

Gang-gang

February 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 10.02.10

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

In the first presentation **Duncan McCaskill** will demonstrate loading a **COG Grid cell overlay for Google Earth**. This is a powerful free program with many uses including getting precise latitude/longitude information for recording bird observations. The grid cell overlay makes the cell boundaries and names obvious.

The main presentation will be by COG member **Con Boekel** entitled "**From le Coq de la France to le perroquet ondulans (budgie)**".

This will be a whimsical tour of the birds of Europe with special emphasis on "*les oiseaux de la France en de vogels van Holland*". The talk has a special emphasis on the cultural and symbolic side of birds. It is backed by a wealth of very ordinary photographs of some extraordinary birds, bird art and statues with wings. It includes a spot on foreign soil that will forever be Australian – the grave of a budgie in the Cimetière des animaux in Paris.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

We are now about two thirds through summer and the pattern for the weather, the migrant species present, as well as the breeding season, is clear. After a wet October it was very hot and dry from the beginning of November, then significant rain fell over a short period at Christmas, but after that it has been hot and dry again to the point where a month later all the benefits of the moisture have evaporated.

Despite this, and my dire predictions based on Campbell Park two months ago, it seems to have been a good breeding season, at least in some areas. This does not seem to have been solely triggered by the Christmas rain; indeed from the reports from early January of advanced chicks being fed in the nest or already fledged it was too soon after the event for it to have been responsible. It certainly was a surprise to me that so many species still bred despite gripping drought conditions during the first three weeks of December.

The biggest surprise was a range of reports of successful breeding of **White-browed Woodswallows**. Rather than in the numbers of 100s seen at the end of October, this has been in small groups of up to about 20 in a number of different locations at various points of the compass on the outskirts of Canberra. Whether they had dispersed but stayed, then remained inconspicuous, or had snuck in round the beginning of December, is unclear. Some evidence for the latter comes from one regularly surveyed spot where they were absent in November. However, what is clear is that, unlike October, there were very few, if any, **Masked Woodswallows** breeding amongst them.

The **Dollarbird** also seems to have had a successful nesting season, judging from reports from Red Hill and other suburban nature parks. Watch out for

(Continued on page 2)

STOP PRESS

Birds of Canberra Gardens (2nd edition), will be launched by the Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope at 9.30am on Tuesday, 16 February in the Dickson Room, Australian National Botanic Gardens.

All are welcome.

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these over the next few weeks as they move more into the suburbs, calling and feeding from the wires before they leave early in March. The **Superb Parrot** again seems to have bred successfully in or near Canberra, and has been widely seen north of the lake, though probably not quite in such large flocks as have occurred feeding on ovals or in trees as in past years. There have been a few reports of the species south of the lake, mainly in Curtin or Deakin, but this still appears to be a significant barrier for reasons not entirely clear to me. This species does have a very unusual distribution pattern, basically on the SW slopes and adjacent areas of NSW. While most will by now have moved northwards, in the past couple of years there have been some reports well into February, so again keep an eye out for any lingering birds.

The **Eastern Koel** has also been widely reported throughout this summer, including in some suburbs in southern Canberra and Queanbeyan where it previously has been absent or infrequent. Interestingly this has been less common in my local patch of NW Chapman for the past few years, with this year only one observation within a kilometre, though it was heard in the distance a number of times. For the second year there has been confirmed breeding with dependent young, usually well hidden initially but given away by their begging calls, again being hosted by **Red Wattlebirds**.

However, to my knowledge there have been very few, if any, reports of successful breeding of the **Rufous Songlark**, which were so conspicuous in October/November, perhaps due to the difficulties in confirming this as noted in my December column. Thus their breeding success remains unclear. It was very noticeable that after the Christmas rain they started calling again very loudly in the former pine forest on the SW side of Narrabundah Hill and the adjacent Chapman horse paddocks. There seemed to be about 10 territories and it appeared to me they were still in the process of territory establishment/pair bonding rather than their post-breeding behaviour. I thought at the time they may have started breeding again after abandoning due to the drought, but it would have been very late considering most usually leave by the end of January/early February. However, by mid-January the calling had stopped and the birds had either left or were certainly much less conspicuous, though a thorough search was not conducted.

The reports of such significant breeding events in some spots around Canberra raised the question of what is it that makes these places so attractive so that such a wide range of species would breed together there. I wish I knew the answer to this, though I do know these spots can be ephemeral. A few years ago I used to think it might relate to moisture, as the slightly wetter gullies such as occurred at Campbell Park and in the horse paddock off NW Cooleman Ridge were at the time “magic spots” for breeding. However, both spots have moved, the former up to round the horse gate, and the latter first up the hill to a very dry rocky ridge, and for the past couple of years has disappeared altogether. For the first time since the fires the **Rufous Songlark** was only there for a couple of weeks, and I have not recorded **White-winged Trillers** or **Dusky Woodswallows** there this year. While still present and breeding, the former does seem to have been in fewer numbers than in recent spring/summers, and woodland surveyors noted that the latter have been absent in some of their survey sites for the first time in years.

Despite the continuing drought inland, with the exception of the **Black-tailed Native Hen**, there does not seem to be an influx of western/inland species this year. Instead there seems to have been more northern/coastal species, the most notable being the immature **Figbird** present in a Curtin GBS site for a number of weeks in December. This appears to represent a significant extension to its range; I understand it has rarely been recorded inland south of the Hunter Valley. Whether this may be due to identification difficulties is unclear but possible. Richard Allen told me it had been round for up to a week, with several immature **Olive-backed Orioles** also present, before he realised it was not one of them. The diagnostic points are very subtle and easily overlooked. Other such species were a number of reports of the **Spangled Drongo**, some **Plumed Whistling-Ducks** seen briefly near Bungendore, as well as **Musk Lorikeets** moving through.

The last of the **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Brown Songlark**, **Horsfield's Bushlark**, and **Tree and Fairy Martins** will also soon have left, if they haven't already. Also keep an eye out for **White-throated Needle-tails** and the rarer **Fork-tailed Swifts** on passing fronts or local thunderstorms (if we get any at all!). The peak season for these in the ACT tends to be February and March. There have been very few seen in recent years but a few of the latter were observed during January. Similarly, watch out for the **Rainbow Bee-eater** on return migration either high overhead (listen for their characteristic pee-pee calls and flight with orange wings), or if you're lucky lower along the creek lines. Again please ensure you report all your last sightings of these species for this season so that they may be included in the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

Field trip leaders are required for Ulladulla (15 to 18 February) and the Easter camp out at Errinundra National Park from 2 to 5 April— see pages 4 and 5

Field Trip reports

Blundells Creek/Warks Road – 17 January 2010

We met near the Uriarra Homestead dam on a surprisingly foggy morning – in fact the earliest arrivals drove straight past because the dam was invisible in the fog! Once the fog started to lift, there was a good range of birds on the dam and in the paddock next to the road. A flyover by five **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** was a good start, with the dam itself yielding, among others, **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **White-faced Heron**, **Hardhead**, **Australian Shoveler**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Hoary-headed Grebe** and **Australian Reed-Warbler**. Around the dam the birds included a **Restless Flycatcher**, **Rufous Whistler**, a couple of **European Goldfinch**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and a flock of **Little Ravens**.

After leaving some cars at Uriarra, we moved along to Blundells Creek Road to start the car shuffle, and it was already starting to get rather warm. The highlight of the walk down Blundells Creek Road was a **Satin Flycatcher** nest with at least two hungry heads visible, and both parents close by. The nest was very exposed – on a small branch with another above, but no foliage to protect the youngsters. There were good views of **Rufous Fantails**, and of a group of young **Red-browed Finches**. An **Eastern Whipbird** was heard, and other species seen included **Gang-gang Cockatoo**, and **White-naped**, **White-eared** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. Those bringing up the rear had a close encounter with a large branch which fell across the road. We finished up with lunch on Warks Road. Many thanks to Bruce Lindenmayer for leading the walk.

— Sandra Henderson

Mid-week walk, Lyons Creek 20 January

Nine members met our hosts, John and Sue Moore, and headed off to part of their property which includes frontage to the Queanbeyan River. This part of the walk covered some grassy eucalypt country which was very pleasant to walk through with great views. Surprisingly birds were not particularly common on this part of the trip with highlights being a probable juvenile **Brush Cuckoo** and a flock of 60+ **Little Ravens**. Breeding records for this segment were **White-eared Honeyeater** CF; and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** ON (the nest site high in a tree overhanging Tinderry Rd.)

After lunch - graced by a **Whistling Kite**, an addition to the site list - we headed off to a nearby paddock with tussock grass and scattered eucalypts. The action really sped up with sightings of **White-winged Triller**, **Hooded Robin**, **Flame Robin** and **Southern Whiteface**. Breeding records were: **White-browed Woodswallows** including CF, DY and most excitingly, NY in the top of a sweetbriar bush; **Dusky Woodswallow** DY; **Grey Fantail** ON; **Diamond Firetail** NY; and **Australasian Pipit** CF.

In total 44 species were recorded. Many thanks to John and Sue for their hospitality. — Martin Butterfield



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2010: Celebrating 30 years of plains-wanderers

11 April 2010

Pelagic trip off Eaglehawk Neck,
Tasmania.
a 'not-for-profit' pelagic trip

23 June to 7 July

Top End
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine,
Kununurra & optional Mitchell Plateau
flight

11 to 15 July

Alice Springs &
MacDonnell Ranges

22 to 28 August

New Caledonian birds, butterflies and
flora tour

4 to 22 September

Strzelecki Track Outback Tour
31st Strzelecki tour!

Plains-wanderer Weekends:

6/7 & 20 /21 November
4 /5 & 18 /19 December 2010

**Proposed tours 2011: Laos, Malaysia,
New Guinea**

**Tour itineraries, bird lists, checklists
and latest news are on the website**

www.philipmaher.com

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.

A reminder to all participants in COG outings that it is important to let the organiser of the trip know you are coming along, if this is specified in the announcement of the outing.

Sunday 7 February 2010 — Jerrabomberra Wetlands — morning outing

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, there is no better place to visit than Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the adjacent Fyshwick Sewerage Ponds. We will search for ducks, waders, rails and birds of the surrounding bush and grasslands. Meet in the carpark off Dairy Road at 7.30 am. The outing is expected to finish by 11 am. Bring a scope if you have one, as well as hat, sunscreen and water. Please book with Sue Lashko on 6251 4485 or by email to SMLashko@gmail.com. Should numbers become too large, the group will be divided in two, so if you are prepared to help lead this outing, please contact Sue.

Monday 15 — Thursday 18 February — Ulladulla.

There will be a short week of birding in the Ulladulla area. A number of habitats will be visited including wet forest, heathlands, beaches and headlands. Bob Rusk, who lives in the area, will organise walks in the mornings and point members to other local birding spots for the afternoons but a COG member will be required to act as leader for the outing. A wide range of accommodation options are available, including local caravan parks. It will be up to individual COG members to book and pay for their accommodation. Bob can provide you with a few suitable options, and booking early is advised. Bob has advised me that the Ulladulla Headland Tourist Park (1300 733 021) would be the best all round accommodation in the area, as it is an easy short walk to town, food and clubs. Anyone interested in participating, please contact Chris Davey 62546324 or chris_davey@aapt.net.au as well as Bob sharonrusk@southernphone.com.au or on 02-4455 6813. Again, please note it is important that a COG member puts their hand up to act as leader for this outing.

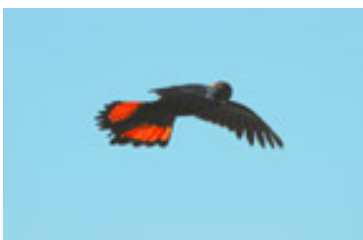
17 February — Wednesday walk

Stirling Park adjacent to Yarralumla. Details of the meeting point (9:00 am) will be advertised in an email close to the date. If there is a total fire ban for the ACT on that day the walk will be cancelled. — **Martin Butterfield**

Sunday 21 February 2010- Gungahlin Hill Nature Reserve

Chris Davey will lead a morning's outing to this most interesting small area of the Canberra Nature Park. good outing for beginners who wish to know more about the birds of our dry sclerophyll forests and grassy woodlands. The outing will start from the car park at 7.30am and will go for as long as the participants wish. The car park is best approached along the Barton Highway heading into town rather than heading to Hall. The going will be easy but appropriate shoes for dirt tracks will be required. Please note this is a change from the outing advertised in the Draft Outings Program posted in the December issue of Gang-gang.

6–8 March 2010 — Canberra Day Long-Weekend — Nangar National Park Campout



Glossy Black-Cockatoo
(*Calyptorhynchus lathami*)

Photo by Stuart Harris

Nangar National Park is situated off the Eugowra-Orange Road, approximately 15km east of Eugowra. The delightful amphitheatre-style campground has six wooden tables and benches, but there are plenty of grassy areas for campers not requiring tables. Despite the road being a bit rough on the way in, it's accessible to 2WD cars and camper-trailers. The Nangar-Murga Range is a very distinctive landmark from all angles, and is a less-known area to Canberra birders. Terrara Creek, which runs through the park, is lined with rocky slopes rich in flowering shrubs and eucalypts including ironbark, tumble-down gum, and bundy. The surrounding landscape has been cleared, leaving the park an oasis harbouring interesting birds includ-

ing **Peregrine Falcons, Glossy Black-Cockatoos, Barking Owls, Turquoise Parrots**, and many other species which rely on the cover and food the park provides. Mammals are plentiful, and the robust, shaggy-coated Wallaroo is easy to spot grazing at the base of the hills.

The 'Dripping Rock' homestead ruins had been badly vandalised, and when we visited the park in early 2010 the homestead had been completely vandalized; ie demolished! Birds once hung around here, living off the remains of the garden and collected water – maybe some might still hang around. Given enough interest and 4WD's we'll do a 13km drive to the top of Mount Nangar which provides spectacular views to the north.

Apart from birding and walking we'll also venture out for some night-time spotlighting. A special attraction will be a visit to 'Escort Rock', where Australian history was made, when the gang led by Frank Gardiner held up the gold escort coach and escaped with a huge amount of money. Included in the gang was the

“infamous” Ben Hall. Sit in the shade and relive the moment.

Participants must be prepared to camp in the park and you must be fully self-sufficient and carry adequate water. A 'composting' toilet is on site.

Join leaders Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer for an exhilarating long-weekend; this enigmatic park will have you hankering to go back again and again!

This campout will be limited in numbers, so get in early. More information will be emailed to participants. To book; phone Margaret & Charles: 6161 3450 or email mcjannett9@hotmail.com

Sunday 14 March – Molonglo Reach – morning boat cruise

This will be the last outing/cruise for 2009-10 on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River and Jerrabomberra Creek, where early autumn is the peak time for nesting, with three species of cormorant and darters known to breed there. The area is also rich in other water birds, and a variety of land birds can be seen on the banks. The clearing of the trees on the north bank in May 2008 seems to have had limited influence on the breeding.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We will travel in the MV “Darter” which can carry 16 people and, though it has a motor, is very quiet at slow speeds, allowing both a close approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The point of departure will be the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way). Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

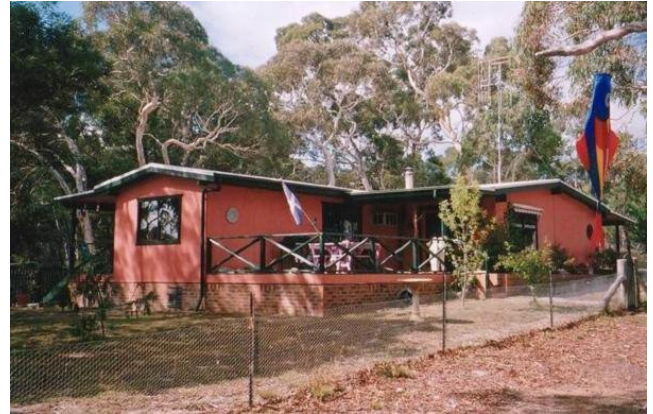
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Moon Cottage

Bush Retreat

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Private walking trails thru 160 acres of bush.

Enjoy the birds, river gorge and platypus.

Close to Monga Rainforest and Budawangs

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Woodland Project — Summer survey round late November/early December 2009

Mulligan's Flat NR

Jenny Bounds reported that a small team undertook the survey on Sunday 28 November as cloud and moderate winds associated with a weather change moved in during the morning. Highlights of 54 species were **Common Bronzewing** at two sites, three species of cuckoos, **Pallid, Shining Bronze** and **Horsfield's Bronze**, a number of **Olive-backed Orioles, White-Winged Triller**, numerous **Leaden Flycatchers, Scarlet** and **Red-capped Robins** and a pair of **Superb Parrots** in the woodland near the large dam. A highlight for Jenny was seeing three **Brown Treecreepers** from a group of eight birds recently released in woodland not far from the main road in from the carpark and COG site 9.

Gooroo NR (north)

Nicki Taws reported on the summer survey on Sunday 28 November, a fine cool morning until a strong dusty wind picked up - fortunately most sites were surveyed before this. Despite the dry November the woodland was looking pretty good, with lots of green Kangaroo Grass and flowering Wallaby Grass. A few Yellow Box were in full flower but given the dry conditions they may not carry much nectar. The numerous Drooping Mistletoe were carrying lots of fruit or flowers. The less common Creeping Mistletoe has plentiful buds, and can be a honeyeater magnet. Many spring migrants were still active, particularly **Rufous Whistlers**, both **gerygones**, and **Mistletoebirds**. Highlights included:

- one male **Hooded Robin** heard calling, then seen in the area where they have previously bred successfully;
- a recently fledged **Red-capped Robin** with its parents;
- two separate sightings of **Superb Parrots**; and
- at least five pairs of **White-winged Triller** feeding on caterpillars in the magnificent woodland block over the border from the northern tip of Gooroo. Unfortunately the Trillers weren't game to cross over the fence which also seems to mark the edge of the **Noisy Miner** territory, so they had to remain 'outside' records.

Gooroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the survey on December 6 in perfect conditions. Highlight was a **Rufous Fantail** at site 8. Also seen were **Wedge-tailed Eagle** (three including a young bird), **Collared Sparrowhawks** (three young birds near a nest), **Superb Parrot** (two), **Pallid & Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoos, Speckled Warbler** at two sites, a **Reed Warbler** in a gully site, and **Fairy Martin** (four), as well as breeding records for **Wood Duck, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Pied Currawong, Common Starling** and **Australasian Pipit**. Also a fox chasing a young roo (it aborted the hunt when it saw us), and two Shinglebacks drinking at a dam.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie reported that the reserve was looking quite spectacular with lots of forbs flowering, in particular **Chrysocephalum** (daisy) in waves of yellow. They surveyed a couple of the survey spots earlier in the week, with all the usual birds seen and nothing unusual. Plenty of nesting activity was still happening. It was a bit chilly the day they did the majority of sites with only small numbers of the usual small birds; the larger birds (**parrots, currawongs, pigeons, honeyeaters**) must have still been warming up somewhere. Highlights were an immature **Scarlet Robin, Leaden Flycatchers** at two sites, **Speckled Warblers** at one site, plenty of **Buff-rumped Thornbills** and a nice sized family of **White-winged Choughs**. Other animals include a Swamp Wallaby and Eastern Grey Kangaroo. There are still plenty of rabbits to be seen despite the baiting.

Majura Field Range

Alison Rowell and Jenny Bounds did the survey while Paul Fennell was away, on a fine and mild morning on Monday 7 December, but had to watch out for troops of cadets doing marches through some sites (no firing though). Highlights of 43 species were **Scarlet** and **Red-capped Robin, Common Bronzewing** and a **Brush Cuckoo**. There were no sightings

of **Hooded Robin** or **Brown Treecreeper**. Notable absentees from sites where they are normally in spring were **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Sacred Kingfisher**.

Campbell Park

Michael Lenz reported on the survey on 28 November under pleasant conditions. 10 to 16 species were recorded per site, with no real highlights. Several **Leaden Flycatchers**, **Dollarbirds**, (only) one pair of **Dusky Woodswallows** (with young in nest), the very aggressive pair of **Brown Goshawks** at its best, three **White-winged Triller**, one site with **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, one **Jacky Winter** on nest, very few **thornbills** and no **Speckled Warblers**. Also of interest was a pair of **Little Ravens** with dependent young near an area where they had a nesting attempt a couple of years ago (then interference from **Australian Ravens**). Rabbits are still abundant at the first 5 sites. In general there was quite low and sparse grass/herb cover, and some flowering of eucalypts.

Callum Brae NR

Sandra Henderson and Jenny Bounds shared the survey sites in Callum Brae on 1 December, while Jenny assisted Alison Rowell to undertake habitat re-assessments at the six 10-year Symonston sites (three in Callum Brae NR and three in woodland off Mugga Lane). Most sites were relatively quiet and the **Brown Goshawks** were not around the usual nesting territory this year, although Sandra did see two Goshawks engaged in display when leaving the last site on the other side of the reserve. Two pairs of **Dusky Woodswallows**, two **White-winged Trillers** and a **Diamond Firetail** were seen in one area after the survey on the way back to the carpark. A **Dollarbird** at the usual site 3 was one of the few highlights.

Jerrabomberra NR woodland

Jenny Bounds reported on the survey in mild, calm and early overcast conditions on Sunday 6 December, notable for the number of Australian **Ravens** around the woodland and the lack of small birds - perhaps related! Only 36 species were recorded (compared with 44 species at the same time last year), and no **Dollarbirds**, **Sacred Kingfishers** or **Dusky Woodswallows** seem to have nested in the usual spots. Highlights were **Speckled Warblers** at two sites, **Mistletoe-birds** and **Tree Martins**, and **Southern Whiteface** feeding young at the site on the edge of the grasslands. Jenny added that she was harrassed and attacked by one very vocal **Brown Goshawk** and noticed a possible nest in the top of a tree nearby, but could not stay around to confirm it was using the nest. As **Goshawks** have not been recorded nesting in this woodland patch before, is this the same pair which has nested at Callum Brae in previous years (but were not in the usual territory this season)?

Tuggeranong Hill

Lia Battison reported on the survey early on Saturday 5 December in mild, still conditions. The most unusual record for the survey was a couple of Leaden Flycatchers. Many of the birds were silent and motionless and could easily have been missed. Breeding records for **Red Wattlebird** and **Australian Magpie** were recorded. As always, there were lots of kangaroos about, as well as a fox and hare kittens. Most of the sights have been heavily grazed, although there were some wildflowers about and some of the mistletoe had berries.

Rural leasehold near Tharwa

Alison Rowell used the opportunity of the December survey to update the site habitat assessment at the same time the survey was conducted. Surveyor, David McDonald, was able to identify the significant changes in habitats that have occurred over the 20 years he has been surveying there. The continuing low abundance and species diversity of small canopy feeding birds was noted, along with the virtual absence of honeyeaters large and small. **Woodswallows** seem to be boycotting the area this year, and the crash in **Tree Martin** numbers remains apparent. Pleasingly the **Speckled Warblers** are still present, using the Sweet Briars for cover. Three species of raptors was also a pleasing feature of the summer survey.

Rural leasehold in Naas Valley

Julie McGuinness reported a lovely summer morning for this survey. Highlights were the plethora of small birds and evidence of much breeding activity with **Jacky Winter**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Grey Fantail** either on nests or feeding

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Garden Bird Survey Notes

Over the holiday break there have been a few recent chatline postings that are directly GBS-related:

- Pre-eminent amongst these is the first ACT sighting (and the first inland record south of the Hunter Valley) of an immature **Australian Figbird** in Curtin;
- First record of **Superb Parrots** at a site in O'Connor.
- Begging (=dependent) young **Australian King-Parrot** in Kaleen
- First record of an **Eastern Koel** at my site in Carwoola. The Ainslie **Koel** seems to have bred again.
- **Channel-billed Cuckoo** in Wanniasa;
- **Musk Lorikeet**, confirmed by observer in Watson (and suspected in several locales in North Canberra)

Use of GBS data

The second edition of *Birds of Canberra Gardens* has been released to members! GBS data was used by Chris Davey and Nick Nichols in an article on diversity of birds in gardens published in Canberra Bird Notes. A new observer in the GBS team has used data from her site as part of her school project and also presented her results to the Ginninderra Catchment Group.

Charts!!!!

At present I am aware of 92 people having Charts for Year29. If all are handed in next year this will be the highest number of Charts ever. Well done all, and keep up the good work!

It is now some seven years since the list of birds pre-printed on the Chart has been examined. A few changes are needed to include the most frequently reported birds in the pre-printed list. With the agreement of the Committee, species added to the list are **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo; White-winged Chough, White-browed Scrubwren, Australian Wood Duck, Little Corella, Eastern Koel, Collared Sparrowhawk, and Grey Butcherbird**. To make room for these species the following have been deleted: **Striated Thornbill, Australian Hobby, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Whistler, Dollarbird, Red-browed Finch, Fuscous Honeyeater and European Goldfinch**. The list will also be reordered to conform with the formal taxonomic order.

The competition is done and dusted!

The winner of the Myna competition was David Cook who tipped 1.84 – extremely close to the value - 1.8293. I'm sure he'll enjoy his prize of a copy of the second edition of *Birds of Canberra Gardens*. — **Martin Butterfield**.

(Continued from page 5) — Future Field Trips

Sunday 28 March — Gossan Hill

Park at the intersection of Haydon Drive and Purdie Street. The walk departs at 8am at the reserve directly opposite Purdie Street and will last for 2-3 hours. Easy walking. Gossan Hill Nature Reserve is surrounded by urban development. It has varied habitats including grassland and woodland. The walk will focus on urban pressures affecting the natural values of Gossan Hill Nature Reserve and to observe which species are coping with the pressures. A particular focus will be to see whether Speckled Warblers survive in the reserve. Leader: Con Boekel, ph 6247 2419. Registration is not required.

Fri-Mon 2-5 April – Easter campout at Errinundra National Park

The Easter campout currently does not have a leader, so we are looking for someone to organise and lead this outing. If you are familiar with Errinundra National Park and would be prepared to lead this campout, please contact Chris Davey, phone 62546324 or email chris_davey@aapt.net.au

ABSA Scientific Day

The Australian Bird Study Association's Scientific Day will be held on 14 March at the Newington Armoury next to Sydney's Olympic Park. The theme of the day's meeting will be:

DNA - What secrets does it hold for the study of Australian Birds?

Further details are on the Associations' website: <http://www.absa.asn.au/comingevents.html>

January 2010 Members Night

A report on the January meeting has been held over due to lack of space. It will appear in the March edition of Gang-gang.

Birding tourism

The Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre has just released research exploring bird-watching tourism in Australia. The research - *Practices, needs and attitudes of bird-watching tourists in Australia* included an extensive survey of national and international bird-watchers. Tour operators and accommodation providers who support this niche tourism sector also contributed to the research. Full details are at <http://www.crctourism.com.au/BookShop/BookDetail.aspx?d=687>



Crowdy Head & Comboyne Plateau

6 & 7 February 2010

5 days/ 4 nights — \$2275 pp Twin or Dble — \$180 Supp

This trip has been especially designed to cater for Canberrans; starting and ending in Canberra with the aim to take you out to summer coastal weather and into the Mid North Coast which is quite splendid and often overlooked. There is a generous diversity of bird life here and as you move back to the moist forests around Comboyne with their 40 odd waterfalls.

Few people remain unmoved by the beauty and diversity of Crowdy Bay: the spectacular view of the broad sweep of Crowdy Beach, striking Diamond Head rising abruptly before dropping away gently to the wetlands and heaths of the coastal plain. Birds are prolific with well over a hundred species in the surrounding estuaries and national park.

Resident coucals at our accommodation right on Crowdy Head will delight with their lolling walk. And below, beside the beach Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens surprise with their inquisitive gaze while Figbirds yelp and then softly sing in the banksias.

Further inland Comboyne Plateau developed on the deep rich red loam derived from basalt. Large pockets of sub-tropical rainforest remain where Noisy Pitta, Logrunners, Fruit Pigeons and Eastern Whipbirds utilise these plant communities. Along the roadsides Regent Bowerbirds and Scarlet Honeyeaters are expected to wow you with their spectacular colour.

Dates

6 & 7 February 2010
5 days / 4 nights

Summary

- * Coastal Summer escape
- * Spectacular Mountain Vistas
- * Beautiful Beaches & Headlands
- * Mountain Rainforest Birds

Leader [Alan Morris](#)

Featured Birds

- * Noisy Pitta
- * Logrunners
- * Regent Bowerbirds
- * Figbirds

Contact us for an itinerary

Follow That Bird – Birds and Camaraderie

Tel 02 9973 1865 — email: tours@followthatbird.com.au
Website: www.followthatbird.com.au

Committee News

- COG is involved in discussions on the *Urban Forest Renewal* program.
- Habitat re-assessments are being done in the woodland survey sites.
- Work on the *Annual Bird Report* is progressing.
- *Birds of Canberra Gardens* (2nd edition) has been delivered, and is now available through a variety of local bookshops and the COG sales desk. Members wanting to buy a copy direct from COG, but who have trouble getting to a meeting, should contact Sandra Henderson. The book is being listed on the Botanic Gardens bookshop site as their best-seller, and sales through the National Library bookshop have also been very strong.

(Continued from page 7) — Woodland Project

nestlings. Also seen were **White-winged Triller**, **Noisy Miner** and **Magpies** feeding dependent juveniles, many **White-browed Woodswallows** vigorously defending territories, and **Diamond Firetails** courting. Other species of note were a pair each of **Speckled Warbler** and **Southern Whiteface**, a few **White-throated Geryones** and **Tree Martins**, and numerous **Rufous Songlarks**. Also, unusual for this site, was a very vocal male **Hooded Robin**. Notably absent regulars were the resident **Brown Treecreeper**, **Mistletoebirds**, **White-winged Choughs**, any **cuckoos** or any small **honey-eaters** other than a couple of **White-plumed**.

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, barbdebruine@hotmail.com, or see <http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

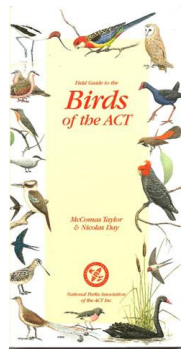
Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck, while for the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction.

Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

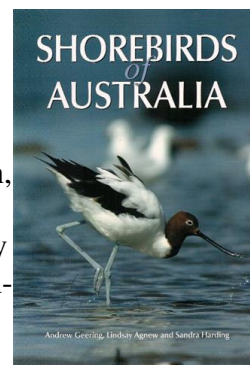
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COG SALES

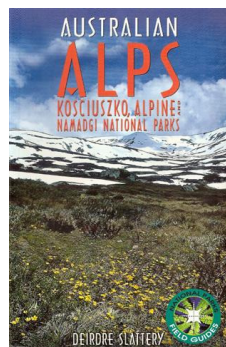


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT (Taylor & Day) - \$16.00 — Bird identification in the ACT has just become much easier! Here are all the birds of the ACT in colour, with easy-to-follow text and key biological data, in a compact field format that will fit easily in your pocket.

Shorebirds of Australia (Geering, Agnew & Harding) \$33.00 — This title brings together the latest information about the evolution, ecology and behaviour of shorebirds and how they are distributed in Australia. This is a highly sought after title in the popular "CSIRO Publishing" series.



Birdwatching on the Far South Coast (see <http://www.thebegavalley.org.au/6224.html>) This spiral bound title is well presented, easy to read and is available from the Sales Desk for \$16.00. The inside front cover provides a quick guide to the towns and localities referred to in the text. All sites have been tried and tested and it is recommended that the guide be used in conjunction with a district map.



Australian Alps: Kosciuszko, Alpine & Namadgi National Parks (Slattery) - \$16.00 — This guide is your key to the secrets of the three national parks that stretch over Australia's spectacularly beautiful rooftop - Kosciuszko in New South Wales, Alpine in Victoria and Namadgi in the Australian Capital Territory. Ideal for field trips, this guide will make a wonderful memento as well as a great reference for future trips.

Watching Wildlife (Chris) - \$24.00

Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? And Other Bird Questions You Know You Want To Ask (O'Connor) - \$13.50

CD: Bird Calls of the ACT (Fullagar & Slater) - \$12.00

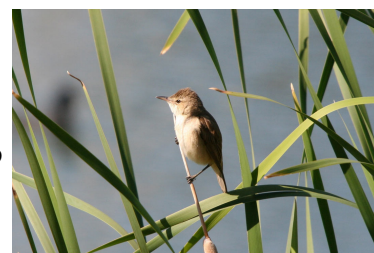
LIMITED STOCK: Messent Bird Calendar 2009 - \$8.00

All these items (and more) plus COG T-shirts and Polo shirts are available at the monthly meeting sales desk

Avian Whimsy No 79

A Short Bird Walk in the Hindu Kush

You may have come across a recent good-news story about the rediscovery of one of the world's least-known birds, whose name reinforces its superficially fairly bland appearance. The **Large-billed Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus orinus*) would be unlikely to attract the attention of many of us if it popped up in a Kellys Swamp reed bed, being very similar to, and closely related to, our swarming **Australian Reed Warbler** (*A. Australis*). It was first recorded (and collected) in mountainous Himachal Pradesh in northern India in 1867; it was next recognised – again just a single bird – in central Thailand 139 years later.



Australian Reed Warbler
(*Acrocephalus Australis*)

Photo by Lindsay Hansch

That was it until Robert Timmins of the US-based Wildlife Conservation Society was doing bird surveys along the Wakhan and Pamir Rivers of north-eastern Afghanistan in 2008. He heard an unfamiliar song and assumed the bird emitting it was **Blyth's Reed Warbler** (*A. Dume-torum*) which breeds in eastern Europe and western Asia and over-winters in India and Sri Lanka. Further detective work with museum specimens and the recordings he had made led to the realisation that a whole population of near-mythical Large-billeds had been found. A follow-up expedition just this January (2010) caught, studied and released some 20 birds, an inconceivable wealth compared with what we had previously known.

But just a minute, let's check what we've just read. He was doing bird surveys where?! I'm as close to certainty as I'm willing to commit to that I'll never get there, but it does sound like an amazing part of the world. The Wakhan Corridor in the Pamir Mountains (at the junction of the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush) forms a vastly rugged mountainous link from north-eastern Afghanistan east to China, and separates Tajikstan in the north from Pakistan in the south. It's apparently a vital movement corridor for many animals and is of obvious biological interest. But. Although it is apparently regarded as relatively peaceful I think the 'relatively' is of some relevance here; it is roughly only 250km north-east of Kabul and about the same distance north of the Khyber Pass.

I'm trying to imagine the conversation round the Expedition Planning Table in New York. "I hear that the Pamir Valley is nice at this time of year. Want to pop over?" "Sounds reasonable – nothing we need to know about that part of the world is there?" That's unfair of course, the WCS is a very well-respected organisation and Timmins has good form in such matters – he was involved in the discovery in Laos of the **Bare-faced Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus Hualon*), described in only 2009, and two species of rodents, one representing an entirely new family, from the same country. In fact the WCS has been working with local people in the Pamir area for some time and have even assisted in the declaration of the country's first national park there, Band-e-Amir.

But how did it happen? I've read many reports and all just follow the Society's press release; fair enough to a point, in that it is a very well-written and informative presser, but how come no journal was intrigued enough to ask the obvious questions? It's all very frustrating. Presumably the military, both local and the other forces involved, must have approved and even assisted with their transport; who did, and why would they have done so? Or did Timmins just paint a big red pair of binoculars on the side of his vehicle and rely on the Taliban to respect that?

He would have known it didn't work for Mike Entwhistle, the legendary and late British birdo, who with colleague Tim Andrews in 1990 ignored strong local advice and entered a Sendero Luminoso stronghold in central Peru, presumably relying on their binocs, field guides and pommy accents to convince the comrades that they really weren't CIA agents. Wrong. I don't for a moment suppose Timmins and the Wildlife Conservation Society are guilty of such lunacy – inter alia you don't just walk into the Hindu Kush from anywhere these days, Eric Newby notwithstanding.

So, how did it happen? I don't like starting the year being frustrated by ignorance, but neither do I believe in suffering alone. And maybe you even know the answer ...

— **Ian Fraser** (ianf@pcug.org.au)



WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

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www.visitnsw.com.au (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

March deadline

Wednesday 24 February 2010

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

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

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

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Judy Collett and helpers

COG membership

2008-2009 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—

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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

Office

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allen 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 with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

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