



# Gang-gang

**JUNE 2013**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## **JUNE MEETING**

**Wednesday 12 June 2013**

**7.30 pm.**

**Canberra Girls Grammar School, Multi-media centre, corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.**

First, **Duncan McCaskill** the GBS co-ordinator will present: **Introduction to the Canberra Garden Bird Survey.**

The Canberra Garden Bird Survey (GBS) is about to go into its 33rd year. It is now a very valuable and a much used source of data for urban wildlife research. This talk will introduce the GBS to newcomers and remind current observers about the GBS rules. It will also outline some analyses using the data.

The main presentation entitled "**Management and Control of Pest Bird Species on Islands**" will be by **Susana Saavedra Cruz.**

Susana is a Spanish specialist in endangered species/invasive species management. She has worked for the Spanish, Portuguese, UK and Cook Island Governments and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Ornithological Society of Polynesia in developing strategies and practical field activities for reducing the Common Myna, the Crested Myna, the Javan Myna and the Red-Vented Bulbul, and some other pest species. She has been personally responsible for the eradication of mynas on a number of islands including three of the Canary Islands and Mallorca. She controls mynas and other exotic bird species in others, like Ascension Island, St Helena Island and Singapore.

Susana is currently engaged to tackle the problem of mynas and bulbuls in Tahiti. Susana will discuss the strategies and practical field activities she has adopted - and her success.

## **What to watch out for this month.**

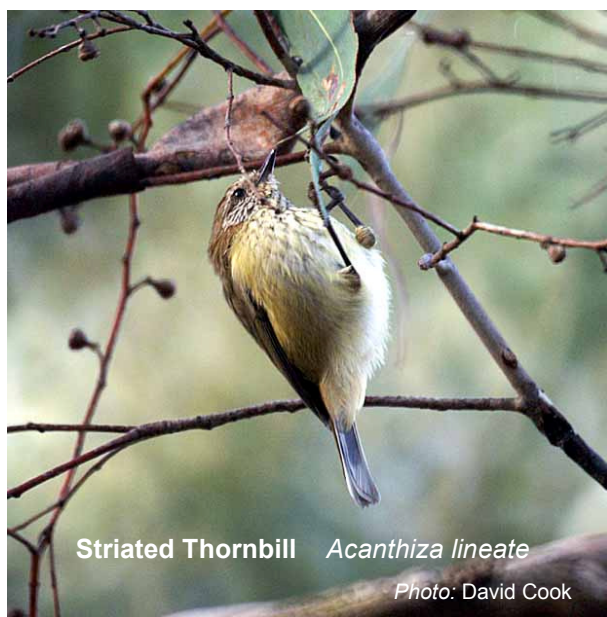
Winter has come and all the signs and forecasts are for a dry one, with a significant proportion of the inland west of Canberra already suffering from, or moving into, drought. This is having an influence on bird sightings, with a number of members posting on the chat-line the influx of small birds into their gardens, including observations of some species not usually present, particularly the **Striated Thornbill** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**. The latter has been conspicuous by its presence and in particular its calling in my garden since the end of March, whereas usually there are one or two isolated sightings at best over winter. It also seems to be widely present in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge/southern half of Narrabundah Hill, where I estimate there have been at least up to six birds recently.

Autumn is always the best time for birds in my garden, and over the past couple of months I have counted up to 35 species in a week. This number has gradually been edging up, but still below the tally in a good autumn before the 2003 fires. While these have included many small bird species, a feature continues to be that they are not present or difficult to find for long periods, sometimes days on end, with the numbers suddenly boosted when a mixed feeding flock moves through. Where these are at other times is hard to tell; they certainly seem to be very mobile. A feature over the past few weeks has been an influx of larger birds into my Garden Bird Site (GBS), with up to 27 **Crested Pigeons**, 22 **Crimson Rosellas**, 15 **Australian Ravens**, 10 **Satin Bowerbirds**, and 19 **Yellow-tailed Back-Cockatoos** seen. The latter were part of the large flock of well over 100 birds that seems to have moved into Yarralumla/Weston Creek during May. Also seen a number of times flying over towards the Cotter have been up to 12 **Straw-necked Ibis**,

**Everyone welcome**

once a common sight but hardly seen in the past 10 years at least. By contrast numbers of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Galahs** seem to be lower than usual, in particular when undertaking their roost flight in the evenings, with the former typically heading out to the Cotter and the latter back into town. In fact the former have more commonly been seen heading out to the Cotter in the morning, suggesting they are now roosting in the suburbs in larger numbers. Numbers of the **Pied Currawong** also seem to be down, at least round my GBS. Not so welcome has been a flock of up to 30 **Common Mynas** in my neighbour's trees and lawn, but rarely entering my garden. They didn't seem to be roosting nearby, but it was interesting to see small groups of them flying in early in the morning, gathering together and then spending much of the day there very noisily. Luckily this seemed to break up a few days before writing, so hopefully it was just a temporary phenomenon.

As bird activity quietens down for the Canberra winter, your garden or local park can be a very rewarding place to observe birds. If it gets even drier this winter may be particularly good as Canberra tends to provide a refuge for birds, at least for the early parts of an emerging drought. If you haven't participated already please join up in the Garden Bird Survey and collect a chart following the presentation by Duncan McCaskill, the GBS co-ordinator, at the June monthly meeting. In my years of experience, the garden is the best place to learn your bird species and there's nothing better than a well sited bird bath to get close to your birds. **Striated Thornbills**, which many people have difficulty in identifying, love them, and it's one of the few places they will be relatively still for a brief period.



Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*

Photo: David Cook

Drying conditions means that waterbirds are also here in reasonable numbers with, apart from the common species, **Freckled** and **Pink-eared Ducks** still being reported, as well as **Red-kneed Dotterels**. The new dam at the northern end of Weston Creek near the RSPCA has had good numbers on it, consistent with my experience that as the dams/ponds were filling in the Lake Tuggeranong system over 25 years ago they attracted good numbers of species for the first 6 months or so due to the initially high nutrient levels.

While the above species are being attracted into Canberra due to the drying conditions, it appears that most of the summer migrants have left. The **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike** were still being reported up to mid-May, but the last records I can find of the **Dusky Woodswallow** and the **Olive-backed Oriole** were on 4 May and 3 May, respectively.

Similarly, of the other species that usually depart Canberra earlier, I can only find reports of the **Rufous Whistler** and the **Superb Parrot**, the last being on 6 and 8 May, respectively. So it seems very few summer migrant species will over winter this year? This is in spite of mild temperatures, at least to mid-May; perhaps they know a cold winter is coming, or it's due to the dry conditions.

Likewise there have been very few reports of migrating honeyeaters since my last column written about a week before the end of April. Lindsay Hansch tells me migration continued over/through his place in Jerrabomberra until about the end of April, with the ratio of **White-naped Honeyeaters** continuing to rise until they made up about 90% of the total. He added that the migration this year was very intermittent and at different times of the day. Typically there was a rush of 200-300 birds, then nothing for an hour, and on some days when the weather was conducive to movement there was no movement. Overall he estimates the numbers this year were considerably less than any of the previous five years. There also seem to be no reports that I can find of the **Fuscous Honeyeater** in May; this species too can overwinter with the Botanic Gardens often being a good spot to find it.

Of the species that come to Canberra to spend the winter, the **Flame Robin** has been reported in open areas close to Canberra on only a few occasions so far, and remains absent in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge/southern fence line of Narrabundah Hill and the Chapman horse paddocks. I haven't yet been able to find it at Stromlo Forest Park, but

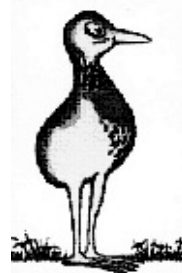
perhaps they'll move in closer with the colder weather from mid-May. By contrast there have been some reports of the **Pink Robin** and the **Rose Robin** in the Botanic Gardens, with the latter also seen in some lucky members' gardens. So far I can find one record of the **Crescent Honeyeater** close to the suburbs, but somewhat surprisingly there have been more of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, for which most of the Canberra records also seem to be in autumn/winter. The same applies to the **Restless Flycatcher**, for which there have been a couple of reports, both on the northside of Canberra. This is a species which Mark Clayton has noted on the chatline as having largely disappeared from the ACT, particularly to the north.

So while winter is the quietest time for bird watching in Canberra, there is still plenty to observe. Remember that because birds have much less daylight in which to capture their daily energy requirements, they need to be active for much of the day in winter, and a fine still afternoon can be the best time to see them. So keep an eye out for the species discussed above, and also for any mixed feeding flocks which will start to break up once breeding commences, as early as July for some species. As always please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

- Jack Holland

## COMMITTEE NEWS

- Annual subscriptions are due on 1 July. The subscription rate remains at \$35 for the coming financial year.
- The nomination of the Scarlet Robin to ACT Flora and Fauna Committee was lodged in early May.
- Jenny Bounds lodged comments on behalf of COG with respect to the Draft Plan of Management for Oolambeyan NP (in the Riverina), which COG groups have regularly visited over the past 6 to 7 years. Jenny has prepared text for a bird leaflet for the park's Homestead area.
- Some clearing of willows near the Kingston boat harbour is to occur. COG has checked the area to ensure no cormorant nest trees are affected.
- COG will support the Conservation Council's application for a grant to run information days about domestic animal issues at each of the dog parks.
- Planning for COG's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year is still underway.



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## 2013

### 20 July – 3 August Gulf of Carpentaria

Cairns to Mt Isa, returning via  
Atherton Tablelands

### 1 – 20 September Strzelecki Outback

Vic, NSW, SW Q'ld, SA. 34<sup>th</sup> tour

**22 – 29 September:**  
NSW Central Coast, Barrington Tops  
NP, Barren Grounds NR

**2 & 3 October**  
Birding for beginners in  
Murray Valley NP

**10 – 18 December:**  
SW Western Australia birding  
and mammal tour

### 2013 Plains-wanderer weekends

7 & 8 December  
28 & 29 December

### 2014 tours

2 – 8 Feb: Tasmania  
19 – 26 April: Alice Springs  
25 May – 8 June: Top End  
June: Gulf Country  
August: New Caledonia  
September: Strzelecki Track  
30 Oct – 6 Nov NSW Central Coast,  
Barrington Tops NP, Barren Grounds  
NR

Please see itineraries, checklists and  
latest news on our website

[www.philipmaher.com](http://www.philipmaher.com)

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# Field Trip Reports

## Sunday 5 May—The Pinnacle NR, Hawker

Twenty members and friends met at Dungowan Street, Hawker, at 8.00 to explore the Pinnacle, guided by John Brannan and Barbara Allan. The morning was bright and clear after a light frost, but a chill breeze deterred us from lingering on the more exposed high ground. The smaller passerines appeared mostly in mixed flocks in the sheltered woodland.

Species seen included **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Mistletoebird**, both pardalotes, **Weebill**, all local thornbills except Yellow, **Double-barred Finch**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Fantail**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Gang-gang Cockatoo** and **Red-rumped Parrot**. **Scarlet Robins** were numerous and posed obligingly for the photographers. A call which some of us took for a **White-eared Honeyeater** turned out to be a **Grey Shrike thrush**. Later both species were seen well. Honeyeaters were generally scarce but did include an **Eastern Spinebill** and a couple of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**.

The highlight for most people was a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths**. Raptors were conspicuous by their absence until our walk was almost over, when a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** put in an appearance being hassled by an **Australian Raven**. A second eagle appeared moments later, and soon a **Brown Goshawk** was soaring high overhead. The total species count was 41.

Our thanks are due to John Brannan and Barbara Allan for leading a very rewarding walk and sharing their very detailed local knowledge

- Kevin Windle

## Wednesday 15 May—Woodstock NR

Eleven members of COG braved the weather forecast (and indeed the early look of the weather) for what turned out to be a top exploration of Woodstock Nature Reserve in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. A pedant could even say it was a top to bottom exploration as we ended up at the River.

To begin with we were seeing or hearing quite a few of the common bush birds with excellent views of a **Golden Whistler** being appreciated. The bottom of the first hill produced a male **Scarlet Robin**, at least two **Eastern Yellow Robins** and a male **Flame Robin**.

Moving on we watched with great delight a **White-bellied Sea-eagle** soar along the opposite escarpment from Uriarra Crossing downstream past the old Ginninderra Falls. Shortly thereafter the first of three **Wedge-tailed Eagles** (all present at once a little later) appeared. Then the noise level increased as 3 **Peregrine Falcons** appeared around the cliffs below the lookout. One bird in particular performed a very high speed stoop diagonally across the sky.

Other more interesting birds were a roosting pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** (in the same area where a member of the group had seen them a year ago); at least 20 **Little Black Cormorants** fishing in the river; a **Black-shouldered Kite**, 3 **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, 2 **New Holland Honeyeaters** and 2 **Double-barred Finches**. We recorded 36 species.

- Martin Butterfield

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## Friday May 17 to Sunday May 19—Royal National Park

As we packed our camping gear in the freezing cold we did wonder why we were leaving our nice warm home for a few nights under the stars. However, the call of seeing some coastal birds and enjoying good company overcame our hesitations and we set off to more temperate climes just south of Sydney to the Royal National Park (*photos: page 6*). Kathy and John had selected the Bonnie Vale Campsite near Bundeena. From here we could look out over the estuary to the city and over the harbour to North Head.

During the afternoon and evening 13 more COGites joined us. Some managed to see a **Powerful Owl** on the way in. During the weekend we took opportunities to look for birds around the campsite. **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **New Holland Honeyeaters** seemed the most plentiful birds but **Pied Oystercatcher**, **Crested Turns**, **Buff-banded Rail**, **Nankeen Night-heron**, **Variegated Fairywren**, **Red-capped Plover** and **Rusa Deer** were pleasing to see.

On Saturday morning we set off for a scenic walk along the sandstone cliffs. Shortly we all had great views of two **Rockwarblers** hopping around on the cliff face. Within minutes 3 **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens** were spied. It took us a little longer to get good views of **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**. Eventually one sat obligingly right on the cliff's edge and sang. Further along a sea view gave us diving **Australasian Gannets** and an easterly wind gave us a few **Black-browed Albatross**. A **Lewin's Honeyeater** was seen at the morning tea stop. After lunch we tried a heath walk where we found a **White-cheeked Honeyeater** and a **Southern Emu-wren**. In the late afternoon a group of us went to see the nearby Aboriginal rock carvings that featured sea and land fauna and what appeared to me to be mythical creature with a frog's upper body and human legs. A generous COG dinner followed a try at seeing the Powerful Owl – no luck this time.

Sunday morning saw us taking a long time to walk a 400m track amongst rainforest adjacent to the Hacking River. Here we saw a **Green Catbird**, the bower and **Satin Bowerbirds**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **Scarlet Honey-eater**, **Bassian Thrush** and **Yellow-throated Scrubwren**, and heard a **Rose Robin** and an **Owlet Nightjar**. The weekend concluded with a late morning row along Kangaroo Creek which gave us beautiful scenery and a **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**.

All up we saw 81 bird species and had a good time indeed. The days were sunny and the strong winds fortunately confined themselves to the evenings and nights.

- Julianne Kamprad



Photo: Kathy Walters

COG-ites enjoying the Royal National Park

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## Future Field Trips

Before the start of each trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities. The form reads as follows:

*I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.*

*I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.*

Changes to trips are notified on the trips page of the COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/> and on the COG chat-line at :<http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>.

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give **preference to members** for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people.

### Friday night—Monday 7-10 June—Jamberoo Valley/Barren Grounds NR

Note: this trip is full, but you can go on the waiting list in case anyone is unable to attend. Please contact Sue Lashko at [smlashko\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:smlashko(at)gmail.com) or phone 62524485.

### Saturday 15 June – Superb Lyrebird survey – Tidbinbilla NR

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the Superb Lyrebird to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. If interested and for further details contact Chris Davey on 62546324 (h), email [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au).

### Wednesday 19 June - Australian National Botanic Gardens

Meet in the car park where the bridge goes across to the Cafe at 9am.

### Sunday 23 June - Stromlo Forest Park, morning stroll

Built after the January 2003 fires, the shared public facility at Stromlo Forest Park has inadvertently provided ideal habitat for the **White-fronted Chat**, and this is one of the few places in Canberra where this species can be reliably observed, particularly in winter when it often forms loose flocks of over 20 birds. The open areas are also those favoured by **Flame Robins** and now that their favoured immediate post-fire habitat has matured, the venue is also one of the more reliable places to see this species in Canberra in winter. Other species such as the **Diamond Firetail** sometimes get caught up in these on the ground flocks.

Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840) at the car park at 9 am (there is no need to book for this outing). To avoid the bike activity we will go into the first gravel car park on the right as you approach the building, entering through the wide gate. We will spend the morning slowly moving through the open areas in a clockwise direction looking for any activity to try and locate these species. Depending on what we find, after morning tea we might venture a little further into revegetated/regenerating bushland towards the bush fire memorial.

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## Friday 5 to Sunday 7 July - Mallacoota

Don't miss this opportunity to visit this unspoilt wilderness area. We will explore with local ornithologist, Bob Semmens, the sewage works, airport (possible **Ground Parrots** and **Australian Hobby**), Gypsy Point (**Nankeen Night-heron**, **Whistling Kites**, **White-bellied Sea-Eagles**) Double Creek (**Wonga Pigeons**, **Lewin's** and **Scarlet Honeyeaters**), our block (**Rainbow Lorikeets**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **New Holland honeyeaters**) and of course, the beach and wharf area.

A list of accommodation options will be supplied on application or you can camp at the Foreshore Caravan Park. Please contact **Barbara de Bruine** at [barbdebruine@hotmail.com](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com) or ring 62583531.

## Sunday 21 July – Mount Majura Vineyard

This is a repeat of a most excellent field trip run last year in the Mount Majura Vineyard (MMV). MMV is now the ACT's only working vineyard that offers both wine making and cellar door facilities and sits at the foot of Mount Majura, on the eastern side. Stuart spends nearly every working day outside and has managed to 'tick' 70 species within the parameters of MMV, which belies the notion that agriculture (viticulture) creates 'poor birding zones'. To his surprise, with the advent of winter, an avian exodus did not occur; on the contrary, large flocks of **Diamond Firetail**, **Red-browed Finch** and **European Goldfinch**, and both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robin** were sighted on a regular basis. Nothing can be promised; at worst you will experience a nice morning walk, with some hills, fresh air, outstanding views and some tidbits of info about MMV and Canberra wine in general. Please dress appropriately for this walk, as the terrain ('terroir') is quite open and the ground can be uneven and rocky in parts (though we will be sticking to established paths as a rule). Rabbit holes hidden by grass pose a threat to ankles.

Meet Stuart Harris at 8.45 am in MMV's large car park off Majura Rd (<http://www.mountmajura.com.au/index.html>) which runs between Canberra Airport/Pialligo (in the south) and the Federal Hwy/Horse Park Drive (in the north), for a prompt 9 am start. Major roadworks are in progress so any changes to the entry to MMV will be notified on the chatline.

Before entering the vineyard, the bottom of your shoes will be sprayed with Ethanol which will prevent the spread of Phylloxera fungal spores which have had, and could have, a devastating effect on the root systems of grape vines.

## Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September – Eden pelagics

COG has booked the weekend of September 21 and 22 for two one-day pelagic trips. The outings leave from Eden Harbour in the early morning (time to be confirmed), and return mid-afternoon. Each trip can accommodate 12 people, and the cost per person per trip will be \$100. October is one of the peak months for seabird migration off the east coast of Australia and there should be a wide diversity of seabirds. Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but there may be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

**Bookings will only be confirmed when full payment is received.** Payment must be made by July 31. These trips need to be fully subscribed to ensure COG does not make a loss, and as is the case with all paid trips, preference is given to COG members. Once you've booked and paid, no refunds can be given unless a replacement can be found.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip.

Please book with Sandra Henderson ([shirmax2931@gmail.com](mailto:shirmax2931@gmail.com)) and indicate which day you prefer (Saturday or Sunday). Payment by direct deposit to COG's bank account is preferred – details will be sent to those who express interest.

## Monday 23 to Friday 27 September 2013 - Green Cape

Built in 1883 and perched on the edge of a peninsula, Green Cape Light Station is the tallest and most southerly lighthouse in NSW. Its octagonal tower juts out from a square base in dramatic contrast to the low-lying landscape surrounding it. It looks across Disaster Bay – the site of many shipwrecks. A tour of the lighthouse itself is normally provided for participants, and the historic Ly-ee-Moon Cemetery is only a few minutes' walk from the accommodation.

**Accommodation:** Two cottages that were previously the assistant keepers' residences have been carefully restored to offer superb 3.5 star heritage accommodation. Each cottage contains a fully equipped kitchen, dining room, bathroom, master bedroom (with queen-size bed), second bedroom (with two single beds) and family/lounge room (with sofa bed). Each cottage can accommodate up to six people. We have booked for four nights from Mon 23 September to Fri 27 September – that is, to arrive on Monday (after midday) and depart on Friday morning.

**Costs:** The commitment is for a 4-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. The total accommodation costs will be \$190 per person (payable by the end of July, once you've registered your interest with Sandra Henderson). There is also a \$7 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival.

**Catering:** Evening meals will be communal, and arrangements for that will be made closer to the time. Bring your own food for breakfasts and lunches – and BYO wine/beer/spirits. Please note that there are no shops nearby so bring all food and drink items with you.

**Activities:** There will be ample opportunity for good seabird watching from the cape, and the heathlands surrounding the cottages are excellent for birds including **Ground Parrot, Southern Emu-wren, Striated Fieldwren, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Beautiful Firetail** and other typical eastern Australian coastal heathland species. To get some idea of the activities and birds, check the trip report for the last visit (Trips page on COG's website, 2011 trips, September- Green Cape) or visit Peter Fullagar's blog at <http://mipartners.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/cog-at-green-cape-in-2011.html>

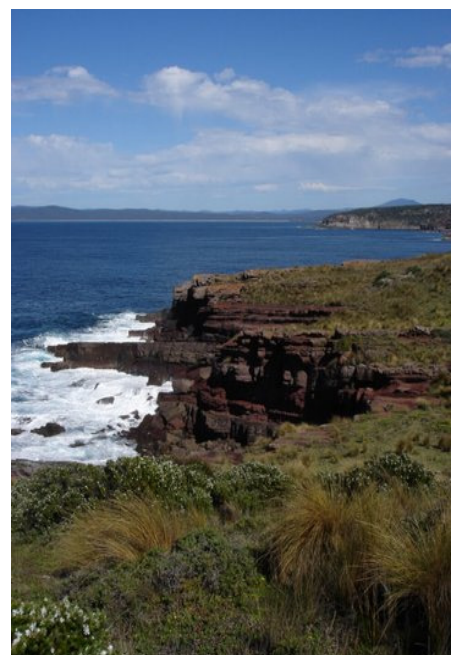
Those interested in being part of this year's trip please contact Sandra Henderson at [shirmax2931@gmail.com](mailto:shirmax2931@gmail.com). A personal telescope and tripod can be very useful at Green Cape.

### Tent for Sale - \$60

Canvas, medium weight, central pole and corner pegs, easy set up 1-2 minutes. Stand up inside, sleeps 2 comfortably. Almost new condition. Single foam mattress free. Contact Jenny Bounds, phone: 62887802.



Green Cape and lighthouse



Photos: Janette Lenz

# Photo Ops #13 - Jun 2013

## Be Prepared!

As they were humming along Round Hill Road last month in the late afternoon, Kathy Walter and John Goldie thought they saw what might have been a **Malleefowl** to the side of the road, partly hidden in the grass.

Later at camp (where I'd been stalking a friendly **Shy Heathwren** and attempting unsuccessfully to get close to a **Crested Bloody Bellbird**), Kathy casually showed me a beautiful image of a **Malleefowl** on her camera which she claimed to have photographed just down the road. I was sceptical. It was a near-perfect image, well framed and so colourful and sharp that it looked like a field guide shot. Hmmmm.

Flashback. Another time while travelling through the Kimberley, at one of our rest stops, a not-particularly-birdy friend showed me a photo of what could only be a **Gouldian Finch** that she told me they'd just seen on the roadside. It was a bit blurry but definitely a **Gouldian Finch** so of course I was pretty excited - until they collapsed in laughter confessing the photo had been taken of a field guide illustration! It was a fine trick, but left me permanently scarred.

So that was one reason for my unjustified scepticism about the **Malleefowl**. The other was that not only does it require luck to come across a rare-ish bird in such a location, but converting a fleeting drive-by sighting into an excellent photo is stretching believability close to breaking point.

However, in this case it was true, and the point of the little story is that fortune favours the prepared in wildlife photography. John was driving when they saw the bird and slowed instantly, reversed back to the spot and positioned the car at the right distance and with the sun nicely behind them. Meanwhile Kathy got the camera ready and wound the window down. Luck meant that the bird had not scarpered and was curious enough to remain standing in that photogenic location while many photos were taken, one of which is shown here. None of this



would have been possible if K & J were not prepared in the sense that they had the camera accessible, they knew how it worked, and they had a well-practised routine for going back to birds they'd maybe just seen.

The same principles apply to any 'planned ad hoc' bird photography, if I can invent such a thing. Know your camera, know what settings it is on, keep those settings adjusted to suit circumstances, know what birds you are expecting, make sure you have at least some idea of their likely behaviours and habits, have an idea of what sort of photo you are after, and, not least, have in mind what your reactions should be to avoid scaring your fortuitous bird if and when it presents.

I can't say I manage to achieve more than some of these for most of the time, but it is gratifying when you do and you get a result. During a recent visit to the Botanic Gardens, my mind was on recently seen **Pink** and **Rose Robins**, and **Bassian Thrushes**. I was ready and had the camera exposure set, focus range set to close-range (in a fit of optimism – this helps to achieve faster focus), and was thinking firmly of robins. My plan if I saw one was to slow down gradually without an abrupt stop, stay standing and if the bird was all or partly in the sun, shoot without changing any settings. If in the shade it was to be a single-finger +3 stops exposure compensation, which I could do without looking during the time it took to raise the camera. If it was more than 6m away I would flick the focus range switch.

In the event I didn't see a robin so decided to try for the thrush. This time I was pretty sure any bird

would be in the shade and could see that the shade was very gloomy and variable, so I set for auto-exposure, slightly underexposed. The plan if I saw one was to freeze and then do my best to hide and hope that the bird did the freezing bit but not the hiding. I was in luck and seeing a bird about 7m away stopped dead and sloooowly lowered to the ground. The bird behaved perfectly, froze at first and then decided I was some kind of irrelevant aberration and carried on feeding in the leaf litter. I managed to get dozens of good shots in the five or ten minutes we stayed like this until in the end it was me who ran out of patience and had to leave. (Actually not so much lack of patience as the severe discomfort of holding a ridiculous position for so long).



It's true that luck played a big part in both my examples, as it does in any ad hoc photography. But it's also true that without some forethought and preparation none of the accompanying photos would exist. The moral - if this kind of photography is your cup of tea - 'Be Prepared'.

- Julian Robinson

[More photos of the Thrush including a nice close-up are at [flickr.com/ozjulian](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ozjulian/) ]

**Bassian Thrush**



**CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC.**  
**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION**

☐ **Renewal**                      ☐ **New Member**

1. Membership fees are currently **\$35** per annum, and are due on 1 July for existing members.
2. You can pay by **cash** or **cheque** at COG meetings, or by **cheque/money order** through the post – do not post cash. Mail your payment to:
- Memberships  
Canberra Ornithologists Group  
PO Box 301  
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608
3. **Electronic funds transfer** can be used to pay subscriptions. If you pay by EFT please notify Sandra Henderson at [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au) and make sure you identify your deposit with your name, and make sure you also notify any change of details. Transfer funds to:
- Canberra Ornithologists Group  
St George Bank  
Account number 050111462    BSB 112908

Title                      Name

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Street address    Town/Suburb    State    Postcode

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Telephone:    Home                      Work                      Mobile

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Email – please print carefully

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Family memberships : list names of family members covered by membership

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single membership - \$35  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership - \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institution - \$35  | <input type="checkbox"/> School student - \$17.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canberra Birds Conservation Fund Donation - \$                      (a receipt will be issued for tax purposes) |   |

If you would prefer to read either Gang-gang (monthly newsletter) or Canberra Bird Notes (journal, 3x/yr) on the COG website instead of receiving a printed copy, please tick the box(es) below, and you will be notified by email when the publication is available on the COG website.

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gang-gang | <input type="checkbox"/> Canberra Bird Notes |
|------------------------------------|--|



## 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 the links to accommodation and Wonga)

## New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

M Carey, Griffith  
A Sengupta, Belconnen  
J Whalan, Hughes

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for the July 2013  
edition

Wednesday 26 June 2013

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc. to the Editors at:

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au)

or

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.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged

## COG info

*President*—Alison Russell-French

Email: [alisonrf@iinet.net.au](mailto:alisonrf@iinet.net.au)

*Vice President*—Chris Davey  
6254 6324

Email: [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

*Treasurer*—Noel Luff

Email: [noel-luff@hotmail.com.au](mailto:noel-luff@hotmail.com.au)

*Secretary*—Sandra Henderson  
6231 0303

[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

*Address for correspondence*

The Secretary  
COG, PO Box 301  
Civic Square, ACT 2608

*Newsletter distribution*

Brian Fair and helpers

*COG website*

[www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au)

### COG library

For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on  
6254 6520

### COG membership

2012-2013 memberships:

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

### Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

[member-ship@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:member-ship@canberrabirds.org.au)

for changed address or other details

### 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 E-mail Discussion List

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

Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to;

[canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au)

The subject is 'subscribe' (without the quotation marks).

### Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

[lenzmj@hotmail.com.au](mailto:lenzmj@hotmail.com.au)

### Gang-gang

Editor: Sue Lashko

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Lay-out Editor:

Janette Lenz