



Gang-gang

August 2003

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 13 August

Details pg 2

Contents

Field trip reports	3
Future field trips	5
Final Tattlings	13
COG info	16

From your Committee

THANKS to Kathy Walter

Kathy Walter has formally stepped down as editor and designer of *Gang-gang*, after a number of years regular and responsible service to COG in one or both of these important positions.

Over the last few years *Gang-gang* has become an interesting and informative newsletter, keenly awaited by the membership every month. Kathy's role in designing *Gang-gang* to a very professional

level and her desire to increase the number of images used has greatly improved it's look and appeal.

Kathy also developed the graphics for and designed COG's 'Birds of Canberra Gardens' publication, and more recently the Declining Woodland Birds pamphlet.

On behalf of the COG Committee and membership, MANY THANKS KATHY for a job well done.

Tanya Rough stepped into the *Gang-gang* editor and designer role earlier this year on an interim basis, and has agreed to continue until a permanent editor and designer can be found. Thank you Tanya.

The GBS report saga

Until now, the COG Committee has deliberately refrained from making any public comment about its decision in October 2001 not to publish *Canberra Birds: a review of the first 18 years of the Garden Bird Survey*, by Philip Veerman. The Committee recognised that Philip had put in an immense amount of work into the review, but concluded on the basis of expert advice that the draft document at that time was not suitable for publication. However, following Philip's subsequent publication of his review, using COG

data without formal authorisation by the Committee, and his unprecedented and unwarranted performance at the June COG meeting, the Committee feels compelled to set the record straight.

COG's Garden Bird Survey (GBS) commenced in 1981 and, for many years, its findings were reported only briefly, in the annual bird report. After the survey had been running for 17 years, and following discussion between Philip and the Department of Urban Services, the Department made a grant to COG to publish a book on the birds of Canberra, based on data from the GBS. A management committee for the project was formed and Philip Veerman, the then GBS coordinator, was contracted to extract and collate data from the GBS database and to provide an explanatory text. He was paid \$2,500 from the grant for his work.

In the view of the management committee, Philip's text did not meet the Department's requirement that the work be suitable for 'a wide audience' so a large team of COG members undertook the rewriting and editing task, without remuneration. The end result was *Birds of Canberra Gardens*, which sold over 2,800 copies and made a surplus, for COG, of some \$39,000.

Some time later, after long and difficult negotiations, COG paid Philip a further \$295 for his expenses under the initial contract and an ex gratia payment of \$2,205 in recognition of the costs incurred in his running of the GBS.

It was agreed that part of the publication output would also include shorter technical papers, to be published by COG or in other journals. Because of this agreement and in light of Philip's concern about many aspects of the Birds of Canberra Gardens, in January 2000, the Committee agreed in principle to publish a more technical report on the GBS with Philip as sole author. At its August 2000 meeting, the Committee reaffirmed its in-principle support for a technical report of 100-120 pages, but insisted on its being professionally refereed before making a final commitment to its publication. Philip provided a manuscript in December 2000. Two external reviewers nominated by Philip provided extensive comments on the manuscript and these were passed to Philip to guide him in redrafting the document. The Committee appointed a second review team, comprising Dr Michael Lenz, Dr Chris Tidemann and David McDonald, to make an assessment of the extent to which the manuscript had been reworked to take into account the reviewers' comments and to make recommendations on the next steps. The review team advised COG's office bearers that the report was still not in a form suitable for publication by COG, and suggested that Philip work with a technical writer and statistician to improve the document. Given the Committee's previous experience in trying to engage Philip in a team process, the office bearers rejected this suggestion and recommended to the Committee that the document not be published by COG. The Committee gave Philip time to respond to the review team's report, and when he

indicated that he was unprepared to make further changes, the Committee accepted the office bearers' recommendation. Philip then went ahead and self-published his review in 2002, without seeking formal permission to use the data for his own purposes; he updated it in 2003.

The Committee commends Philip wholeheartedly for his enthusiasm for the GBS, his responsiveness to queries based on it, and for the considerable work he has put into his review over many years. He is not, however, a professional ornithologist, statistician or technical writer. Nor has he shown much preparedness to accept professional advice or to work collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes.

In consequence of its initial failure to obtain the kind of review of the GBS that is warranted, the Committee will commission a professional review of the GBS, which it will publish in a future issue of, or supplement to, Canberra Bird Notes.

In response to some members' concerns, and to address any uncertainties that might exist over the use of COG data, the Committee has prepared Memoranda of Understanding between COG and all persons who have access to COG data, spelling out what is expected of the holders of the positions and what they are permitted to do with the data. The provisions relating to the use of data are highly liberal, and read as follows:

[Office-holder] "may not publish or otherwise make use of COG data (with minor exceptions) on his own account unless:

1. permission is sought and received in writing from the COG committee to use the data for that specific use only; and
2. in any such publication or use, that permission is acknowledged; and

3. a disclaimer is included, stating that the views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of COG."

Philip has declined to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and, accordingly, the Committee has appointed Mark Clayton as interim GBS coordinator.

Your committee



AUGUST MEETING

8 pm

Wednesday 13th

*Canberra Girls Grammar
School cnr Gawler Cres and
Melbourne Ave, Deakin*

Short talk The short talk will be a very special one, by parrot expert Joe Forshaw, this time on Dollarbirds (he doesn't want to be typecast!). Special, because it will be one day short of the 35th anniversary of his first talk to COG - so come and be part of the celebration.

Main speaker Our main speaker will be James Nicholls, a former Canberran and young COG member, and now completing his PhD at the University of Queensland on Satin Bowerbirds, which will be the topic of his talk.

Should be a great night

don't miss it!

Donations to Birds Australia for HANZAB

Many of you will know of the fabulous HANZAB volumes being produced by Birds Australia.

Six volumes of the seven volume series are now completed. The seventh is well underway.

Alas, Birds Australia is desperately short of funds to complete this important work. It has launched an appeal to raise \$800 000.

This is a good time to give.

Donations are tax deductible, so that you can get a tax refund soon.

Send your donation - cheque (payable to Birds Australia Research Fund), or credit card (Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard) - to HANZAB at Birds Australia, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East VIC 3123.

You should include a note indicating that the donation is towards the completion of the final volume of HANZAB.

Please give generously to this valuable project.

It helps "to ensure that we have the information we need to find solutions to the problems that face our bird populations today, and in years to come".

Field Trip Reports

Round Flat area Tinderry Nature Reserve; Sunday 22 June 2003

Question: Who would go walking at above 1100 m on the shortest day of the year when showers in the ranges and a maximum of 10°C has been forecast? Answer: Eighteen slightly crazy Canberra birdwatchers! And the prospects for a wet and miserable day spent walking among cloud and persistent drizzle, if not snow, looked pretty strong judging by the very low cloud cover over the mountains to the west as we drove down the Monaro Highway. When we dropped down into Michelago it was a certainly a big surprise to find the high peaks of the Tinderrys virtually cloud free.

Despite some pessimism on my part this remained so, and went spent about 4 hours walking in the SE corner of this little known reserve under high cloud, with patches of sunshine and only the occasional strong gust of wind. If only the birds had realised what lovely weather it was it would have been a near perfect day. However, they turned out to be very quiet and uncooperative indeed, much more so than a number of atlasing visits I made to this area during 2002. We struggled to record a total of 20 species, a number of these by only a brief glimpse or a short call, and the trip was characterised more by what was not seen or heard.

Easily the most co-operative and the highlight of the day was a pair of **Red-browed Treecreepers**, which obligingly remained quiet and almost motionless while most of the participants obtained excellent views. I had not recorded this

species here before, nor the **Eastern Yellow Robin**, which turned out to be probably the conspicuous species for the day. Even the **Superb Lyrebirds**, so vocal during a visit nearly a year ago to the day, were surprisingly quiet, with only the occasional short burst of calling. The Spotted Quail-thrush and Wonga Pigeon often seen here remained out of sight and hearing. While the patch of silver banksias at Roberts Creek near the end of the walk still contained the odd flowering spike, and some grevillea was coming into flower nearby, this was obviously not enough to sustain any honeyeaters.

Nevertheless participants had a very enjoyable walk in an area where most of them had not been or heard of before. A **Wedge-tailed Eagle** circling low while harassed by two **Australian Ravens** as we returned to the cars added a nice finishing touch. As an added bonus, a very mangy, ochre-coloured wombat made a bee-line straight past us to dive into shelter, where presumably its burrow was located, when we stopped to check a spot at the bottom of the range where a Chestnut-rumped Heathwren had been recorded several months ago. After such mild weather it certainly was a jolt to return to a wet, windy and cold Canberra.

Jack Holland

Newline Survey; Friday 4 July 2003

As I had a few days of holidays left after returning from Africa and the weather promised to be fine and clear, I braved the aircraft noise and quarry trucks on a working week day to do the winter count at this woodland survey location near the Canberra Airport. 34 species in total, the same number as on the survey at Mulligan's Flat. The pair of **Brown Treecreepers** is still in

residence as is a pair of **Jacky Winters** in the front paddock. Other interesting sightings, a **Grey Fantail**, a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** calling (very early), a **Common Bronzewing Pigeon** and **Golden Whistler**, as well as the usual exotics associated with a near town area (Common Myna, C. Starling, Blackbird and House Sparrow). The next survey date TBA – I will let the regulars know.

Jenny Bounds

Boorowa Area; Weekend 5-6 July 2003

In the nineteenth century a Catholic nun was asked, 'Have you ever been to Ireland?' 'No,' she answered, 'But I've been to Boorowa.'

Now COG has also been to Boorowa, and to its highways and enchanting low-ways and by-ways, on the south-west slopes of NSW. Nearby, Frogmore's toilets were eccentric; at Koorawatha we ourselves were welcomed as rather eccentric (all those funny hats and bulging eyes) by a group of Filipina migrants; a fleeting glimpse of Murringo transported one back to Australia in the 1940s. Let's hope these exotic places will long remain unspoilt by the ignorant hordes who race up and down the Hume Highway between capital cities.

The excellent birding was due both to the extensive, detailed knowledge, and to the sharing skills, of Anthony Overs. When he was a national parks officer he covered this region and he knows it like the back of his very capable hand. The amiable Stuart Harris was his off-sider and chauffeur on the weekend of 5-6 July. We were grateful to these members, who had obviously prepared the outing thoroughly; they kept many treats a secret until we were almost upon them. Such treats

were plentiful. The two days yielded about eighty species seen by the group, a congenial bakers' dozen. Some relative new-comers to bird-watching added several new birds to their lists.

Nothing went wrong. Fogs cleared, frosts thawed and the sun shone warmly, particularly on Sunday (fifteen degrees), unbelievable in mid-winter. One of the objects of our search was the Swift parrot. Although none were found, many other superb (yes, we saw one Superb) birds, seen only occasionally by many of us, made for exciting times. Highlights were: flocks of **White-browed and Grey-crowned Babblers** and their nests; **Little Lorikeets**; **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**; a **Striped Honeyeater**; a **Turquoise Parrot**; **Southern Whitefaces**; a **Little Eagle** with a Wedgie (**Wedge-tailed Eagle**); and a flock of **Diamond Firetails** at beautiful Bennett Springs on the Boorowa River. Near Koorawatha we saw open grassland that was so rewarding, we decided to re-name the spot Robinvale: there were **Red-capped**, **Eastern Yellow**, **Flame** (in their droves), **Scarlet and Hooded Robins**; also **Jacky Winters**. We were helped to experience all these wonders, including an echidna, by the fact that Anthony's ear is as sharp as his eyes, and they're pretty damn sharp.

After the expedition I filled up at the local Mobil Service Station. The owner 'loves nature' and imparted this tip: those wanting to feast on the sight of Superb Parrots should visit in spring, during Boorowa's Wool Festival. Then, the 'large tree' (unspecified) behind the Westpac Bank is covered in blossom and teeming with Superbs. Let's go again, at that time, and camp on the beautiful Spring Forest property?

Suzanne Edgar

Although we saw few water-birds, I'll end with a fine poem by Judith Wright about the spirit of bird-watching; 'Egrets' is in her book, *Birds* (1962):

EGRETS

Once as I travelled through
a quiet evening,
I saw a pool, jet-black
and mirror-still.
Beyond, the slender paperbarks
stood crowding;
each on its own white image
looked its fill,
and nothing moved but
thirty egrets wading –
thirty egrets in a quiet evening.

Once in a lifetime, lovely
past believing,
your lucky eyes may light
on such a pool.
As though for many years
I had been waiting,
I watched in silence,
till my heart was full
of clear dark water, and
white trees unmoving,
and, whiter yet,
those thirty egrets wading.

Mulligan's Flat Survey; Sunday 6 July 2003

After being postponed due to rain the weekend before, we re-scheduled the survey for 6 July when weather was predicted to be more favourable. It was a cold, still and foggy morning to start, but the fog lifted as the morning progressed. Conditions at the reserve were quite dry with little surface water around and sparse grass cover, and dam levels are very low, some dams are dry. The large dam has only a few small pools and

it is unknown when the dam wall will be repaired as there are apparently engineering issues to be resolved.

A total of 34 species was recorded for the morning. Some sites were quiet; others had mixed feeding flocks moving through. Highlights were:

- Over 100 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** in the reserve, mostly at the northern end (one group of 30 feeding on pine cones in a stand of pines abutting the reserve's northern boundary); this is a new species record for the surveys (and for the reserve I believe); obviously the birds have been displaced from their usual habitats in and around Namadji NP, and the various burned out pine plantations due to the January bushfires
- **Mistletoebird** at one site (no 22) and **Eastern Spinebill** at another (no 10)
- Several pairs of **Scarlet Robin** and good numbers of **White-eared Honeyeaters** (these move from the high country in autumn/winter; there seem to be more around Mulligans than usual this winter)
- **Varied Sittella**, 3 birds, near site 5
- Several groups of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** – again more than the usual
- A **Peregrine Falcon** along the western side, after the survey
- 2 **Black Swans** on one of the small dams.

We celebrate the completion of 8 years of these surveys and the start of the 9th year at Mulligan's, COGs longest running woodland survey site – longitudinal data is very important and we need to keep this going. **Thanks** to all those who have assisted over this time, some of whom like Kay and Horst Hahne and Bruce Lindenmayer, have been involved for all eight years on most surveys. A number of other people

manage a couple of the surveys each year as their commitments allow, and this is all appreciated. Personally, I have missed only one when I was overseas. The next survey will be Sunday 30 September – note your diaries, details in Sept Ganggang.

Jenny Bounds

Wednesday Walk Jerrabomberra Wetlands; 16 July 2003

The six who turned up for this outing scored a mild and sunny winter morning and there was an encouraging level of water in Kelly's Swamp. Both sides of Dairy Flat Road were well covered and our list included four raptors, **Little Grassbird, Golden-headed Cisticola, Australasian Shoveler, Double-barred Finch** and **Blue-billed Duck** (5), with **Grey Teal, Eurasian Coot, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead** and **Australasian Grebe** in large numbers.

With the help of some top twitchers 53 species were recorded for the morning. I'm sure if the **Freckled Duck** and **Spotted Harriers** had been around they would have found them too!

These Wednesday outings are pleasantly casual and work quite satisfactorily without a leader. There are usually old hands in attendance to help any beginners, so why not give it a go.

Phyl Goddard



Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala pectoralis*)
Photo courtesy Helen Fallow

Future Field Trips

BUSH RETREAT; EXTENDED WINTER WEEKEND AT THE SOUTH COAST

Thursday 14 to
Sunday 17 August 2003

This trip, which has been advertised in the 4 previous issues of *Gang-gang*, is fully subscribed, with a number of people on the wait list. **For any enquiries about this event please contact the leader Jenny Bounds on 6288 7802 (AH).**

.....

BURRA; MORNING WALK/LUNCH ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Sunday 31 August 2003

Ian Anderson has invited members for an early spring visit to his property in Burra. One of the main interests will be an area of regenerating casuarina that often attracts **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. Up to 8 at a time have been seen there this year, which makes it possibly the most reliable spot in the ACT region where to find this threatened species. Ian is also very familiar with the other birds that occur on his property, having put in regular atlas sheets from there, usually consisting of 30+ species. There should be a nice range of woodland birds and some altitudinal migrants, maybe **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**. Perhaps there will still be a few winter feeding flocks. The early spring migrants, including the honeyeaters, should also have returned.

In addition Ian knows his plants very well, having been very active with the Australian Native Plants Society (formerly SGAP) for many years. Meet Ian (phone 6281 0609 after 25

July) at the Williamsdale Service Station at 8.30 am prior to a further 30 minutes drive to his property for several hours viewing of a mix of birds and plants. Members are also invited to stop over to have their lunch at the rammed earth home Ian has built there. **Please note that this outing replaces the one advertised as Greening Australia sites – remnants and revegetation for Saturday 30 August 2003.**

.....

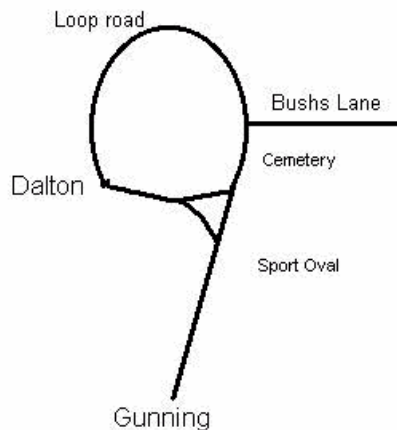
OOLONG/DALTON DAY OUTING

Sunday 7 September 2003

COG had a great day out at Oolong near Dalton last year. Gianni the owner has kindly agreed to another visit from COG at 9.00 am on Sunday 7 September this year. The property has a dam, some pleasant woodland, some wet soaks, open cleared land and for the energetic there is the option of a walk up the hill at the eastern part of the property which provides excellent views of the district. There are lots of opportunities for a wide range of bush birds.

Gianni is keen to develop the property for wildlife and birds, as can be seen from the website www.pcug.org.au/~gianni. Since COG was there last some walking trails have been marked. We'll meet at the Griffin Centre in Civic for some car pooling at 7.30 am, for a 7.45 am departure. Some who live on the northside could meet us at the property if they prefer. Please bring a hat, binoculars, good walking shoes and your lunch. The property is on a slight slope, but most walking is on level-ish ground. There are, however, options to walk on steeper slopes. To get there, we'll drive along the Federal Highway, as far as Sutton, and continue through Gundaroo to Gunning. From the town of

Gunning, on the old Hume Highway, proceed towards the village of Dalton for about 10 km, leave the bitumen road at the Loop road. The sport oval and the cemetery are on the right. Proceed on the gravel road for about 200 m to the Bush's Lane street sign. The Bush's Lane is to the right opposite a hay shed. Proceed on this lane. The entrances to "Dalton Park" and the Oolong Sanctuary are about 1 km from the Bush's Lane sign. Please park your car on the parking area near the entrance.



It is preferred that participants contact the leader Alistair Bestow (6281 1481 A/H) before hand.

.....

TUGGERANONG HOMESTEAD AFTERNOON WALK

Saturday 13 September 2003

The Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead (MOTH) have invited COG members to join them on a combined outing to learn more about the Tuggeranong Homestead. This property has important links with our cultural history, both aboriginal and European. It is also the site for which in 1922 Charles Barrett published the first paper in the literature about the birds of the then Federal Capital Territory.

The outing will include an explanation and examination of the historical significance and cultural values of the place. MOTH is restoring a grassy woodland site and there are also remnants of a cold plain (Tuggeranong Plain) grassland. We will be shown these and also we'll be looking at which birds live there now, compared with in the past.

Meet at the front gates at 1 pm for a couple of hours wandering through the site, culminating in afternoon tea at the Homestead cafe, so bring some money along for this. For further information please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au).

Please note that this outing replaces the one advertised as Local Nature Park for Sunday 14 September 2003.

.....

MULLOON CREEK MORNING/EARLY AFTERNOON OUTING

Sunday 21 September 2003

Mark Clayton has offered to lead a walk on Mulloon Creek, which is a private property off the King's Highway approx 10 km on the coast side of Bungendore. The area straddles the top of the Dividing Range and is thick dry sclerophyll forest with some interesting patches of gum and some more open areas used for grazing. A mix of birds associated with these habitats may be expected, including some returning summer migrants. Exact details are still being negotiated but we expect to meet in Bungendore (place and time to be determined). Further information will be the September Gang-gang, but in the meantime [pencil this event into your diaries.](#)

.....

WEDDIN MOUNTAINS

CAMP-OUT

long weekend 4-6 October 2003

The October long weekend camp-out will be held at the Weddin Mountains National Park. This follows the very successful Easter 2002 COG visit when we saw over 80 species within 5 km of the Seaton's Farm Camping area, and many participants agreed that a visit in spring was highly desirable and could be even more successful. We propose to use the same area to camp, now renamed the Fuzzy Box Campground, which hopefully will finally be completed. If preferred, participants could stay in motel accommodation in the nearby Grenfell. Over the 3 days we expect to visit again the callitris of the Bimbi State Forest, the ironbarks of Seaton's farm, perhaps again do a tranverse of the Weddin's Range to Holy Camp and also to visit Gum Swamp near Forbes where a further 40 species, including a range of raptors and waterbirds, were seen.

Further details will be in next month's Gang-gang. In the meantime expressions of interest please to Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au) who, while organising and participating in the camp-out, would like to hear from anyone who is prepared to help lead this outing.

.....

MULLIGAN'S FLAT WEDNESDAY WALK

Wednesday 20 August 2003

An easy 6 km walk through the Mulligan's Flat Reserve in Gungahlin, following the marked trail and pamphlet (available at the reserve or from the COG sales desk at meetings). Bring some morning tea or lunch. The early spring migrants should be arriving back.

Meet at 9 am at the gate to the reserve off Gundaroo Road, just a short distance north from where the main sealed road through Gungahlin ends.

Longer trips

EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA TOUR

28 September to 13 October 2003

Pelican Safaris, who have taken a number of COG members on tour in southern Africa, have 2 vacancies on a Kruger National Park, Zululand, Drakensberg Mountains trip from 28 Sept to 13 Oct 2003 (cost AU\$3100). The rest of the group are Australians. I can personally recommend this. email: caulton@sco.eastcoast.co.za or if you dont have email access phone me at home 6288 7802 and I will pass your contact details on to Pelican.

Jenny Bounds

.....

COMBINED SHOREBIRD/PELAGIC OUTING CENTRED ON WOLLONGONG

Weekend 18-19 October 2003

A combined shorebird/pelagic outing centred on Wollongong will be held on the weekend of 18-19 October 2003. It is proposed participants will drive down from Canberra on the Saturday morning, with shore bird watching around Lake Illawarra and environs that afternoon, and with a full day's seabird outing on Sunday (approximately 7.00 am to 4.30 pm).

Julie McGuinness and Sue Lashko will be the joint leaders for this trip.

The pelagic trip will be through the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association Inc. (SOSSA), which

provides private charter and guides to accommodate parties of up to 22 persons in their vessel the Sandra K. The estimated cost per person will be about \$65 (including the \$4 COG admin fee), as it appears we will manage to fill the boat. This will be advised later and costs will include two guides and all burlies.

While Julie McGuinness/Sue Lashko will be the leaders on the day, Jack Holland (6288 7840 (A/H) or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au) is co-ordinating the arrangements.

Please call him to register your interest or to obtain further information. Please note that this trip has filled quickly, with at the time of the closing for the August *Gang-gang* copy only two spots left, and it is recommended that you **book asap**. A \$25 deposit made out to the Treasurer COG will ensure your place on the boat. When the 22 places have been filled a waiting list will be taken, and participants will have until 15 August to pay their deposit. If not their name will be taken off the list and substituted with the next person on the wait list.

Participants will be provided with several options for accommodation during August and it is expected they will make their own bookings.

Further information on SOSSA may be obtained from the following web sites:

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~sos> or <http://sossa-international.org>.



Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)
Photo courtesy Helen Fallow

DRAFT FIELD TRIPS PROGRAM FOR 2004

The year may only just be half over, but it's time to start thinking and planning for the 2004 COG Field Trips Program.

So if you have a favourite spot/trip that you think should be included, or where you think COG should go to again, or any reasonable suggestion, please let Jack Holland know (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au). The draft program is expected drawn up and published with the November 2003 *Gang-gang*.

Other surveys/ Activities of Interest to COG Members

BARREN GROUNDS GROUND PARROT SURVEY

Sunday 10 August 2003

Volunteers are needed for the Barren Grounds annual Ground Parrot survey/census from 9 am to noon on 10 August 2003. This is one of the longest running monitoring programs in Australia. Members wanting to help with the census on Sunday can join in for no cost. Alternatively there is a weekend course for the special price of \$150 (\$140 for BA members), which Jack Baker will lead. For more information please contact Jack by E-mail on bakerclarkes@bigpond.com. Alternatively contact Birds Australia Barren Grounds on 02 4236 0195, or by E-mail on barren.grounds@bigpond.com.

NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY

Sunday 7 September 2003

It's Time to Start Planning

National Threatened Species Day is held each year on the 7th September, in memory of the day when the last Tasmanian tiger died in captivity. It is a day to raise public awareness of threatened species issues across Australia and for groups to celebrate the good work they are doing to help protect our precious natural heritage. It acts as the gateway to Biodiversity Month, which runs for the entirety of September.

For further information, check the following websites.

<http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/information/ts-day/>
http://www.wwf.org.au/tsn/TSN_NTSD.htm

How you can help

COG is in a position to run, support or encourage public events and awareness campaigns around National Threatened Species Day. Please take some time to talk to your friends and fellow members and come up with a plan for this year. Your involvement could include;

- Running public activities such as field days, talks, displays, tree plantings, bush regeneration and surveys
- Carrying out routine activities (like surveys) but badging them as threatened species activities and promoting the issue
- Encouraging groups in your network to get involved
- Media awareness
- Campaign or publication launches

As this year is International Year of Freshwater, there is a particular focus on spreading the word on freshwater species, habitats and their threats. However, this doesn't limit promotion of other species, habitats and issues.

How to get involved

Event registration will be coordinated by Environment Australia, and should open in late July or early August. Keep your eye on the above websites for more information.

If you have any ideas for national threatened species day 2003, please don't hesitate to get in touch with a member of your committee.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR OSPREY NESTS

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, in conjunction with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), calls on the public in NSW to help scientists identify Osprey nests.

The Foundation is providing funds to assist the NPWS in the development of a recovery plan for the vulnerable species. All information on breeding Ospreys will assist with the preparation of the plan.

Older records from 1988 know of only 45-50 breeding pairs along the NSW coast between Eraring on the Central Coast to the Queensland border. It is now essential to gather new and exact data on numbers and locations of breeding birds for the coast from Gosford to Tweed.

"This project relies on the information from a wide range of key National and State organisations, local councils, bird watchers and interested members of the public", said Peter Ekert, Director of Ekerlog Consulting Services (ECS) who undertakes the study.

"We are hoping that these groups can provide information on the location of current and previous active Osprey nests. This information will be an important first step in assessing the status of Osprey nesting in NSW", Mr Ekert said.

If anyone has any information on nesting Ospreys anywhere in NSW, please call Peter Ekert, Ekerlogic Consulting Services on 02 49500573

The company's homepage <http://www.ekerlogic.com.au/> also offers an Osprey Survey Data Sheet for people to report their sightings. Once completed, the sheet can be e-mailed to projects@ekerlogic.com.au.

To support future Osprey research and conservation through a donation contact the

Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, GPO Box 2666, SYDNEY NSW 2001, telephone 02 9221 1949, website www.fnppw.com.au



Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*)
Photo courtesy Helen Fallow

BIRDS AUSTRALIA TWITCHATHON 2003 (NSW & ACT)

Weekend 25-26 October 2003

It's SNAG's 10th Twitchathon birthday this year!! I can't believe that we have been going that long!

So - don't chill out this winter and forget our birds! Warm yourself and your friends up for another fantastic NSW and ACT Twitchathon - the best in the ten years! Just imagine how many species you could find and how many \$'s you could raise if you well and truly plan your team's every Twitchathon move around a cosy fireside hearth during your winter hibernation!

Maps, notebooks, literature on the best birding spots, and the quickest McDonalds breakfast outlet all cry out for an airing on the kitchen table whilst you plan your best ever Twitchathon performance. Sit back in winter comfort and warm to our birds and imagine what a difference you really can make for our birds if you participate in this wonderfully rewarding experience. Celebrate our 10th Twitchathon birthday by getting involved for the birds in the Murray catchment.

For those of you with no idea what a Twitchathon is, it is a real fun activity. It's so simple. Find as many species of birds as possible between 25/26 October 2003 within a team category participation, and/or raise the most money by sponsorship and a great prize could arrive in your mail box. Whether you are 5 or 105 years old, you could be eligible to receive a multitude of prizes in many race categories. But above all, you really will have helped to make a difference for our birds. You will be very proud of yourself!

What's the 10th Twitchathon project? The answer lies in the birds of the MIGHTY MURRAY CATCHMENT. See below for a description of the project. Isn't it a brilliant project! We need just \$12,500 and I know we can all make it together for we have raised more than this in a past Twitchathon. Go for it friends - ask SNAG for your 10th Twitchathon birthday kit TODAY!

Measuring the outcomes of protecting remnant woodlands for birds in the Murray Catchment of NSW

Background Between 1997 and 2001, Greening Australia NSW facilitated the protection and enhancement of hundreds of woodland remnants in the highly fragmented Murray Catchment. Natural recovery of native vegetation

or enhancement through tree planting occurred at these sites using incentive-funded fencing programs. The main types of vegetation that were protected were Grey Box and Yellow Box/Blakely's Red Gum woodland which are now rare in the catchment, and White Cypress Pine woodland. Protection of native vegetation will provide long-term benefits to rural landscapes in terms of reducing erosion and salinity and improving ecosystem health. However, it is also vital to measure the biotic responses of habitat protection to provide encouragement to landholders and other community members to increase the effort and area for protection and enhancement. Some of the best environmental indicators of the success of habitat protection are our native woodland birds. Many species of woodland birds are now known to be threatened or declining significantly in many parts of Australia.

Project Outline This project aims to measure the success of the Greening Australia NSW Murray Catchment Fencing Incentives Program in terms of benefits to woodland birds. A selection of sites that were fenced and protected in the last 2-7 years will be surveyed for all bird species to gain an understanding about the responses of birds to habitat protection and enhancement. In particular, the project aims to look at how size, shape, age of tree plantings, tree species and shrub layer affect the responses by woodland birds. The results of this project not only provide a much-needed audit of catchment-based woodland conservation, but also recommendations about how best to conduct future fencing programs. It will be critical to present the results of this project to the participating landholders and to use the results to hopefully encourage other landholders in the catchment to protect and manage their important remnant woodland patches.

Methods It is anticipated that a project officer will, with the direction of the project manager, identify approximately 100 sites that have been stratified into categories based on size of remnant fenced, type of vegetation fenced, tree cover, understorey condition and age since fencing occurred. Each site is to be surveyed in Spring 2003 using a standardised 20-minute census technique. All birds seen or heard within or flying over the site will be recorded. Surveys will only be undertaken in the good weather conditions. Analysis and reporting of results will be undertaken in late 2003 with a report provided to Birds Australia in early 2004. The report will then be distributed to local landholders. It is also envisaged that local conservation or bird groups will continue to monitor some of these sites to gauge the long-term responses of woodland birds to habitat protection and enhancement. There is great potential for the production of community education material based around the findings of this project which will be used by community groups and organisations whose focus is on conservation of remnant vegetation for birds and general biodiversity.

Frances Czwalinna
 Twitchathon Coordinator
 Birds Australia, Southern NSW &
 ACT Group
 P.O. Box 1322, Crows Nest, 1585
 Telephone/Fax: Frances (02) 9872
 4185 Email:
 secretarybird@bigpond.com
 Website:
<http://snag.birdsaustralia.com.au>

COG SALES



- **NEW** – **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 Rottnest Island – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira - \$15.00**
- **Birds of Rottnest 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 - \$9.00**
- **Birds of Queensland’s Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef – by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00**
- **Guide to the Bird Habitats of NSW (and ACT) – NSW Atlasers - \$27.00**
- **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**
- **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia – by Pizzey and Knight - \$35.00**
- **COG Birds of Canberra Gardens - \$25.00**
- **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.

Atlassing Excerpts or....who's seen what where...

Snippets of interest taken from sheets returned to the Records Officer.

Mid-year is the time when we start assembling all bird records from the previous July-June for inclusion in the Annual Bird Report. If you have collected bird records during the past 12 months (or longer) but have not yet committed them to paper, now is the time to ensure they are recorded for posterity and included in the ABR. Please submit your records at meetings (in the red box) or send to COG, PO Box 301 Civic Square 2608.

Mid-year can also be a quiet time for birding, particularly in the mountains, and particularly this year in the burnt forests. Surveys in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, by the Friends of Tidbinbilla and by Chris Davey, have turned up few species and low numbers of birds. The most commonly seen species are **Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren, White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Shrike-thrush, Scarlet Robin** and **Flame Robin**. The occasional **Superb Lyrebird** has been seen but they are rarely heard calling this season.

Further south in Namadgi NP around the Yankee Hat and Boboyan Pines area, a similar suite of birds has been recorded by John Goldie and Dianne Deans in their 2 ha sites in burnt areas. However the fire was cooler and more patchy in this area and there are also records of **Brown Treecreeper, Hooded Robin** and good numbers of **Flame Robin** to be found.

Dianne Deans has also been surveying a number of wetlands around Bungendore, finding small numbers of Freckled Duck and an array of other waterfowl including

Australasian Shoveler, Australian Shelduck, Hardhead and Pink- eared Duck.

A good winter birding location is always the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Harvey Perkins recorded a number of the honeyeater species which typically leave the mountains and may overwinter in our relatively warmer climate. These include **White-naped, Crescent** and **New Holland Honeyeaters**, as well as **Eastern Spinebill** and **Red Wattlebird**. Also from the Cook-Aranda area, Malcolm Fyfe and others have reported overwintering **Fuscous Honeyeaters**.

Nicki Taws

COG member puts pen to paper to save East O'Malley

The following letter was written by COG member, and newsletter distributor, Lia Battison and sent to the Editor of the Canberra Times. The letter was subsequently published as the letter of the day on 18 June 2003. Lia sent the same letter to all of the members of the Legislative Assembly. Responses have to date been received from at least six members and the letter referred to Jon Stanhope, the Minister for the Environment, or Simon Corbell, the Minister for Planning. Well done Lia!

Dear sir

I am writing to you to express my absolute disillusionment with the processes of the ACT Government with respect to the protection of the environment. When I heard that East O'Malley was to be released for housing I was dumbfounded. The short-sighted, money grabbing attitude astounds me. The people who would purchase this land could afford to live anywhere they like,

would they care that we have allowed the destruction of a rare piece of bush to allow them to live in this particular spot? The ACT population is the most intelligent in Australia, how can we allow this to happen?

What is the ACT Legislative Assembly's understanding of the concept "protect the environment"? Did they think that it was going to be easy and that as soon as there was a difficult decision to be made they could cave in? How do they intend to redress the void created by the removal of this very valuable piece of real estate? Australia is such a vast land with so much land which is suitable for human habitation, why would we destroy this tiny gem? Did they think that they could plant a few Blakeley's Red Gum somewhere else and make up for it?

I am bewildered and ashamed about this decision and would seriously consider tying myself to the trees to express the depth of my emotion on this issue, enough is enough! The Legislative Assembly has a responsibility to their constituents, Australians generally and their children's children to find another solution to our housing needs.

Yours sincerely

Lia Battison

Fisher Parkland;

Remnant trashed in the name of human safety

Fisher Parkland is CUPP managed land south of Fisher. Following the January 2003 fire, large areas have been cleared of the former plantation trees and ground cover on safety grounds. With the significant reduction in canopy cover in a number of areas within the Parkland, there are severe

reservations about the potential for weed spread and soil erosion.

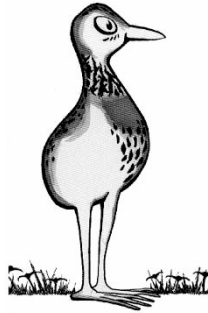
One major disaster has been the partial destruction of the Broad-leaved Peppermint (*Eucalyptus dives*) remnant in the midst of the Parkland on safety grounds. This remnant had around 60 native plant species within its boundary. As there were few who wandered into this area it is hard to see how this act of wanton ecological vandalism can be justified.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has commented that the "stark reality of the need for action on the extinction crisis facing Australia's environment has been dramatically outlined in the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment". This action does not appear to be consistent with any consideration of that document.

It is clear that the whole process has been fundamentally flawed with no general community consultation on the fate of the Parkland, much less the remnant, limited meaningful consultation with a community group, no environmental assessment of the condition of the remnant and damage during the destruction of timber within the remnant.

What makes it worse is that the Parkland began to be effectively managed under the local Liberal government and the Dives remnant looked after and preserved. The Stanhope Labor government has effectively trashed the remnant.

Alan Ford



Australian Ornithological Services Pty Ltd

PO Box 385 South Yarra Victoria 3141
Tel: 03 9820 4223 mobile: 0417310200
E: enquiries@philipmaher.com

2004

- ◆ 17—22 March **Tasmania**
(optional Melaleuca flight on 23 March)
Accommodated tour seeking all Tassie endemic birds plus mammals such as Tasmanian Devil, Southern Bettong, Eastern Quoll, Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Includes pelagic trip.
- ◆ 9—13 April **Easter camp Oolambeyan National Park (NSW)**
Good food and birding at one of the Riverina's newest national parks. Starts/finishes in Deniliquin
- ◆ 20—30 April **Mallee Parks and Reserves of Vic and SA**
Camping tour through Victorian and South Australian mallee parks en route to Gluepot Reserve. Starts/finishes in Melb
- ◆ 22 May — 6 June **Top end endemics tour Darwin Kakadu NP Kununurra**
Accommodated tour seeking all the top-end endemics such as Black and White-throated Grasswrens, Gouldian Finch, Hooded Parrot and Banded Fruit-Dove. Starts/finishes in Darwin.
- ◆ 11—22 June **Gulf of Carpentaria Tour**
Accommodated tour from Cairns west to Queensland's Gulf country through Georgetown, Karumba, Burketown, Mt Isa and Cloncurry. Key birds include Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens, Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, Black-throated Finch and Flock Pigeon. Starts/finishes in Cairns.
- ◆ 20 Aug —7 September **Strzelecki Track Tour**
Accommodated outback tour seeking all the inland specialities such as Plains-wanderer, Inland Dotterel, five spp. of Grasswren, Bourke's Parrot and Hall's Babbler. Starts/finishes in Melbourne.
- ◆ 18—28 September **Forests and Woodlands of Central NSW including Bird Routes of Barraba & Baradine districts**
New accommodated tour taking in the best of the forests and woodland of central NSW such as Gillenbah State Forest near Narrandera, Goonoo State Forest near Dubbo and Pilliga Scrub and the Warrumbungle Ranges near Coonabarabran. Starts/finishes in Melb.
- ◆ 30 Oct—17 Nov **South East Australia, optional Tasmanian endemics extension**
Comprehensive birding tour of SE Australia and Tasmania seeking 300+ spp. Key birds on the mainland include Powerful Owl, Pilotbird, Spotted Quail-thrush, Plains-wanderer, Superb Parrot, Malleefowl, Striated Grasswren and Rufous Bristlebird. Takes in the full spectrum of habitats in SE Aust.

www.philipmaher.com

Final Tanzanian Tattlings

This chapter was intended to cover a couple of seasons. The long rains were due to start within a week of sending TT III but were about 6 weeks late and only lasted 10 days rather than about 50. This could have serious consequences for both people and wildlife.

We are now in the cool season (with highs in the upper 20s, lows in the low twenties and maximum humidity below 50%).

As a result of the low rainfall we spent Easter at Sable Mountain on the edge of the Selous Game Reserve in South Central Tanzania. An unusual part of the trip was using a small private railcar to access the park, allowing for game and bird viewing as we rattled and bounced along. The highlight was, as expected a boat safari on Lake Tagalala giving up close and personal views of about 30 species of water related birds and raptors. Of the water birds, **African Spoonbills**, **Goliath Herons** and **White-crowned Plovers** stood out in my memory. The raptors were amongst the more distinctive birds in Tanzania with **African Fish Eagle**, **Black-chested snake-eagle** and **Palm-nut Vulture** turning up for the occasion. I should also mention the hippos and crocodiles!

Around the lodge there were not a great number of visible birds in the bush. There were a lot of audible ones and several soaring raptors with **White-backed Vultures**, **Lappet-faced Vultures** and **Bateleurs** being close enough to identify. All in all, 75 species recorded for the trip with 5 additions to my life list. Several billion ants were also available but I didn't try to ID them!

The late appearance of the rains led us to postpone a trip North from June

until July. This covered Lake Manyara, Serengeti, Ngorongoro and the West Kilimanjaro areas.

The highlight had to be the flamingos (approximately 500,000 of them) in Lake Manyara. They were accompanied by large numbers of storks (mainly yellow billed), pelicans and herons/egrets (again in wide variety). While flamingos appeared again at the lake in Ngorongoro Crater (and were much more accessible) there were only 1,052 of them in evidence. I commented in a message to the chat-line about watching sundry vultures battles with mammalian scavengers in the Crater. This was made more exciting by being so close and the action so intense.

Serengeti produced a few additions to my life list, but the business there was really mammals: even after an hour of steady driving through them 1,000,000 wildebeests are still an impressive sight (and sound).

The final days were spent on a friends farm in the Moshi area. As well as great views of Mts Meru and Kilimanjaro (when the cloud lifted) I managed to add some 10 species to my life list, in an area we had previously visited. As I write my Tanzanian list is approximately 430 species: about 40% of the national total!

That's all folks. We have 6 weeks before returning to Australia and getting back to honeyeaters rather than weavers!

Martin butterfield

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 clifftop 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
6262 7975.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Birdwatching 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 few kilometers 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@argay.com.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.



Join Richard and Roz for their 2003-04 tour program

SPRINGTIME IN THE MALLEE

5 to 11 November 2003 \$980

We combine two popular favourites - hunting for the endangered Plains-wanderer with Philip Maher; then spending most of the tour in Gluepot tracking down all the Mallee specials at a time when the Reserve is bursting with life. Mainly camping.

A SNOWY CHRISTMAS

24 Dec 2003 to 1 Jan 2004 \$1180

Spend the festive season at a lodge high in the Snowy Mountains - then travel along the Snowy and Deddick Rivers. All Christmas/New Year festive fare included. Half camping/half accommodated.

EMU GOES TO LORD HOWE ISLAND

13 to 20 March 2004 \$1900

One of Emu's favourites as Ian Hutton, the island's expert naturalist, spends the week with us. Includes flights by Qantaslink. Excellent, centrally-placed accommodation with cooked breakfasts & some other meals included.

EMU GOES TO MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

13 to 27 June 2004 \$2900 ex Lilongwe

These tours to 'the friendly heart of Africa' are proving rightly popular. Travel with Richard and a local guide to the best birding areas - including the outstanding South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. Book early!

Richard Jordan & Roslyn Hemsley **EMU TOURS** PO Box 4 Jamberoo NSW 2533
Phone (02) 4236 0542 Fax (02) 4236 0176
emutours@ozemail.com.au www.ozemail.com.au/~emutours

AvIan Whimsy #12

Banksias with Feathers

As you (or maybe you) are reading this, I may well be watching, in situ, the largest ratite of all, and the only black and white one.

When Gondwana began its monumental break-up about a hundred million years ago, ending half a billion years of unity, many of the most prominent and familiar elements of our world were emerging. The flowering plants were spreading rapidly from their apparent cradle in western Gondwana, in the portentous Great Rift Valley between Africa and South America. The mammals were very much there, waiting their turn to step out of the dinosaurs' oppressive shadows. And the birds were already diverse and widespread; the oldest currently known 'Australian' bird is represented by a single unattributable feather from Koonwarra in Victoria.

Few living groups are recognisably traceable to such a distant time, and of course only groups which already existed then could be expected to be found in all the Gondwanan lands today. One such group is the Proteaceae – Banksias, Hakeas, Grevilleas, Proteas, Waratahs and their kin, descendants of ancient Gondwanan ancestors, are now found in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia and South America. Few bird groups seem to go that far back, but there is one.

The ratites still represent something of an enigma, but tools such as biochemistry have greatly increased our certainty that they are a coherent related group. They are the great southern flightless birds; the Ostrich in Africa (and you knew that as the answer to the riddle in line one, of course), the Emu and the cassowaries in Australia-New Guinea, kiwis in New Zealand and rheas in South America.



Cassowary (*Casuarinus casuarinus*)

Photo courtesy **Ian Fraser**

Ratites, which tragically did not survive the arrival of humans in their island homes, include the New Zealand moas and the great elephant birds of Madagascar. They are all now generally regarded as belonging to the order Struthioniformes, with each of the groups mentioned representing a family.

One thing that strikes me as extraordinary is the fact that already, by at least 100 million years ago, they had 'been there, done that' with regard to the marvels of flight, and given it up, opting instead for size. The word 'ratite' comes from the Latin 'ratis', a raft, and refers to the flat breast-bone. When they lost their wings (or at least the use of them; all still have vestigial wings) they also lost the use of the protruding keel which is most familiar to us from the faithful chook (albeit when it's on a plate...). Its purpose is to provide an anchor for the great flight muscles;

without them it serves no purpose and ultimately disappeared.

As we'd expect from such an ancient group, there has been plenty of time for diversification. Most are polyandrous, with the female mating with several males, each of whom takes sole care of eggs and chicks. (In rheas, males also mate with several females...) Ostriches share the duties, and in particularly harsh areas may form monogamous pairs, as do the kiwis always. Clutch sizes vary from over twenty for ostriches and rheas, to 3-5 for cassowaries, to just one (huge!) egg for kiwis.

Most are dwellers of open plains, where they presumably evolved, but cassowaries and kiwis live in dense wet vegetation. The cassowaries are solely tropical rainforest inhabitants, presumably a secondary adaptation. Only the kiwis are small – in fact technically they 'could' fly; I have no information here, but I assume they have 'shrunk' from large ancestors as they found themselves on an island without terrestrial predators.

One thing which you may (or may not...) wish to contemplate is that the ratites are among the very few bird groups that have a penis. More 'modern' birds have dispensed with it. (Now, now, I didn't design them, I'm just the messenger!)

I've not discussed Emus, but I think they warrant a Whimsy all to themselves in the near future.

A final observation; some 12 million years ago Ostriches had spread from Africa across southern Europe and Asia. Perhaps that explains the oddity of a Gondwanan dish in the Mediterranean. Oh sorry – I mean ratitouille of course.

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

Expressions of interest: editor of *Gang-gang*

The current editor of *Gang-gang* is calling for expressions of interest to assist in the monthly production of our newsletter. If you would like more information about what is involved, or you are keen to be involved, please contact Tanya Rough by email at rough.boden@apex.net.au or phone 02 6274 2302 (w) , 02 6161 0151 (h)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Michael and Jan Robbins,
Kambah

Nancy Smale, Narrabundah

Next newsletter

SEPTEMBER deadline
Wednesday 27 August 2003

Send updates to
Tanya Rough,
Editor *Gang-gang*
Email preferred:
rough.boden@apex.net.au or
Tanya.Rough@ea.gov.au
Ph: 6161 0151 (ah)

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; 150 for Atlassing Snapshots), except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with articles encouraged.

COG info

President

Barry Baker, ph 6274 2402 (w),
mobile 0412 484 728

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Doug Laing ph 6287 7700 (h)

Membership inquiries

Contact Alastair Smith 6281 3221 (h)
or 0401 993 381 for changes of
address or other details

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)

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

<http://www.canberrabirds.dynamite.com.au>

COG membership

2003-2004 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.

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 Birding', also known by the nickname 'cog-1'.

Join the list at

<http://www.topica.com/lists/canberabirds> or by sending a blank email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@topica.com.



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.
PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA