

# Gang-gang

July 2008

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday  
9 July 2008**

*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 Bird of the Month presentation will be by Jack Holland on "**Field Identification of the Jacky Winter**". This will be the eighth local robin species looked for in the twitchathon on 20 July. There will also be a rerun of how to identify the five **red-breasted robin** species, particularly the females.

The main presentation will be by David Geering, who many COG members will know as the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Co-ordinator. The title of David's presentation will be "**A Bird in the Hand: Returning the Regent Honeyeater to the Bush**". This will cover the recent release of captive bred birds as well as an update of other aspects since he last spoke to COG. As David is about to leave this position for another role within the NSW NPWS, it will be a very timely presentation.

**Everyone welcome**

## What to watch out for this month

The most notable aspect of the 2008 winter so far is how mild the weather has been, in that, close to the end of June, there has not yet been a decent frost. To my recollection, this is only the second time this has happened in 35 years of living in Canberra. However, this does not appear, at least from my observations and the reports to the COG chat line, to have resulted in the overwintering of large numbers of migrant species; in fact there have been few reports of species such as the **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Grey Fantail**, **Fuscous** or **White-naped Honeyeaters** than often stay over in reasonable numbers if the weather is mild.

Other species that come to Canberra to stay for winter also seem to be relatively scarce. Since I returned in early June I have been unable to find the **Flame Robin** in my local patch on NW Cooleman Ridge/Narrabundah Hill, despite a thorough search of all the spots where they have been common each winter since the January 2003 fires. Indeed the area seems the quietest it has been in the four winters since I moved back. This also appears to be the case

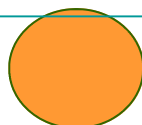


**Scarlet Robin**  
( *Petroica multicolour* )

Photo by Julian Robinson

for other areas such as Coppins Crossing, another good spot to see winter birds in recent years. One bird that does seem more conspicuous in my GBS site, but not outside of it, is the **White-eared Honeyeater**. Sightings of this species usually become fewer once July arrives, as do those for the **Scarlet Robin**, also present so far only in small numbers in my local patch. So if you see any of these species make sure they are reported.

One bird that has been surprisingly common this year, including in my GBS site, is the **Red-rumped Parrot**. This species is one that has definitely increased in numbers in my area since the fires. A number of times in March I again observed just after sunrise up to 80 birds of this species leaving Duffy in small to larger groups to feed out in the Cotter/Cooleman Ridge area. Up to a dozen often came into my GBS site to feed. On my return this has continued, with some evidence in the second half of June that late afternoon they were preparing to roost in the Darwinia Terrace/Woolum Crescent area of



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Rivett. At the June COG meeting there were a number of reports of increased numbers in other suburbs. Again any unusual numbers should be reported.

One feature that has been clear so far this mild winter is that the local planted ironbarks and other eucalypt species are the best they have been for at least five years. While this has been a boon for the **Red Wattlebirds**, it is worth examining these trees for other rarer species known to love eucalypt blossoms such as the **Regent Honeyeater**, **Swift Parrot** or **Little Lorikeet**. The latter species are quite noisy while flying or feeding and should alert you to their presence. Also they are often very intense feeders and will allow a very close approach. The **Yellow-tufted** and **Crescent Honeyeater** are other species to look out for as they can be drawn to Canberra gardens etc in winter by the available nectar. There have been a few reports of both.

There have also been some reports on the COG chat line of the **Satin Bowerbird**, including in places where they have not seen before. This is also a winter visitor (though not exclusively) to gardens etc, and it seems to be gradually spreading its range. Up to the early 2000s it was mostly reported from the Weston Creek and Woden/Yarralumla areas, spilling into Red Hill/Griffith and the Botanic Gardens, as well as Fraser. It now seems to be slowly moving into Belconnen spreading from Aranda into Cook/Macquarie and most recently into Weetangera/Hawker. So this is another bird worth reporting, particularly if it is new to your area.

It's hard to believe but within a month towards the end of July we can start looking forward to the first of the spring/summer migrants to return as the weather warms. Will the earliest arrivals again be **Welcome Swallows**, **Tree and Fairy Martins**, or will it be the **Horsfield Bronze-cuckoo**, one of the most conspicuous early arrivals last year?

— Jack Holland

## Field Trip reports

### Sunday 25 May — The Pinnacle – Morning Walk

A large group of 29 people attended this walk, with over half being from COG and the rest from Field Naturalists, FOG and other friends. We split into two groups, with Rosemary Blemings taking the beginners and John Brannan and myself taking the more experienced birdos.

A quick introduction to the local trees (mainly Yellowbox, Blakely's Redgum and Applebox) also yielded a large mixed feeding flock (MFF). This flock enabled us to identify the features of **Spotted Pardalotes**, a male and female **Scarlet Robin** and a small flock of **White-naped Honeyeaters**.



**Rainbow Lorikeet**  
( *Trichoglossus*  
*haematodus* )

Photo by Lindsay Hansch

Good views from The Pinnacle itself provided a useful setting for discussing the history and management of this site, and how this fits within the broader Molonglo valley. Heading towards the more native 'Red Stringybark forest' we saw a **Rainbow Lorikeet** (an ACT first for some birders), another male **Scarlet Robin** and a **Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike**. In the forest were **White-throated Tree-creepers** and more **scarlet robins** and **spotted pardalotes**, plus some interesting plants including cauliflower bushes, paper daisies and everlasting daisies which had just finished seeding, and matt-rushes (*Lomandra*).

Moving back into tree plantings we finally saw **Speckled Warblers**, two **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **White-naped Honeyeater**, a **Striated Thornbill** and other sbbs (and Roger Curnow didn't have his camera—now that is a tick!).

I think John Cummings was first to see a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** which was being harassed by **Magpies**, **Ravens** and **Magpie-larks**. Then John Brannan showed us a **Chough** nest and we bumped into a group of **choughs**, plus more **White eared Honeyeaters** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**.

A number of people hadn't been to The Pinnacle and hopefully this introduction will encourage them to return. Thanks to Rosemary Blemings for organising the walk, John Brannan and Barbara Allan for helping out, and all the other input on the day.

Of course, when walking home I saw a **Sparrowhawk** and a Grey **Currawong** that we must have only just missed on the walk. — Benj Whitworth

## 7 to 9 June — Jervis Bay Trip

Kathy Walter and John Goldie's well planned trip to Booderee NP, Jervis Bay, coincided with the few clearish days between coastal storms. The trip was enjoyed by 14 COGites. Group day walks of the Murray's Beach Walking Trail, the Telegraph Creek Nature Trail and separate trips along Elmoos Rd to St Georges Basin and to the Botanical Gardens were a delight. On Sunday evening we set off to the Steamers Beach Rd area and back to Elmoos Rd in search of elusive owls. In the unplanned moments, participants revisited sites or set off to spots such as the lighthouse to see what they could find. Others walked leisurely around our camp spot at Green Patch or just sat at their camp site drinking tea and casually observing the occasional **Eastern Bristlebird**, the **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **Eastern Whipbirds**, **fairlywrens**, **thornbills** etc.

For me, the birding highlights were a **Rose Robin**; a **Yellow-nosed Albatross** and the graceful flight of a young **White-bellied Sea-eagle** from the lookout near Murray's Beach to the rocky area below; the large number of **Eastern Bristlebirds** in the park; and the call of the unidentified owl on the St George's Basin side of the park. I always enjoy watching the flowing flight and fast dives of the **gannets** and **terns** when I am at the coast.

The sighting of a **Ground Parrot** by Brian Scales in the low heath at the intersection of Elmoos Rd and Hyams Beach Rd was most pleasing. **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, a **Beautiful Firetail** and a **Southern Emu-wren** were also seen at this site. Other interesting sightings on the trip were a grey form **Eastern Reef Heron**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Brown Cuckoo-dove**, **Brown Gerygone**, **Scarlet Honeyeater**, **Lewin's Honeyeater**, **Red-browed Tree-creepers** and a pair of displaying **White-throated Treecreepers**. A **Little Lorikeet** was heard but not seen. Those of us who took part in the Murray's Beach Walking Trail outing were fortunate enough to see a Humpback Whale breach close to the cliff.

We saw 71 bird species and 6 non-human mammal species. — **Julienne Kamprad**

## Wednesday 18 June — Midweek walk — Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG)

Seven walkers participated in a coolish walk through and around the ANBG. We achieved 27 species including six parrots/cockatoos and six honeyeaters. The least usual bird was a **Crescent Honeyeater** of which we had good views near the Sydney Gully. We didn't record **White-plumed**, **White-eared** or **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** (all of which we had expected) nor **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** or **Little Wattlebird** (which we had hoped for). Many **White-naped**, all closely inspected for the purity of their white throats and unfortunately they all passed the test.

Potential nesting activity was shown by **Galahs** excavating a hollow and **Spotted Pardalotes** inspecting an existing hollow.

The upper part of the garden was enhanced by workers using an industrial strength chipper which may have explained the dearth of birds in that area.

— **Martin Butterfield**



### Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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Victoria  
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Mob: 04173 10200

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

### 2008

27 July — 2 August  
**New Caledonia birding tour**  
incl. Lifou and Ouvéa Islands

5 — 24 September  
**Strzelecki Track  
Outback Tour**

**2008 Plains-wanderer Weekends**  
29 & 30 Nov; 6 & 7 Dec; 20 & 21 Dec  
2008; 3 & 4 Jan 2009

### 2009

22 — 28 February 2009  
**Tasmania birding & mammal tour**  
including pelagic & Melaleuca flight

17 April — 2 May 2009  
**Vietnam birding tour**  
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

3 May — 9 May 2009  
**Thailand Pitta Tour**  
co-led by Uthai Treesucon

12 May — 1 June 2009  
**Borneo and Peninsula Malaysia**  
co-led by Dennis Yong

8 — 26 August 2009  
**Strzelecki Track  
Outback Tour**

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

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## Superb Lyrebird survey, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve 22nd June 2008.

The fifth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird** was again run under perfect conditions. Eighteen 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 19 individual **Superb Lyrebirds** reported which compares with the 6, 14, 12 and 12 reported in the four previous surveys. Of these, thirteen were reported from the Camel Back Trail with either 2 or 1 reported from the remaining four trails. It is interesting to note that from the 16 vegetation communities mapped for the Reserve the only trail that covers the *E. fastigata* and *E. dalrympleana* communities is the Camel Back Trail

During the survey 35 bird species were reported with the highest number (25) from the Gibraltar Rocks Trail. Interesting observations included **Satin Bowerbird**, **Pilotbird Crescent Honeyeater**, **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Grey Butcherbird** and the very vocal **White-eared Honeyeater**.

Many thanks to the participants and to the staff at Tidbinbilla for once again 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 6 July — Googong Dam

Ian Anderson will lead an extended morning walk to the Googong Dam area. Meet at 8.30 am at the carpark near the entrance. The walk may include a visit to Tin Hut Dam at the other end of Googong Dam and perhaps a visit to nearby Burra Creek. Bring appropriate clothing including something warm and perhaps wet weather gear. Also bring water, morning tea and lunch. Please contact Ian (6281 0609 or [iananderson@grapevine.com.au](mailto:iananderson@grapevine.com.au)) for further details and to book your place.

### Wednesday 16 July — Midweek walk

This month's walk will be to the Newline Quarry site. Meet at the gate (Map 71, F5 in the Yellow Pages) at 9.15am.

### Sunday 20 July — Repeat Robin Twitchathon — Extended morning bus trip

The ambitious aim of this repeat outing is again to try to observe all of the seven species of robin that occur in the ACT in the one day, plus the **Jacky Winter**. In particular we will attempt to find the species we missed out on in July 2005, as well as the Jacky Winter and the female/immature **Red-breasted Robins**, which will be the subject of the July Bird of the Month talk.

Transport will be by two 12-seater buses. As this involves a total of 24 people, a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles, otherwise the outing becomes logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8:00 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. With the rising price of petrol, costs will be about \$16.00 per person, including the COG admin fee, depending on the number of participants. This will be payable on boarding the bus. At the time of the *Gang-gang* cut off there were still seats available in the second bus. To book please contact Jack Holland asap (6288 7840 AH or by e-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)), so that your seat on the bus can be ensured.

We will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these species are likely to be present. The exact itinerary will not be determined until very close 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.

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## Sunday 3 August — Lake Ginninderra — Waterbirds for beginners morning

This is the second of our bird walks in 2008 that is aimed specifically at beginners or new members. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or [anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto: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. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

## Sunday 24 August — Science Week at Jerrabomberra wetlands — Morning

**Volunteers required — see page 6**

## Sunday 31 August — Kama Woodlands — Morning

Chris Davey will lead a walk into this patch of threatened woodland in the lower Molonglo area. The patch is home to a monitored population of **Brown Treecreepers**. Full details will be provided in the August Gang-gang.

## Sunday 7 September — Repeat Raptor Twitchathon — All day bus trip

The ambitious aim of this repeat outing is to observe as many as possible of the eleven bird of prey species that may be reasonably expected to be seen in the ACT in the one day. In particular we will be concentrating on the identification of raptors, which many members find difficult. Some material will be available to assist in this process, which will be based on the Bird of the Month presentation at the August 2006 COG meeting.

As we will be visiting several spots in the ACT where raptors are likely to be present, transport will be by two 12-seater buses. The point of departure will again be the National Library car park at 8:00 am where you can park your car for free. It will run until mid afternoon, so please bring morning tea and lunch. With the rising fuel prices costs will be about \$16 per person, including the COG admin fee. This is payable on boarding the bus and will be dependent on sufficient numbers to fill both buses. Would those interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au)) as soon as possible. If there are two full buses there will not be the possibility for any tag-a-long vehicles.

A draft route and 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, could you please let Jack Holland know.

## Committee news

- A site for the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund is being set up within the COG website, to provide possible applicants with information and application details.
- COG is preparing a supplementary submission for the Government inquiry on the Molonglo development.
- Testing is underway of some early files of *Canberra Bird Notes* which are being digitised and added to the website.
- Chris Davey attended the opening of the Birds Australia Southern NSW & ACT (BASNA) Discovery Centre at Olympic Park in late May. This new Centre is well worth a visit.
- COG has provided copies of its bird calls CD to the Parkwood Nursery, and it has been selling well.

**Correction:** The photograph of the **Tawny Frogmouth** perched on a suburban clothes hoist on page 9 of the June 2008 *Gang-gang* was incorrectly attributed. It should have been attributed to John Walter.

**Books for loan and wanted:** Bill and Elizabeth Compston have several books of birds of overseas countries they are willing to lend to birders who are going to South India, South Africa, the Galapagos Islands, England or the USA. They would like to borrow any book on the birds of Eastern Europe.

## The Australian Science Festival

**Sunday 24 August — Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Fyshwick Sewage Ponds, “Waterbirds need Wetlands” guided tour conducted by COG. Meet at Jerrabomberra car-park at 9:10am.**



### **The Australian Science Festival**

**16 to 24 August 2008**

The *Australian Science Festival* is part of National Science Week that runs from 16–24 August 2008. The *Australian Science Festival* (ASF) <http://sciencefestival.com.au/> (program to be included in the *Canberra Times* on Wednesday 13 August) has a range of science or technology based events, including major events such as the Amazing World of Science sponsored by ActewAGL and dozens of smaller events held at various places around Canberra such as the ANU, CSIRO and the Botanic Gardens.

An application was made on COG’s behalf, to register an event in this year’s *Australian Science Festival*, called “**Waterbirds need Wetlands**”. This proposal was accepted and a small grant has been made available to COG for improved signage and a morning tea. This support is provided by the Australian Government through the ACT National Science Week Co-ordinating Committee.

We anticipate around 40 members of the public attending, mainly families interested in learning about bird-watching and the value of wetlands for birds and the environment.

We would like interested COG members to act as either guides, or to generally interact with attendees, or to help with the morning tea near the Jerrabomberra car park. The aim is to conduct two tours at once, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the Fyshwick Sewage Ponds, then change over mid-way and have a morning tea. If anyone attending could bring any spare binoculars to lend to those attendees from the public for the morning, that would be much appreciated.

Could any members interested in helping out, please register your interest with Anthony Overs (6254 0168 H or [anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au)).

**Details:** Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Fyshwick Sewage Ponds tour on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> of August from 9:30am to 11:00am, meeting at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands carpark on Dairy Flat Road. **Could COG members arrive 20 minutes earlier to help set up the event.**

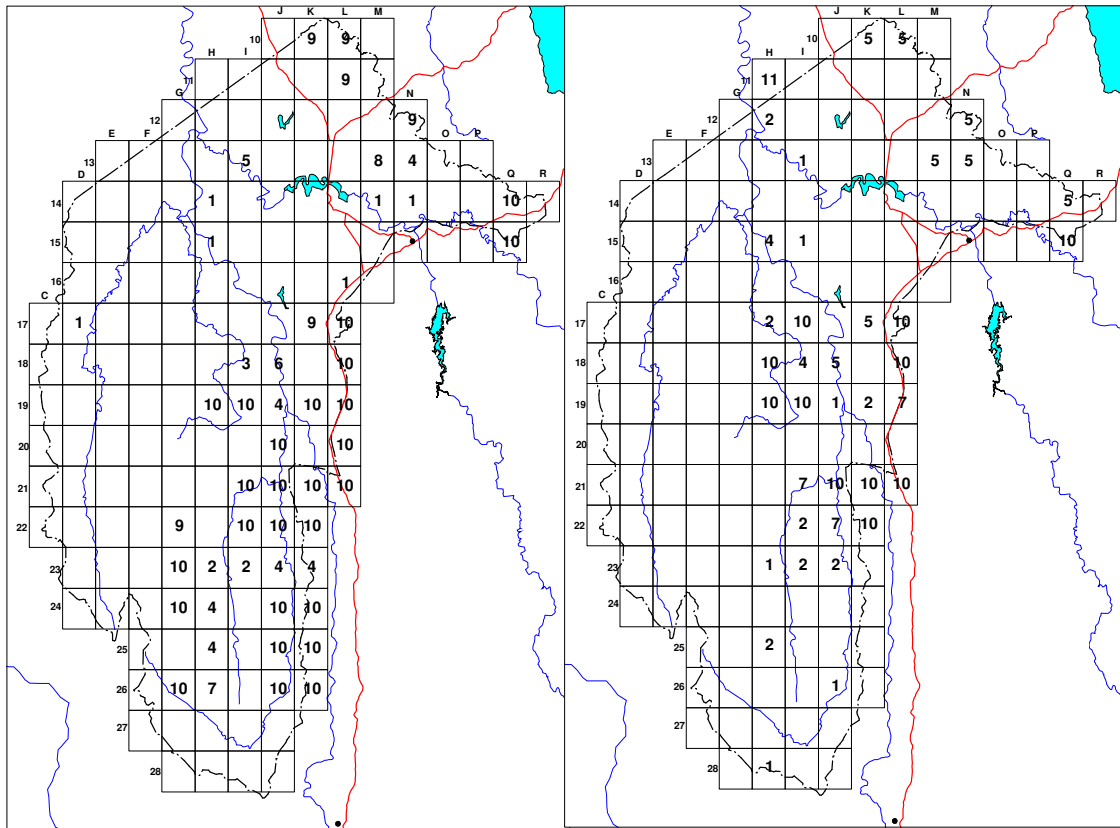
## Wanderings through the COG database

In the May 2008 Gang-gang a table insert was included that indicated that records from the COG database demonstrated a significant reduction in the reporting rate of the **Brown Treecreeper** when comparing the periods 1986-1989 and 2003-2007. Using these data the status for each grid cell covering the ACT that had a reporting rate of more than or equal to 0.1 for either of the two time periods is shown below.

Using the same methods as described in the May 2008 Gang-gang the status for the **Diamond Firetail** is also shown. As with the **Brown Treecreeper** the decline is significant with the data suggesting that there has been a decline in reporting rate from 16.6% to 6.15% in the interval between the two periods.

- 1—**increase**; 2—**possible increase**; 3—**possibly no change**; 4—**no change**; 5—**decrease**;  
 6—**possible decrease**; 7—**possibly gone**; 8—**virtually gone**; 9—**gone**; 10—**inadequate coverage**; 11—?

Chris Davey



**Brown Treecreeper**

**Diamond Firetail**



NATIONAL

**WILDLIFE  
REHABILITATION  
CONFERENCE  
ACT 2008**

## National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference

The conference is aimed at wildlife carers, vets, researchers and, of course, for general interest. It is being held from 22–24 July (Tues-Thurs) at the National Convention Centre with a day trip on Friday, 25 July to Tidbinbilla with a BBQ and full inspection of the Sanctuary with talks about birds, the Corroboree Frog and the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby breeding programs. Single day registrations are accepted. More details are available at [www.nwrc.com.au](http://www.nwrc.com.au).

**CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC  
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION  
2008-2009**



**INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE**

- Membership fees are set at \$35 for 2008/2009 and are due 1 July 2008 for most existing members - check your *Gang-gang/CBN* label to confirm when your membership expires. Do not pay if your membership expires on or after 30 June 2009.
- Electronic fund transfer (EFT) is only available to renewing members. If you pay your subscription by EFT please complete the form on the COG website and then email it as an attachment to the COG secretary, Sandra Henderson at [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)
- Ensure your initials, surname and/or COG number are on the transfer - if we cannot identify your payment you could be struck off as non-financial.
- Transfer funds to:
  - Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc
  - St George Bank
  - A/C number 050111462
  - BSB 112-908

**If you can assist with any of the following please circle the relevant topic(s):**

- |                      |                 |                       |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Atlassing/Surveys    | Data entry      | Administration/Office | Leading outings |
| Publicity/Exhibition | Youth education | Publications          | Conservation    |

COG membership number (check your <i>Gang-gang</i> or <i>CBN</i> mailing label)	Title	Name
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Street Address	Town / Suburb	State	Postcode
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Telephone Home	Work	Mobile	Email address
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*Family memberships: List names of all family members covered by membership
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- Individual - \$35
- Institution - \$35
- \* Family - \$35
- Student (18yrs or under) - new \$17.50
- Canberra Birds Conservation Fund Donation \$.....

**If you would prefer to be notified when *Gang-gang* can be accessed on the COG Website rather than be sent a printed copy, please tick here:**

**Total \$:(office use only)**

**FURTHER INFORMATION ON PAYING YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

- Contact the treasurer, **Lia Battisson**, by email [liabattisson@actewagl.net.au](mailto:liabattisson@actewagl.net.au) if you have any queries about paying your subscription.
- You can pay by cash or cheque at the meetings or by cheque/money order through the post - do not send cash. Mail your payment to: **The Secretary, Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc, PO Box 301, CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608**



## Garden Bird Survey Notes

Some GBS-relevant highlights from the Chatline, and other sources, for late May to late June include:

- **Little Friarbird** and **Superb Parrot** in Watson;
- The leucistic **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** from Wamboin paid a brief visit to Carwoola;
- **Noisy Friarbirds** present (at least early in the month) in North Canberra;
- three **Satin Bowerbirds** in Oconnor;
- **Rose Robin** in Cook; and
- **Crescent Honeyeater** in Hackett.

As I will be in Adelaide at the time of the July meeting, I will not be able to attend but Kay Hahne and Ann Hall will be there to receive completed Year 27 Charts. They will have a supply of blank GBS Charts for handing out to observers. Can I ask again that people taking a chart sign one of the sheets to indicate they have done so; it makes management of the GBS much easier. If observers would like a chart but can't make it to the meeting please send me an email ([martinflab@gmail.com](mailto:martinflab@gmail.com)) and I will arrange to get a chart to you. This may not be until I return to Canberra at the end of the month.

I was recently looking at the historical record of the number of inactive charts (that is; the number of Charts completed for at least part of a year that were not completed in a specific week). Three weeks stood out as having an unusually high number of blank weeks:

- Week 52 — beginning on Christmas Day, reflecting many observers being out of town; and
- Weeks 27 and 28 — while there may also be a school holiday induced travel effect here, I suspect that the problem is many observers not receiving their new charts until sometime in week 28.

There is no immediate action for the first of these problems! However, can I ask that if people are intending to complete a chart for the coming year, and don't have one yet, they use a notebook to record the birds seen in their site until the chart is acquired (and then transfer the data).

Thus far 39 observers have taken charts for the next year including several for new sites in the areas I mentioned at the June meeting as being under-represented. I expect/hope this number to have risen significantly after the July meeting.

— **Martin Butterfield**



## MONSTER BOOK SALE

### Massive Discounts

To make way for exciting new stock, Beth Mantle and her helpers will be discounting current titles by up to 40% at the July COG meeting.

Be early to ensure you don't miss out.

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!!

It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs.

It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Contact Barbara de Bruine

(02) 6258 3531.

## 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

6286 1564 or  
gramsay@actewagil.net.au

# COG SALES

The following items plus various pamphlets (most free) and membership application forms are available from the sales desk at COG meetings.

- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** by Taylor and Day - \$16.00
- **Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change** by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- **Bird Calls of the ACT** – CD - \$12.00
- **Bird Songs of Canberra** – Cassette - \$10.00
- **COG Car Stickers** - \$2.00
- **COG Badges** – red or grey - \$5.00
- **The Long Paddock: A Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW** by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **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
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** by Jo Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **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** - \$12.50
- **The Nestbox Book** by Gould League - \$12.50
- **Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape** by David Lindenmayer et al - \$34.00
- **Feather and Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art** by Penny Olsen - \$50.00

A range of substantially discounted titles, mostly from CSIRO Publishing, is also available at meetings or may be ordered via email/telephone by COG members only.

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

## Avian Whimsy #64 — The Case of the Migrating Fish Tag

*“Bird researcher Dale Whitiri was on an island off southern New Zealand examining the stomach contents of a baby seabird when an electronic device the size of a grain of rice spilled from the bird’s gullet. ... The native Maori catch the delicious chicks for supper, but hand over the stomachs to Whitiri and other researchers who monitor the birds’ diets.”*

*“Maori hunter Dale Whitiri on Big Moggy Island off southern New Zealand killed a young sooty shearwater chick, and found the tag.”*

Both versions have been reported in reputable newspapers and journals around the world. It makes no real difference to the actual story, which I’ll get to shortly, but it would probably matter to Ms Whitiri, who would I suspect either grin or growl a bit, depending on whether she sees herself as hunter or researcher! I’m also curious about another aspect of the reporting. The story only came to my attention a few days ago via a *News Alert* dated 16 June 2008 from the very highly esteemed (certainly by me) *Birdlife International*; what they failed to mention though was that the ‘news’ actually happened in April 2007, and the news reports I subsequently found were from August 2007! It never ceases to amaze and delight me the number of times I come across other stories from the one I think I’m writing, in the course of doing so.

Anyway, back to the case. The amazing thing about it was that the tiny electronic tag had last been seen by a human nearly three years previously, when it had been implanted (ouch) into a juvenile Rainbow Trout, 560km inland on the Columbia River in Washington State, USA, and 10,000km from Big Moggy Island (more usually known as Mokonui). It was the form of Rainbow Trout which we would call Ocean Trout, which goes to sea before returning to fresh water to spawn. And this one did so. (That is an extraordinary story in itself, but I must exert some self-discipline.) However, it most certainly did not swim to Mokonui, which is off Stewart Island, south of New Zealand. There is no doubt that it flew First Class, inside one of the parents of the **Sooty Shearwater** chick – or rather the tag did, as the fish would have effectively disappeared after a day or so of the voyage. Based on our knowledge of the movements of both fish and bird, which could have met anywhere in the north Pacific, the tag could have been in the shearwater’s stomach for up to 16 months before suddenly being regurgitated into the chick’s waiting maw.

The route it took from North to South Pacific is pretty well known however, based on knowledge also gained from electronic tags, but this time attached to adult **Sooty Shearwaters** (and there’s an impressively unhelpful name, as anyone who’s done some seabirding will attest!). This work was commenced in 2005, tagging birds nesting in New Zealand. (The other two major breeding areas for the species are in Chile, and the Snares Islands, 200km south of New Zealand. There are many Australian island colonies, but they are relatively small.) The results were astounding. The birds undertook an annual peregrination which took them in a vast figure-8 route, presumably using the prevailing winds. They head from New Zealand east across the Pacific, perhaps as far as the coast of Chile, then north and north-west to the north Pacific. Here they may go either to the east (either to Alaska or California) or west to Japan and the Kamchatka Peninsula. Having chosen one of these three destinations, they stay there. Intriguingly the parental pair, while rendezvousing faithfully every year in the same Southern Hemisphere burrow, do not necessarily spend the off-season together. Indeed it is known for mum to have the break off Alaska, while dad takes it easy across the Bering Sea. Curiously (as if the word has any meaning in such an extraordinary story!) en route home to breed, all birds pass south through the same narrow corridor of the central Pacific within five days of 7 October.

During the journey north, the average distance covered per day was over 900km; while in the northern summering grounds this decreased to a mere 220 or so km a day. Over the course of the year, each bird tracked covered an average of 64,000km!

A truly amazing context for the bizarre little tale of the miraculously appearing fish tag. Of the three known players in that drama, the fish and the chick are in no position to comment. What Ms Whitiri might make of her bi-hemispheric fame is an interesting question, which in part might depend on whether she’s a hunter or researcher. Or someone else again.

Ian Fraser [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au)



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## NEW MEMBERS

COG welcomes the following new member:

V. Pinder, Kaleen

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

August deadline

Wednesday 30 July 2008

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

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

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

## COG info

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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—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303  
[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:membership@canberrabirds.org.au)  
for changed address or other details

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

### COG website

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

### Office

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara 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](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au) with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

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### Gang-gang editors—Sue Lashko and

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## Gang-gang

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