

# Gang-gang

August 2011

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## AUGUST MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 10.08.11

**Canberra Girls Grammar School**  
cnr 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.

First **Barbara Allan**, Blitz Co-ordinator, will present a few findings from the 2010 and previous COG bird blitzes and outline procedures for the 2011 blitz on the weekend of 29-30 October.

The main presentation will be **Conservation Wins and Challenges for Bird life on Lord Howe Island**, a talk by Ian Hutton, OAM. Ian will present a brief history of Lord Howe Island, discussing how introduced animals have affected the local bird life, but since the 1980's things have been turned around, beginning with the Woodhen rescue. He will also talk about the extra benefits for all bird life of eradicating cats and pigs from the island; the challenges of rat eradication and the possibility of reintroduction of subspecies closely related to the extinct birds; other threats to seabirds - long line fishing and plastic ingestion - and the best locations and times to visit seabird colonies.

**Everyone welcome**

## Birds, camera flash, spotlights and shutter noise

How many of us have noticed that a surprising percentage of magazine wildlife photographs were taken using flash? On the other side of the camera, how many have been blinded and irritated by camera flash or carelessly aimed spotlights and headlamps?

Many bird photos are only possible if you use flash and others are greatly improved by it, but flash can also mess up a photo entirely and there is at least the potential to disturb or endanger the birds you are photographing.

Camera flash is used for several reasons in bird photography — the most obvious (and least successful in terms of pictorial excellence) is when it is too dark to take a photo by any other means. Even in daylight, flash can be used to fill in harsh shadows or to illuminate a bird that is backlit and silhouetted by a bright sky, or to bring out colours better, to freeze motion, or for special effects.

It's easy to observe that birds fly off or flinch sometimes when flash is used, but the relevant question is whether the photography has harmed the bird or caused undue distress. My personal experience and that of other birders (including experts in animal vision) is that it does not. Birds fly away from me as readily when I get too close, or when I stand on a stick. Flying away is what birds do, and they do it a thousand times a day when alarmed or suspicious of predators, of noises, fast movement by anything, footsteps, large unfamiliar shapes, eyes turned towards them, people walking past who stop suddenly ... and cameras.

Interestingly though, flash fascinates some birds. If you are at the right distance you can often see them watching curiously and waiting for another flash. On the first flash they will turn to see what is happening and then watch subsequent shots with apparent interest. Some birds will flinch but stay their ground, which I interpret as them being startled, but curious enough to want to remain around.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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## Items from the COG President

**Item 1** For those interested in activities at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands please find below a reply to a letter I wrote to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Board of Management on behalf of COG. The letter was written in response to various queries that had been expressed by COG members on the Chat-line

*Dear Mr Davey*

*Thank you for your letter of 5 May 2011 referring a number of queries from your membership, regarding the management of Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (the Reserve), and the means by which the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Board of Management (the Board) might be able to engage with the Canberra Ornithologists Group.*

*As you would be aware the Board was created by the previous Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, with a view to creating a multi-disciplinary management team that could work with Government to enhance the biodiversity values and management of the Reserve. The Chief Minister has tasked the Board with managing a Master Planning Process that will identify the means by which the Reserve could benefit from capital investment. The ACT Government has committed a total of \$2.341 million over three years to produce a Master Plan and commence the rollout of improvements at the Reserve.*

*The focus of the Boards attention to date has been to expedite the development of the Master Plan, and to this end, continues to work with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and with EcoLogical Australia, the consultants appointed to work with the Board and the wider community to produce the Plan.*

*You outline a number of specific queries, which I have addressed below:*

### ***Willow Clearing along Jerrabomberra Creek***

*The Parks Service went to some lengths to communicate their intention to remove willows from a section of Jerrabomberra Creek. For the information of your members, you might like to inform them that you, as a Member of the Board of Management, were consulted on a few occasions and contributed to the survey of the willows in the Reserve, resource material was placed on the TAMS website and a media release was issued with some take up from the Canberra Times.*

### ***Wire fence across Kelly's Swamp***

*The Parks Service has placed the removal of the wire on its works program. The posts will be left in-situ as they may have bird perching value.*

### ***Mexican Water Lily in Jerrabomberra Creek***

*The Mexican Water Lily patch reported in the local press does not represent a new incursion into the ACT. It has been known to occur in Commonwealth Park and at the Reserve in the past, and is relatively common throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. The Parks Service has prioritised the particular patch at the Wetlands as moderate and will aim to treat it over 2011/12. Note that the species is not thought to survive the Canberra winter well and this has restricted its capacity to spread both locally and more generally throughout the wetland environment.*

### ***Typha spread in Kelly's Swamp***

*The spread of Typha is of concern to the Board and will be a priority action. The Master Planning process is considering this issue and will recommend a co-ordinated response to the Board. It is important to carefully consider the management response as anything less than an effective and long lasting effort will see the Typha return over time.*

### ***Additional perching for Kelly's Swamp***

*In principal the addition of more perches to Kelly's Swamp is a good idea and is likely to be a feature of the Master Plan's recommendations. It is not anticipated to introduce the material until the Master Plan confirms the configuration and layout for Kelly's Swamp.*

### ***Mowing of grass around Kelly's Swamp***

*The Parks Service has been advised the mowing of grass right down to the water's edge may in fact be counter*

*(Continued on page 8)*

## NOTE: Rankins Springs 2011 Birds of the Bush Festival.

This year has seen some changes for the festival, starting off by holding a fundraising Black Tie Ball on **Saturday 30th July**.

It is themed in honour of our local Glossy Black-Cockatoos. The evening is formal with two bands scheduled to preform for the evening, catering for all dancing abilities.

We then move to the weekend of **October 7, 8 & 9**. There are bus tours planned throughout the weekend to cater for all bird enthusiasts, Saturday dinner by the campfire with a special guest, and our first "Moonlight birdtour". This will be hosted by Dr Milton Lewis in our local bushland. We have also have a big Sunday lined up, including market stalls, art and photography competition with exhibition, childrens' activities and, new for this year, a fun run.

All the current details can be found on our facebook site or our webpage [www.birdsofthebush.com](http://www.birdsofthebush.com)

If you would any information regarding the weekend or tickets, please give me ring.

## Field Trip Reports

### Newline - Wednesday 20 July

12 members braved a rather appalling weather forecast for the Newline mid-week walk. In fact, the weather was not too bad and the birds rather good. We started off in the first paddock recording 22 species. The initial high-light was a group – probably 2 clans cooperating – of 21 White-winged Choughs, followed by 3 Brown Treecreepers about 5m off the ground in a dead tree.

Thanks to good advice from Sue Lashko (who monitors this area for the Woodlands Survey) we moved a little down the road and into another paddock. Highlights here were a large flock (>60 birds) of Welcome Swallows, and another of 35+ Yellow-rumped Thornbills and at least 6 Double-barred Finches.

Getting back to the road 2 Rainbow Lorikeets were seen as predicted. We then encountered an astonishing flock of at least one hundred (yes, 100) Eastern Rosellas. As well as perching in the eucalypts they were also feeding on the thistles.

Overall 34 species were recorded. A full listing will be submitted to the trips page of the COG website as usual.

*Martin Butterfield*

### Sunday 24 July- Mount Majura Vineyard

The visit to the ACT's only cellar door sales vineyard started under cold and foggy conditions with the fog lifting slightly as the outing progressed. The outing leader, Stuart Harris, who works at the vineyard, showed us the many different varieties of grapes grown with certain varieties on the cooler slopes and others on the warmer slopes although on the day all slopes seemed equally cold to me!



### Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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South Yarra 3141  
Victoria  
Tel: 03 9820 4223  
Mob: 04173 10200

[enquiries@philipmaher.com](mailto:enquiries@philipmaher.com)

### 2011 tours

3 — 22 September 2011  
**Strzelecki Track, Outback**  
4 places available

### Plains-wanderer Weekends

26 & 27 November 2011  
New Year's Eve 2011

### 2012 tours

9 — 25 January  
New Zealand

4 — 11 February  
Tasmanian bird & mammal tour

**Mid May Gulf Country**  
Cairns, Georgetown, Karumba,  
Gregory R, Cloncurry & Mt Isa

1 — 13 July Top End  
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra

17 — 23 July  
Alice Springs/MacDonnell Ranges

6 — 25 September  
Strzelecki Track, Outback

31 Oct — 7 Nov  
New Caledonia

11— 19 November  
SW Western Australia

See itineraries & trip reports on the website

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



(Continued from page 1)

I did a small experiment on the subject of flinching once on some robins in the botanic gardens. Twice with different birds I took some quite close photos with flash and they flinched each time. Then I fired the flash without taking a photo (hence no shutter noise) and they didn't flinch at all. Finally I took some photos (so the shutter noise was evident) without flash, and again they didn't move. I mixed up the order of these so it wasn't just that the bird was becoming accustomed, and the flinching only happened when the flash and shutter noise occurred together. My conclusion was that the combination of sound and visual triggers is synergistic and has a much greater effect than either alone. You could also deduce that the flash itself is not as disturbing as you might otherwise think.



**Crimson Rosellas** – Adult Crimson Rosellas taken without flash (left) and with flash (right)

Night photography needs more serious consideration. We need to assess the possibility that flash or spotlight may be capable of harming birds, either by causing actual permanent damage to the eye or by temporarily blinding the bird to the extent it is unable to fly or to see and avoid predators. Again this has been discussed widely by experts and amateurs, the experts generally agreeing that birds' eyes are not damaged by either camera flash or by spotlights in the 50W to 100W range. One pointed out that birds have a much better ability than mammals to withstand fixation on the sun, the sun being vastly brighter than either spotlights or flash. Others remind us that birds are not adversely affected by the natural version of flash — lightning.

But there is no getting around the fact that dark-adapted birds will be temporarily blinded by both flash and spotlights. While it takes up to 30-40 minutes to fully recover the super-sensitive sight of nocturnal birds, there is plenty of evidence that they are able to function adequately (in terms of not running into things) in much less time than this. A few of us observed and photographed a Powerful Owl at night in Tallaganda, by



**Frogmouths** – An acceptable fully-flash result thanks to plumage without structural colouration and Photoshop to remove the red-eye.

spotlight and camera flash. During a gap in our illumination (while we discussed awe and wonder and fiddled with camera settings) the owl flew from one tree to another, so was obviously able to see well enough to avoid branches and locate the landing branch in the dark, and it did this with at most half a minute of re-adaptation. It's possible that in owls or in all birds only certain parts of the retina are 'blinded' by our lights and that sufficient peripheral vision remains in other areas, or perhaps it is that sufficient re-adaptation for the purpose of flight occurs quite quickly. In a similar example last Easter at Willandra we noticed that the Tawny Frogmouths we watched and photographed at night were able to fly and perch successfully within 30 seconds of removing the lights and cameras from them.

At the other extreme, there is an unfortunate (anecdotal, so unsubstantiated) reported case which



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reminds us of the possible limits of night illumination ... a photographer set up flash units in the UK to photograph an owl returning to its roost in a church spire. The bird tripped the trigger beam and fired the lights for a successful photograph, but then crashed into stonework and was seriously injured. While this may be apocryphal it does draw attention to the fact that dazzling birds while in flight at night is likely to be very bad for the bird and should not be contemplated.

All things considered it seems likely that flash in daylight is no more troubling to a bird than any of the other myriad things to which they react all day. At night it appears that flash and spotlight are unlikely to cause problems in the way they are normally used, but we need to remember that birds will be temporarily blinded in the same way we are, and be cognisant of possible consequences of that.

The other side of this discussion is what benefit is flash to bird photography? Bird photography using flash is actually quite hard to do well and the result is most often quite ugly or unnatural as you can see from a couple of my examples. The reason for this is that flash, unlike daylight, is very directional and the direction is specifically the direction from which you are photographing. This means that surfaces perpendicular to the



**King Parrots** — Partial flash doesn't change King Parrot colours too much.





**Strong Billed Honeyeater** — A ‘flash-ugly’  
Strong-billed Honeyeater.

**Superb Parrots** — Taken with partial flash, the male is unnaturally bright while the females are almost unaffected.

camera will be unnaturally emphasised (commonly beaks, breast and flanks) and surfaces which are normally in shadow may appear strangely bright. At a more macroscopic level, specular reflections from parts of feathers and associated micro-shadowing will give an appearance of extra detail that some people actually like, but most of us would call ugly. Certainly it looks unnatural.

Further down, at the microscopic level, there is an interesting effect that is related to the two different ways in which plumage is coloured. While pigmented colours are unaffected by flash illumination, those ‘structural’ colours that are formed by microscopic arrangement of feather surfaces can change significantly. Structural colours are produced by light interference effects so their appearance can be markedly different when illuminated by such a narrow directional light source as flash — either much brighter than usual, or different colours completely. Structural colours that are commonly affected include blues and greens, some whites, blacks(?) and some reds. A good example is shown in the side by side comparison of two Crimson Rosellas, one taken by natural light and one by flash, with very different colours resulting. Another is the male



Superb Parrot showing colours that were noticeably brighter than they appeared in real life. I was surprised at the time to notice that females were not affected in the same way even though they had some plumage of similar colour. Obviously there's plenty of scope for yet more PhDs on this subject.

There's a suite of other issues that can arise when using flash for bird photography, including the dreaded red-eye and steel-eye, distracting shadows and dark unnatural backgrounds. It is sometimes possible to work around each of these and certainly in daylight it is possible to use flash much more successfully just by picking your subjects carefully and reducing the flash to a 'fill' role. Unfortunately such (fascinating!) topics are well beyond the scope of this column.

And of course even at night you sometimes don't need to use flash at all. The very last photograph shows an excellent example of how to take a night photograph without flash – Tobias catching this Owlet-nightjar illuminated only by vehicle headlights.

*Article and photographs by Julian Robinson*

*(Continued from page 3)*

The vineyard is located adjacent to open paddocks with surrounding pine plantations and open forest providing a good range of habitats. Over the 2 ½ hour outing there were 32 bird species seen ranging from a confused **Black Swan** trying to decide where to go in the fog, a pair of **Brown Falcon**, two **Grey Currawong** and three **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** in the pines. The highlight was a flock of 25 **Diamond Firetail**, most in adult plumage, feeding amongst **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Superb Fairy-wrens**. The Robin family was represented by 3 **Jacky Winters** and 4-5 **Flame Robins**. A single **Scarlet Robin** was seen by the lucky few who arrived early.

After the outing some members retired to the cellar door for a well-earned cup of coffee or a taste of the local wine.

On behalf of the 21 participants I would like to thank Stuart for a most interesting outing, not only for showing us such a wide range of bird species but also for sharing his knowledge of the local wine industry.

*Chris Davey*



**Owlet-nightjar** — Owlet-nightjar photographed without flash using only vehicle headlights (by Tobias Hayashi).

## 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://](http://www.stayz.com.au/25595)  
[www.stayz.com.au/25595](http://www.stayz.com.au/25595).



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*productive from a habitat preservation point of view. The mowing regime is to be modified before next mowing season.*

### **Regular communication with COG**

*The Board is mindful of the need to maintain communication with all interested parties and to this end is working through a number of options including the development of a website. Board members or the Board's Executive Manager would be pleased to attend COG meetings to provide updates on relevant issues if requested. It is hoped that you, Chris, will be a conduit to COG on those issues most pressing for COG members.*

### **Lack of birdlife in and around the Silt Trap.**

*This has been noted by Board members. A possible explanation might be water quality in the trap is limiting the occurrence of invertebrates - a water quality survey and a longer term water monitoring strategy might be useful and is being considered for the dam. Furthermore, advice will be sought from the Master Plan consultants regarding the trap's bank construction and possible re-shaping options.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Warren Nicholls*

*Chair, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Board of Management*

*15 July 2011*

### **Item 2 Jerrabomberra Wetlands Master Plan**

For those interested in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and progress with the Master Plan there are now some details on the Dept. of Territories and Municipal Services website. The item can be found at the following address: <http://tinyurl.com/3mtr8g8>

### **Item 3 Bird calls now on the COG website**

I am pleased to announce that bird calls taken from the CD 'Bird Calls of the ACT' by Peter Fullagar and Ed Slater have now been linked to the Photo Gallery which can be found on the COG website. Those bird species with associated calls can be identified by the blue musical note icon next to the species name. Just click on the icon and the call will be reproduced.

As you can see from the website there are still many calls that need to be added. COG has purchased its own recording gear so if you would like to have a go at adding the calls of your favourite species to the Photo Gallery please get in touch with me.

### **Item 4 Meeting to plan field trips for 2012**

A meeting will be held at the Conservation Council meeting room on 15 September 2011 at 5.30 pm to plan the COG field trip program for 2012. If you have a favourite local birding spot that would be suitable for a morning or day outing, or places further afield that could be visited for a 2, 3 or 4 day weekend (either camping or caravan park/motel accommodation), we would welcome your input. If you are unable to attend, but would like to contribute ideas and/or offer to lead trips please contact Dan Mantle on [danmantle@hotmail.com](mailto:danmantle@hotmail.com).



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- Anne Beadell Highway Outback Expedition;
- Christmas Island Bird & Nature Week;
- W.A.'s South West Birds & Botany;
- Abrolhos Islands Cruise;
- Costa Rica Wildlife Safari.



## Winter Woodland Surveys

Despite some reserve closures over most of our winter survey period, we managed to get all sites surveyed by the 30 June deadline.

**Hall/Gold Creek** Alison Rowell reported on a quiet winter survey at these sites, with very few small birds and no mixed feeding flocks. White-eared Honeyeaters were vocal, and a high point was a lovely male Golden Whistler. As in previous years, a honeyeater was seen feeding on Urn Heath, always an interesting sight. This is a common small shrub (mostly <30 cm) on woodland sites, but flowers profusely in winter. Despite its small size, it may be important for nectar feeders at this time of year when little else is available. This winter it was an Eastern Spinebill feeding, but Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and White-eared Honeyeaters have been observed using Urn Heath at Gold Creek in previous winters.

**Mulligans Flat NR** Jenny Bounds reported that although southside Canberra was heavily fogged in, Gungahlin had clear, sunny skies for the survey on Sunday 26 June. The team reported it was fairly quiet, with not many mixed flocks around; the exception was site 24, an open sunny area on the eastern side of the reserve where a large flock of small birds (thornbills, Weebills, Scarlet Robins) enjoyed this sunny edge and a flock of Yellow-faced & White-naped Honeyeaters moved through. Golden Whistlers and White-eared Honeyeaters were recorded at a number of sites, as were Scarlet Robins - the usual numbers for this time of year. Several groups of Speckled Warbler, Superb Fairy-wrens, and two groups of Brown Thornbills were also seen, the last species with 5 birds in one group - this seems to be a small increase in the numbers of these species usually seen. There were a few Spotted Pardalotes around (but no Striated) and no Hooded Robins recorded (this species has not been recorded on surveys since April 2009). A total of 41 species were recorded for the morning.

**Goorroo NR (north)** Nicki Taws surveyed on a very wintry morning with frost, fog and low cloud that never fully lifted. As usual at this time of year it was all or nothing. Three sites had nothing, and two had everything when feeding

*(Continued on page 13)*

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## Committee News

COG is monitoring the breeding of Silver Gulls on Spinnaker Island. In return, the NCA has offered to donate \$250 to COG.

Willows are being removed from the waterski area. COG has not regularly surveyed this area to see if these trees are being used for cormorant and darter breeding, but is in discussions with the Government.

Both Jenny Bounds and Chris Davey have been involved in meetings about Molonglo developments.

COG has applied for a Community Grant to continue planting efforts by Greening Australia at the Scottsdale property.

A map of the COG 'area of interest' is to be added to the website.

Some very old records on ACT sightings have been handed to the Committee, and Lia Battisson volunteered to enter this data into Excel so it can be added to the COG database.

The Committee is investigating options for the scanning of several old RAOU ACT Newsletters which take the form of ACT annual bird reports. This data precedes COG's annual bird reports which were scanned by Alastair Smith and added to the website as part of the complete set of *Canberra Bird Notes*.

**Please note: if you have not renewed your membership for 2011-2012 this is the last newsletter you will receive. All renewals were due 1 July 2011.**

### Positions on the Committee

After four years as President Chris Davey will be standing down at the AGM to be held on 12 October 2011. Positions for both the President and Vice-president will become available at that time. If there are any COG members who would like to find out more about these positions please contact [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au) or Tel: 02-62546324.

## Future Field Trips

**The Guidelines for the conduct and advertising of COG field trips are published on the COG web site. Both trip leaders and members/participants should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. In particular, the Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.**

### Saturday 13 August - Lake Ginninderra Beginners' morning (in conjunction with the Australian Science Festival)

This is the second of our bird walks in 2011 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or [anthony.overs@gmail.com](mailto:anthony.overs@gmail.com)) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

### Saturday 27 August – Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge (morning walk)

The path between Kambah Pool and Pine Island offers a fairly easy walk to Red Rocks Gorge along (although mostly well above) the Murrumbidgee River. It is about 2.5 km to the Gorge with a steep-ish down-and-up (about 30 metres elevation with some steps) halfway along, where the path dips to the river. There is potential for interesting sightings, especially Peregrine Falcons near the Gorge. The vegetation is regenerating quite well since the 2003 bushfires, especially during the last twelve months. However, there is still not as much canopy as before fires, so bring sunscreen,



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water and something for morning tea. Meet Michael Robbins at 9 am at the car park at the south end of Kambah Pool, second turning left after you cross the cattle grid at the entry to the Bullen Range Nature Reserve.

### **Friday-Sunday 2-4 September – Little Forest Plateau near Ulladulla**

This trip focuses on birdwatching in the heathland of Little Forest Plateau and reserves near Ulladulla. We will stay in a caravan park at Ulladulla that has cabins and campsites. Participants will need to arrive by Friday night ready for an early start on Saturday. Be aware that the road to Little Forest is gravel and car-pooling is encouraged for the drive to the Plateau. We hope to find a variety of heathland birds including **Beautiful Firetails** and **Southern Emu-wrens** as well as other coastal favourites.

The walk at Little Forest Plateau will be easy-to-moderate grade, but if you are unsure please give us a call to discuss. Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email [walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au](mailto:walter.goldie@optusnet.com.au). We will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the day.



**Diamond Firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*) and Sacred Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sanctus*)** Photo by Rhonda Abbott

### **Sunday 11 September – Lake Road (near Bungendore)**

Lake Road runs along the SW corner of Lake George at the foot of the escarpment. We will bird along the road which gives access to the forested slopes as well as the lake edge. Past outings have produced a wide variety of species, including several honeyeater species, raptors, finches, Speckled Warbler and other woodland species. There is very limited parking in the section where we will be birding, so meet Sue Lashko at 8.30 am at the southern end of Lake Road (turn off Bungendore Rd and park just around the corner on the left where the road is reasonably wide). We will carpool from there, but if you could carpool from Canberra, that would be even better. Bring morning tea, hat and sunscreen.

### **Saturday 17 September – Bald Hill Fire Trail (morning walk)**

Martin Butterfield will lead this trip exploring the Bald Hill Fire Trail in Tallaganda National Park. This trail runs from the Mulloon Trail to Palerang Road and suitable habitat in the area supports such special birds as Spotted Quail-thrush, Olive Whistler, Red-browed Treecreeper and Wonga Pigeon. Approximately 50km of the excursion will be on dirt trails and it is recommended that after car-pooling everyone travel in suitable AWD/4WD vehicles. The first meeting point will be in the Spotlight carpark in Queanbeyan at 7.30am before meeting the rest of the group at the junction of Briars-Sharrow Road and Plains Road at 8am. Full details are available on Martin's website at <http://franmart.blogspot.com/2011/07/proposed-cog-outing-to-bald-hill-fire.html>

### **Monday-Saturday 19-24 September, Green Cape NSW**

Built in 1883 and perched on the edge of a peninsula, Green Cape Light Station is the tallest and most southerly lighthouse in NSW. Its octagonal tower juts out from a square base in dramatic contrast to the low-lying landscape surrounding it. It looks across Disaster Bay – the site of many shipwrecks.

#### **Accommodation**

Two cottages that were previously the assistant keepers' residences have been carefully restored to offer superb 3.5 star heritage accommodation. Each cottage contains a fully equipped kitchen, dining room, bathroom, master bedroom (with queen-size bed), second bedroom (with two single beds) and family/lounge room (with sofa bed). Linen is available for hire. Each cottage can accommodate up to six people. We have booked for six nights from 19 September to 24 September – that is to arrive on Monday (after midday) and depart on Saturday morning.

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**Spotted Pardalote** (*Pardalotus punctatus*)  
Photo by Stuart Harris

eastern Australian coastal heathland species. COG has made two previous organised visits to Green Cape and details can be found at:

[http://peter.fullagar.com/2005\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://peter.fullagar.com/2005_10_01_archive.html) and

[http://peter.fullagar.com/2007\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://peter.fullagar.com/2007_10_01_archive.html).

For more information consult the National Parks and Wildlife Service website at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/parkAccommodation.aspx?id=N0003>

Those interested in being part of this year's trip please contact Peter Fullagar on 02 6251 4672 or at [peter.fullagar@gmail.com](mailto:peter.fullagar@gmail.com) to confirm your booking. A personal telescope and tripod would be very useful at Green Cape. **THERE IS ONLY ONE SPACE STILL AVAILABLE.**

### **Sat-Mon 1-3 October – Buddigower Nature Reserve – Bird banding**

In response to numerous member requests over the past year, I have decided that the banding team will run a bird banding session over the October long weekend at Buddigower Nature Reserve near West Wyalong. This reserve is near to our usual banding site at The Charcoal Tank NR. This is not designed to take people away from the COG trip to Capertee Valley but is an additional trip. October is very pleasant in this region, especially now the drought has finally broken.

Please contact Mark Clayton (email: [chollop7@bigpond.com](mailto:chollop7@bigpond.com)) if you are interested and need directions to the site. Accommodation will be camping with a strict 'bring everything in, take everything out' policy. There are NO facilities in the reserve.

### **ADVANCED NOTICE**

### **Saturday & Sunday 10-11 December – Deniliquin Plains Wanderer Weekend**

This year COG will return to the Deniliquin area to search for some of the special birds of the region, including the enigmatic Plains Wanderer. The weekend tour will be led by Phil Maher in the same manner as his regular 'Plains Wanderer Weekends' and will incur similar costs (\$270 per person). This early notice is to advise those interested that accommodation should be organised shortly as there are limited local options and they will likely be busy in early December. One recommended option is the Deniliquin Riverside Caravan and Cabin Park (03 5881 1284).

This weekend outing will be limited to 14 people and will be filled on a first reply basis. A deposit of \$50 will be payable upon registering for the trip. Please contact Daniel Mantle ([danmantle@hotmail.com](mailto:danmantle@hotmail.com) or 0413 554 500) to book your place. **ONLY ONE SPACE LEFT.**

#### **Costs**

The commitment is for a 5-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. The total accommodation costs will be in the order of \$250 per person but Daniel Mantle will contact all participants closer to the date about final costs and how to pay. There is also a \$7 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival.

#### **Catering**

Each person/couple will be asked to cater for one evening meal for 6 people. Bring your own food for breakfasts and lunches – and BYO wine/beer/spirits. Please note that there are no shops nearby so bring all food and drink items with you.

#### **Activities**

There will be ample opportunity for good seabird watching from the cape, and the heathlands surrounding the cottages are excellent for birds including Ground Parrot, Southern Emu-wren, Striated Fieldwren, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and other typical



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(Continued from page 9)

flocks moved through. At Gooroo the winter feeding flocks always contain Weebill, Buff-rumped and Striated Thornbills and then various hangers-on, in this case Scarlet Robin, Speckled Warbler, Grey Fantail, White-throated Treecreeper, and White-eared and Brown-headed Honeyeater. Spotted Pardalotes were at almost every site. No Hooded Robins were found, and it is several surveys since they have been seen. One Brown Treecreeper was heard over the border in the lovely woodland abutting the northern end of Goorooyaroo, proving that the grass is actually greener over the fence, or the logs are better or something.

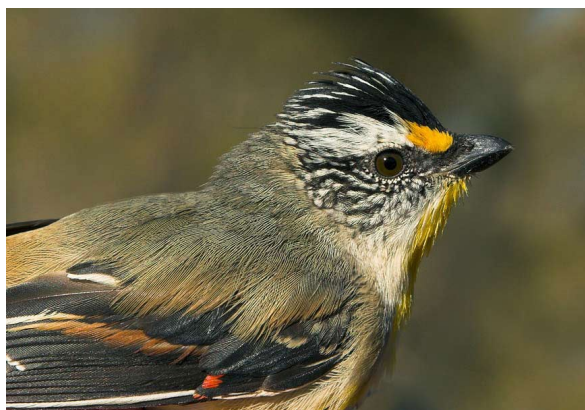
**Gooroo NR (south)** Steve Holliday with Prue Buckley and Dave and Kathy Cook did the June survey on 30 June. After a slow start it turned out to be an excellent day. 42 species was a high count for winter and included a new species for this survey, a Blackbird! Some species with few previous records were Diamond Firetail (4) and a female Flame Robin at site 1 and Red-browed Finch (4) and a Scarlet Robin pair at site 2. Other highlights were a Wedge-tailed Eagle and a Brown Goshawk, 2 Nankeen Kestrels, Speckled Warbler at 2 sites, Mistletoebird at 2 sites and 2 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes. A nice range of small birds included 4 species of thornbill, plenty of Weebills and Spotted Pardalotes (but few Striated). There were very few honeyeaters apart from Noisy Miners, just White-plumed at site 1 as usual, and a single Eastern Spinebill.

**Mt Majura NR** John Goldie and Kathy Walter reported this was one of their most productive surveys in a long time with a number of interesting mixed flocks on the sites on Mt Majura. The first site yielded 17 species including a Scarlet Robin pair, Golden Whistler, Grey Fantail, Speckled Warblers, 5 species of thornbills and a number of Fuscous Honeyeaters.

**Majura Field Firing Range** Paul Fennell reported cold, but near perfect bird watching conditions on 29 June when he and Barbara Allan conducted the survey, escorted by Tyson the Defence environmental officer. The major species seen on this survey were cockatoos – over 60 Yellow-tailed Blacks near the pine forest at the south end of the range, and about 200 Sulphur-crested at the northern end. The Sulphur-crested were very upset about something, with a great lot of noisy to-ing and fro-ing. This may have been due to the rattle of gunfire from the main firing range that upset them. There were very few highlights at the survey sites, with the exception of a pair of Australian Hobbies at the Grenade Range site in the south. There have been hobbies reported there off and on for a number of years. At site 10 in the far south there is a small dam – almost notorious for having nothing on it ever, but a single Hoary-headed Grebe was recorded, possibly a first for the range.

**Campbell Park/Mt Ainslie NR** Michael Lenz reported a pleasant but relatively quiet morning on 26 June for the woodland survey on the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie. Small numbers of both species of pardalotes were widespread, Brown-headed Honeyeaters were recorded twice. 2 mixed feeding flocks were found, one with 10 species, the other with 12. Each flock included Speckled Warblers. Notable was a group of 24 Superb Fairy-wrens in stands of Saffron Thistle, with another 9 only 30 m away in the same vegetation.

**Red Hill NR** The Red Hill Woodland survey was done over two mornings - Harvey Perkins did the southern sites in cool but clear and calm conditions on Saturday morning, 25 June, and Stuart Harris did the northern sites the following morning in cold and frosty conditions. Overall diversity and numbers were marginally higher than average, with 31 species recorded for the whole site (mean over 13 winter surveys of 29.5). Species variety was also typical for winter but no mixed feeding flocks were observed and numbers of small birds generally were low. The most unexpected sighting was a pair of vocal Rainbow Lorikeets that shot through site 9, seemingly on their way from Garran to Forrest. This is the first time the species has been recorded during the Red Hill surveys, and interestingly coincides with a report of a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets in Garran on 27 June. Other species to spark a little more interest were a Nankeen Kestrel, a halfway intermediate Crimson/Eastern Rosella hybrid ("paired" with a full Crimson Rosella as seems the norm on Red Hill) and a single White-plumed Honeyeater.



**Striated Pardalote ( *Pardalotus striatus* )**  
**Photo by Julian Robinson**

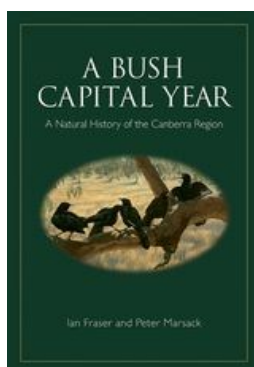
**Jerrabomberra West NR** Jenny Bounds reported on the survey in the woodland behind the grasslands on an overcast but still and relatively mild morning with no dew. Bird activity was very quiet though. Small

birds were difficult to find but parties of Superb Fairy-wrens were at several sites, taking advantage of thick vegetation. A huge mixed flock of cockatoos and corellas ( 200+ birds) offsite in the adjacent leasehold was notable. Brown Goshawks were calling near site 6. Numbers of Noisy Miners seemed to be down. 23 species total is the lowest count since surveys commenced there in 2006 - normally the winter survey records at least 30 species. Some survey sites have become very overgrown with Blakelys Red Gum re-growth, some growing 2 metres tall in the last year, and other sites have a lot of thick dried off thistle, again head high - the marker posts at 2 sites were inaccessible as it was so thick.

**Callum Brae NR** Sandra Henderson recorded 33 species on 30 June. Of note was a mixed flock in site 2, with Buff-rumped Thornbills, Red-browed Finches, a Scarlet Robin and Weebills, and 2 Kookaburras behaving oddly, flying repeatedly at the side of a tree, although nothing was on the smooth trunk apart from dozens of small marks caused by the kookaburras. At site 3, what seemed to be a raptor alert call from the Noisy Miners attracted another dozen, as well as some Australian Ravens, King Parrots, Crimson Rosellas and a Grey Butcherbird. Outside survey sites were a large flock of Yellow-rumped Thornbills along the quarry fence, and a Common Bronzewing not far from the entrance (not a commonly seen species at Callum Brae). Little Pied Cormorant was seen at two of the dams.

**Newline** Sue Lashko reported on her survey on 25 June, a perfect morning which yielded 42 species. The highlight was a mixed ground feeding flock of 3 Brown Treecreepers, 7 Flame and a single Scarlet Robin, Yellow-rumped

## COG SALES

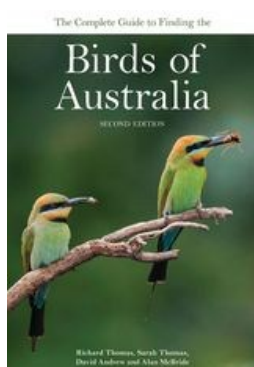
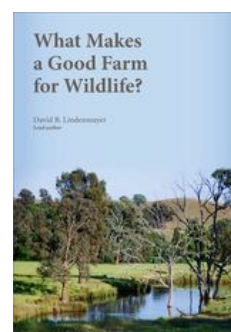


### **A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region** Ian Fraser , Peter Marsack

*A Bush Capital Year* introduces the fauna, flora, habitats and reserves of the Australian Capital Territory and includes the most recent research available. It also emphasises often unappreciated or even unrecognised urban wildlife. For each month of the year there are 10 stories which discuss either a species or a group of species, such as mosses and mountain grasshoppers. While never anthropomorphic, many of the stories are written from the organism's point of view, while others are from that of an observer. Beautiful paintings complement the text and allow better visualisation of the stories and the subjects. Members price \$32

### **What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife?** David Lindenmayer

Based on thirteen years of intensive research, the book breaks the discussion into chapters on key environmental and vegetation assets and then discusses how to make these assets better for biodiversity. The work encompasses information on vertebrates and invertebrates on farms and their relationships with significant vegetation and environmental assets: woodland remnants, plantings, paddocks, rocky outcrops and waterways. A chapter is dedicated to each asset and how it can be managed. Members price \$27



### **The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed** 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. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.

### **Stray Feathers: Reflections on the Structure, Behaviour and Evolution of Birds** Penny Olsen , Leo Joseph

*Stray Feathers* showcases some of the remarkable adaptations of Australian birds. A brief introduction describes how evolution shapes form and function, followed by a series of vignettes illustrating the wondrous variety of forms and functions shaped by evolution. For example, did you know that barn owls can hunt in absolute darkness and that cuckoos commence incubation before their egg is laid? Members price \$39 – expected for the June meeting

Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): *Kookaburra*, *Australian Magpie*, and many more.



Thornbills, 27 Double-barred Finches, 5 Red-browed Finches, 4 Southern Whiteface, 2 Speckled Warblers and 2 Willie Wagtails. A pair of Rainbow Lorikeets was again at Site 7. Near the quarry, one tree was literally crawling with an estimated 55 Weebills, along with Fuscous Honeyeaters. One each of Brown Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon and Grey Currawong added to an interesting morning's birding.

**Tuggeranong Hill NR** Lia Battisson reported on the survey on 23 June, a cold but sunny, still day. 22 species were observed on the Hill during the morning, albeit only 10 in the survey sites. Grey Butcherbirds were heard all morning and obliged on time at Site 1. No birds were recorded during surveys at Sites 4 or 5. The Galahs were back at Site 2. There appeared to be only one, until debris from the renovations inside the broken-off stump rained down from the other bird inside! It was nice to see two male Scarlet Robins, a male Rufous Whistler and 6 Double-barred Finches in between sites. White-eared Honeyeaters were about as well.

**Woodland near Tharwa** David McDonald surveyed on a cold, overcast morning down south, (it was full sun when he left home!). The survey combined some highs and lows. The low point was the lack of birds, with none at all on two of the nine sub-sites. The highs commenced at the first sub-site, which was jumping with birds including three threatened/endangered species, namely Brown Treecreeper, Speckled Warbler and Diamond Firetail. Sub-site 3 sported a seven-species mixed feeding flock which included Speckled Warbler. The last of the sub-sites was like the first, full of birds including a Red-browed Finch displaying to a potential partner; he had a long grass stalk in his bill and was jumping up-and-down on the branch. She did not seem at all interested, turned her back and flew off!

## June-July 2011 GBS Notes

Sorry for no entry last month: I was touring the North Coast. The chatline has had several GBS sightings in this period!

- Crested Pigeons: 75 in Chapman;
- Yellow-tufted Honeyeater in Ainslie;
- White-headed Pigeon in Cook;
- Spotted Dove in Turner and Hawker;
- Restless Flycatcher in Hawker

### How roost-faithful are Tawny Frogmouths?

There have been some comments on the chatline recently about Tawny Frogmouths being very faithful to their daylight roosts with some observations of them using the same roost continually for a month or more. Other evidence suggests that they move around more than this. The species is reasonably commonly reported in the GBS and if the birds are strongly faithful to their roosts they would be reported more than half the time.

The bird has been reported at least once on 123 Charts over the duration of the GBS. There are 20 site-years in which the species is reported more than 10 times and only 7 in which it has been reported more 26 times in a year. (It is probably fair to conclude that the 63 cases in which the species was only observed once or twice during a year mainly represent observations of birds hunting at night rather than roosting in the day.) Of the 7 charts with >26 observations a year, 5 are for a site in Cook and once each for sites in Watson and Carwoola.

The 5 reports from Cook with more than 26 Observations per year are for years 8-10 and 21-2. That site also reported 1 – 23 Frogmouths sightings in 12 of the 21 years since year 8. In Carwoola the birds have used 15 different roosts within the GBS site over a 4 year period. It is likely that, as all these trees are within our property, it is easier for me to cover such a large number of roosts than a standard suburban situation.

I believe the overall reporting pattern suggests that the birds can be quite mobile in their choice of roost sites rather than usually “staying put” for long periods.

### Uses of GBS data

- A CD-ROM of GBS data has been submitted to the Atlas of Living Australia and is being incorporated within the Atlas.
- Provision of information on Spotted Dove is being discussed with the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, for use in policy consideration regarding management of this invasive species.
- Final information has been provided to Kate Garrock for her Myna-oriented PhD.

### Years 30 and 31

56 charts have thus far been received for **Year 30**. I believe/hope that there are many more completed charts out there and would ask that observers return them at the August meeting or contact me to make arrangements for collection by other means.

Completed sign-up sheets and other notifications show some 78 Charts are being compiled for **Year 31**. There is always room for more observers. If anyone has a Chart and has not completed a sign-up sheet could they let me know asap: it makes follow up at the end of the year a lot easier.



## WONGA Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

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

patricia.walker@bigpond.com  
phone 02 6251 3136

[www.visitnsw.com.au](http://www.visitnsw.com.au) (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

## COG welcomes the following new members:

G Hopwood, Goulburn NSW

N Zhou, Greenway

D Letham, Crestwood NSW

M Burrows, Gowrie

M Bollard, Watson

J Wilson, Gowrie

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

### September deadline

Wednesday 31 August 2011

Please send, articles, advertisements, updates etcetera to the Editors at  
[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au)  
or c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301  
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

## COG info

*President*—Chris Davey, ph 6254 6324

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*Vice President*—Matthew Frawley

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*Treasurer*—Noel Luff

Email: [noelluff@hotmail.com.au](mailto:noelluff@hotmail.com.au)

*Secretary*—Sandra Henderson 6231 0303

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

*Address for correspondence*

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

*Newsletter distribution*  
Brian Fair and helpers

### COG membership

2010-2011 memberships:

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

### Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303

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

### Office

COG no longer maintains an office. 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](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au) with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

Beth Mantle

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



## Gang-gang

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