



Gang-gang

SEPTEMBER 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 12.09.2012

Canberra Girls Grammar School
corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave,
Deakin. The meetings are held in the Multi-
media Theatre at the School.
Enter off Gawler Crescent using the school
road signposted as Gabriel Drive. If that car-
park is full, enter using Chapel Drive.

The first speaker will be **Suzi Bond** on “**Bird use of plantings, woodland remnants and remnant trees on farms.**”

This presentation will examine the results of Suzi's PhD at the ANU looking at how birds in southern NSW farmland use plantings and remnant vegetation. Vegetation loss and degradation from agricultural activities are widespread around the world: temperate eucalypt woodlands in Australia have been cleared, fragmented and degraded. In response, restoration programs have planted trees and shrubs on cleared agricultural land. The focus of Suzi's study has been on how birds are using the plantings for purposes such as breeding.

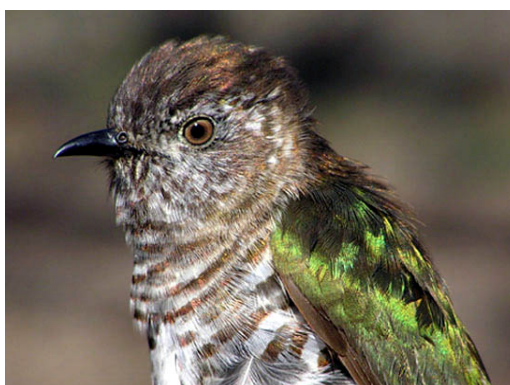
This will be followed by **Sue Lashko** talking about “**Birding in Ethiopia.**”

When we think of Ethiopia, we most often associate it with drought and famine. While this is the reality at times, “simply put, Ethiopia is undoubtedly one of Africa's most productive and rewarding birding destinations.” Sue will talk about her trip there in January 2012, describing not just the birds, but also the mammals, the landscapes and the cultures of this beautiful country.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

Possibly because I am writing this a weekend earlier than I would normally do, there haven't been many signs of the spring activity that I predicted in last month's column. Most obvious, at least round my place, has been an influx of the “partial migrants”, the **Silvereye** and the **Striated Pardalote**, with the latter quite vocal. The returning **Tree Martin** has also been regularly reported from the beginning of the month, followed mid-month by the first **Fairy Martin** observations. Both are well-known early returners but with only the latter generally considered to over winter in small numbers, unlike the **Welcome Swallow** which seems to have been present in significant numbers this winter. Similarly, the **Grey Fantail** has been seen often, though I've only recorded it once in my local patch since the end of June.



Shining Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalites lucidus*)
Photo: Harvey Perkins

Early in August there were a number of reports of the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo**, but none since, so these were probably overwintering birds rather than the first returns. It's always very hard to tell.
(Cont' page 2)

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 October 2012**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, Deakin.
(*Agenda and Committee nomination form - page 15*)

This is also the case for the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, whose numbers don't seem to have increased yet compared with winter. It also applies to the **Rufous Whistler**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, the **Australian Reed-Warbler** and the **Superb Parrot**. By contrast, I'm still not aware of any **Noisy Friarbird** or **Dusky Wood-swallow** records for this winter. While there have been signs of the beginnings of the **Yellow-faced** (and **Fuscous**) **Honeyeater** migration, by 20 August it appeared most species known to return relatively early still had to start



Yellow-faced Honeyeater
(*Lichenostomus chrysops*)

Photo: Geoffrey Dabb

arriving. Perhaps when you read this column in early September it may have all changed. If not, please keep an eye and ear out in your patch for the first returners, including the **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo**.

In keeping with this, there were still plenty of altitudinal visitors in Canberra in mid August with the **Scarlet** and **Flame Robin** still being regularly reported. In fact the latter seems to have been more common this month than for the rest of winter, with John Brannan reporting more than he's ever seen on the Pinnacle. While the **Rose Robin** has been reported a number of times in August, there have been no reported sightings of the **Pink Robin**. Likewise there have been a few observations of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** and the **Swift Parrot**. Records in Canberra during August of the more common winter visitors, the **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater**, also don't seem to have declined much yet. Unusually one of the latter has stayed on in my GBS site, though not calling which is typical for late winter.

If this long winter ever finishes, numbers of the above should decline during September when the first **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones** usually arrive; as does the **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Mistletoebird** and perhaps the **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark** later in the month/early in October. Based on conditions inland I'm again going to predict very few of these will come to the ACT this spring/summer, even though a number of the latter were recorded at Currawang to the NE of the ACT in August, surprisingly calling loudly (my experience is that they are very quiet and secretive in winter). Round this time the first **Sacred Kingfishers**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and **Dollarbirds** will arrive and the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail** may be seen as passage migrants to the wet gullies of the mountains during October. The first **Eastern/Pacific Koels** are also likely to arrive during this period, perhaps not until the end of October as was the case last year.

The continuing winter conditions seem to have arrested breeding in August compared with the large number of reports in July. Several of the early **Masked Lapwing** nests at the well-known sites seemed to have failed, perhaps due to the many severe frosts and subsequent cold soil conditions. By contrast, the **Common Bronzings** nesting in Dennis Ayliffe's backyard in Fraser appear to have fledged one very early young, despite the attentions of the currawongs for the last few days. The **White-winged Choughs** in the tree close to the dam at the end of Kathner Street Chapman appeared to have started feeding young by the third weekend of August. John Brannan reported early nest building by the **Scarlet Robin** at the Pinnacle, and an **Eastern Yellow Robin** was reported on a nest at the ANBG, as well as Grey Currawongs nest building at Shepherd's Lookout. Finally there has been another report of cockatoos feeding dependent young over winter, this time they were **Gang-gangs**.

So, three weeks into August there is as yet no real influx of the "summer migrants" returning and the breeding season seems to have been arrested. But all it takes is a few days of warmer weather to change this. So please keep your eyes and ears open for the first arrivals and watch closely for any signs of breeding, and, as always, please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

— Jack Holland

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 29 July – Mount Majura Vineyard

On a typical Canberra winter morning nineteen members and guests met in the Mount Majura Vineyard carpark. Those who arrived early negotiated the challenging entry amid fairly thick fog. Fortunately the fog had mostly cleared by the time we'd all assembled, and formalities had all been observed including Stuart spraying our shoes. By then we'd already watched a group of 14 **White-winged Choughs** fly out of, and back into, the vineyard (wonder if they got their feet sprayed?). We'd also seen or heard **Grey Currawong**, **Galah**, **Magpie-lark**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Australian Magpie**, **Australian Raven**, **Brown Goshawk** and **Common Starling**. As we set off we saw **Crimson Rosella**, a flock of about 20 **Red-browed Finch**, **White-plumed Honeyeater** and **Flame Robin**.

The early highlight of the morning was excellent views of a **Grey Currawong**, apparently collecting sticks - for a nest perhaps - and of the later morning hearing a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. The main highlight was a flock of about 12 **Common Bronzewing**, several of which stayed perched in good view of the group. While we only saw 26 species in all, (down on last year - no **Diamond Firetail** or **Scarlet Robin**), we did add a species to Stuart's list for the Vineyard, a **Great Cormorant**. The tasting of Mount Majura wines afterwards, with most informative commentary by Stuart and other vineyard staff, well and truly offset any small disappointment that might have been felt about the number of species seen. Many thanks to Stuart for a great outing.

- Michael Robbins

Sunday 5 August – Googong Dam

On a cold and windy afternoon 20 members and guests met at mid-day for a wander around some of the northern sections of Googong Dam. Things were very quiet around the ranger station, so we moved on further. A mixed flock of **Red-browed Finches**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills** and a **Speckled Warbler** proved very flighty, or perhaps they were just anxious to get out of the wind.

Water birds were elusive, with only small numbers of **Eurasian Coot**, **Dusky Moorhen** and **Australian Wood Ducks** putting in an appearance. A **Great Cormorant** and an **Australasian Darter** were found. A large flock of **Red-browed Finches** was located at a sheltered picnic area, along with **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Kookaburras**, a **Scarlet Robin** and a **Grey Currawong**. The list for the afternoon totalled 31 species. The highlights, especially for the very new arrivals in Australia, were good sightings of two echidnas. Thanks to Philip for an interesting afternoon's birding.

- Sandra Henderson



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Ornithological
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enquiries@philipmaher.com

2012 tours

November: New Caledonia
November: SW Western Australia
(a few places left)

2012 Plains-wanderer weekends

15 & 16 December
29 & 30 December
(a few places left)

2013

February: Tasmania
including pelagic & Melaleuca

Easter Saturday & Sunday
Plains-wanderer Weekend

**April: Alice Springs area &
MacDonnell Ranges**

July: Top End
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine,
Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau flight

July: Gulf Country
Cairns to Mt Isa, returning via Ather-
ton Tablelands

September: Strzelecki Outback
Vic, NSW, SW Q'ld, SA, 34th tour

**October: Yorke Peninsula to
Ceduna** (over 60 scarlet-chested
parrots seen on the 2011 tour)

2013 Plains-wanderer weekends
7 & 8 December
28 & 29 December

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Wednesday 15 August – McQuoids Hill

Twenty members attended the Wednesday walk around the base of McQuoids Hill. Although the weather was quite mild, birds were not evident in great numbers or diversity. Of the 36 species recorded on our last foray (July 2010) 15 were not recorded on this visit - but we did add a further 7 species to the Wednesday Walkers' site list. Among the additions were **Brown** and **Striated Thornbills**. On the previous visit we had recorded **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** (both seen today) and **Yellow Thornbill** (not today) so the area could be seen as thornbill heaven. We also added Red-browed Finch to the list, balanced by missing out on **Diamond Firetail** and **Double-barred Finch**.

Possibly due to being a month later we recorded breeding indicators for 4 species: **Australian Wood Duck** (Inspecting Hollow); **Striated Thornbill** (Display); **Australian Raven** (Nest Building - we believe: certainly there was a nest and the two Ravens were vigorously driving off a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**); **Common Starling** (Inspecting Hollow).
- Martin Butterfield

Sunday 19 August - Burra

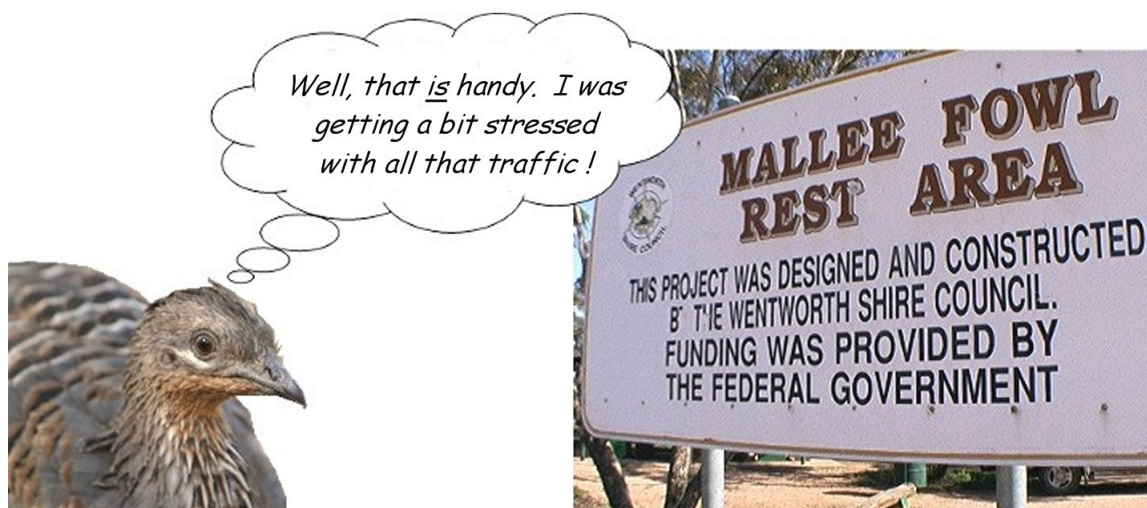
Twelve members and guests made their way to Ian Anderson's property at Burra on a surprisingly pleasant morning. The vegetation is recovering well from the dry years, and Ian was able to give us lots of information about the plants.

The most spectacular sight was the three **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circling above the ridge, and one which came closer to check us out. A couple of mixed feeding flocks added **Brown**, **Striated**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** to the list for the day, as well as **Red-browed Finches**, **Grey Fantails**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Grey Shrike-thrushes** and **Eastern Spinebills**. After morning tea in Ian's cottage we climbed the hill to see the old stone wall (built by Chinese miners in the 1870s). A **Fantailed Cuckoo** was heard several times but not sighted, and only one person managed to see the **Grey Butcherbird** we were hearing intermittently. A total of 38 species were seen.
- Sandra Henderson

Geoffrey's Dab

"On the way back on the Euabalong/Mt Hope Road just past the Round Hill lookout I saw a pair of Malleefowl on the edge of the road. Max came to a screeching halt and we watched them look to the left, look to the right and look to the left again as you would expect from road wise birds and then they sauntered across the road and disappeared into the bush. "

(extract from the May 2012 newsletter of the **Murrumbidgee Field Nats**. Article by Nella Smith and brought to G-g by Sandra Henderson)



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>.

Friday 7 to Sunday 9 September – Shore, Rain Forest and Heath with Illawarra Birders

We will be shown a number of good birding spots in the Illawarra by the Illawarra Birders (IB) who joined COG on the Wee Jasper trip in February 2012. The trip starts on Friday night, because of an early start on Saturday and the roughly 3 hour drive from Canberra.

The proposed schedule is an 8.30 am start on Saturday with an approximately 3 hour visit to Tallawarra Ashponds, then depending on interest, weather, etc, a possible quick visit to Lake Illawarra to see some shorebirds. Everyone should bring a packed lunch and drinks for the day so that we can adjust timings as appropriate and all stay together. After lunch we aim to visit the Mt Kembla ring track which has good rainforest with **Australian Logrunner**, **Pilot Bird**, **Bassian Thrush**, and recently a calling **Noisy Pitta**. This part of the trip will be about 2 hours depending on sightings.

Dinner on Saturday will be a joint COG/IB event at a Thai restaurant in Windang, near Oasis Caravan Park. On Sunday morning we will visit Barren Grounds or Budderoo Fire Trail, depending on advice of locals as to which is likely to be best on the day. Then COG people will head back to Canberra.

Members attending will need to book their own accommodation. The Oasis Caravan Park is a good starting point: <http://www.oasisresort.com.au/> but there are numerous alternatives nearby.

Registration is essential and closed on 12 August but to check for availability of places after that date, contact **Michael Robbins** (mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au)

Sunday 9 September – Mulligans Flat

Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve contains some of the best preserved lowland woodland and forest anywhere in Australia, and the area inside the feral proof fence is really special. By early September, we should see some of the first returning summer migrants such as cuckoos, gerygones, **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Olive-backed Orioles**, **Leaden Flycatchers** and **White-winged Trillers**. There is a good chance that we will see some of the recently reintroduced Eastern Bettongs, and possibly **Superb Parrots**.

Meet in the carpark in Amy Ackman St, Forde at 8.30 am. Travelling north on Horse Park Road, turn right into Francis Forde Boulevard, cross the next roundabout, turn left at the lights into Amy Ackman St and continue until you come to the carpark on your right. We will enter through the Red Gum and Woodland Gates, walk along the Old Coach Road and return past the woolshed and new toilet block.

Please wear walking boots and bring a hat and water. The walk will be about 5 km on good tracks. Numbers will be limited to about 20, so please contact **Bruce Lindenmayer** if you would like to join: phone 6288 5957 or 0417 418 759 or email blaags@bigpond.net.au.

Sunday 16 September – Woods Reserve

It has been some time since COG has visited this neck of the woods. **Lia Battisson** will lead the group. We will meet at Woods Reserve at 8:30 am and look around that area, before walking up to Gibraltar Falls and back. It is expected that we will finish before lunch. Bring morning tea with you. Car-pooling is encouraged. Meet at Kambah Village at 7:45 for a 7:50 departure. Those on the north side may wish to nominate a place to meet.

Contact Lia on 02 6231 0147 or liabattisson@grapevine.com.au

Wednesday 19 September – Michelago and Bredbo area

In September the Wednesdays walkers will venture further afield to the property Illilanga and then Strike-a-Light TSR, both of which we visited last year with good results.

COG members Sandra Lauer and Jeremy Meares own Illilanga, which is monitored as part of the K2C surveys and usually has some good birding. The property is on Baroona Rd, Michelago. Baroona Road is about 9km past the Michelago petrol station, off the Monaro Highway to the west (righthand side if you're coming from Canberra). Turn into Baroona Road & follow the bitumen road to the right when you come to an intersection with Weemala Lane. The house is the second on the left about 790m from the highway (number 79) - an A-frame up the hill. Parking is best on the verge near the letter box. It's about a 20-25 minute drive from Calwell, 40-45 minutes from Fyshwick or Queanbeyan. Car-pooling will be organised closer to the date.

When we've had a chance to look around at Illilanga and had some morning tea, we'll proceed to the Strike-a-Light TSR, which is 11km down the Jerangle Road. The turnoff is in Bredbo.

Leader: **Sandra Henderson**

Saturday 22 September (morning) – Namadgi Visitors Centre woodlands

Spring in Canberra is a time of renewal, with the arrival of many migratory birds that depart during our colder months, lots of breeding behaviour, plants in flower and abundant insect life. It is an exciting time to be outside and observing nature. It is in this context that we will visit the woodland that surrounds the Namadgi Visitors Centre. Nestled at the foot of the towering Mt Tennent and not far from the Murrumbidgee River, this small patch of remnant woodland contains many mature Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum trees, so our focus will be on woodland birds. There is also a dam here that is home to water birds, so there is a lot to see in this one location.

Meet **Matthew Frawley** at the front of the Namadgi Visitors Centre at 8am. Please bring water, sun-screen, hat and food for morning tea (there are ice creams available at the visitors centre as well). Hope to see you there.

October long weekend (Labour Day) – Sat. 29 September to Mon. 1 October

(NB: a leader is required – please contact Sue Lashko if you can help.)

This campout will be on private property which consists of around 5000 acres of thick bush, natural grassland, river gorge, lightly wooded areas and more birds and critters than you can hope for. The property is called Yalcowinna and is located 14 km north of Cooma on the Shannon's Flat Road.

Water, food, and toilet will not be provided but there is plenty of firewood. Vehicles with some clearance are recommended with RAV 4 and Subaru Outbacks suitable for access.

The location for the camping area can be viewed by typing these coordinates into Google: 36° 7'43.27"S 149° 4'56.44"E and the location of the house is 36° 8'24.78"S 149° 4'7.59"E. Arrive Friday or Saturday morning at front gate to property.

(Cont' next page)

The rough programme is:

After breakfast at the campsite, there will be a morning chat about the property followed by a walk around open bushland on the top half of the farm to begin a bird list for Yalcowinna. Expect many **Kookaburras**, quails, **Gang-gang Cockatoos** and other nesting parrots, as well as four kinds of macropods and many echidnas.

After lunch explore the gorge paddocks comprising open rock areas and large patches of briar rose, large eucalypts and deep creeks with **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, many finches and many raptors.

Day two: explore the river gorge via fire trails. Birds of interest include many parrots, **Superb Lyrebirds**, **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, **Brown Goshawk** and many small bird species.

Day three: explore the lower half of the farm around paddocks with large apple box, deep creeks and open bushland. After lunch explore the natural open grasslands, searching for **Swamp Harrier**, grass-land birds and many quail. **NB: this trip will run only if someone volunteers to lead it.**

October long weekend (ACT holiday) - 6-8 October - Currarong

Currarong is a coastal village on the Beecroft Peninsula which encloses the northern end of Jervis Bay and is surrounded by national park. Local habitats include rocky coast, long sandy beaches, headland cliffs and extensive heathland, forest and patches of sub-rainforest. Nearby are Jervis Bay itself, and coastal lakes, lagoons and rivers. Access is via Nowra, and the trip from Canberra takes about three and a half hours.

We will visit a range of habitats and the bird list should include a range of bush, heath and shore birds. **Eastern Bristlebirds** have made their way to the local heathlands from their translocation release sites further around the bay, and on recent trips I've recorded **Grey Goshawk**, **Bar-shouldered Dove**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, **Southern Emu-wren**, etc.

Accommodation is available at the Currarong caravan park. The weekend coincides with the last weekend of the NSW school holidays but is outside of peak season. For further information see <http://www.holidayhaven.com.au/Currarong-Beachside-Tourist-Park.html>

Places will be limited to about 12-15. Contact **Harvey Perkins** at hdpphd@gmail.com or on 043 886 9990 for further information or to register your interest.

Sunday 14 October K2C bird surveys Bredbo Region

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**, and the spring honeyeater migration will be in full flight. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and add to the property lists. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact **Nicki Taws**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or ph. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

Sunday 21 October – Bellmount Forest and TSR 48

Mark this in your diaries, but see the October edition of Gang-gang for details!

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2012

Yes, it is on again, on the **weekend of 27-28 October** - COG's annual effort to record over the last weekend in October all species of birds present in the ACT across as wide a variety of habitats as possible; and to record any breeding activity. All COG members are warmly encouraged to participate, so that we can cover as much of the ACT as possible. COG members are encouraged to "adopt" one or more locations or entire grid cells, and those already adopted will be shown on our website and updated from time to time. But don't be perturbed if your favorite location has been taken - multiple surveyors per location are quite acceptable, though it would be good if you took on at least one unclaimed site as well. Think about giving an unknown area a try – it might prove exciting. In order to claim a grid cell, please put in your bid to **Barbara Allan**, the blitz organizer, on blitz@canberrabirds.org.au or phone her on 6254 6520. And yes, thanks to all those who have suggested we need a blitz week, to allow for adverse weather etc. but in the interest of consistency, we are retaining the two-day format.

If you are very familiar with a site and regularly survey there, or do Birds Australia-registered two hectare surveys there, you would probably be the best person to survey that site for the blitz if you can. But if last years' sites were boring or unpleasant or bird-free zones, pick somewhere new this time. Or better still, do a 2-ha 20-min survey to "cover" the site, then move on to somewhere more interesting. If you are a beginner, probably the easiest way to participate is to do a survey in your local park – but remember only to record the birds whose identity you are absolutely sure of. And if work or family commitments preclude you from doing much at all, be sure to try and do at least a 20-minute, 2-ha survey of your own backyard and environs to support COG's blitz.

As usual, depending on the weather and Namadgi National Park management, we hope to be able to conduct surveys beyond the locked gates in the Park. The organiser is looking for more 4WDs and competent drivers to tackle the fire trails. Please contact Barbara if you'd like to be involved and/or if you have room in your vehicle and are willing to take passengers.

All standard Birds Australia survey methods are acceptable – just indicate on the electronic or hard-copy datasheet which one you used:

1. a 20-minute survey over 2 hectares (rectangle of 100 m x 200 m; or circle of radius 80 m)
2. a survey within 500 m of a central spot, time unlimited but 20 mins or more

a survey within 5 km of a central spot, time unlimited (though please stay within the one grid cell).

Remember to record the *abundance* of each bird species seen – e.g. 2 Laughing Kookaburra; plus any indication of breeding using the following codes: ih (inspecting hollow); co (copulating); nb (nest building); ny (nest with young); cf (carrying food); dy (dependent young). *Only* record species you are sure about. If you see a bird species on COG's "unusuals" list, take a photo of it, if at all possible; take copious field notes of all the details you observe and any features you didn't see; then submit a completed "unusual bird report form" (available on the COG website) with your hard-copy datasheet or email it to rarities@canberrabirds.org.au.

Datasheets are available at COG meetings; from the organiser; or from the COG website under "forms" – the COG observation record sheet is the general-use form. This year you may also use COG's electronic input option for your blitz records, using the standard ABA code, not a specific blitz one. [This means that any ACT bird record entered over the blitz weekend will be treated as if it were a blitz record]. If you aren't already a user of the online data entry system and would prefer to enter your blitz records this way,

please contact Paul Fennell our database manager for details: ptf@grapevine.com.au or 6254 1804. If you use hard-copy datasheets, please mail them to COG blitz records, PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608; deliver them to Barbara; or hand them in at the November COG meeting.

While most of us find the act of going out and recording birds rewarding enough in itself, it is good if we can offer modest incentives such as participation “lucky draw” prizes. If you are prepared to donate books, wine, DVDs, native plants or anything suitable as a blitz prize, the organiser would love to hear from you!

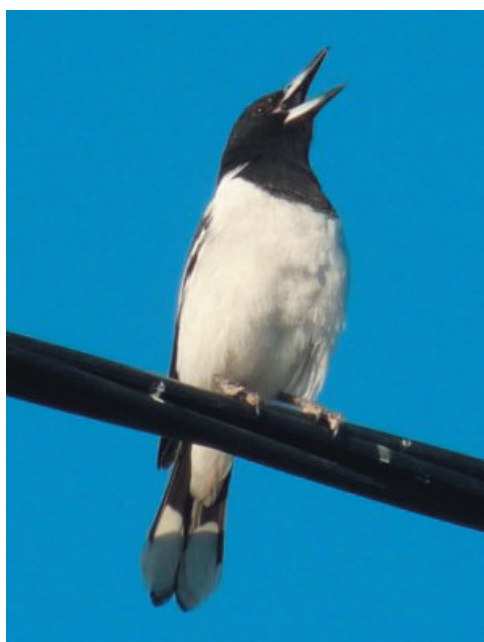
There will be regular blitz updates on the COG website, including lists of unloved sites awaiting adoption, so do check it out. And join us for a fun weekend of birding for a cause. Accounts of the outcome will be published in *Gang-gang* and *Canberra Bird Notes* in due course.

- **Barbara Allan**

UNDERSTANDING BIRDS

Learn to think like a bird!

An ANU Centre for Continuing Education course
with COG member
and ‘Avlan Whimsy’ author Ian Fraser



Six two-hour sessions covering evolution, structure, ecology, behaviour, habitats, bird-watching tools and techniques.

For beginners and experienced birders, *lots* of slides.

Discussion of the issues encouraged!

Tuesdays, 6.30pm,
25 September—30 October.

Also two 3-hour field trips.

For further details and booking,
contact the CCE on 6125 2892 or
enquiries.cce@anu.edu.au

Back-up Layout Editor still required

COG invites expressions of interest from members who might be willing and able to assist from time-to-time as a back-up for the layout editor of ***Gang-gang***.

Training and the software program are available. You will need good technical skills and the time to process the materials at the end of a month when required. Anyone with desk-top publishing experience – or with good word processing skills – would be capable of doing the job.

If you can help, please contact Janette through lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

- Member's Corner -

Notebooks

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book (Oddie 1980) lists the essential tools for birdwatchers as – the notebook, binoculars and the field guide. Binoculars are not always essential for observing birds. Most of my Garden Bird Survey (GBS) input is made without binoculars. The guidebook and notebook, no matter what form the latter has, are critical.

As a project for someone new to bird watching the GBS is an excellent entry. Their input is acknowledged each year in the Canberra Bird Notes (CBN) and from time to time their actual data is individually acknowledged. A satisfying experience. Note taking is minimal.

Many will also contribute to other surveys carried out by Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG). The surveys dictate the information to be gathered which limits note taking requirements. However, surveys are an essential part of birdwatching and contribute to major publications such as the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (HANZAB) – the bible.

In addition to this 'formal' work some will go on to adopt a patch which is visited regularly and the comings and goings of birds noted. From these notes often an article for CBN is written which in turn may be quoted in other publications as source material. This means that the random jottings have now irretrievably gone out into the ornithological world beyond the Australian Capital Territory. As probably all that is known about birds has its origins in notebooks those original jottings have an importance beyond that envisaged when written. This brings up the question – how good are our notes?

In most instances we will never know for the simple reason we never show our notebooks to others nor ask to see someone else's notebook. Notebooks are not generally discussed among birdwatchers and there are few readily available information sources where they are the subject. Field guides have a couple of paragraphs on notes but, understandably, these lean towards identification of the bird of the moment – so we do the best we can.

We can format our notebooks, whether they are paper and pencil ones, or on the IT devices now available. But in general terms there is an emphasis on noting everything which makes this difficult or impossible given the time we have or our capabilities. Also, and this is an individual thing, formatting is restrictive and goes against the principle 'too much information is barely enough' to paraphrase Roy and HG.

In an ideal world we need to have knowledge of botany, entomology and geology, as well as an ability to read maps, to ensure our notes are adequate. Also being able to identify birds is useful.

The likely final indignity is that when we 'pop our clogs' the notebooks will probably end up on the closest tip. This, our course, raises the question, why bother writing this article? As discussion and articles on notebooks are few I thought, 'let's raise the curtain a little'.

Reference: Oddie, Bill, (1980) *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book*, Eyre Methuen, London.

Robert Digan

digan@netspeed.com.au

Protocols for CanberraBirds, COG's email-based announcement and discussion list

COG's email-based announcement and discussion list, CanberraBirds, has been operating successfully for over a decade. It has around 250 members and distributes about five emails per day.

The list has a few simple 'rules' that guide its operation:

Messages sent to the CanberraBirds email list should:

- NOT be of a purely commercial nature
- NOT contain defamatory, offensive, hurtful or inappropriate language
- NOT contain personal attacks - argue about the message, not the messenger
- NOT stray too far from our main topics: the wild birds of the Canberra/ACT region, their habitat & conservation

Messages, including attachments, should be under 100 kb in size.

COG's Committee reminds subscribers that COG (as the list owner), as well as the author of any defamatory messages could both be found liable in any legal action for defamation.

Information can be found by emailing canberrabirds-help@canberrabirds.org.au with the word 'Help' in the subject line. A comprehensive, searchable archive of all the messages sent to the list is available at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds>.

For any assistance, please contact David McDonald, who manages the CanberraBirds list on behalf of COG's Committee of Management, email canberrabirds-owner@canberrabirds.org.au, or phone David at (02) 6238 3706.



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Photo Ops 10 - Peregrine Falcons



My interest in Peregrine Falcons was reawakened recently when I was lent 'On the Wing' by Alan Tennant, an unusual and quite wonderful book. It's possibly the only work in its genre – natural history meets aviation road movie – and tells the story of a Peregrine enthusiast and his sidekick pilot who attempt to track the migration of Arctic Peregrines through North and Central America. They do this by the old-fashioned 'manual' method of flying along in a slow aircraft attempting to pick up signals from a nearby transmitter-fitted bird. The book offers considerable insight into the world of the

Peregrine and the Peregrine enthusiast, including in particular the few who enjoy privileged access to such an attractive and iconic wild species – those who handle, feed, study, heal and even temporarily own them.

I was reminded by the book of my own close encounter last year. Not only was I fortunate to experience the keen attention of a pair of Peregrine Falcons at close quarters for several minutes, but I also happened to have my camera with me at the time.

A group of us had walked to Lucifer's Thumb lookout in Guy Fawkes River National Park (north-east NSW) last spring, passing on the way the White-throated and Red-browed Treecreepers mentioned in an earlier column. Reaching the lookout, we walked out on to the obvious rock to make the most of the view. A Peregrine shot out from somewhere in the cliff underneath and was soon joined by another in a series of fly-pasts and more pointed manoeuvres designed to move us along. While others avoided the birds and gazed at the view, I of course was being torn in several directions: given I'd probably never be in a similar situation again, should I just experience the rare sight (and sounds) of high speed eye-level proximate Peregrines, or should I concentrate on taking photographs? Were we causing the birds unacceptable stress and therefore should I retreat and leave them in peace immediately? In the end I managed an approximation of all three, arguing first to myself that other people must come here regularly and then observing that the birds did settle down fairly quickly, one perching in a nearby tree where it had been



Lucifers Thumb Lookout , Guy Fawkes River National Park



when we first arrived while the other appeared intermittently flying past, presumably at other times visiting the nest that we couldn't see.

When I first arrived, however, while standing on the most extended and precarious rock completely preoccupied with fitting the bird lens to the camera, a sound brought my head up just in time to see a Peregrine stooping at incomprehensible speed, apparently vertically, towards what seemed must be instant certain death on the cliff top. With wings tightly closed,

from my viewpoint it appeared to be travelling vertically, but as it approached eye level and only 6 or 7 metres away (all this in fractional seconds) the bird extended wings and levelled out with a sound and effort that I'll never forget, a kind of whoosh that you could imagine from a violently manoeuvring aircraft, full of strain and metal-bending forces, before shooting across at head height a few metres in front of me into the emptiness above the valley.



That moment will always be a highlight, probably *the* highlight, in my short bird-watching history. Needless to say I've no photos of it. In fact you can see that the photos show the tail well fanned to facilitate slow flight. It was only on these comparatively slow attacks and fly-pasts that the camera was able to focus correctly and I notice that all my images of the birds in faster trim are defocused.

Most birders would have their own stories of peak birding moments and I'm thankful for the good fortune to have the camera with me at this time. Other bird photographers will recognise the dilemma as to whether to take the camera or not on any given expedition, and whether to take the big lens or not. For

enthusiasts it's a tricky question and all we can do is cross our fingers and keep our eyes on the ground when we don't.



For anyone who might decide to visit this spot I should mention that I ended up in Glen Innes outpatients as a result of this walk! Not suffering talon rips or impaled beak but rather eight particularly toxic ticks that attached themselves while I was trying to work my way through the bush to a distant position facing the cliff on which we'd been standing – an attempt to view where we assume the Peregrines had their nest. I never got there.

- Julian Robinson

COG SALES

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, while 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.

Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay
6286 1564 or
gramsay@grapevine.com.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren 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.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine
(02) 6258 3531, or
barbdebruine@hotmail.com
or see
<http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>



The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia, 2nd Edition.

Richard Thomas, Sarah Thomas, David Andrew & Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species.

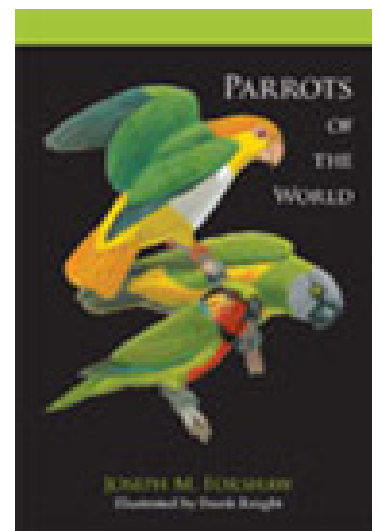
This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories.

Member's price \$32.

Parrots of the World

Joseph M Forshaw, Frank Knight

A stunningly illustrated, easy-to-use field guide to all 356 species and well-differentiated subspecies of parrots. 2010 - CSIRO PUBLISHING - 336pp - \$28



2012 COG AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 October 2012**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

Agenda

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Opening | 8. Appointment of auditor for 2012-2013 |
| 2. Apologies | 9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (see nomination form in this issue, and forms will also be available on the night of the AGM) |
| 3. Confirmation of minutes of 2011 AGM | 10. Other matters for which notice has been given. |
| 4. President's report | 11. Close of meeting |
| 5. Adoption of president's report | |
| 6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts | |
| 7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts | |

COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate

for the position* of

*(*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)*

on the 2012 COG Committee.

(Name):

(Signature):

I second the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

I accept the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

Nominations can be mailed to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608, or submitted by hand prior to the AGM. Mailed nominations **MUST** reach the mailbox by 3 October 2012.



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New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

J. Middlebrook, Uriarra

D. Gordon, Reid

J. Kowalski, Pearce

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for the October edition

Wednesday 26 Sept. 2012

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

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 and welcomed.

COG info

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6231 0303

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Newsletter distribution

Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership

2012-2013 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

membership@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 website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

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

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

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

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