



Gang-gang

December 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

DECEMBER MEETING



Christmas Party

Sausage sizzle
Black mountain Peninsula
Wednesday 8 December

Details pg 3

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Australian Brush-turkey (*Alectura lathami*) Photo courtesy Lindsay Hansch

Field Trip Reports

Bellmount Forest 31 October 2004

Pauline Wicksteed welcomed 13 members to her property north of Gundaroo on a sunny spring morning. In the 24 years she has lived there, the natural woodland has regenerated and extensive planting has been carried out close to the house. Our walk through the woodland yielded 32 species including nesting **Striated Pardalotes** and **Red Wattlebirds**, as well as **Olive-backed Orioles** constructing a nest of fibrous bark. Spring arrivals included **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Leadend Flycatcher** and **White-throated Gerygone**.

After morning tea, we visited 'Nelangelo' (TSR 48). No sooner had we gone through the gate to the lane leading down to the TSR than we heard the call of a **Painted Honeyeater**. The excitement didn't end there, though; as we were following the calls of more Painted Honeyeaters we were distracted by a **Red-backed Kingfisher** which obligingly showed off its pale front, striped head and red rump. Other highlights in a list of 41 species included **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **White-browed** and **Dusky Woodswallow**, **White-winged Triller**, **Restless Flycatcher**, **Brown**

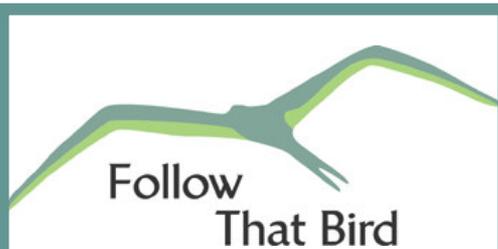
Treecreeper and **Diamond Firetail**. A **Jacky Winter** on its impossibly small nest, **Striated Pardalotes** in their nesting hole and **Willie Wagtails** feeding young completed a perfect spring day.

Our thanks to Pauline for her hospitality and local knowledge.

Sue Lashko

Cocoparra National Park and environs, 25 -29 October 2004

A total of 11 COG members travelled to the Riverina and camped the week at Woolshed Flat in Cocoparra National Park some 30 km NE of Griffith, NSW. Weather remained dry but with periods of rather trying high winds. The park and other non-irrigated areas nearby were still very much in drought. Within the park a total of 82 species were seen with a number of breeding records. Among the memorable highlights were flocks of hundreds of **Masked** and **White-browed Woodswallows** swooping down to feed on bands of locust hoppers which has recently emerged. These were joined by many **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and some **Budgerigars**. In a nearby bush were a group of a dozen or more **Crimson Chats**, looking as one member put it, like ripe apples in a tree! Groups of **Splendid** and **Variiegated Fairy wrens** were observed. A **Red-backed Kingfisher** was seen on the Road to Mt Bingar.



Birds and Camaraderie

Introducing our small well serviced birdwatching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre. All prices include three star accommodation and meals. For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

January 2005 \$ 1485

Alpine Birds and Plants Saturday 22 to Wednesday 26 January 2005

Start Canberra End Canberra

Leader Jules Gold: Local Plant and Birdo Expert

February 2005 \$ 1750

Divine Lord Howe Island Saturday 12 to Wednesday 16 February 2005

(price excludes airfare) Start Lord Howe End Lord Howe. Leader Ian Hutton: the Lord of Howe himself

May 2005 \$ 2130

Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfield Monday 2 to Sunday 8 May 2005

(excludes airfare) **Start Canberra End Adelaide.** Leader Alan Morris

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Near the campground was a dam which contained some water. A succession of birds were seen coming to the water including **Bar-shouldered Doves, Common Bronzewings** and a number of honeyeater species including the **Black Honeyeater**. Night birds were in evidence, with **Tawny Frogmouth, Southern Boobook, Spotted Nightjar** and **Australian Owlet-nightjar** either seen or heard. Along the edge of the park were **Emus, Blue Bonnets** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**. **Australian Ringnecks** (Mallee form), **Red-rumped Parrots** and **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were everywhere.

A visit was made to Fivebough swamp in Leeton. This is an amazing place which was stuffed full of water birds. In spite of very high winds among the thousands of birds present were hundreds of **Glossy Ibis, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Black-winged Stilt** and **Red-necked Avocets** were present. Other waterbirds of note included **Marsh Sandpiper** and **Freckled Duck**. Both **Swamp** and **Marsh Harrier** patrolled the marsh. In a nearby paddock hundreds of **Whiskered** and a few **White-winged Black Terns** were seen feeding on another hopper band.

A trip was also made to the Griffith area. Of special note was a trip to Binya State forest. In a patch of beaten up calitris forest cluttered with rubbish and the odd burned out car the group saw more **Painted Honeyeaters** in half an hour feeding in Mistletoe than most of us had previously seen in a lifetime! Many **Mistletoebirds** were also seen. In all a highly successful and memorable trip and thanks to Trevor and Joan Lipscombe for organising it.

David Rees

Callum Brae 7 November 2004

On the sunny Sunday of 7 November Geoff Dabb, one of COG's most engaging walk leaders, took a large group onto the

property, 'Callum Brae'. This grazing lease abuts Narrabundah Lane, near the junction with Mugga Lane.

The Heysenesque patch of woodland was recently proclaimed as an addition to Canberra's nature parks. Although not yet formally open, it will soon be accessible to all. Its beauty, richness and proximity to the city mean that it may become almost as popular as Campbell Park with Canberra bird watchers. It would be rewarding for any bush-walker.

During the morning nearly sixty different birds were observed. This diversity shows how lucky we are in Canberra that we do not have to go far afield to enjoy the pleasures of spring in the bush. Beginner bird watchers were impressed, as was a visitor from Germany.

Sunday's first very exciting moment came when several of us heard an uncommon honeyeater calling from a flowering Yellow-box. Yes, it *was* a **Regent Honey-eater**. This fact was confirmed by Jonette McDonnell and Richard Mason, both of whom saw it briefly. Unfortunately it soon flew off towards Mugga Lane and remained elusive.

We also saw **Weebills** and **Yellow, Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**; **Peaceful Doves**; **Grey Teal** and **Hardhead, Pacific Black** and **Wood Ducks**; **White-throated** and **Brown Gerygones**; **Shining, Horsfield's** and **Pallid Cuckoos** (this last was being fed by a **White-plumed Honeyeater**). The migrant **Noisy Friarbirds, Dollarbirds** and **Rainbow Bee-eaters** had arrived. As well, both **Dusky** and **White-browed Woodswallows** were there, the latter species represented by a fledgling, on the ground and unable to fly. Geoff found this 'a surprisingly early breeding record for the species in Canberra'. Nesting **Little Corellas** were observed; also an immature **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** whose face was, at that stage, only half-black; a male **Mistletoebird**, obligingly close overhead; **Speckled Warblers**; an **Australian Hobby** and a **Brown Falcon**. The writer saw one **Southern Whiteface** on her way back to the cars.

Geoff thinks of everything. He eased

our entry to the lease with an elegant makeshift saddle for the barbed wire fence (and whisked the tell-tale sign away later). And he advised us in advance that he'd located a dense, bosky spot at that halfway point in any excursion when members are likely to need to see a man about a dog. Everyone was most grateful that it was he who introduced us to the birds of 'Callum Brae'.

Sue Edgar, assisted by Shirley Kral.

Campbell Park; Sunday 14 November 2004

Close to 30 members and guests joined me in this repeat of last year's very successful morning focussed on finding as many nests or nesting activity as possible. After a short presentation, including covering the 10 basic types of nests built by different groups of species of birds, and tips on how to find nests or nesting behaviour, we split into two groups to put this into practice.

Rumours that nesting activity at Campbell Park was very low this year (including few reports on the chat line) were quickly dispelled and in total we found confirmed breeding activities for 18 species, as well as several other species defending territory etc. This included 6 of the 10 basic nest types and comprised well over 50% of the 35 species seen or heard for the morning.

The day started well when participants could see a **Noisy Miner** on a deep cup-shaped nest in a low bush sapling in the car park while we were going through the brief presentation. However, the highlights were a number of **White-winged Trillers**, including one female on a typical tiny low-sided nest in a fork high in a gum and **Varied Sittellas** carrying food to yet another tiny nest in the vertical fork of a dead branch, and then settling on it. It was certainly great to record these two recently listed threatened species breeding.

Other notable observations were a **Dusky Woodswallow** on a nest typically constructed in the gap where the bark was peeled off the trunk, a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** giving us great frontal views from a typical

December Meeting



6-8 pm

Wednesday 8 December 2004

“COG Christmas Party”

Sausage sizzle at Black Mountain Peninsula

We expect to use the same barbecue area as last year (from the main road into the Peninsula, turn right at the second side street, about 400 metres along). But the same site cannot be guaranteed, so just follow the COG signs.

Sausages (Gluten free, chicken and red meat), bread and drinks supplied

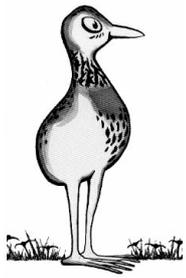
Please bring any or all of the following:
a picnic table, chairs, plates and glasses,
salads or desserts to share. Insect repellent
and sunscreen might be called for;
and binoculars for the bitterns.

Contributions: \$4 a head for food and soft drinks;
\$6 a head for food, wine, beer
(free for members' children under 12)

**Lucky ticket prize and prizes for:
Children for the best dressed bird; and
Adults for the best bird theme poetry reading**
suggested limit 8-12 lines, can be own composition or other author

*Offers of help to assist
with food and drink purchasing,
setting up etc, to
Jenny Bounds 6288 7802 (ah).*

You'd be Cuckoo to miss it!



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South Yarra 3141
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enquiries@philipmaher.com

2005 Birding Tours

12 -28 February: New Zealand
NZ options: 11 Feb pelagic for
NZ storm-petrel; 1-2 March Kapiti
Island for **little spotted kiwi**

9-14 March: Tasmania bird &
mammal tour, including Bruny Island &
pelagic trip

16-23 March: Kangaroo Island, SA.
Great Ocean Road – Coorong NP

18-29 May: Gulf Country Q'ld
Cairns Karumba Georgetown Mt Isa

4-19 June: Top End incl. Kununurra

3-10 July: New Caledonia
(rescheduled)

Comprehensive birding tour seeking
all endemic, plus the near-endemic,
species on Grand Terre and nearby
islands of the Loyalty group. Birds
include the incredible **kagu**, plus
cloven-feathered dove, **horned
parakeet**, **crow honeyeater**, **white-
bellied goshawk**, **red-throated
parrot-finch**, **NC imperial pigeon**
*A little bit of France in the tropics, 2.5
hours from Sydney, with reputedly the
richest biodiversity per square
kilometre in the world.*

8-26 August: Outback trip
The 20th Strzelecki Track tour

Plains-wanderer Weekends

11 and 12 **December 2004**
18 and 19 **December 2004**
26 & 27 March (Easter) 2005

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shallow saucer-shaped nest in a
horizontal fork, a couple of **Grey
Fantail** nests, very small cups
complete with a cute "rat's tail",
and **White-winged Choughs**,
both with a dependent young and
a bird on a mud nest.

A pair of **White-throated
Gerygone** were observed building
a side entrance nest, and a pair of
Leaden Flycatchers were also
seen, with the male first showing
the female where the nest site
should be, where she then
proceeded to start building. **Tree
Martins** were seen examining or
entering tree hollows, and **Red-
rumped Parrots** were inspecting
a couple of hollows. **Striated
Pardalotes** were seen entering
and leaving small hollows in a
tree, while the **Spotted Pardalote**
was seen coming and leaving a
hole dug into the side of the
entrance of a rabbit burrow.

Much of this activity was
concentrated in a small area of
about 50 metres radius within 150
metres of the carpark. Our
excitement of finding all these in
such a small space was topped off
when an **Australian Owllet-
nightjar** was spotted sitting quite
still observing us from a nest hole.
It was happy to let the 2 groups
admire and photograph it and was
still there when we returned about
45 minutes later. A couple of days
later it was found to have at least
two young in the hollow.

It was certainly a great morning,
with a slightly different emphasis
from the usual COG outing,
though at the same time many
species were able to be identified.
As we were returning to our cars,
we saw a **Sacred Kingfisher** and
then a **Dollarbird**, both of which
have bred here previously, and
rounded off the morning perfectly.

Many thanks to all participants,
and especially to Anthony Overs
for giving up some of his time as a
new father to come and help me
lead. I feel that we should make
this an annual event and will try to
find a spot for it on the 2005 Field
Trips Program.

Jack Holland

Wednesday walk from Shepherds Lookout 17 November 2004

On 17 November 13 folk, including a
pair of excellent juniors, gathered at
Shepherd's Lookout to explore the
area and some would continue to
Uriarra Crossing. Target species at
the lookout were **Southern
Whiteface** and **Speckled Warbler**
and at the Crossing we hoped to pick
up the **Common Sandpiper**.

While none of these were achieved
some very nice birds were seen and
we ended with a list of 55 species
which generated six and a half
breeding records (the half was a little
eagle that absolutely refused to step 1
metre to the left and get in/on the
nest). A **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**
had young in a nest hanging over the
Molonglo and a pair of **Leaden
Flycatchers** were building a nest **in a
casuarina that featured a Magpie-
lark on nest and a White-winged
Triller** also building.

Some people were entranced by the
Rainbow Bee-eaters posing on a
casuarina branch over the river. My
favourite was the pair of
Mistletoebirds collecting spider
webs for their nest. At one point the
spectacular male perched about 2m
from me: needless to say, I didn't
have the camera out.

Martin Butterfield

Goulburn; Saturday-Sunday 20-21 November 2004

Perhaps it was the surfeit of outings
and good birding over the past month
which meant that few members or
guests joined me on this joint outing
with the Goulburn Field Naturalists
(GFN). This took in some of the best
birding spots round Goulburn,
including some of the now Greater
Argyle Council (GAC) sites where
special permission is needed for
access. Certainly the low participant
numbers were a surprise given the
strong interest expressed for a return
visit by the very big group who came
with me last February.

On Saturday afternoon we first
visited the Gorman Road sewage
ponds, an area of large finishing
ponds before the water is irrigated on

the nearby fields on which cattle are grazed, supplying the GAC with some valuable revenue. These ponds are very extensive in size, being very much bigger than those at our local sewage farm at Fyshwick. And the numbers of waterfowl on them were corresponding higher including a conservative 400 **Hardhead**, 150 **Pink-eared Duck**, several hundred **Grey Teal**, and 300 **Hoary-headed Grebe**. A total of 9 duck species were seen, including at least 6 **Musk Duck**, at least 10 **Chestnut Teal** and **Australasian Shoveller** and 4 **Blue-billed Duck**. The latter two both had young, a rare record for the region for the last-named, as did the **Pacific Black Duck**.

We also visited an area of rehabilitation round the old brick pits on the Mulwarree River where an **Eurasian Coot** nest with young was seen, and finished the afternoon at Marsden Weir on the Wollondilly River where a lone **Glossy Ibis** was determined to keep feeding in what was obviously a favourite damp patch, despite our very close approach. A **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** high over as we drove into our motel completed off a perfect afternoon's waterfowl watching (except for the very cold breeze coming off the water).

On Sunday the focus was more on bush birds. We first visited the Kenmore Dam and its associated woodlands where we notched up a total of 49 species in a couple of hours. Highlights included **Sacred Kingfisher**, both species of **Gerygone**, **Speckled Warbler**, a pair of **Scarlet Robins** carrying food, **Leaden Flycatchers**, a **White-winged Triller** and a flock of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** with squawking dependent young as we were leaving. This area has a variety of habitats including the large dam which supplied the nearby former Kenmore Hospital with drinking water, and in addition to birds is an even better spot for plants. Sadly a change of Council has meant that this area, which was formerly earmarked to be bought for conservation purposes, is now under threat of development, and COG is proposing to write letters of support for its

COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottneest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottneest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

COG T-shirts, Polo shirts, all above and other books on local flora and fauna available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Carol Macleay (for post and packing costs) on 02 6286 2624.

preservation based on our findings. We finished off the day on a longer walk starting walking along the corridor encompassing the nearby the Kenmore Quarry and then along the northern bank of the Wollondilly River skirting the southern edges of the Cookbundoon ranges to Murrays Flat. Initially we saw a similar range of bush birds plus **Double-barred Finch**, until we came to the long reach on the river where the undoubted highlight was at least 15 **Freckled Duck**. The total number was hard to estimate as they were loafing in small groups under the willows fringing the banks. A **Nankeen Night Heron** was also seen by some participants. However, the most unexpected observation here was an immature male **Red-capped Robin** with a red wash in the breast and a brown forehead, repeatedly giving his telephone ring call. This was Rodney's first record for district of this species.

All in all a most successful visit, with over 95 species seen over the weekend. Once again we'd like to thank again the GFN especially Rodney Falconer for giving up his weekend and showing us so enthusiastically all his favourite bird spots (as well as plants etc) and for Peter Mowle for arranging access to the Greater Argyle Council land. Goulburn certainly has a lot to offer in variety etc and a further return visit to sites not seen this time is planned, in line of my policy to co-operate with like-minded organisations round Canberra. Pejar Dam is now nearly dry but apparently is a hot spot for **Diamond Firetail**, which have been reported feeding on the seeding grasses growing where the water has receded.

Jack Holland

The Snowy River Rehabilitation Project

On Sunday 31 October, Jack Holland and I assisted Chris and Roman, a couple of keen landowners, and Jo, a local Snowy River Alliance member in the Dalgety area, to set up some bird survey sites along the Snowy River. This was our second visit, having done a brief inspection last

March on the way back from the Thredbo weekend.

This is part of The Snowy River Rehabilitation Project, a program of works preparing the river channel for environmental flow releases from the Jindabyne Dam in the near future. Danny Henderson from the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority is managing willow and other weed control, revegetation, and riparian land management agreements along the Snowy River in NSW. They are keen to see how the bird fauna will change as willows and weeds such as blackberries are progressively removed from along the river and "nodes" of native vegetation are restored in these areas. Stream flows are expected to increase as increased water flows in the river are implemented.

The area is about 750 metres in elevation. While there is much cleared and open country in this area, there are remnant stands of Ribbon Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Apple Box (*E. bridgesiana*) and Snow Gum (*E. pauciflora*) in places. We had a brief lunch stop at a promising Nature Reserve called Ironmongy on the way into one property.

On this visit we set up three sites with a very simple methodology based on the Birds Australia area search (within 500 metres), gave some tuition on how the surveys are done and the birds likely to occur in the area. Next autumn we expect to go back and provide further assistance, and possibly set up a couple more sites.

The three different sites surveyed all had a slightly different suite of birds, depending on factors like the vegetation structure, and the proximity of remnant native vegetation. There was a surprising number of birds for what is largely degraded riverine habitat, a total of 44 species, most species predictable for that area and habitat.

A pair of **Satin Flycatchers** in some willows, in particular, was an unexpected sighting, along with **Great Cormorants** nesting in a dead willow on the river and a pair of **Sacred Kingfishers** at an open site with only a few willows (possibly

they were moving through). Other species recorded included a group of **Southern Whiteface** at one site, **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, **Restless Flycatcher**, a **Little Grassbird** calling and a **Scarlet Robin** at a site adjacent to a eucalypt remnant.

Though COG was approached earlier in 2004, the committee agreed not to adopt it as a formal COG project due to it both being out of our area of concern and potentially resource intensive. While it is being assisted on a personal basis as a very interesting and worthy project, we are keen to foster and maintain a connection with COG and its expertise in conducting a variety of surveys. Chris and Roman are very enthusiastic, actually live on or adjacent to their sites and, as well as doing the surveys, will observe what birds are present at other times. If this can be replicated at other sites along the river, together with the simple methodology, it should provide valuable information for relatively little extra effort.

Jenny Bounds

Surveys/other Activities of Interest to COG Members

The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of **4-5 December 2004**. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on thebradybunch8@bigpond.com.

Mulligan's Flat Survey - Sunday 12 December 2004

Regular volunteers please note the next survey is on this date, meeting at the gate to the reserve off Gundaroo Rd at 7.15am sharp. Please advise Jenny Bounds in the week before, if you are available - phone 6288 7802, can leave message. Jenny will also email those on her list as a reminder. Bring cup/mug for morning tea, wear sturdy shoes and bring clipboard, pencil and eraser for recording.

Support local conservation efforts - become a Conservation Council I-Member. The I-Member program is a new initiative for the Conservation Council. It opens up the opportunity for individuals to become members of the

Council and support its valuable work. I-Members won't have voting rights with the Council but they will have the opportunity (if they wish) to have a say on environment issues through web based forums and surveys, as well as being able to attend formal meetings and participate in discussions. They will also benefit through access to exclusive information, events and discounts on a range of services and products provided by ACT businesses.

Membership costs are:

\$ 40 per annum for Individuals

\$ 55 per annum for Households

\$ 25 per annum for students, pensioners and unsalaried persons

I-Members will receive a members' kit

on joining (which will include items like a AAA showerhead or selection of CFL globes, a calico carry bag, stickers, booklet outlining member benefits/discounts and their members' card). Members also get a discount on the annual subscription for hard copy of Sustainable Times, the Conservation Council's quarterly newsletter. Each year on renewal of their membership, a new members' card and booklet of benefits and discounts will be issued. Membership will be on a financial year basis.

Membership forms can be found in the new Conservation Council brochure. For more information call 02 6247 7808 or contact ccserac@ecoaction.net.au.

Future Field Trips

Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve; Sunday 5 December 2004

Morning walk

This will be the first time COG formally visits this newly declared Nature Reserve in which we have been carrying out COG Woodland surveys for some time. So if you haven't visited it yet here is your chance to find out what birds can be found there. Early summer should see a peak of activity and Speckled Warbler, Southern Whiteface, maybe a Brown Treecreeper are expected. Other summer migrants should also be seen. The walk, which will be restricted to the southern section of the reserve, will now be led by Tom Green (many thanks to Tom for agreeing to step in when Steve Holliday was no longer able to do so). Meet Tom (6247 0630) at 8 am at the car park at the SW corner off Horse Park Drive (see map on the COG website at: <http://www.canberrabirds.org.au/GoorooyarrooNR.htm>.)

East Basin/Molonglo River; Sunday 12 December 2004

Electric boat cruise

The final outing for 2004 will be a further cruise on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin and the adjacent Molonglo River on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet". As members will be aware this boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The main

objective will be to view nesting, with three species of cormorant and lesser numbers of darters having already started, but the area is also rich in other waterbirds.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). As the boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers there will be an early and, depending on the level of interest also a late shift, one at 7 am and the second at 9 am. Note that the point of departure is now from the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the new Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way).

At the time of printing there were still plenty of seats available at both times.

Wednesday walk – 15 December 2004 – Kelly Road

For the last mid week walk, indeed the last official COG outing for 2004, the President would like to show participants his favourite bit of local woodland at Kelly Road. This runs parallel to the Monaro Highway about 10 kilometres north of Michelago. Expect to see **Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Dusky Woodswallow, Fuscous Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher** and perhaps **Diamond Firetail, Southern Whiteface, White-winged Triller, Rufous Songlark** and **Jacky**

January 2005 Meeting

8 pm

Wednesday

12 January 2005



"Members night"

The January meeting will be members night, when 'ordinary' members, not experts, are encouraged to share birding thoughts, slides, poetry or music.

Please contact Barbara Allan on 6254 6520 if you'd like to take part.



EMU TOURS

Nature Tours with the Focus on Birds

EMU TOURS TO MALAWI IN 2005

Richard and Roz are going back to Malawi for one more time! The experience of a lifetime—and wonderful birds - in the spring when migrants will be around and birds will be in breeding plumage. We shall include magnificent Nyika Plateau in the north and Liwonde NP. The tour will be for 14 days in mid-October (ask us for the dates). Unbeatable value at **\$2950** twin share ex Lilongwe - with all good accommodation (1 night a bit rustic!).

Reserve your place now.

Richard and Roz
emutours@austarnet.com.au
0428 38 5677

HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

Guerilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

Lovely, clean and quiet self contained 1 bedroom flat amid trees, own courtyard and garden, adjacent Burrewarra Point cliff top reserve. Close unspoiled walks, beaches. Over 120 bird species seen in the local area, half from the property and lots of other interesting fauna and flora. Reasonable rates. Contact Joan and Trevor Lipscombe 02 6262 7975.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Bird-watching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle.

Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week.

Further details contact – Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 – 62583531) for further information.

Winter as we stroll down the flat easy walk along the magical mile starting just north of TSR 36, and then back again.

We'll meet at the Kambah Village shops off Marconi Crescent at 8.15 am so that we can car pool and drive down to get to the start of Kelly Road by 9 am. Bring morning tea.

Trips for 2005

Lake Burley Griffin; Saturday 15 January 2005 - Evening electric boat cruise

What better way to start off the outings in the new year by spending a balmy summer's evening cruising silently on Lake Burley Griffin on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet". We'll be keeping close to shore looking at the darter and cormorant nesting on the eastern shore of Black Mountain Peninsula, looking for **Great Crested Grebe** in Acacia Inlet, looking for **Silver Gulls** nesting on moored boats or pontoons and listening for **Bitterns** booming. There may also be flocks of birds flying to their roost sites.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). As the boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers it will be on a "first in best dressed" basis. The boat will leave at 6 pm from the jetty at the bottom of Lawson Drive, Acton, near the Australian Museum (labelled Acton Peninsula on Map 59 of the Yellow Pages).

Brindabellas; Sunday 23 January 2005 - Day outing

This will be COG's traditional annual visit to the Blundells Creek/Warks Roads area of the Brindabellas, which as members know was devastated in the 18 January 2003 bush fires. The outing will provide members with an opportunity to see how this area is regenerating from the fire damage and also to see what birds are there this summer. Meet Bruce Lindenmayer at Uriarra Homestead (cnr Cotter and Uriarra Rds) at 8.30

am. Note there are actually TWO intersections of Cotter and Uriarra Roads, the other one being just up the road from Eucumbene Drive, Duffy! Participants will need to take either road and travel the 15 or so km to Uriarra Homestead.

Following a quick look at the waterbirds on the large dam there, we will car pool, and also do the usual shuffle, leaving some cars at the top of Blundell's Creek Rd and some at the bottom so we only need to walk downhill. Could those intending to participate please ring Bruce (6288 5957, mobile 0417 418 759) beforehand as due to the sensitivity of the area and potential parking problems it has been agreed to limit numbers.

Jerrabomberra Wetlands; Sunday 6 February 2005 morning waterbirds

This outing is to one of the most popular and best birding spots in Canberra where a number of very interesting species such as crakes, **Red-Kneed Dotterel**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, **Latham's Snipe** and the rarer ducks have been seen here recently. Who knows what will turn up on the day. We will be visiting both Kelly's Swamp and the adjacent Fyshwick sewerage ponds. The latter in particular is very open, so if it is going to be hot don't forget to bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water to drink (plus morning tea).

Meet Tom Green (6247 0630) at the carpark off Dairy Road at 7.30 am for the morning's outing.

Ben Boyd National Park; 11-14 February 2005 – extended weekend campout

COG is again venturing to the coast for a quiet late summer campout after the main holiday period. The previously advertised trip to Cape Conran has been deferred until 2006 and the venue is now the Saltwater Creek campground in Ben Boyd National Park, a 320 km easy drive south east of Canberra via Cooma, Bombala and the Imlay Road. We plan to visit a variety of bird habitats on or near this unspoiled coast, and there will be plenty of opportunities

to relax and socialise. New members and beginners are particularly welcome and there are plenty of lovely beaches, walks, vistas etc if you or yours do not want to peer through binoculars all weekend.

Contact Trevor and Joan Lipscombe at TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com or on 62627975 for information pack.

Lake Burley Griffin; Sunday 20 February 2005 – birding by bike morning Or the “Tour des Birds de LBG”

Martin Butterfield will lead this bicycle tour of the Central and West Basins of Lake Burley Griffin intending to visit a number of locations with good chances of seeing some of the less common sights of Canberra (in addition to the birds there is always the possibility of encountering a bagpipe player or a naked jogger or perhaps even the PM power-walking).

Martin's expectation would be at least 40 bird species including 4 cormorants and darter, 3 grebes and most of the other usual Lake and parkland suspects. In addition the edge of Westbourne Woods can generate some of the less common bush birds.

Meet at Mr Spokes bike hire in Acton Park at 8 am, and we'll head off clockwise (for those with digital watches, that means towards the Carillion). He expects to have at least 9 'formal' stops with many others possible. We'll cover about 20 km, at a polite pace with no big uphill, in about 3 hours. At least one water bottle per person is advised, and although he doesn't intend to go off road a spare inner tube each would be good insurance. Wearing a helmet is compulsory.

Longer trips

Possible longer COG specific trip for 2005

As members are aware COG did not run one of the above in 2004 for a variety of reasons, one being the very low level of interest in the one Emu Tour that was advertised late in 2003.

Despite this several members have contacted me about the lack of

opportunity to join other COG members on tours starting/finishing in Canberra. Consequently I have been discussing the possibilities with Janene Luff of Follow That Bird based in Sydney, a bird tour company which doesn't appear to be well known in COG circles.

We have discussed a tentative COG specific trip next winter. The proposal we favour as the best destination at the time of year is for a trip along the NSW coast to Coffs Harbour, and a return journey with different stops. This is briefly outlined below:

"The Green Gold and Blue of Coffs Bird Routes" 6 day/5 night - Canberra Coffs Harbour Canberra with different locations on the return journey.

One of the most attractive parts of the east coast of Australia, an area of diverse landscape with much to offer the cold weary Canberra birdwatcher.

Long stretches of beautiful sandy beaches separated by rocky headlands and backed by numerous peaceful lakes, these waterways hold nesting cormorants at this time of the year. So engaging in their habits of parental change over; with exercise, feeding and calling making time stand still. South West Rock's surrounding inlets offer the unique, large-eyed **Beach Stone-curlews**. Nambucca and Scott's Head have the beautiful **Brahminy Kites** at nest, their soaring unequal in colour or beauty. Woolgoolga Flora Reserve our most northerly point, promises to be a highlight - among the many of Alan Morris' special spots.

June 28 to July 3 2005 are the preferred dates as a perfect time to get away from the Canberra cold. Alan Morris, who is well known to COG members, is the expert guide and he is flattered at the chance to spend time with members of COG.

Approx Cost depending on minimum no. of people - 6 persons \$1800.00.

At this stage the main aim is to gauge whether there would be sufficient interest in such a trip to make it viable. This needs to be known before Xmas to allow more specific plans to be developed. So if you are

interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

There have been several expressions of interest so far but not enough yet to make it a viable trip, assuming not all these are firm. Therefore this is your **last chance** to contact Jack.

Iron Range, November 2005

Advance notice is given that Mark Clayton's bird banding crew will be visiting the Iron Range in North Queensland late in November 2005. Members will be welcome to participate but will have to make their own way up there. If there is sufficient interest it may be possible to organise some transport from this end. If you are interested please contact Mark Clayton on 6241 3620 (A/H). Mark can also be reached at Mark.Clayton@csiro.au. **Given the extensive organisation it will involve, this is your last opportunity to let him know of your interest.**

2005 COG Field Trips Program

The draft 2005 COG Field Trips Program was included in the November issue of *Gang-gang*.

There has been a limited response to the request for filling the free spots and/or some leaders. In particular the location of the outing for the June long weekend and whether COG has a camp-out for the Anzac Day weekend still needs to be resolved.

So if you have any places not included that you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit, past outings that you think ought to be repeated, or if you can help lead some of the listed trips, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) by 17 December. The final program will then be published with the February 2005 *Gang-gang*.

Reminder

No January *Gang-gang*
Gang-gang will return to your
letter-box in February 2005

From the COG Committee

The 2004-05 COG Committee

At the AGM, the following office bearers were elected for the coming year:

Jack Holland (President); **Nicki Taws** (Vice-President); **Barbara Allan** (Secretary); and **Joan Lipscombe** (Treasurer). **Jenny Bounds, Sue Lashko, David Rees, Tanya Rough** and **Anthony Overs** were elected as Committee members. Once again my thanks to **David McDonald, Harvey Perkins** and **Alan Thomas** for the work they've done on the committee, especially David who has served in a number of roles for many years.

The Committee will continue to meet

in the Environment Centre at 6 pm on the Wednesday following the COG general meeting. At our first meeting on 17 November the committee agreed to invite both David Cook and Julie McGuinness on to the committee, under rule 12 (d) of the COG constitution,

While it's great to have a stable committee of hard working volunteers, we do need to attract some more new blood each year, and there are still a number of vacancies, as we do not have the full complement of 10 ordinary members. Several key committee members have served in their roles for a number of years and have signalled their desire to step down soon. So if you have some time to help and feel that you have something to offer COG through serving on the committee please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on

jack.holland@deh.gov.au) to discuss the possibilities.

Jack Holland

Committee Conservation News

The Committee has recently been approached about impacts on birds by wind farms, and the Conservation Council is undertaking some research in light of recent press on various proposals in the region. We are seeking any information members may be aware of, such as relevant reports or useful studies on bird impacts, or names/contacts of people who may have information about local issues which could assist us. Please contact Jenny Bounds or Julie McGuinness on conservation.officers@canberrabirds.org.au or phone Jenny on 6288 7802/ Julie on 6231 9882.

THE 1974 IOC REVISITED

In the November 2004 *Gang-gang*, Ian Fraser remembered the International Ornithological Congress at Canberra in August 1974 from the point of view of a biology student from Adelaide. His account aroused memories for us of different perspectives on that momentous event for Australian ornithology, described so thoroughly in *The Flight of the Emu*.

As Libby Robin says there, the initiative for the first Australian IOC came from Dom Serventy: his influence in ornithological circles was not confined to this country. Rosemary, as Secretary of the RAOU, drafted the formal letter from the Union, which Graham Brown signed as President, inviting the IOC to Australia, as protocol required. We were in a hotel at Dalwallinu, some 200 km north-east of Perth, with a party on the way home from the 1970 RAOU camp-out at Kathleen Valley, when the telephone rang for Dom with the message that the invitation had been accepted at the IOC then in session at The Hague. Allan McEvey said, "Harry Frith won't agree to be Secretary-General

unless he is sure he can make it a success. Therefore, if he agrees, we know it will be a success." At a meeting of the RAOU Council around the Balmfords' dining room table, Harry Frith agreed to be Secretary-General. As we all know, and as Ian Fraser reminds us, the Congress was a success. Pauline Reilly was President of the RAOU by the time it happened.

In February 1971, Peter was asked by Harry to be chairman of the excursions committee and select its membership. The committee, with assistance from many people, devised and conducted various excursions designed to help the visitors see something of the major bird habitats of the Australasian Region.

Some memorable stories came out of that. The bus driver who earned the undying hatred of his passengers by never wanting to stop the bus; only to drive on to his destination ³/₄ "It's no good saying you want to stop for some bird. We are going straight on. Is that clear?". (They had good looks at a lot of birds nevertheless.) The amazed gratitude of the Europeans in a bus which broke down at the gate of a country property, when the farmer's wife came out with afternoon tea for everyone – apologising for having only twelve cups and saucers so that

they had to share.

The strike: Pauline's husband Arthur had connexions in the oil industry and managed to arrange petrol so that the Melbourne contingent could refuel in Albury. Joan Paton came from Adelaide with drums of petrol on the roof of her car. Overseas visitors were horrified at the quality of the Sydney-Canberra road, and were not mollified when we explained that in normal times, when there wasn't a strike, people didn't drive to Canberra, they flew.

The Canberra ornithologists, at short notice, arranged local tours to the Botanic Gardens, the back of Mt Ainslie and elsewhere, for the first day until the scattered visitors came together and the Congress could start, half a day late. Canberra's birds, especially the parrots, did their thing to impress the visitors throughout the Congress – we remember especially the Crimson Rosellas along Sullivans Creek, as we walked from the Colleges to the Congress sessions.

It rained for the local excursions day in the middle of the Congress. Jean Dorst, its President, when he was offered a lift in a car, is said to have replied, with true French panache, "No, I will go out and die with my troops!"

A German visitor asked Peter if he could move a flock of Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos to a different tree for a better picture: Peter clapped his hands and the birds moved! Wunderbar!

As we huddled on the verandah at Tidbinbilla eating lunch the rain stopped, and a flock of Superb Fairywrens and Flame Robins moved over the grass in full sunlight, to everyone's pleasure. So much the better for us, because we were able to talk with some knowledge of Flame Robins, which we had been banding in Victoria under Pauline's leadership.

During the Congress we met many old friends and made some new ones. Like Ian Fraser, we remember the well-known ornithologists we heard or saw or even got to talk to at meals or other times. It is perhaps invidious to mention names, but here goes with a few not on Ian Fraser's list: Robert Cushman Murphy, R.D. Etchécopar, Charles Fleming, Ronald Lockley, Bill Bourne, Jim Flegg....

Afterwards, we took Terry Oatley, a professional from Natal, to Melbourne and on a BOC excursion on Port Phillip Bay. And when we took Bob and Juanita Krebs, amateurs from New Jersey, out from Melbourne, we found to our astonishment that, although in Australia for the first time, they instantly recognised all the "ordinary" birds we saw, and not just the Lyrebirds and Penguins.

Peter and Rosemary Balmford
Melbourne, 9 November 2004



The National Library of Australia, The National Gallery of Australia, The National Museum of Australia, and The Embassy of the United States of America cordially invites you to

John Gould and His World

A lecture by
Robert McCracken Peck
Senior Fellow and Librarian
of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia

Time: 2.00pm.

Date: Sunday December 12, 2004

Venue: *The National Library of Australia Theatre*

John Gould (1804-1881), often called the "Father of Australian Ornithology," was a taxidermist, artist, and entrepreneur of extraordinary ability and dimension. In a 45-minute illustrated lecture, Robert McCracken Peck, American naturalist and historian will describe Gould's spectacular publications, his remarkable life and how his great collection came into the care of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. Peck will place Gould into a broad historical context, explaining his relationship with some of the most interesting figures of the 19th century, including: Charles Darwin (whose theories on evolution Gould helped to develop), John James Audubon (the great American ornithologist) the nonsense poet Edward Lear (who provided illustrations for some of Gould's most beautiful books), and the British Royal family (whose patronage helped to ensure Gould's remarkable success).

RSVP Essential by Wednesday December 8. Telephone: 6214-5966/5872



GBS Central #8

You've all done very well. With 60 Charts for 52 weeks we have a theoretical maximum of 3120 observer weeks. We have about 81% of that number which, allowing for people moving in and out of the area and the amount of time birders seem to find it necessary to go away to add to their life lists, is extremely good.

If anyone finds that they are moving house during the year (especially out of Canberra) I'd appreciate them

dropping the part-year chart off before they leave. It will be much easier than scouring the nation/world to find you after July 2005!

As part of my quality control processes for year 23 of the Survey I noticed a couple of observations of flocks of more than 30 **Australian Ravens**. On checking back with the (very experienced) observers of these data they were confirmed. Looking at the database as a whole there are 11 records of flocks of Australian Ravens of this size of which 8 have

occurred in the last 5 years. Generally, the average flock size reported for this species in the GBS appears to be increasing over the years. Does anyone have any idea why?

An unusual sight in my site was a **Common Bronzewing** chasing a **Crimson Rosella** away from some food. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised by this: after all it was a Common Bronzewing and not a Peaceful Dove! From another garden it was nice to read of a **Satin**



WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com

phone 02 6251 3136

www.visitnsw.com.au (follow accommodation and Wonga)

Flycatcher returning.

You may have read the short article I wrote for Canberra Bird Notes (CBN) about breeding activity as represented in the GBS. As time permits, and the editors of CBN are willing, I hope to do further articles about previously unexplored aspects of bird life as recorded in the GBS. If others wish to access data to write articles on topics of interest to them I'll be pleased to assist (with, of course, the agreement of the COG Committee).

Martin Butterfield

Next newsletter

FEBRUARY deadline
Wednesday 26 January 2005

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

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

COG info

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Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and Sue Lashko

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battisson and helpers

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG membership

2004-2005 membership: Individuals, families and institutions: \$35. school students (under 18): \$17.50.

Office (6247 4996)

COG maintains an office in room G5, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, civic.

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Office volunteers are not in attendance for regular opening hours. Members access by prior arrangement.

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email announcement and discussion list for members and friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.

Join the list by sending an empty email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au.

Editor Canberra Bird Notes

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Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
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