

Gang-gang

July 2007

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday
11 July 2007**

*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.*

The short presentation will be given by **Geoffrey Dabb** in the form of two videos, one on the **Powerful Owl** in the ANBG, and other on the **Peregrine Falcon** family that successfully bred last spring.

The main speaker will be **Debbie Saunders** on "**Migratory movements and conservation of the Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor***". Debbie is the former co-ordinator of the national swift parrot surveys and will talk on the research she has been doing for her PhD at the ANU. The swift parrot is a threatened species that breeds in Tasmania and migrates north to mainland Australia for the winter period. However, its migratory patterns have remained elusive. Debbie will give a detailed assessment of spatial and temporal variation in migratory movements of the swift parrot across eastern Australia using seven years of detailed volunteer survey data collected for the national swift parrot recovery program. The implications of this research for conservation and long-term monitoring of environmental change will be discussed.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

Winter is usually the quietest time for birds in Canberra, and this is certainly the case round my patch in NW Chapman and Cooleman Ridge, with even **Flame Robins**, so prominent in past winters since the fires, present only in very low numbers. Mulligan's Flat, when I helped to survey on 24 June, was also the quietest in my seven years' experience there.

Despite this it's been a very exciting time for Canberra birdwatchers with several species recorded here for the first time ever during June. In particular the **Black-chinned** and **White-fronted Honeyeaters** were seen within the same week at Newline and Jerrabomberra respectively. In addition there have been a number of urban sightings of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, an uncommon species in Canberra, though most likely to be seen in winter. All are probably part of the influx of western species related to the continuing drought, and perhaps it is surprising the Black-chinned has not been recorded previously since it occurs only an hour's drive or so away from Canberra, for example at Gundagai and Borowa. The White-fronted has a much more inland/WA distribution, but is well known to be nomadic and to suddenly turn up in districts, especially where there is substantial flowering.

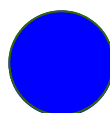
So who knows what to look out for and who would lay bets on what may turn up next? With the **Powerful Owl** in the Botanic Gardens, and further **Pied Butcherbird** sightings, anything seems possible. I always look forward to the beginning of a new birding year, particularly spring, with much anticipation. No doubt what will happen in 2007-2008 will depend very much on whether or not there is continuing drought.

Finally a reminder that 30 June was the end of the 2006-2007 bird year for COG's area of concern. Please make sure all your sightings are provided to the Records Management team and thus can be considered for the year's Annual Bird Report. —
Jack Holland

Photo by Lindsay Hansch



**Pied Butcherbird
(*Cracticus nigrogularis*)**



Field Trip reports

13 May — Beginners' bird walk, ANBG

While those who arrived early waited around for the rest of the group to arrive, leader Anthony Overs told us of his successful trip (with several others) the previous evening to Tallaganda, where they found and photographed a **Powerful Owl** (this followed an unsuccessful COG trip a couple of weeks earlier). The less adventurous among us decided this was one bird we'd never see – dark forests on cold nights weren't exactly an enticing thought.

Five minutes later, Anthony was frantically texting and phoning local birders while we stood in awe only a few feet below the first **Powerful Owl** sighted in Canberra itself for many years. spectacular start to the beginners' bird walk!

It was a little difficult for our leader to get his mind back on to the job of finding bush birds, but on a great morning we managed to see: **Striated Thornbills, Brown Thornbills, an Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Spinebills, White-throated Treecreepers, White-eared Honeyeaters, New Holland Honeyeaters, White-browed Scrub-wrens, Australian Ravens, Magpies, Superb Fairywrens, Blackbirds, Satin Bowerbirds, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** as well as a group of **Crimson Rosellas** and **Red Wattlebirds** enjoying the water near the Tom Green memorial seat. A pair of **Galahs** provided some great photo opportunities – no surprise that Mum **Galah** (on Mothers' Day) was busy cleaning out a tree hollow, while Dad dozed a couple of metres away.

In the Sydney Gully a swamp wallaby was foraging near the water.

A bonus was that Anthony also ID'd for the beginners' group quite a number of local birders as they quickly converged on the ANBG to see the owl! — **Sandra Henderson**

27 May — Callum Brae

On a VERY chilly Sunday morning at the end of May a number of frost-hardy COG members, with leader Jenny Bounds, undertook a walk at Callum Brae. Just before the 7.30am start some large flocks of **Little Corellas** had flown over, en route to their daily activities from night roosts in the reserve.

The initial stages of the walk were as much concerned with staying in the sunny spots as birdwatching, but near the entrance there were several trees with large numbers of little corellas and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. On the Mugga Lane side of Callum Brae we found many small birds, including **Double-barred Finches, Speckled Warblers, Weebills, Yellow-rumped Thornbills, Red-browed Finches, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Scarlet Robins, White-eared Honeyeaters, Superb Fairywrens, Spotted Pardalotes, Buff-rumped Thornbills, Grey Fantails and Diamond Firetails**. Towards the back of Callum Brae there were a number of **Scarlet and Flame Robins, Dusky Woodswallows, Willie Wagtails and Starlings**. The dams yielded **Pacific Black Ducks, Woodducks, Australasian Grebes** and a **Little Pied Cormorant**.

Letter to the Editors

I just wished to congratulate Ian Fraser on his amazing write up in the June *Gang-gang* about historic personalities (Cook & Co) and their commemorations in fauna names. I wouldn't have begun to think that someone could come up with (from who knows where) something that seems so new and entertaining, so well researched and put together, about something old, that I never knew, didn't realise I'd want to know and now think it might just come in useful one day if I manage to remember - and still fit the story, the whole story and nothing but the story, so brilliantly on just one page.

Philip Veerman

Our leader was delighted to see that a newly fenced strip now provides a link between Callum Brae and the grasslands which front the Monaro Highway.

Other species recorded for the day were **Mynas, Magpie-larks, Striated Thornbills** (heard), **Kookaburras, Striated Pardalotes, Red-rumped Parrots, White-winged Choughs, Galahs, King Parrots, Noisy Miners, Eastern Rosellas, Crimson Rosellas, Magpies, Australian Ravens, and Crested Pigeons**. A very pleasant morning tea back at the entrance completed a very satisfying morning. — **Sandra Henderson**

Wednesday 20 June - Midweek walk

Despite concerns about the weather, the morning was very pleasant for a walk along the banks of the Molonglo. Nearly all the requested birds turned out for us: **Flame Robins** (10) **Red-capped Robins** (two; one of each sex), and **Diamond Firetails** (6). No **Chats** nor **Double-barred**

Finches. Of the other birds three species of raptor (**Wedgetails, Brown Falcon** and **Nankeen Kestrel**) were welcomed by the birders but given a hard time by other species (**Ravens** and a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** attacked the **Wedgetail; Magpies,** the **Falcon** and **Welcome Swallows** the **Kestrel**). We totalled 30 species for the morning. — **Martin Butterfield**

23 June 2007 — Superb Lyrebird survey, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

The fourth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird** was again run under perfect conditions. Twelve COG members met at the gates of the Reserve at 8.30am and were soon dispatched to the five main walking trails; Gibraltar Rocks, Devil's Gap, Fishing Gap, Ashbrook Creek and Camel Back trails.

There were 12 individual lyrebirds reported which compares with the six, 14, and 12 reported in the three previous surveys.

The survey is conducted at the end of June each year for it is the time of the year when calling males are the most easy to detect. A bird just off the Camel Back trail was in full voice and over a couple of minutes, in addition to its territorial call and associated whirrs and whistles, imitated the **Crimson Rosella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Red Wattlebird, Grey Shrike-thrush, Pied Currawong, Satin Bowerbird** and **Laughing Kookaburra**; all species commonly heard in the repertoire of the local lyrebird population.

During the survey, 32 bird species were reported with the highest number (22) from the Gibraltar Rocks trail. Similar to last year there were more species on average reported from the three trails to the eastern side of the valley (18) than from the two trails on the western side (11.5) but interestingly, there were more species recorded per trail than last year when on average there were 12 species reported from the eastern trails and six species from the western trails.

Many thanks to the participants and to the staff at Tidbinbilla for allowing us early access into the Reserve. — **Chris Davey**

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.

Sunday 8 July — Commonwealth Park — Ducks Plus morning

Or everything you ever wanted to know about ducks, plus more! Local expert Peter Fullagar will be sharing his vast knowledge about ducks in this outing, which is suitable for both new and experienced members. Join Peter (chifley@fullagar.com or 6161 4808) at Regatta Point at 9 am for a stroll down to the ponds where we will be looking particularly at ducks and Peter will be pointing out aspects of duck behaviour. Depending on the level of activity we might move to other spots nearby where duck species are also known to gather.

Saturday 21 July – Molonglo Valley morning



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enquiries@philipmaher.com

2007 Birding Tours

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New Caledonia

Including Ouvéa & Lifou Islands
Stunning birds and flora

Plains-wanderer Weekends

24/25 November &

1/2, 15/16, 29/30 December 2007

2008 Birding Tours

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Tasmania Birding & Mammal Tour
includes pelagic & Melaleuca flight

12-30 March

Thailand

A repeat of our wonderful 2007 trip with over 400 species of birds recorded; fantastic mammals, reptiles, butterflies, flora, scenery and food

Co-led by Uthai Treesucon, Thailand's foremost birding guide

See website for checklist & trip report

10-28 August 2008

Strzelecki Track Outback Tour

See other 2008 tours on our website

www.philipmaher.com

COG has been given an opportunity to explore one of the rural leasehold properties marked for housing development in the Molonglo Valley. The property is upstream of Coppins Crossing and on the south side of the river. We will meet at 8.30am. We will briefly wander around the more open parts of the property and also spend some time down along the river corridor (will there be as many robins and finches as seen downstream recently?). The entrance to the property is on the eastern side of Coppins Crossing Rd, about 1.7km south of Coppins Crossing (and about 1.7km north of Uriarra Rd). Look for the white microwave and letterbox. Follow the driveway up to the house. Leave gates as you find them. Four wheel drive vehicles would be advantageous, however we can ferry people about the property as needed. For more details and to register for this outing please contact the leader, Anthony Overs on anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au or 6254 0168 AH.

Wednesday 18 July – Midweek walk

The next Wednesday walk will be in the Yarramundi Reach area of Lake Burley Griffin. Meet at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre on Lady Denman Drive at 9.00am. We will walk through the Yarramundi Grasslands to Acacia Inlet and then follow the shore in the direction of Scrivener Dam. Possible birds include **Double-barred Finch**, **Darter**, **Black-shouldered Kite** and an abundance of **Superb Fairy-wrens**.

Sunday 5 August – Lake Ginninderra – Waterbirds for beginners morning

This is the second of our bird walks in 2007 that is aimed specifically at beginners or new members. Meet Anthony Overs (6254 0168 AH or anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park -see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Please don't forget to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Saturday 18 August – Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge

This morning walk will be to the Murrumbidgee River corridor, from Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge. Further details will be in the August Gang-gang.

Sunday 2 September — Yanununbeyan State Conservation Area (SCA)

Yanununbeyan SCA, (gazetted in 2003), is about 25 kilometres southeast of Queanbeyan. It has a range of eucalypt forest types with a variety of understorey. The landscape of the SCA will limit us to short excursions through various habitats including creek lines, a dam area and some relatively undisturbed areas. We'll pass through a population of a subspecies of Argyle Apple *Eucalyptus cinerea spp triplex*, and we'll also make a stop by a massive old Apple Box.

NOTE: The trip will be weather dependent as the roads may become impassable after heavy rain.

The combined area of Yanununbeyan SCA, National Park and Nature Reserve has a list of over one hundred bird species including **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo**, **Owlet-nightjar**, **Spotted Quail Thrush** and **Eastern Whipbird**. During this excursion we hope to encounter honeyeaters, robins and a variety of thornbills and other common birds of the area.

This introduction to the SCA will hopefully encourage COG members to re-visit the area in the future and explore further. There are possibilities for camping in the SCA which the leaders will point out, and after the recent heavy rains we may be fortunate enough to see some early spring wildflowers.

Meet at 7:30 am at the 'Spotlight' carpark at the intersection of Kings Highway, Yass Road and Ellerton Drive in Queanbeyan for carpooling. Bring hot and cold drinks, morning/afternoon tea and lunch. We expect to be back in Queanbeyan by 4:00-4.30pm, but may be earlier depending on weather and the birds.

Bookings are essential. Contact Margaret McJannett or Charles Bauer, phone 6161 3450, email: mcjannett9@hotmail.com, or mobile: 041 337 9655.

Monday to Friday 8-12 October — Green Cape – mid-week accommodated

This mid week trip is a reprise of the very successful COG trips in June 2004 and October 2005. COG has again booked the two duplex cottages associated with the lighthouse, and Peter Fullagar will again be leading. This time it will be the peak of the season for the **shearwater** migration and he also expects to see a mix of other sea birds 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 from COG's previous visits include up to four species of **shearwaters**, five species of **albatross**, **Brown Skua**, **Black-faced Cormorant**, **Striated Fieldwren**, **Southern Emu-wrens**, not to mention the very tame **Ground Parrot** in June 2004.

The two cottages have been booked for 4 nights. The cottages each hold a maximum of 6 people, consisting of separate rooms, the master bedroom with a queen size bed, one bedroom 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 \$125 per person for the 4 nights, including the COG admin fee. As a number of previous participants put their names down at the time the booking was made in 2005, and a number of other members have sought to be included since, there is already significant interest. To book your place, or to put your name on the waiting list in case of oversubscription, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or jack.holland@environment.gov.au). Note that some allowance may have to be made from the strict order of receipt in assigning the last few places due to the need to achieve a gender balance. A deposit of \$30 will required from those accepted by 1 to August ensure your place in the cottages. Note also that the full payment of \$125 is due by the COG meeting on 13 September, when further information for participants will also be available.

Other Surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

The date for the second **Swift Parrot** and **Regent Honeyeater** surveys for 2007 is the weekend of 4-5 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 gums are flowering or survey local reserves such as Mulligans Flat, Campbell Park or Mount Ainslie as swift parrots do pass through Canberra in most years, even if only briefly. For further details contact Belinda Cooke, the Swift Parrot Project Officer, Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW on swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au or Freecall 1800 66 57 66.

Cowra Woodland Birds Program

Cowra Woodland Birds Program (CWBP) is a series of projects aimed at helping to reverse the decline of woodland birds in the Cowra district. The projects are focused on scientific research and the management of birds in their woodland habitats. The CWBP was launched in July 2001 by members of *Birds Australia Southern NSW & ACT Group* and local landholders and land managers.

CWBP's main activity is conducting regular (quarterly) bird surveys at many of the sites in the database, now in its sixth year. From the initial survey in May 2002 with 28 volunteers recording 122 species, the project is now up to 195 species and has had over 50 volunteer surveyors! Currently, surveys are done on about 60 sites and new volunteer surveyors are always welcome! **Survey dates for the remainder of 2007 are July 21/22 and October 20/21.** Anyone interested in joining a survey should contact Malcolm Fyfe on 6253 0772 or mfyfe@tpg.com.au

News from the Committee

- COG is purchasing some equipment which will be used for field recording of birds. A workshop will be held in due course to provide some training in use of the equipment for those who will be recording calls.
- COG was recently represented at meetings to discuss proposed firetrails in Namadgi National Park, the Molonglo Valley development, and the predator-proof fence to be constructed at Mulligan's Flat. Landholders in the first stage of the Molonglo Valley development, near Coppins Crossing, have been asked to vacate their land by the end of September. The Mulligan's Flat fence will be constructed between September and April.
- The Committee has been discussing the Forward Plan, which was published in *Gang Gang* recently. Responsibilities for the various actions have been identified and some are underway.
- Acting on a suggestion from a member, the Committee has agreed that it would be useful to digitise Canberra Bird Notes and make the publication available on the website. The process will take some time, but Alastair Smith has volunteered to begin the work.

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- Following the large influx of visitors to the Botanic Gardens to view the powerful owl, discussions were held between the ANBG and COG to iron out some issues which arose. COG will take steps to assist the ANBG staff to manage future such events, and a Memorandum of Understanding is being developed.

Report of June COG meeting

The short talk, 'Tackling Indian Mynas', was delivered by Bill Handke of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG). Did you know that **Indian Mynas** were introduced to Melbourne in 1862 to control locusts and to north Queensland in 1883 to control cane beetles? Canberra was free of them until 1968 when they were brought here, and since the 1980s their numbers have steadily increased. Chris Tidemann has estimates that there are now 250 per square kilometre or 150 000 in Canberra. CIMAG was formed in April 2006 to protect native wildlife from the threat posed by Indian Mynas. The CIMAG strategy has three core elements: raise public awareness that Mynas are a serious environmental threat; distribute information to the public on how to reduce feeding, roosting and breeding opportunities for Mynas (see box); and a humane trapping programme. CIMAG now has 240 trappers who have removed 10,333 Mynas from Canberra, Murrumbateman, Queanbeyan and Burra in the last 13 months. 26 trappers in Kambah have removed 3,500 birds with the result that native birds, especially small ones, are returning to the suburb.

TACKLING THE MYNA PROBLEM

Reduce feeding opportunities

- keep pet food inside
- better waste control at restaurants and shopping centres
- stop direct feeding

Reduce nesting opportunities

- block up cavities in roofs
- maintain vigilance on nesting boxes

Reduce roosting sites

- remove unsuitable trees
e.g. — dense exotic pencil pines, palm trees
- plant suitable gardens
e.g. — reduce open space (lawns) and plant native shrubs

Our main speaker was Richard Hastings on '*Stop the bullying in the bush: Making your Revegetation Noisy Miner Free*'. These aggressive honeyeaters have flourished with land clearing and, while they mob birds the size of **rosellas** and **Kookaburras**, they chase small birds such as **pardalotes** and will kill any they catch. nakes, goannas and even kangaroos are not immune from attack. **Noisy Miners** are cooperative breeders, as the males stay home and help, as well as communal breeders, in that they nest close together. Females rule the roost and will allow male offspring to stay in their territory, whilst female offspring are driven out. For their diet of nectar, insects, seeds and lerps, they rely on eucalypts, open ground and open woodland. Their size and their ability to drive out **thornbills** and **pardalotes** mean they have exclusive year-round access to a food supply. **Noisy Miners** dominate in vegetation plots up to 40hectares and on edges and in small areas, but it is unknown whether they are deterred by understorey.

Richard's research asked the questions: are wildlife corridors of eucalypts through pastures creating ideal **Noisy Miner** habitat? If so, what would be the most favourable environment for small birds in wildlife corridors? He attempted to answer these questions by comparing different types of roadside corridors which border pastures in the Southern Highlands. These were: eucalypts with and without understorey, acacias with and without understorey, conifers with no understorey, and exotic deciduous trees with no understorey. He found that there were significantly more **Noisy Miners** in eucalypt sites with most in those without understorey. In acacia sites dominated by bi-pinnate wattles with soft feathery leaves, there were no **Noisy Miners** and lots of small birds, but where the wattles had phyllodes which resemble eucalypt leaves, there were **Noisy Miners** and very few or no small birds.

This led to a supplementary study of mixed eucalypt and bi-pinnate wattle sites with understorey. Here Richard found more small birds, more bird species in total and very few **Noisy Miners**. He concluded that this is because bi-pinnate wattles are a food source for **thornbills**, their structure allows small birds to avoid attack and they are not an important food source for **Noisy Miners**. Casuarinas may have a similar effect. Richard's research has led to his recommendation to Landcare groups that they plant at least 15% non-eucalypts (preferably bi-pinnate wattles) and have at least 10% of the site with a shrubby understorey. His research is continuing on his property, and we look forward to hearing his results in the future.



The Paradise Parrot
E E Gostelow

MR GILBERT'S BEAUTIFUL PARRAKEET

Friday, June 22, 2007 - Sunday, October 14, 2007 Visitor Centre, National Library

John Gilbert (1812–1845) was an English naturalist and explorer who was a taxidermist for the Zoological Society of London when he met John Gould and travelled to Australia with him in 1838. He spent the next few years collecting natural history specimens for Gould's planned publications about birds. He visited Tasmania and Western Australia as well as New South Wales and Queensland. It was there, on the Darling Downs, that he discovered a parrot, till then unknown, which he described in a letter to Gould as 'without exception the most beautiful of the whole tribe I have seen in Australia'. Shortly after he sent his latest collection of specimens to Gould, he joined an exploring party led by Ludwig Leichhardt and unfortunately died on the expedition after being speared during a night attack by a group of Aborigines.

Sadly, there have been no confirmed sightings of Gilbert's 'beautiful parrakeet', later known as the paradise parrot, since 1927. Most likely it became the victim of loss of habitat as the Darling Downs were cultivated and stocked with herds of cattle and mobs of sheep. Its use of termite mounds in which to build its nest also made it very vulnerable.

This display, curated by Dr Penny Olsen of the School of Botany and Zoology at the Australian National University, focuses on the, almost certainly extinct, paradise parrot as a symbol of all those birds and animals which have ceased to exist as they have been hunted for food, their feathers and fur, or had their habitat destroyed through human expansion. Visitors will have the opportunity to view some special items from the Library's collections such as the work of John Gould, Gregory Macalister Mathews and Gracius Broinowski and the watercolours of William Cooper, E.E. Gostelow and Neville Cayley.

HAVE YOUR SAY

In addition to the usual request for articles and trip reports (see page 12) the Editors invite members to contribute shorter pieces for publication in *Gang-gang*.

Share your experiences, the good and the bad, in prose or poetry.

Gleanings from the Chatline

A small selection of items from the COG Chatline which caught the Editor's eye

(NOTE: Reports of sightings of rare species have not been endorsed by the Rarities Committee)

Following the current spate of **Wedge-tailed Eagle** sightings over suburban Belconnen, **Mark Clayton** provided the following information that was known to only few people, mainly the raptor researchers at the University of Canberra.

For quite a few years I had noticed **Wedge-tailed Eagles** over the Kaleen, Mitchell area and was informed by staff at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems that the birds were responsible for killing and eating some of the captive Tamar Wallabies held on the CSIRO grounds.

Several years ago my back fence neighbour, a former soldier who was working at the Belconnen Navy radio transmitting station asked me if I was interested in the location of a Wedgie nest that was in the line of *Pinus radiata* trees that are found on the ridgeline of the old transmission station. I found this a bit hard to believe, as the nest was no more than about 200m from houses in Kaleen. I contacted Jerry Olsen and Esteban Fuentes and asked if they knew of this nest – they didn't but promptly went to investigate.

Sure enough the nest contained 1 young eagle which they promptly banded. I gather talking to my neighbour that the adults were feeding the young bird on kangaroo joeys. They would harass the adult female 'roos that had pouched young, no mean feat given all the cables holding the transmission towers up, and forced them to "dump" the joey. Bingo, enough tucker to keep the young eagle happy. The chick did fledge but in very poor wet and windy weather and we are not sure if it survived. At the time my neighbour and his colleagues counted over 300 kangaroos in the fenced in base – maybe the eagles were keeping their number in check. There are certainly a lot more there now.

I think it is safe to let the secret out as the birds have not been seen there for quite a while and the old nest is rapidly falling down. With all the recent reports I suggest people keep a close eye on just where these current birds are hanging about – you may have a nest quite close and not know it. I have a small property near Lake George which has a recently built wedgie nest on it. It is also about 150 m from one house on a neighbouring property and 200 from another. This chick was also fed mainly on kangaroo. The species will breed at any time of the year given a reasonable abundance of food, something I learned from Esteban.



Black-chinned Honeyeater hunters—Newline June 2007

Photo by Martin Butterfield

Peter Milburn's discovery of a **Black-chinned Honeyeater** sparked a minor stampede to Newline Quarry and much discussion, as did **Steve Holliday's** identification of a **White-fronted Honeyeater** at Jerrabomberra Wetlands and various sightings of **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**.

The **Powerful Owl** returned to the Botanic Gardens around the middle of the month, much to the regret of the hapless Sugar Glider that was on the menu.

Philip Veerman reported hearing a **Superb Lyrebird** in the usual spot on the track between Kambah Pool and Pine Island, the first time he's heard it there this year.

A flock of more than 150 **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** was reported flying along the back of Mt Ainslie near the top of the saddle between Ainslie and Mt Majura by **Terry Gourlay**.

Marnix Zwankhuizen spotted seven species of thornbill in a mixed feeding flock on the Lade Vale Road near Gunning, including a **Chestnut-rumped Thornbill**, which has been reported in the Canberra region only once before.

A flock of 160+ **Little Corellas** on Captain Cook Crescent, Griffith was reported by **Geoffrey Dabb** on 27 June.

Satin Bower Birds were reported in gardens Griffiths, Hughes, O'Connor and Turner.



Limited Edition

**Framed and
unframed
Wild Bird
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by Stuart Harris
& David Cook

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Email us at
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or david@naturefocus.com.au



Note: Special COG Prices, with \$10 from every purchase being donated to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

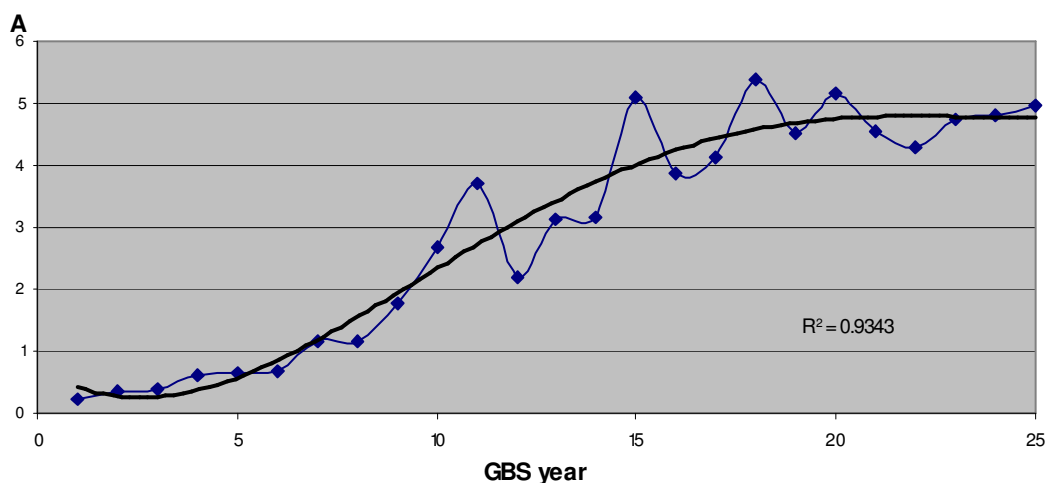
Garden Bird Survey Notes

The last month has been relatively quiet in people's gardens (unlike some other elements of the Canberra environment). Matters raised on the chatline have included:

- an early breeding record in the form of copulating **Common Mynas**, leading to comments suggesting a 'plateauing' of the population of this species;
- **Wedgetailed Eagles** reported as overflying a site in Scullin; and
- a large (25 birds) flock of **Noisy Miners** arriving in my site at Carwoola. (Some flocks of 3 – 6 birds were sighted subsequently with a flight of 16 birds – just outside the site – on 25 June.)

Having raised the topic of **Common Mynas** can I remind members who are compiling a GBS Chart and trapping this species to put a note to this effect (including date started and an estimate of numbers trapped) on their year 26 GBS Chart when handing it in. It will be interesting to see how this species has changed over the last year: I have included below a chart showing the values of A for the species over the first 25 years of the Survey and a polynomial trendline.

Common Mynah: values of A



Can I also remind folk to bring their completed Charts to the July COG meeting. I will also have a supply of replacement charts available for people who didn't pick one up at the June Meeting. If you can't make it to the Meeting please let me know (by email to martinflab@gmail.com or phone to 02 6238 2637) and I will try to make some alternative arrangements for pick-up and delivery of the Charts. — **Martin Butterfield**

The Powerful Owl

(to the tune of 'Jack and Jill')

Anthony looked up a tree
To see what caused a fracas.
He saw there a very rare
Powerful owl, a cracker.

Quite a pack moved up the track
As news spread about the owl.
Yellow eyes round with surprise,
It watched the eager folk prowl.

Garden staff stood on the path
To stop the trampling birders,
Though didn't scowl up at the owl,
The perp of many murders.

This wintry celebrity
Sat and yawned and took no heed
Of this pack upon the track:
A powerful owl indeed.

Maurits Zwankhuizen

The Consummation

On a day of winter sun
red-browed firetails' calls
are pricking holes in air.

Scanning the bush to trace
the urgent mewling cries,
I find a clarity of twigs and

an importuning cock
dancing for his love,
the gift of a leaf in his bill.

One last balletic leap
and he lands upon her back,
compliant, soft and warm.

Seconds later he's off
and gone in the shadowy maze.
What was in it for her?

Only spring will tell -
the docile female bird
follows his lead and flies,

leaving the courting lair
to merge in leafy light,
a dazzle of sunlit green.

Suzanne Edgar

COG SALES

The Long Paddock: A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW - Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00

Wet and Wild: A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country - M Lintermans and W Osborne - \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).

Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland - Jo Wieneke - \$16.00.

Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.

Grassland Flora: A Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) - by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00

Our Patch: A Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00

The Nestbox Book - Gould League - \$12.50

Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT - Taylor and Day - \$14.00

Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape – Lindenmeyer et al - \$34.00

Feather and Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art – Penny Olsen reduced price - \$50.00

Simpson and Days' Birds of Australia CDROM Version 5.0 special price - \$45.00

COG Car Stickers - \$2.00

COG Badges – red or grey - \$5.00

COG Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change - Steve Wilson - \$25.00

COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00

COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00

COG Bird Calls of the ACT – CD - \$12.00

All these items plus COG T-shirts and Polo shirts and various pamphlets etc are available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Bruce Ramsay via email to barkeramsay@velocitynet.com.au or telephone 02 6294 5881 (after 6.30 pm please)

Avian Whimsy #54 — Des Oiseaux Francais-australiens

In the last Whimsy we looked at some birds which we know by names commemorating members of the James Cook expeditions to the south seas. At least until recently, if we had asked someone with a basic knowledge of Australian history what was the next scientific expedition to these waters, it is very likely that they would have skipped forward 30 years to Flinders and the *Investigator*. That would be a very Brit-centric view though; the next three voyages of scientific exploration to 'Australia' were all French. Both Louis XVI and the Emperor Bonaparte were committed to broadening the world's scientific horizons, and their expeditions set standards of organisation and resources for others to follow. (Needless to say the human factor still managed to poke sticks in the spokes though.)

Jean-Francois de Galaup, Comte de la Perouse, sailed with *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe* into Sydney Harbour in 1788, just three weeks after the First Fleet arrived, and sailed off into oblivion. The wrecks of both ships were found at Santa Cruz, New Hebrides, 40 years later. Neither this expedition, nor that of Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, sent to look for la Perouse in the ships *R cherche* and *Esperance*, made any mark on the ornithological landscape. That changed abruptly with the grandest and most grandiose of them all, that of Nicolas Baudin on *Le G ographe* and *Le Naturaliste*, commissioned by Napoleon in 1800. It was superbly planned, even carrying a large library of the journals of Dampier, Cook, Phillip, Bligh, La Billardiere, etc. They carried passports from the British Government as protection from the Royal Navy; this view of science as transcending political disputes was a very noble but sadly fleeting phase.

There is no room here to debate the popular wisdom that Baudin was an arrogant bully who alienated or sacked his scientists; I have no reason to doubt it, but it's worth remembering that he died on the voyage and the victors (or at least survivors) get to write history. He lives on though in the monicker of the very specialised south-western **Long-billed Black-Cockatoo** (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*). (Like the **Red-capped Parrot**, its long slender bill evolved to probe the seed capsules of Marri.) To fill the void a young medical student named Fran ois Peron took on the role of naturalist – and his work is now regarded as pivotal to the development of Australian zoology, and particularly of marine biology. 'His' bird is *Zoothera peronii*, the sadly endangered forest-dwelling **Orange-banded Thrush**, a **Bassian Thrush** relation from Timor and adjacent islands. However in our own backyards are two more *peronii* – two of our commonest urban frogs are the maniacally cackling Peron's Tree Frog *Litoria peronii* and the popping Striped Marsh Frog *Limnodynastes peronii*.

Another who benefited from the sudden decamping of Baudin's scientists (most never made it to Australia!) was a young self-taught natural history artist called Charles Lesueur, who'd astutely signed on as assistant helmsman in the hope of just such an eventuality. His paintings were superb and the naturalist-artist relationship with Peron lasted until Peron died. (Lesueur, the literal amateur, eventually became the first curator of the Le Havre Natural History Museum.) Every spring we may be reminded of him when the **White-winged Trillers** warble so frenetically in the woodlands – his compatriot Louis Vieillot named the bird *Lalage sueurii*. (And coincidentally a featherless local bears his name too – the somewhat louche water dragons in the National Botanic Gardens are *Physignathus lesuerii*.)

The magnificently labelled Jean-Baptiste Louis-Claude-Th odore Leschanault de la Tour was chief botanist on the expedition. For no obvious reason the eminent polymath naturalist Ren  Lesson named the **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* for him. And while Lesson was on the job, the ear-blasting **Trumpet Manucode** of upper Cape Yorke (plus New Guinea and Indonesia, where the expedition presumably collected it) became *Manucodia keraudrenii* for the *G ographe*'s surgeon, Pierre Keraudren.

Another impressively vocal tropical Australian bird also has a French accent. The sleek **Black Butcherbird** is *Cracticus quoyi* is named for Jean Rene Constant Quoy, also a surgeon but on a later expedition, under the command of Baudin's former second-in-command, Louis de Freycinet, in *L'Uranie*.

Eh bien, assez. Maybe it's time to get back to the birds themselves – but I've had fun with this. Et vous?

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb



White-winged Triller
(*Lalage sueurii*)



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NEW MEMBERS

COG welcomes the following new members:

Catherine Ross, Yarralumla

Margaret Clarke, O'Connor

Gary Clark, Chisholm

Anne Carrick, Braddon

Moira Parkinson, Kambah

Next newsletter

August deadline

Wednesday 25 July 2007

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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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 membership

2007-2008 memberships:

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

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for

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Join the list by following the links on the

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