

Gang-gang

July 2005

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Monthly Meeting

8 pm Wednesday

13 July 2005

*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 carpark is full, enter using
Chapel Drive.*

Our **short talk** will be by
sound recordist *par
excellence* and producer of
the recent CD on Canberra
bird calls, **Dr Peter**

Fullagar. Peter will describe
how the CD came about and
how he hopes to develop it,
with our assistance.

Our **main speaker** will be
another one of our members,
ANU PhD student, **Golo**
Maurer. His topic is entitled
Oddballs of the bird world:
breeding eccentricities in the
Pheasant Coucal *Centropus
phasianinus*.

In this talk Golo will
report on his field study on
the unusual breeding biology
of the Pheasant Coucal in
Darwin.

Everyone welcome

Field Trip and Survey Reports

Majura Field Range Survey - Friday 17 June 2005

Paul Fennel and I, accompanied by Assistant Environmental Officer from Defence, Elizabeth Russell, did the winter survey on a very cold and bleak day. There were few birds around, but the big news is the group of four **Brown Treecreepers** we found at one of our southern sites in March is still there at that site - this is very exciting news. The nearest group of BTCs we know of is at the Newline Quarry site, a couple of kilometres away where a group of up to six birds is regularly seen. We have suggested that Defence consider bringing in to that area some logs and stumps removed from other areas on the Range where trees have to be removed to upgrade fire trails. Environment ACT is intending to do this at Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyaroo reserves, using native timber cleared from urban developments in Gungahlin.

Jenny Bounds

Mulligan's Flat Survey - Sunday 26 June 2005

On a cool and still morning, the winter survey turned up a surprising three species of robin, a lot of mixed feeding flocks of small birds, and a number of local honeyeaters, in a total of 38 bird species. A pair of **Hooded Robin** were at the usual site on the eastern side of the reserve, **Red-capped Robin** (immature or female) were seen at two different sites, and **Scarlet Robin** were recorded at several sites. Other good sightings were **Speckled Warbler** and **Crested Shrike-tit** near the shearing shed ruins, amongst flocks of many small thornbills and **Weebills**, several **Grey Currawong**, a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** (eastern side of reserve), and a **Brown Goshawk**. Five species of small honeyeaters were recorded: **Fuscous**, **White-eared**, **Brown-headed**, **White-plumed** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. While it was pleasing to walk on soft wet ground after the recent rain, the dams are still very low and need more rain to fully replenish them. The next survey is Sunday 25 September - *regular surveyors please note your diaries*.

Jenny Bounds



Follow That Bird

Our small well serviced birdwatching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre.

All three star accommodation and meals are included. For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

October 2005

Eastern Australia

Part 1 Tropical Cairns 1st-6th \$ 2250
Leader Klaus Uhlenhut
Start & End Cairns

Part 2 Lamington to Sydney \$ 3950
Leader Alan Morris
Start Lamington End Sydney

December 2005

Christmas Island \$ 2850
Leader Dion Hobcroft
Start & End Perth

January 2006

Alpine Birds, Plants & Everything \$ 1485
Leader Dion Hobcroft

February 2006

Divine **Lord Howe Island**
18-22th \$ 1750
(excludes airfare) Start Lord Howe
End Lord Howe. Leader the Lord
of Howe himself : Ian Hutton

Visit our website or telephone for
more information

Follow That Bird

Birds and Camaraderie

3/59 Central Rd, Avalon 2107

Tel 02 9973 1865 Fax 02 9973 1875

email tours@followthatbird.com.au

website followthatbird.com.au

Jervis Bay Field Trip, 10-13 June 2005 (>70 bird species)

To Jervis Bay COG and Field Nats went,
the long weekend in June.
Stayed at Uni. of Canberra Field Station -
two bunk-beds to a room.

The mattresses were squeaky,
the top bunk a long way up,
but the dining area was
spacious,
a great place to dine and sup.

The first morning out near
Murray's Beach
Welcome Swallows filled the
air,
and a lone Rose Robin with his
rosy breast

was quietly sitting there.

Male and female Fairy-wrens,
both Variegated and Superb Blue;
it was great to compare their colour and size
all in the very same view.

The view from the cliffs was spectacular –
Gannets dove and Sea-eagles soared.
It was grey and windy, but the birds were astir
and none of us were bored!

At Murray's Beach we sat down on the rocks
for morning tea and a rest,
saw three Whistling Kites, heard them scream
and later one flew to a nest.

After lunch back at "the ranch",
we donned Gortex and wet-weather gear.
Jenny hoped for Scarlet Honeyeaters,
but not one did we see or hear.

After a scrumptious communal tea
and our daily bird list call,
Some went spotlighting for Ring-tail Possums,
in spite of the raindrops' fall.

Sunday morn dawned bright and clear –
off to the heath we went.

Everyone saw Eastern Bristlebirds,
so that was a time well spent!

And honeyeaters were everywhere,
flitting about the place.

Lots of New Hollands, a few White-cheeked,
and even some Yellow-faced.

We tried the Botanical Gardens again,
Welcomed by a Kookaburra chorus,



Satin Bowerbirds, Brown Gerygones,
and Scarlet Honeyeaters, of course!
Sunday night was still and clear,
the stars so close and bright.
Off we drove to another place,
Sue carried the bright spotlight.

The lead car saw the flash of a Powerful Owl,
plus a Boobook standing on its own,
And the scream of a Barn Owl made us glad
we were not out there alone!

Three Greater Gliders with such long tails,
both phases – light and dark.
We'll do this again, it's a great
place to come –
Booderee National Park.

Kay Hahne



Future Field Trips

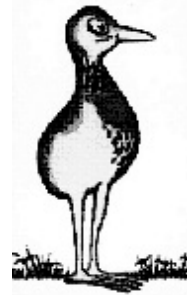
At its May meeting, the committee discussed the COG policy on sharing costs on field trips where car pooling is encouraged or occurs. The committee noted that there was a clear expectation that drivers should be recompensed for both fuel and running costs. Rather than set formal rates it was concluded that the exact amount should be agreed at the start between the driver and passengers. This policy applies to car pooling both for travelling to and from a venue such as Jervis Bay, and for sharing car seats, often in the 4WDs, when moving around to different sites once at the venue.

Robin Twitchathon; Sunday 17 July 2005 **Extended morning by bus**

There has been a very good response to the proposal in the June *Gang-gang*, and this outing has been moved to 17 July 2005. Two buses have been booked and are fully subscribed. There is a waiting list, so if any intending participant is no longer able to go please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au) so the seat can be filled.

The ambitious aim of this outing is to observe all of the seven species of robin that occur in the ACT in the one day. In particular we will be concentrating on the identification of the female/immature **Red-breasted Robins**, as a follow up to the May Bird of the Month talk (*see report this Gang-gang*). The overheads and slides from this presentation will be available to participants, the latter on a laptop.

Winter is the best time for this and as we will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these birds are likely to be present, transport will be by two 12-seater buses. As this involves a total



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria
Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2005 Birding Tours

**The Good Food
Plains-wanderer Weekend
19 & 20 November 2005**
Combining good food, good wine
and good birding

2005 Plains-wanderer Weekends
10 & 11 December 2005
17 & 18 December 2005
31 Dec ember 05 & 1 January 06

2006
5 —11 February 06
Tasmania
Bruny Island, Derwent Bridge,
Melaleuca & pelagic trip. Accom.

23—30 April 06
Central Australia birding tour
Alice Springs, Uluru, Glen Helen
Accommodated

15—30 May 06
Top End
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau, Lake Argyle Accom.

1 — 8 August 06
New Caledonia birding tour

15 August – 2 September 06
Strzelecki Track Outback Tour
Accommodated
check website for availability

7– 24 April 2007 Thailand

www.philipmaher.com

of 24 people, a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles, otherwise the whole exercise will become logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am. This is quite central, close to where some species are expected to be, and where the parking is free. It will run until mid afternoon so that the buses can be returned late that afternoon, so please bring morning tea and lunch. Costs will be \$17.00 per person, including the COG admin fee.

While a draft route has been planned, the exact itinerary will not be determined until closer to the day, and will depend on recent reports of where these birds are, though there will be an attempt to stay within the ACT boundaries. If any member is aware where a particular species can be reliably found and viewed with such a big group, especially the **Rose, Pink and Red-capped Robins**, could you please let Jack Holland know.

Mt Majura; Saturday 23 July 2005

Evening Glossy Black-Cockatoo Watching

This will be a repeat of the very successful viewing last year of the **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** as they come down to drink at the dams near Mackenzie St, Hackett. Since the notice in the June *Gang-gang*, these birds have started to come here more reliably, so let's hope they do so on the day. Participants will need to be aware of the sensitivity with which these vulnerable birds should be treated, and our viewing of them should be done under conditions that will have the least impact.

Meet Tom Green (6247 0630) at 3.45 pm sharp at the small car park in Mackenzie St near the end of Grayson St Hackett for a short flat walk of about 10-15 minutes to the dams. It should be okay to park in the street if there isn't enough room there.

Lake Ginninderra; Waterbirds for beginners -Sunday 7 August 2005

This is the second of our bird walks in 2005 that is aimed specifically at beginners or new members. Meet Anthony Overs (6254 0168 AH or email on anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au) at 8.30 am 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 carpark 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. Please don't forget to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Future Outings

Sunday 21 August 2005 – COG Trip Leaders workshop

Planning for this event has commenced. The proposal is for there to be a 30-45 minute exposition of the principles for leading COG bird walks, followed by an outdoor activity to put some of these into effect. It will also provide the opportunity to trial COG's draft Guidelines for the Advertising and Conduct of COG Field trips.

The venue is still to be decided and it is likely that the first part of this will be indoors rather than outside is it would have to be at Campbell Park, which was the advertised venue in the 2005 COG Field Trips Program. **Consideration is also being given to moving the date to Sunday 28 August.** Confirmed details will be in the August *Gang-gang*. In the meantime could all current and aspiring COG bird walk leaders please pencil this event into your diaries [contact is Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on



EMU TOURS

Nature Tours with the Focus on Birds

EMU TOURS TO MALAWI IN 2005

Richard and Roz are going back to Malawi for one more time! The experience of a lifetime—and wonderful birds - in the spring when migrants will be around and birds will be in breeding plumage. We shall include magnificent Nyika Plateau in the north and Liwonde NP. The tour will be for 14 days in mid-October (ask us for the dates). Unbeatable value at **\$2950** twin share ex Lilongwe - with all good accommodation (1 night a bit rustic!).

Reserve your place now.

Richard and Roz
emutours@austarnet.com.au 0428 38 5677

jack.holland@deh.gov.au].

Goorooyarroo to Mulligan's Flat walk; Sunday 4 September 2005 – morning walk/car shuffle

The proposal is to leave cars at the Mulligans Flat carpark (the end) and the Goorooyarroo carpark off the middle of Horse Park Drive and to commence the walk at Horse Park Drive, walking in on the main track north (see map on COG's web site). There is a nice area of woodland for Hooded Robins and other woodland birds about 1.5 km in, at the northern end of Goorooyarroo. We will then walk into Mulligans Flat, check out the eastern end of the reserve and walk back to the Mulligans car park on the Gundaroo Road along the old coach road. The total distance will be around 7-8 km.

We are still looking for a leader/organiser for this walk, so if you can help please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Local Nature Park; Sunday 18 September – morning outing

This walk was advertised in a very flexible manner in the 2005 COG Field Trips Program, also indicating that a leader was still needed. If any member has a favourite spot that broadly meets this description for this early spring walk, and is happy to lead, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Wednesday walk – 20 July – Blue Range Hut

The mid week walk for July will be a little further afield to Blue Range hut and the East-west Roads to look for Flame Robins, Diamond Firetails etc. Meet at Deek Park (corner of Cotter Rd and Uriarra Rd **note this is at the former Stromlo Pine Plantation end – see Yellow Pages Map 67, ref A5**) at 8:30 am (**note this is an earlier start than usual to allow for carpooling and getting to the venue around the usual starting time**). Bring morning tea.

Longer trips

Green Cape – Tuesday to Friday 25-28 October; Mid-week accommodated

This mid week outing is a reprise of the very successful COG trip in June 2004. COG has again booked the two duplex cottages associated with the lighthouse at Green Cape, and Peter Fullagar will again be leading. At the end of October he expects to see a mix of sea birds (including shearwaters) as well as whales close to shore (depending on the weather). In the nearby heath there are some specials such as the Ground Parrot and the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, and there is likely to be a range of birds in the woodlands, also close by. Highlights in June 2004 included three species of **albatross, Brown Skua, Black-faced Cormorant, Striated Fieldwren, Southern Emu-wrens**, not to mention the very tame **Ground Parrot**.

The two cottages have been booked for 3 nights. The cottages each hold a maximum of 6 people, consisting of separate rooms, the master bedroom with a queen size bed, one with two single beds and a double sofa bed in the family/lounge room. There will also be the opportunity to camp at Bittangabee Bay, only 8 km away.

The accommodation costs will be \$100 per person for the 3 nights, including the COG admin fee. The cottage accommodation is likely to be very popular and to book your place, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). A deposit of \$30 will ensure your spot in one of the cottages.

COG was saddened to learn of the death of one of our long-time members, Daphne Fullagar, on 2 June. Our most sincere sympathies to Peter, David and Kate and their families.

Report: 'Woodlands for Wildlife - recovery for our birds'

On World Environment Day, Saturday 4 June, COG hosted a very successful Seminar at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, which attracted around 190 people - the venue was packed. We also had interest from the Press and good coverage for the Seminar and bird conservation issues in the WED Supplement in the Canberra Times the day before and a report after the Seminar.

While there was a good representation in the audience from government agencies, community groups etc, what was particularly pleasing was the number of people from the general public who responded to the press articles and advertising. It is gratifying to be able to organise an event like this and get good publicity for bird conservation issues - this event clearly has raised community awareness about woodlands and woodland birds conservation issues, an important COG objective. We have had very positive feedback from a number of people who attended, summed up by one lady who said "we knew nothing about woodlands until now".

COG wishes to thank the speakers (details below), as well as the Seminar Chairperson Dr Richard Schodde who gave a great summing up at the end, and Dr Rosemary Purdie, the ACT Commissioner for the Environment who chaired the speakers panel discussion in such a professional and sensitive way. Thank you also to the large band of COG members who helped me organise this event and who played a role on the day itself, eg organising the afternoon teas, on the registration desk, providing information, ushering etc - I could not have done this without all these contributions.

The COG sales desk and the information tables did good business - great to get so many bird publications and free handouts out there, and we raised \$350 in the raffle for the Conservation Council's work on woodlands issues - thanks to Trevor and Joan Lipscombe for this. Finally, thank you to the Steering Committee who oversighted/assisted me with various arrangements - Jack Holland, Murray Evans (Environment ACT), Nicki Taws, Tanya Rough, and to Shirley Kral who handled the registrations. Thanks also to David Shorthouse the Manager of the Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit of Environment ACT for their advice and support.

Program:

Seminar Chairperson: Dr Richard Schodde
Former Curator-in-Charge, Australian National Wildlife Collection, CSIRO

Professor David Lindenmayer, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU
Large-scale studies and natural experiments on woodland bird responses - new insights into farm and conservation management practices

Ms Alison Rowell, Biologist and Environmental Consultant
Trends from a decade of bird surveys in the ACT - what have we learned? A progress report from the COG Woodland Bird Monitoring Project. Statistical analysis by Ross Cunningham, Consultant Statistician & Associate Professor ANU

Dr Jack Baker, Manager of Biodiversity Conservation Science, NSW Dept. of Environment & Conservation, & Councillor of Birds Australia
Reversing the Decline of the Cowra Woodland Birds - the Cowra Woodland Birds Program

Ms Nicki Taws, Ecologist & Ms Suzi Bond, ANU Honours Graduate
Bringing Breeding Birds Back - a study of birds breeding in re-vegetation sites

Dr Geoff Barrett, Ecologist, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems
Rebirthing the Holbrook Landscape - Birds as indicators of ecosystem health & biodiversity

Panel Questions and Discussion - Chairperson: Dr Rosemary Purdie, ACT Commissioner for the Environment

Notices

THE SWIFT PARROT & REGENT HONEYEATER RECOVERY TEAMS present a workshop on *Woodland Birds of the South West Slopes* including a welcome to country by Wiradjuri elders **Saturday 23rd July**, Gundagai, NSW **10am-5pm** Gundagai Services Club, 254 Sheridan Street, Gundagai.

Interested in woodland birds and their habitats? Then come along to a free one day workshop at Gundagai to find out how to identify woodland bird species and the habitats they use in your local area. The workshop will include: An illustrated talk by woodland bird researchers Debbie Saunders, David Geering (Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater recovery programs) and Mason Crane (Australian National University, South West Slopes Woodland Restoration Project). Information about the latest survey and research information on woodland birds. Identification of woodland birds and their habitats, including Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots. Information on what you can do to encourage woodland birds on your property. There will also be plenty of opportunity to share your observations and thoughts on woodland birds with researchers and other locals. We will have a **short field trip in the afternoon** to look at some of the woodland birds and their habitats discussed during the day. Lunch and morning tea are provided so all you need to bring is pen, paper, binoculars (optional) and enthusiasm!

Interested in coming along? Then simply register your name and we look forward to seeing you there! Registrations can be made by contacting Debbie Saunders (Swift Parrot Recovery Team) on 1800 66 57 66 (freecall) or swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au.

The 2005 dates for the second **Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater survey** is the weekend of **6-7 August**. There are usually several COG members who participate by going out to the western slopes or the south coast. Why not form your own group and go to your favourite spot where trees are flowering or survey local reserves such as Mulligans Flat/Campbell Park/Mount Ainslie as Swift Parrots do pass through Canberra in most years, even if only briefly? Up to 60 birds were present in the Mt Majura Reserve from mid March to mid April 2005, where lerps were an important food source.

There are usually several COG members who participate by going out to the western slopes or the south coast. Why not form your own group and go to your favourite spot where trees are flowering or survey local reserves such as Mulligans Flat/Campbell Park/Mount Ainslie. If anyone is interested, they can register their interest with Debbie Saunders (swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au or Freecall on 1800 66 57 66), who will be happy to advise on spots to survey.

Volunteers are needed for the **Barren Grounds Annual Ground Parrot survey/census** from 9 am to noon on Sunday **14 August 2005**. This is one of the longest running monitoring programs in Australia. Members wanting to help with the census should contact Jack Baker by E-mail on Jack.Baker@environment.nsw.gov.au. Bring stout walking gear, wet weather gear, a hat and lunch.

Canberra Bird Blitz A reminder, folks, about the big bird blitz, on **Sat 29 and Sun 30 October 2005**. We're aiming for a *minimum* of one survey in every COG grid cell in the ACT over that weekend. We are still waiting for confirmation from Environment ACT that we will have access through locked gates to some of the more remote regions, so a final allocation of grids can't be issued just yet. Surveys will be by the standard methods: a 20-minute survey of 2 hectares (100 metres by 200 metres is a good guide), totally within the grid. It may be necessary or preferable in some grids to use an alternate approach, namely a survey within 500 metres of a central point, with start and finish times recorded and for a minimum of 20 minutes but without upper time limits. Bird abundance to be recorded, as well as indications of breeding. Use a COG datasheet for each survey to record the birds you see (datasheets available at COG monthly meetings, or from our website www.canberrabirds.org.au – or contact the organiser). If you haven't yet nominated the grids you'd like to take responsibility for, email the organiser on allanbm@ozemail.com.au or phone her on 6254 6520. In the

allocation of grids, preference for formal grid ownership and responsibility will be given to COGites who regularly survey those areas. This doesn't mean you can't survey them also – the more the merrier! – but we'd like you also to take on at least one, and up to five, other grids as your special responsibility. Even if you can't get out and about on those days, please try and participate by surveying in your suburb at least. If you're uncertain about where the grids start and end, come and check the maps at COG meetings, or ask the organiser. The maps in the annual bird reports will help – try *Canberra Bird Notes 30(1)* March 2005, for guidance. We'll publish a final list of who is responsible for what in *Gang-gang* nearer the time; and interim lists will be on display at COG meetings. And remember, you don't have to survey by yourself. You can if you like, but you might prefer to take on more grids and go with a few friends. If you're unsure of your ability to identify birds correctly but would nevertheless like to participate, let the organiser know – she'll match you up with a member who has agreed to take along beginners or visitors. And for keen members of the public who'd like to participate, there will be guided walks-cum-surveys at the Australian National Botanic Gardens and at Tidbinbilla.

Prizes will be awarded in many categories, and there will also be lucky draw prizes among all participants. COGites with skills or hobbies are encouraged to offer or sponsor a prize – for example, one hour's free computing tuition, one hour's gardening, a basket of home grown vegies, native plants. More details in future issues of *Gang-gang*! The organiser will be contacting you shortly, if you have already volunteered to participate.

Barbara Allan, blitz organiser

Report of May COG meeting *SueLashko (Sorry, a month behind—'other' editor's' fault)*

Jack Holland repeated a short talk on robins which he had last given in 1983. With all five species occurring in the ACT, Jack has produced the following tables to help with identification:

MALE RED-BREASTED ROBINS

FEATURE	ROSE	PINK	FLAME	SCARLET	RED-CAPPED
Back	Slate grey	Sooty black	Dark Grey	Jet black	Jet black
Wing-stripe	<u>None</u>	<u>None</u>	White	White	White
Fore-head spot	White, small	White, small	White, small	<u>White, large</u>	<u>Red, very large</u>
Breast	Rose-red to lower breast	<u>Pink to vent</u>	<u>Orange-red (flame) to vent</u>	Scarlet	Scarlet
Throat	Slate grey	Black	<u>Orange-red</u>	Black	Black
Outer tail feathers	<u>White*</u>	<u>Black*</u>	White	White	White

* Serves as the main distinguishing feature between the Rose and Pink Robin, but can be difficult to see except in flight

FEMALE/IMMATURE RED-BREASTED ROBINS¹

FEATURE	ROSE	PINK	FLAME	SCARLET	RED-CAPPED
Back (all are shades of brown)	Grey/brown	olive brown (darkest)K	Light brown	Grey brown	Light grey brown (palest)
Wing-stripe	All have	“broken	arrow”	wing	stripes ²
Forehead spot	White, small	White small	Buff	<u>Off-white largest</u>	<u>Red-brown</u>
Breast	Light grey brown ³	Light brown ⁴	Light to mid brown	<u>Strong scarlet wash</u>	Light brown ⁵
Outer tail feathers	White	Brown	White	White	White

¹ Except for the female Scarlet Robin these are all very similar superficially – look for a male nearby!!

² While some field guides describe the different shades of wing-stripes as diagnostic, this is unreliable as there can be considerable variation due to age and sex (immature/female pink and all juvenile birds can have an buff to orange wing stripe)

³ Female or immature male can have a pale rose wash

⁴ Old females and immature males can have an irregular pink wash

⁵ Female or immature male can have a red-brown cap and a washed red breast

OTHER FACTORS (HABITS AND HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION)

ALL ARE WANDERERS AND CAN BE FOUND IN UNSUITABLE HABITAT; PARTICULARLY IN THE NON-BREEDING SEASON.

ROSE – COASTAL TO RANGES – ARBOREAL - GREY FANTAIL LIKE – DARTS ABOUT

PINK – VIC/TAS - QUIET AND UNOBSTRUSIVE – IN DENSEST VEGETATION

FLAME – HIGH COUNTRY SUMMER, OPEN AREAS WINTER – ONLY ONE THAT FLOCKS
SCARLET – FORESTS AND WOODLANDS, MORE OPEN AREAS WINTER – SINGLY/PAIRS
RED-CAPPED – INLAND WOODLANDS - CALL

The main talk on COG's Annual Bird Report for 2003-04 was delivered by Barbara Allan, Nicki Taws, Harvey Perkins and David Rosalky. Harvey discussed the highlights, including 'rare but regular' records. **Freckled Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Buff-banded Rail, Spotless and Australian Spotted Crakes, Regent and Painted Honeyeaters, and Brown Songlarks** were all recorded in the ACT last year. Other species had an 'increasing occurrence', including **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** (which also bred here), large flocks of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo**, and two species which are extending their range from the coast, **White-headed Pigeon** and **Channel-billed Cuckoo**. Other unusual sightings for 2003-04 were **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Crimson Chat, Diamond Dove** and **Black-faced Monarch**.

Nicki focussed on 'Birds with a sentence', those that are endangered, vulnerable or under a watching brief. The **Regent Honeyeater** was the only one to fit into the former category. Several vulnerable species were regularly recorded. These included the **Superb Parrot** which confined itself to the northern and western parts of the ACT, one record of **Swift Parrot**, and **Painted Honeyeater**. Other vulnerable species, **Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Varied Sitella** and **White-winged Triller**, were recorded from nature parks and reserves. Species with a watching brief included **Flame Robin**, with most records from fire-affected areas, and **Crested Shrike-tit**, with no records from fire-affected areas, but regular sightings from Newline, Lake Ginninderra foreshore and Campbell Park. **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Diamond Firetail** were fairly widespread.

Harvey dealt with migrants which he divided into four categories. Trans-equatorial migrants include Scolopacid waders, as well as needletails and swifts. Others migrate from north to south within Australia. These include Superb Parrot, cuckoos, **Rainbow Bee-eater, Dollarbird, Leaden** and **Satin Flycatcher**, and some honeyeaters. Other ACT records are of local or altitudinal migrants, including some honeyeaters, some robins and possibly **Golden Whistler**. For some species, a portion of the population migrate while others are resident. **Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Skylark, Richard's Pipit** and **Welcome Swallow** are examples.

The arrival and departure dates of migrants showed some variation from previous years. Perhaps this is because observers are not submitting records! Latham's Snipe were first recorded on September 18 and last recorded on February 21 (compared to August 24 and March 16 in 2002-03). Dates for Rainbow Bee-eater were September 22 and February 25, for Leaden Flycatcher September 27 and March 10, and for Common Sandpiper December 29 and January 28. The latter had previously been recorded as early as September 1, and for 2004-05, it was recorded in early October and last seen on March 26. It is most likely the same bird returning to the same site.

Barbara commented on breeding records for 2003-04. Of the 174 to 178 species which breed in COG's area of interest, 102 species were recorded as breeding last year. The highlights were records of **Red-capped Robin** in Tidbinbilla and **Red-kneed Dotterel** at the Fyshwick turf farm.

David Rosalky, as our new Garden Bird Survey coordinator, discussed the 24th year of GBS data. From the 60 sites, 149 species were recorded, with the top four being Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Common Myna and Common Starling. The top 10 included the two latter species and the House Sparrow. The species showing the greatest increase was the **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo**, which was seen in 46 sites. Breeding was reported for 32% of the recorded species.

Harvey commented on some of the problems and bias in the Annual Bird Report. The top three contributors submitted 30.5% of the records and the top 10 submitted 68%. Do they have preferred birding locations and are other areas being overlooked? What will happen if some of them leave? Regional coverage is another problem with only 23% of total grid cells in COG's area of interest being reported on. 25% of sheets came from just three grid cells which included Kelly Swamp/sewage works, ANU/Botanic Gardens, and Campbell Park. 78% of all records came from the city.

All speakers made a plea for more records. What can you do to help?

- Join the Garden Bird Survey (only 20% of members do a GBS). Collect your 2005-06 record chart from the June COG meeting or contact David Rosalky to make the silver jubilee year the best year yet
- Submit breeding records (we have all seen a pair of Masked Lapwing nesting somewhere in the ACT, haven't we?)
- Visit rural areas and other out of the way grid cells and complete a data sheet
- Submit incidental records for unusual species and raptors. First and last sightings of migrants are important.
- Don't just put your sightings on email to canberrabirds, put them on a data sheet
- Participate in the atlassing blitz in October.

COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **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 Rottneest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottneest 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 - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **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
- 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.

From the Committee

COG has relinquished, effective from the end of June, the office it has rented for many years in the Griffin Centre. We are instead renting a small unit at U-stow-it, Belconnen, to store our camping and display equipment and archives; and are keeping the COG computer, current records, library, telescopes and GPS in a separate 'office' at the secretary's. The office telephone has been discontinued. If you would like to borrow a telescope or GPS, a book from the library, or to get a supply of datasheets, please contact Barbara at cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au or telephone 6254 6520. She will bring the items to the next public meeting, or you may collect from her. For loans of camping or display equipment, please contact one of the office bearers, who will have access to the facility.

The Woodland Seminar at CSIRO Discovery Centre on 4 June was a great success, with over 180 attendees. Carol's sales table made over \$700, while the raffle raised \$350 for the Conservation Council. Well done everyone!

Woodland Birds Project. Currently an analysis of project data for 64 species of birds (a range of common as well as declining species) is being undertaken by Ross Cunningham, Consultant Statistician, and Alison Rowell, Project Consultant. We are expecting a preliminary report in around a month. The analysis includes bird abundance over time, differences in land tenures (reserve versus leasehold sites) and by particular habitat features at sites. Some preliminary results were presented by Alison at the recent Seminar "Woodlands for Wildlife - recovery for our birds", showing that some common species seem to be in decline in our local grassy woodlands. This data set of records collected systematically over a number of years (eg 10 years at one site and 8 years at a number of the other sites) and habitat assessments for sites is starting to provide some very interesting results and will be a powerful tool in the coming years as more and more data is added. In the next month or so, we are expecting to

(Continued on page 12)

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.

Avian Whimsy #32 More Dhirri-dhirri, less Willie please!

Given the fate of most southern Australian indigenous languages, I suppose it's to be expected that there are a lot more Australian birds with English names than indigenous ones. It seems to me extraordinary though that by my count there are also at least as many overseas non-English Australian bird names as indigenous ones!

One curious thing that strikes me is that this is not true of mammal names; kangaroo, wallaby, koala, wombat, dingo, numbat, potoroo, bettong, bilby, quokka, pademelon, quoll and dunnart are all familiar names, and many more are first-choice names of less familiar mammals. I suspect that this stems from the fact that while the settlers and explorers were familiar with birds at home, and assumed that what they saw here was simply an extension of that, the mammals were so obviously different from any previous European experience that they felt the need to ask.

Perhaps it is significant that most of the indigenous bird names we do use – eg Currawong, Kookaburra, Brolga, Galah and Corella – are of familiar and conspicuous birds. These presumably are among the ones we first noticed as we entered the land (either around Sydney or as we moved inland), when there were still speakers of local language to ask.

One crucial thing to remember when talking about 'Aboriginal language' in general is that it's as meaningful as referring to 'the European language' – we can no more equate Arrente with Ngunnawal, than we can lump English with German, Greek or Hindi. In fact there were some 250 different languages in Australia 200 years ago, as well as dialects. However, there are some similarities across Australia in some of those indigenous bird names we do know and this is because, like early English speakers (and doubtless speakers of other languages), Aboriginal people used onomatopoeic names to reflect the calls they heard. A great example is Kookaburra, a word from the Wiradhuri language just to the west of here, according to the ANU's Australian Dictionary Project. The *Macquarie Aboriginal Words* renders this Wiradhuri word as Guubuubarra ('uu' like the 'oo' of kooka); in Wembawemba from western Victoria it was Kurng-kurng; in Packantyi (along the Darling) Kuukakaka; in Bundjalung (NSW north coast) Gagurim; in Kurna (Adelaide) Ngunngana ('ng' like 'ny') and in Gooniyandi (far NWWA) Jawawoodoo. The last of course refers to the Blue-winged Kooka, but in each case the famous laugh rings with familiarity. (Kuukakaka gets my vote, incidentally!)

There are surprisingly few names from the Sydney language – maybe not so surprising though, given that we don't even know the name of the language! (It is sometimes asserted that it was Dharug, but apparently that name didn't even appear in the literature until the late 19th century.) One such however is another classic rendering of the call – Bubuk. To the Wembawemba this owl was Wuk-wuk. The only other Sydney bird name that I can determine has survived in English is Wungawunga, as Wonga.

Another obvious candidate for an onomatopoeic origin is Currawong. Djarung-djarung from the Ngarigo of the Snowy Mountains (according to Josephine Flood in *The Moth Hunters*) is getting close. I've found a chapter on the web by Hiroyuki Yokose called *Aboriginal Words in Australian English*, but can't find the context or anything about Yokose's credentials. He claims that the word was Cur-ow-ung from Awaba (Newcastle area) or Kirriwong from Birbai (Port Macquarie). I'm assuming that the ANU and Macquarie publications are properly cross-referenced, but understandably the authors know more about words than birds. For instance the Macquarie tells us that the Ngiyampaa of the western NSW plains referred to the 'black jay' as Wiyu. From that I'm guessing a currawong, perhaps the Grey, though Pied comes to the edge of their lands and probably enters it in good years.

Closer to home Flood tells us that the Ngunnawal referred to the 'small black cockatoo' as Gang-gang. Perhaps this is the only non-locality Ngunnawal word in current use (though the ANU Dictionary Project claims a Wiradhuri origin for Gang-gang). This Project also tells us that Brolga and Budgerigar are from Kamilaroi (inland northern NSW and into western Queensland), Galah from Yuuwaalaraay (northern NSW) and Corella from Wiradhuri. Lowan is from Wergaia, western Victoria (per Yokose), but I can't find the origin of Quarrion.

Which brings us to Dhirri-dhirri, also from Wiradhuri (or Thindrrithindri to the Diyari of north-eastern South Australia). Here we can surely hear the busy strident chickering of Willie Wagtail. Wouldn't it be a great name for us to adopt? I dare us! What say you?

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

investigate and set up one more woodland location for monitoring, in woodlands south/west of Holt, an area expected to come under urban development pressures in coming years. In June, COG submitted an Environment grant application to the ACT Government for ongoing funding of the project.

We will soon have the illustrations from the Pocket Guide on the COG website, accompanied by Tom Green's text on how to access Kellys Swamp, Campbell Park and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. While most Canberra birders are probably familiar with these sites, the information should prove useful for others, including interstate birders.

COG has applied for an ACT Environment Grant for 2005/06, to continue its long running woodland project, now in its 11th year. In the coming year, it is intended to establish one more location in the Project, in the Molonglo Valley to bring the number of monitoring locations across Canberra's Grassy woodlands to 14. A report on the latest data analysis from the Project is expected in the near future.

For further information on any of these matters, please contact any committee member.

Next newsletter

AUGUST deadline
Wednesday 27 July 2005

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

Articles should be less than 500 words
(300 except by prior arrangement with
the editor.

COG info

President

Jack Holland, ph 6288 7840 (h),
email jack.holland@deh.gov.au

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520

Membership inquiries

Contact Alastair Smith 61618608(h)
or alastair@homemail.com.au for
changes of address or other details

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and Sue Lashko

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battisson and helpers

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support projects that protect and
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COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG membership

**2005-2006 membership: Individuals,
families and institutions: \$35. school
students (under 18): \$17.50.**

Office (6247 4996)

**COG no longer has an office in the
Griffin Centre.**

**For all queries or access to COG's
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on 6254 6520**

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Join the list by sending an empty
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Editor Canberra Bird Notes

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au



Gang-gang

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

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