

Gang-gang

February 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

February meeting

Wednesday 11 February

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Field Trips Program (*enclosed*)

Rainbow Lorikeets

Shrieks of "Saps up", "Feed here!",
churrs of "All's well, Honey flows",
screech of "Hawk's shadow!
Watch out!"
mute to the mating thrum
Bill-and-Coo, Tickle-and-Tweek.

From poem by **Mark O'Connor**
(poet, academic, environmentalist)
www.lesmurraypoet.com/mark.htm

Field Trip Reports

Brindabellas

Sunday 30 November 2003

The COG outing to Blundells Creek and Warks Roads in the Brindabellas has been an annual event for more than a decade. The area was a very special part of Namadgi National Park and is highlighted by Ian Fraser in his book "Above the Cotter".

As usual, we started with a good look at the dam at Uriarra Homestead, where we saw big groups of **Eurasian Coots, Hardheads, Australian Wood Ducks** and **Welcome Swallows**, a few **Grey Teal, Masked Lapwings** and **Black-fronted Dotterels**. **Rufous Songlarks** were in fine voice and a **Sacred Kingfisher** and both **Pallid** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** were heard. In total we recorded 25 species on and around the dam.

All of us were a little apprehensive about what to expect in the once beautiful wet forest we knew so well, and now burnt. Some of the tall **Brown Barrells** and **Ribbon Gums** have survived and even a few **Tree Ferns** in places. The understorey has grown back vigorously but is now

dominated by exotic grasses and weeds. However there were plenty of natives including trigger plants, bluebells and various daisies. In the past, the area was well known for uncommon / spectacular species such **Pilotbirds, Cicadabirds, Eastern Whipbirds, Rufous Fantails, Wonga Pigeons, Eastern Yellow Robins** and **Superb Lyrebirds**. None of these were observed, whilst the numbers of more common species such as **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Brown Thornbills** and **White-browed Scrubwrens, Rufous** and **Golden Whistlers** were much lower than in earlier outings. However, we did find more birds as we moved down into the valley where the fire may not have been as intense. Notables included **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos, Flame Robins** (not recorded here in recent years) and a very sooty **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** which emerged from an even sootier tree hollow.

Overall, a bit depressing, but not without hope for the future. Future surveys will be interesting. Does anyone have some spare **Pilotbirds**?

Bruce Lindenmayer

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor

Why do birds sharpen their beaks?

Wondering of Kambah (October 2003)

Dear Wondering of Kambah

I apologise for the delay in responding to your very interesting question. After a lot of digging I believe that I have now found an answer.

The behaviour that you describe as 'sharpening', is known in behavioural ecology circles as 'bill (or beak) wiping' and is when a bird rubs its bill on a branch or other such substrate in a characteristic manner. Bill wiping is an innate, rather than a learned, behaviour and is believed to have more than one function.

Bill-wiping is most often observed during or after feeding. Behavioural ecologists believe that it is performed by the bird to indicate to other birds that it has finished eating and is no longer a competitor for food. Aviculturists add that the action is simply to dislodge something stuck to the bill.

In one of the only published studies into the function of bill wiping, Cuthill et al. (1992) found that it also seems to be a means of keeping the beak trimmed to the right length. In the study, starlings given only smooth surfaces, such as perches wrapped in linen, engaged in bill-wiping more often than the birds given rough surfaces to wipe their beaks on. The birds with the smooth surfaces developed overgrown beaks, which the birds with the rough surfaces did not.

Bill-wiping has also been observed being performed in situations not linked to feeding. Sometimes animals in conflict situations show behaviours that seem totally irrelevant or inappropriate to any of the conflicting tendencies. These are known as displacement behaviours. Bill-wiping as a displacement behaviour is commonly observed in flushed birds immediately after they alight on a perch. It has also been observed in courtship situations.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the behaviour in question is (was) known as 'feaking'. The origin of "feak" (or "feek") is the German word "fegen," meaning "to cleanse or sweep." The term "feak" first appeared in English back around 1575 and has always been primarily associated with falconry, as illustrated by this quotation from a 1686 explanation of the proper falconry terms: "When she [your Hawk] hath Fed, say she Feaketh her Beak and not wipeth it."

Kind regards, Tanya (aka the Editor)

References

Cuthill I, Witter M & Clarke L . 1992. The function of bill-wiping, *Animal Behavior* 43, pp43-115.

Robinson S.R. 2001. Taxonomic distribution and evolution of avian bill-wiping behavior. *Animal Behavior Society*, Corvallis, OR, July 2001.

Please send letters, snippets etcetera intended for this column to the editor. Contact details are on page 16 of this *Gang-gang*. As with all sections of the *Gang-gang*, space allocated to this section each month will be limited. Therefore entries are more likely to be published if they are kept to a minimum length.

Mulligan's Flat Survey Sunday 30 November

The summer survey was in fine weather after a couple of inches of rain the week before. 55 species of birds were recorded. The most interesting sighting was a pair of **Superb Parrots** seen near the car park on Gundaroo Road as I arrived; later when we left the reserve, one **Superb Parrot** was seen flying, from possibly the Hall area, over the western ridge of Mulligan's - maybe on a feeding run. This species is not a regular in the reserve although the habitat seems to be quite suitable; we have had a few records over the years including breeding near the large dam several years ago.

Other good sightings were numerous pairs of **Scarlet Robin**, **Varied Sittella** and **Dusky Woodswallow**, all locally declining species, a **Brush Cuckoo** near site 5, 3 **Hoary-headed Grebe** on the large dam, a **Little Corella** near the large dam, and a **Skylark** on the western edge. Interestingly, we recorded no **White-winged Trillers** in the reserve, although I recorded several pairs in the new Gooroo reserve the day before. One **Rufous Songlark** only was recorded - numbers seem down again this year. Wildflowers and native grasses were in abundance. Thanks to the volunteers who assisted with the survey.

Jenny Bounds

TSR 60, Mountain Creek Road Sunday 7 December 2003

A keen, albeit small, group met David McDonald at the Uriarra Homestead dam and quickly totted up 29 species. Nice to see a **Musk Duck** and **Latham's Snipe** lurking in the grassy bank. **Hoary-headed Grebes** predominated and, with a couple of **Dotterel**, we mainly saw bush birds.

A short drive along Mountain Creek Road took us to the open woodland

of this travelling stock route. This patch is adjacent to The Mullion community centre, spreading over a ridge and down to the Mullion Creek. Quiet strolling gained us 33 species of birds you would expect.

We backtracked to Tinkers Creek and were grateful for the deep shade afforded by this protected remnant. While it could be circumnavigated in 10 minutes, we found 21 species, with a good sighting of a **Brown Goshawk** and heard a **Rufous Songlark**. David pointed out that this small area had been surveyed into small blocks according to his map. With the creek bordered by a line of mature pine trees, a rough stone road bisecting the forest and various long mounds, we came to the conclusion that there might have been a bit of gold prospecting in this area last century. There were also lots of wild flowers for the botanists amongst us to query. This is a delightful spot to be remembered and re-visited and morning tea never tasted so good.

Shirley Kral



Rainbow Lorikeet
(*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

Photo courtesy **Martin Butterfield**

Newline Survey **Sunday 14 December 2003**

I did the seasonal survey of this woodland site on my own this time, and spent a rather pleasant three hours very early in the morning in overcast conditions walking the length of the site. Weeds and exotic grasses were well grown from the recent rains, although nowhere near the four feet high growth I experienced at this site in December several years ago - nevertheless gaiters are the order of the day at Newline at this time of year due to the grass seeds. I recorded 43 species on this visit. The regular pair of **Brown Treecreepers** were active in the front paddock. Highlights were one **Diamond Firetail** near site 4, a pair of **Double-barred Finches** and a **Speckled Warbler** near the dump, a **Grey Butcherbird** with two immatures at site 7 at the quarry end of the area, several pairs of **White-winged Trillers** and a couple of **Dollarbirds**. As at Mulligan's Flat, one **Rufous Songlark** only was recorded.

Jenny Bounds

Postscript to Report of Brown Treecreeper at Gooroo (December/January Gang-gang)

I am pleased to report that the **Brown Treecreeper** which I discovered at southern Gooroo on 30 October was still there when Julie McGuinness and

February Meeting

8 pm
Wednesday
11 February

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

Our short talk will be given by COG member, entomologist and waterbird survey coordinator, **Michael Lenz**. But on this occasion, he is spreading his wings. His talk is entitled "*From tall forest to suburbia: the success story of the Pied Currawong*".

Our main speaker is **Esteban Fuentes**, a student at the Applied Ecology Research Group, University of Canberra. Esteban's talk is entitled "*The Wedge-tailed Eagle in the Canberra region*" and will describe eagle breeding and success rates in our area now compared with earlier studies.

Don't miss it!

I did a walk through the full length of the proposed reserve on 29 November 9 (with permission from Environment ACT and the lessees). We spent some time at this spot on the southern boundary trying to see if there was a pair breeding, and there certainly was one bird in and around a hollow in a large tree near a small dam; but we did not manage to see two birds at the same time - from the behaviour of the bird seen, I strongly suspect there was another bird on a nest. As I described in the last *Gang-gang*

report, this bird is utilising an area of degraded woodland with many dead and fallen trees. Several hectares, in fact half of the area, is outside the reserve boundary where houses are proposed; this seems to be the most suitable **Brown Treecreeper** habitat in this huge reserve, as elsewhere there is very little dead and fallen timber which this species relies on. We also recorded a **Diamond Firetail** and **Southern Whiteface** at the **Brown Treecreeper** site. A male **Hooded Robin** carrying food near one of the COG monitoring sites and three pairs of **White-winged Trillers** were other highlights. Finally, I was delighted to see some Drooping Casuarina on the hills at Gooroo (I had not seen this on the earlier visit) - more specifically its *Allocasuarina verticillata*. There are several isolated mature trees, plus at least two patches of trees, some with younger plants - it occurs to me that it would be ideal to encourage more regeneration of these trees as part of the management of the new reserve. What a headline in 15-20 years - **Glossies at Gooroo!**

Jenny Bounds

Black Mountain / Aranda Bushland—Owling with Jerry Olsen Saturday 17 January 2004

In a strictly limited, first in best-dressed outing, ten select COGites met at Aranda at 7:30pm on a somewhat balmy, windy Saturday for an evening's owling with well-known Canberra owl expert Jerry Olsen and his colleague Sue Trost. Not really knowing what to expect given the weather conditions, we were pleasantly surprised with both the fairly benign conditions at the foot of Black Mountain, and the fabulous array of **Southern Boobooks** *Ninox novaeseelandiae* that Jerry and Sue showed us.

Within their study area, comprising the Black Mountain Nature Reserve / Aranda Bushland, Jerry and Sue have

identified six Southern Boobook territories, and over a period of more than 10 years have come to know these extremely territorial owls and their habits intimately. Each territory is approx. 1 sq. km, with boundaries clearly defined by agonistic interactions between adult males in adjoining territories, where the protagonists take up defensive positions for vociferous, and sometimes physical, onslaughts. Males maintain their territories year-round, whilst females have separate, distinct territories, only returning to the male's territory to commence breeding. Nesting hollows can be reused, or several may be used within a territory over successive years, but can be subject to competition from **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Brush-tailed Possums**.

In our search for roosting boobooks preparing for their night-time activities, we visited the territories of "White", "Orange" and "V5" (identified by the colour bands of the breeding males, with the latter apparently named after a large sign painted on a tree), all within easy walking distance for us, aided by the propensity of the boobook families within each to cluster on the boundaries. Here adults can alternatively engage in foraging activities to feed the juveniles, and giving their neighbours a good verbal going over.

Boobook diet varies from insects, such as cicadas and centipedes, mostly taken on warm nights, to birds, such as **Eastern Rosellas**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and pardalotes. Jerry informed us that

insect prey is often taken on the wing and caught using the feet, making boobooks the only owl species in the world known to utilise this method. Whilst nesting and roosting occurs predominantly within woodlands, boobooks appear to prefer more open areas to forage, and are often found within school grounds.



Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) "White" Juveniles.
Photo courtesy **David Cook**

After a short walk, we located the "White" male with two 10-week old juveniles in the top of a smallish eucalypt. Apparently the female hasn't been seen for about 2 weeks, and Jerry thinks she may either be dead or has moved back to her winter territory early. We then found the female and 2 juveniles belonging to Orange, however, this male too has disappeared and is more than likely dead. Adding to the mix, a "floater" (a male without a territory or mate) has turned up in Orange's territory, apparently with the intent of taking over from Orange, but appears to be reluctant to go near the female because of her aggression. Jerry and Sue have colour-banded this bird (now known as "Lime") and attached a radio harness so that they can keep tabs on him.

We then located the family of 5 in "V5". These three youngsters are



Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) "Lime" Floater.

Photo courtesy **Jerry Olsen**

about 11 weeks old, and each showed characteristic circular head movements not displayed by adults, making them easy to identify when in silhouette. In total we saw 11 boobooks (4 adults and 7 juveniles), and all birds, with the exception of the adult "V5" female, which flew away to a nearby tree, tolerated our intrusion upon their territories. As darkness took over, we returned to "Orange" where we witnessed the male hunting and feeding insects to his 2 offspring, which made cricket-like chirring begging noises, before heading off across Caswell Drive into Aranda, causing a moment's concern to Jerry as one youngster narrowly avoided becoming another statistic on our nation's roads.

We ended a fantastic evening there, and greatly appreciated Jerry and Sue sharing their world with us.

David Cook

From your Committee

The COG Committee met for the first time this year on 21 January 2004 and considered, amongst other more routine business matters, the following items. If any COG member would like more information on any of the issues outlined, please contact the nominated Committee member.

Environment ACT's Integrated Nature Conservation Plan website:

COG will discuss with EACT the possibility of including COG information on threatened species.

A Birds Australia proposal for a pocket guide to the birds of the ACT: in principle support, but further information and costings required.

Request for assistance from consultants working on a revised Plan of Management for Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Results of our nominations of threatened birds to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee: of the eight species COG nominated, two – White-winged Triller and Varied Sittella – were deemed to satisfy the criteria for declaration as vulnerable. Action Plans for these species will be incorporated into the Woodland Conservation Strategy currently being prepared by Environment ACT. Four other species - **Diamond Firetail, Flame Robin, Dusky Woodswallow and Crested Shrike-tit** – have been allocated to a watching brief. In view of the importance of building up more comprehensive data on these species, COG urges all members to report all sightings of them, on the relevant datasheets.

COG will be running a special raffle at the February and March meetings. Tickets will be \$2 each and the prize will be *The New Atlas of Australian Birds*, kindly donated by Malcolm Fyfe. There will be a draw for other book prizes at the February meeting, but all tickets will be re-entered into the main draw. So here's your chance to win your copy of this very valuable book which contains the latest distribution maps (4,000 for over 650 bird species, including seasonal changes and breeding range). Change maps are also presented for 250 species that were more or less common since the first Atlas of Australian Birds was completed 20 years ago.

On the conservation front, see Conservation Matters later in this

Gang-gang.

COG is exploring the development of an Internet-based information management system for COG data, including online entry and retrieval. For comment or further information, contact David McDonald.

Garden Bird Survey news: Mark Clayton has had to step down as GBS coordinator, due to pressure of work. Martin Butterfield has been appointed to the position and will be available to assist aspiring surveyors or to discuss issues with long-term contributors. As with other COG officebearers with access to COG data, Martin has agreed in writing to COG's terms and conditions for its use.

Barbara Allan, secretary

Future Field Trips

COG Field Trips Program 2004

The final version of the above is included as a separate leaflet in this *Gang-gang*.

I had little feedback or comment on the draft published in the November *Gang-gang*. As advised then the formal program is basically arranged around two outings per month, the first a local one and the second a longer day/overnight trip a bit further afield, plus the usual events on long weekends. This leaves the flexibility for the organisation of some opportunistic outings, as occurred during 2003.

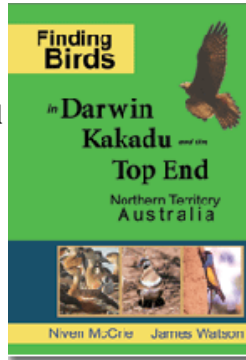
Many thanks to Noel Luff for offering to organise and lead the COG Easter long weekend event at Yathong Nature Reserve, preliminary details of which are contained in this issue of *Gang-gang*.

As indicated, leaders are still needed for several outings. If you can help with these or have any other offers of places to go and/or lead, **please** contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH

COG SALES

- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **The Birds of Prey of Australia Field Guide** by Stephen Debus, \$12.50 (Special Price)
- **Messant Calenders 2004**, "Birds of Australia" and/or "Australian Wildflowers", \$8.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, SPECIAL PRICE for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of 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 (ACT)** NSW Atlassers -\$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.



or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Note that David Rees will be helping to manage the field trips program in 2004.

Jack Holland, president

Jerrabomberra Wetlands; Sunday 8 February – morning waterbirds

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

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

Croajingalong National Park; 13-16 February - Extended weekend camp-out

COG is venturing south of the border for a quiet late summer camp-out after the main holiday period. Thurra River campsite is about 320 km easy drive south of Canberra via Cooma, Bombala and Cann River. This is a wonderfully wild area with a variety of habitats and hopefully we'll find many of the 306 species seen in the Park. Places are still available and new members and beginners are particularly welcome as there are plenty of lovely walks, vistas, coastal history etc if you or yours do not want to peer through binoculars all weekend. There is also the option to

return via Errinundra National Park. For the information kit please contact Joan & Trevor Lipscombe on 6262 7975 or

TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com.au



Waterbirds at Kelly's Swamp

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

Pejar Dam and associated woodlands/Roses Lagoon; Sunday 22 February – Day mini-bus trip for a mix of water and woodland birds

The cancellation of the trip proposed for this date has allowed the opportunity to organise a visit to this spot which was on the 2003 COG Field Trips Program but was cancelled due to the drought. The Pejar Dam is situated about halfway between Goulburn and Crookwell and is probably the most reliable spot near Canberra for observing the **Great Crested Grebe**. A number of members have visited there recently and reported these as well as **Musk and Freckled Duck, Red-capped Plovers; Black-winged Stilts; Red-kneed Dotterels; Australian Shelduck and White-fronted Chat**, all of which are not reliably found in the ACT.

A 12 seater mini-bus (11 passengers plus driver) has been hired and besides visiting the Pejar Dam for the

birds described above we'll also visit some local woodlands such as the Alison Hone Reserve with Crookwell COG member Peter McCrorey. In addition we're anticipating a visit to Roses Lagoon on the return trip, and

we are also trying to arrange a call in at the Goulburn Sewerage Works.

Costs will be round \$25-30 depending on number of participants and will include a \$2 COG

administration fee. This will be advised and will be payable on the bus on boarding. Due to the short notice this trip has been given some pre-publicity on the COG E-mail chat line. As the response has been pretty good (over half the seats taken up already) we will consider hiring a second bus or allowing some tag-a-long vehicles.

Please register your interest with Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) as soon as possible. Meet at the Griffin Centre at 7.15 am sharp. We will return here by 4.30 pm.

Bibaringa; Sunday 7 March – Morning walk

'Bibaringa' (a place of springs) is a horse agistment property adjoining Mt Stromlo to the west and bordered by the Cotter Road. Stuart Harris has been surveying a particular 10 ha remnant there since 1998 with a list of over 105 species compiled so far. Totally consumed by the January 2003 fires, Bibaringa is now in a state of regeneration as its regal Red Stringybarks and Yellow Box offer their epicormic growth to the

returning insect and birds. It remains to be seen what summer migrants will still be present as we roam the hills and gullies of Bibaringa (please bring sturdy footwear, water and hat) and take in the wonderful scenery and birdlife it has to offer.

Meet Stuart (6232 4998 or sih@cea.com.au) at 08:30 am at the front entrance to Bibaringa, which is 1 km further west from the Mt Stromlo Observatory turnoff on the right hand side. Look for the pink gates. The walk will conclude around midday.

Thredbo; Canberra Day Long Weekend; 13-15 March- accommodation

This visit to Thredbo will allow members to enjoy the early autumn atmosphere in Australia's highest country and also to see the birds that occur there. In particular it's one of the more accessible places close to Canberra where **Pink Robins** and **Olive Whistlers** can be reliably seen (the latter in particular was readily seen during the Koscioblitz surveys on 17-18 January 2004). There are also a number of walks of varying difficulty for members to enjoy.

Ten double/twin share rooms have been booked at Boali Ski Lodge where we will enjoy Michelle's legendary hospitality, with the option of full board or bed and breakfast. The cost for the former is \$90 for the first night reducing to \$75 for the second (\$165 for 2 nights), and for the latter is \$105 for 2 nights (\$60/45 per night). A \$6 COG admin fee will need to be added to each. A number of participants have indicated they will also stay on Friday night 12 March, which is a further option. Michelle has also indicated that she's happy to entertain a mix of full board, and B&B, which allows the option of the group having dinner out on one or more nights, eg Friday or Sunday night.

There are still some places available and if you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) as soon as possible indicating your preference for the number of nights and for full board (recommended) or B/B only. Final numbers staying need to be provided to Boali by mid February, and the meal options by early March, when an information package will also be available.

Wednesday walk – 18 February "Mount Ainslie" woodland.

Meet at the car park on the LHS of Mt Ainslie Drive 100 metres from Fairbairn Ave at 9 am. Lots of birds were seen here in January, including a **Regent Honeyeater**, which may still be present. Bring morning tea and defence against grass seeds.



Regent Honeyeater
(*Xanthomyza phrygia*)
Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

Longer trips

Yathong Nature Reserve; 9-12 April – Easter Long weekend

Advance notice is given that the COG Easter event will be held at Yathong Nature Reserve in western NSW. Accommodation at the Shearers

Quarters has been booked, where there is space for a maximum of 20 people (please note that camping is not allowed). More details will be in the March *Gang-gang*, but to register your interest please contact Noel Luff (6288 3291 or by E-mail on noelluff@bigpond.com).

Conservation Matters

Dr Chris Tidemann, the ANU zoologist who is running the 'Minimising Mynas' research project in conjunction with COG and Environment ACT, has now received funding and will be ready to commence the project in the next month or so. The Minimising Mynas project involves positioning Myna traps in a small number of backyards

in northern Canberra, with monitoring of bird numbers and roosts before and after the trapping period. If any COG members wish to be involved with monitoring please

contact Julie McGuinness at julie.mcguinness@bigpond.com or 6231 9882 (h) (those who put their names forward last year need not do so again – we will be contacting you soon).

COG has submitted input into the **Draft Variation to the Territory Plan** No 209 'Extension of Mount Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve'. The variation will allow 66 ha of woodland to be incorporated into the Reserve. This is the last official opportunity to convey our opinion that **all** of the O'Malley woodland

should be protected for conservation reasons.

A focus of COG's conservation work remains **North Gungahlin**. The exact borders of the new Gooroo Nature Reserve are still to be determined. We are working with the Conservation Council to ensure that the new Nature Reserve has the most ecologically-sound borders, that buffer areas around the reserve are adequate and that known threatened species habitat is incorporated into the Reserve. COG members will have seen in the Canberra Times or heard on radio before Xmas the public release of the discussion paper 'Options for the Protection of Sensitive Fauna in Mulligans Flat and Gooroo Nature Reserves from the Impacts of Domestic Cats'. We had hoped to influence the Government to provide adequate buffer areas between any new suburban development and the reserves, but this is unlikely to happen to our satisfaction. In view of these extraordinary circumstances, the Committee has recently written to Jon Stanhope expressing support for the Conservation Council's position advocating that the soon to be developed suburbs of Forde and Bonner be designated a cat-free zone.

The draft '**Management Plan for Mt Jerrabomberra**' near Queanbeyan is on public exhibition till early February. COG has put in a submission outlining the known bird species that have been found in the area and their habitat requirements, and requested that this information be taken into consideration in developing the final Plan.

COG has also made a short submission to the Federal Environment Minister regarding planned industrial development proposals for the **Kooragang Island** area in Newcastle. This is an internationally-important wader site, and we are supporting the work of the Hunter Bird Observers to have the

"East O'Malley"



Nesting Birds of East O'Malley

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

environmental attributes of the Hunter estuary adequately recognised and the proposed development moved from this site.

COG has been contacted by consultants working on cultural, community planning and community values for the new **Kingston Foreshores** development. They are seeking comments or anecdotes, from people who have used the Foreshore area for recreation, about the values to individuals that need to be preserved or augmented. COG will provide information about the avifaunal values of the Lake in the Kingston area, as well as Molonglo Reach and Jerrebomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve that abut the Foreshore. In addition, any COG member who has personal knowledge of the Foreshore area that they might

like to impart to the consultants should contact Julie McGuiness. A focus group meeting has been convened for February 17th.

Spotted Turtle-doves in the ACT. Environment ACT and COG agreed about 18 months ago to monitor the occurrence of STDs, particularly breeding events, with a view to developing a management plan, if required, to halt their establishment in the ACT. We are about to evaluate the data from the last few years, and this is a reminder to those members who have any unreported records of STDs to please submit them now on a regular COG record sheet.

Julie McGuiness, Jenny Bounds
Conservation Officers

Notices

THANK YOU - Early morning walks during Australian Ornithological Conference

A big thanks to Mike Double, Golo Maurer, Michael Lenz, Harvey Perkins, Rick Kuhn, Tom Green, Janet Gardner, Malcolm Fyfe and Louise Muir for offering to help with these walks.

Unfortunately, except for the Saturday these were relatively poorly attended. However, any disappointment was more than made up for by the discovery of a Satin Bowerbird feeding young in a nest in the Botanic Gardens.

Jack Holland

Found Jacket Found Jacket

A very light dark navy blue jacket (size M) was left on the early boat trip up the Molonglo River on Sunday 14 December. If you have lost this please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) so that arrangements can be made to return it to you.

Two Birds Australia Conferences in early 2004

BIRDS AUSTRALIA – SOUTHERN NSW & ACT BRANCH

Scientific Day and Annual General Meeting

Saturday 3 April 2004 1.30-5 pm

“THREATENED NEW SOUTH WALES PARROTS & COCKATOOS”

Norman Nock Theatre, Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards, Sydney

Registration: Members \$25, students/concessions \$20, non members \$30

BIRDS AUSTRALIA

Members Day and Annual General Meeting

Saturday 29 May 2004

9 am to 5.30 pm

General purpose Building, Callaghan
Campus, University of Newcastle,
Jesmond

Conferences Themes: "Managing the
lower Hunter Valley Wetlands for
Waterbirds" and "Birds Australia :
Achievements & Future Directions"

Conference Dinner University at 7
pm

Registration: Members \$50, Students/
Concessions \$40, Non-members \$60

Dinner \$40

Estuary Boat Tours, Swansea Pelagic
Trip & Bus Tours to Important
Wetlands Planned

Jointly organised & sponsored by
SNAG & the Hunter Bird Observers
Club

For further information contact Lise
Hobcroft, Birds Australia (SNAG)

Phone: 02 9436 0388

Fax: 029436 0466

Email: rosella63@bigpond.com



Birds Australia
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

The Birds Australia 2004 Sydney Seminar

*"One of the greatest environmental
challenges facing humanity in the
future will be the integration of
conservation with production in the
same landscape....."*

"Who's a Pretty Boy then?"

**Parrots and Cockatoos in NSW
and beyond...**

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 02 6262 7975.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

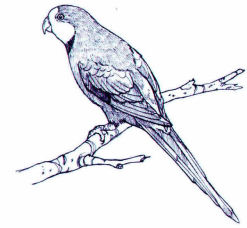
Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only 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.



Parrots and Cockatoos are among Australia's iconic species and yet while some populations increase others are threatened with extinction.

This seminar will look at some of the issues affecting the parrots and cockatoos of NSW.

Discussion will include:

- population trends and their meaning
- case studies: Superb, Swift and Night Parrots
- management strategies and the role of the volunteer
- the integration of conservation with production in our landscapes.

SPEAKERS:

Dr Walter Boles

Australian Museum

Dr Jim Hone

University of Canberra

Matt Cameron

NSW Dept of Environment and Conservation

Debbie Saunders

NSW Dept of Environment and Conservation

Adrian Manning

Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU

John Huxley

Associate Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION:

Chair: Professor Henry Nix

National President, Birds Australia.

WHERE: Norman Nock Lecture Theatre, Royal North Shore Hospital, Pacific Highway, St Leonards, 2065

WHEN: Saturday 3rd April, 2004 commencing at 1.30 p.m.

COST: Birds Australia Members: \$25,
Non-members \$30, Students/
concessions \$20

CONTACT: Birds Australia Sydney
Office:

email: rosella63@bigpond.com

Ph: 02 9436 0388,

Fax: 02 9436 0466

PO Box 1322, Crows Nest, 1585

**Registrations and payment must be
received by the 29th March, 2004.**

Receipts will be issued at the seminar.

Sketch of Superb Parrot reproduced with
thanks to the Birds Australia New Atlas of
Australian Birds

**Proudly sponsored by the Wildlife
Preservation Society.**

Avian Whimsy # 17 Snipe's Latham

I was ruminating recently, as I am
wont to do, in a hide at Kelly's
Swamp. (And it's OK, I'd stop doing
it if you entered the hide!) Of course I
always wonder at the extraordinary
concept of this 200 gram bird flying
and navigating some 10,000km every
year, changing habitat entirely from
the sub-Arctic meadows and fir
forests of its breeding grounds to the
swamps of eastern Australia. But
that's a story whose wonder I'm sure
we all share and I know you're
familiar with it. I was thinking more
about the connection of this
remarkable bird with the energetic
English ornithologist, John Latham,
whose name the bird unwittingly and
unwillingly bears.

He was a successful doctor whose
passion was natural history and
especially birds. He died in 1837 at
the age of 96. He is sometimes
described as the greatest ornithologist
of his time, but he was probably not
that. He was however assiduous and
dedicated, and lived at just the right
time to make the first significant
contribution to Australian
ornithology. He was at the height of
his career when Cook was making his
voyages of discovery and when the

first specimens and illustrations were
being sent back from the fledgling
colony. Banks lent him drawings
from all the Cook expeditions, which
he then copied! He also had access to
works by early colonial artists
including Thomas Watling, via the
collection of botanist Aylmer
Lambert.

He was elected a fellow of the Royal
Society in 1775, even before his
major publications, and in 1788 was a
moving force behind the formation of
the influential Linnaean Society. The
latter was a bit ironic, because it was
his reluctance to embrace the
Linnaean system of binomial
nomenclature that represented the
major weakness in his earlier works.
In his great *General Synopsis of Birds*
(1781-85), which he also illustrated,
he opted for the old non-system of
arbitrary common names; he
basically disapproved of Latin and
couldn't see the point of the new
consistency. As a result the honour of
describing those species fell to later
workers, using his work but assigning
scientific names. In his later works,
Index Ornithologicus (1791, plus
later supplement) and *A General
History of Birds* (1821-28), he did
fall into line with modern
requirements and described a number
of well-known Australian species,
including the Emu, Cape Barren and
Magpie Geese, Black
Swan, White-necked
Heron, Wedgie,
Common Bronzewing,
Sulphur-crested Cocky,
Tawny Frogmouth,
Superb Lyrebird, Noisy
Friarbird, Noisy Miner,
Eastern Spinebill,
Willie Wagtail,
Magpie-Lark, Magpie –
and some 45 others!

In turn he was
honoured with a single-
species genus
(*Lathamus*, the Swift
Parrot) and two
impressive species –

the Australian Brush Turkey *Alectura
lathamii*, and the Glossy Black-
Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathamii*.

However, Latham's Snipe was not
one of them; as far as I can determine
it was never *lathamii*. It is *Gallinago
hardwickii* – basically, Hardwick's
chook... Hardwick, I am told, was
the Tasmanian collector who
provided the first specimen, but I can
find nothing else about him. In
searching for him I came across the
tracks of Bob Forsyth of Mt Isa who
had also apparently failed in the
attempt last year, so I've put that
quest aside. I have no idea how or
why Latham scored the common
name; why not Hardwick's Snipe?

Not that the snipe care – they've got
plenty of problems of their own. Did
you know that a sniper was originally
a courageous fellow who shot snipe
on the wing, for entertainment?

So, you've read all the way to here in
the hope of finding enlightenment –
and there is none. Life's like that;
better get back out to Kelly's and just
enjoy the birds...

[Reminder – any suggestions for a
Whimsy topic are welcomed.]

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

Latham's Snipe
(*Gallinago hardwickii*)

Photo courtesy Ian Fraser



Welcome New Members

Rebecca Clark, Garran
David and Judith Harvey,
Hawker
Sandy Gilmore, O'Connor
Penny Hebbard, Hughes
Fiona MacDonald-Brand,
Lyneham
Simon Buckpitt, Queanbeyan
Janene Luff, Avalon Beach



Mistletoebird (Male)
(*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

Next newsletter

MARCH deadline
Wednesday 25 February 2004

Send updates to
Tanya Rough,
Editor *Gang-gang*
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

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email jack.holland@deh.gov.au

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Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Barbara Allan

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Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and **Sue Lashko**

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battisson and helpers

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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

COG website

<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/canberrabirds> or by sending a blank email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@topica.com.



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
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