thank you also to Ann McKenzie and her team of helpers who arrange for the enveloping and dispatching of *Gang-gang and Canberra Bird Notes*.

Carol Macleay became COG's Publications Officer in 1995 and has had a busy time organising a stocktake, coordinating new stock of various products such as tapes and books, and marketing these to bookshops and bird interest groups. In 1995, the text of the fourth edition of *A Pocket List of Australian Birds* was prepared by Dick Schodde, then desk-top published by Paul Fennell with my assistance, and should be printed early in 1996. The COG bird tape *Bird Songs of Canberra* was also refined and digitised, and new copies produced; the technical assistance of Chris Davey, Peter Fullagar and Ed Slater was much appreciated.

David Purchase and Grahame Clark continued as editors of COG's journal, *Canberra Bird Notes*.

*Jenny Bounds, 7 February 1996*

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## FOR SALE

Back issues (1981-1994) of *Canberra Bird Notes* are available for \$1.50 each (includes postage and packing), or for 50c each at our monthly meetings (pre-1995 issues). Current issues (1995 and 1996) are \$3.00 each (includes package and postage), or \$2.00 each at meetings.

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1984	9	X	X	X	X
1985	10	X	X	X	X
1986	11	●	●	●	●
1987	12	✓	✓	✓	●
1988	13	✓	✓	✓	✓
1989	14	✓	X	✓	✓
1990	15	✓	✓	✓	✓
1991	16	✓	✓	✓	✓
1992	17	●	●	●	●
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(Continued from inside front cover)

<i>Mulligans Flat Survey, Coordinator</i>	Jenny Bounds	288 7802 (mobile 014 63 5249)
<i>Publications</i>	Carol Macleay	286 2624
<i>Records Officer</i>	Andrew Newbery	254 0960
<i>Regent Honeyeater Survey (Capertee Valley). Coordinator</i>	Joan Price	259 2739
<i>Shopfront Managers</i>	Wally Brown Gwen Hartican	281 3622
<i>Waterbird Survey, Coordinator</i>	Michael Lenz	246 4143 249 1109

*Computer Management Subcommittee:*

David McDonald (Convenor - 231 8904), Grahame Clark, Graeme Deaker, Tony Harding, Reid McLachlan, Ian McMahan, Andrew Newbery.

*Conservation Subcommittee:*

Bruce Lindenmayer (Convenor - 288 5957), Ian Fraser, Bill Handke, Warren Martin. Anthony Overs, David Pfanner, Philip Veerman.

*Exhibitions and Education Subcommittee:*

Paul Fennell (Convenor - 254 1804), Shirley Kral, Ann McKenzie, Margaret Palmer.

*Field Trips Subcommittee:*

Jenny Bounds (Convenor - 288 7802, mobile 014 63 5249), John Avery, David McDonald.

*Projects Subcommittee:*

Chris Davey, Michael Lenz. Nick Nicholls, David Purchase.

*Rarities Panel:*

Sarah Martin (Secretary - 281 3574). Barry Baker, Grahame Clark, Mark Clayton, Bruce Male.

*Shopfront Management Subcommittee:*

Paul Fennell (Convenor - 254 1804), Wally Brown, Bob Ecclestone (FNAC), Gwen Hartican.

Production and distribution of *Canberra Bird Notes*:

**Camera-ready Copy:** Cedric Bear

**Printing:** Lowes - Printer

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*Canberra Bird Notes* is published quarterly by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Contributions are welcome. These should fit into one of the following categories: major articles (up to about 3000 words); short notes and "Odd Obs" (up to about 300 words); reviews of books and articles (up to about 500 words); and where to watch birds (up to about 800 words). The articles and notes should cover matters of the distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds occurring in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding area (i.e. New South Wales coast north to Jervis Bay, and west to the Riverina). Contributions can be sent, preferably on an IBM-formatted disk together with a hard copy, to the editors C/O David Purchase, 5 Orchard Place, Melba, ACT 2615 (Tel 258 2252).

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