

# Gang-gang

July 2009

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## July meeting

7:30pm Wednesday 08 July

*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 talk will be given by **Jack Holland** on “**The fuscous and Brown-headed, two often overlooked Honeyeaters.**”

The main presentation will be by **Julian Reid** titled: “**Cowra Woodland Bird Trends**”

Julian will present the results of an analysis of the first 6 years' data from quarterly bird surveys in the Cowra Shire region, NSW. Some COG members have participated in this monitoring project. Ross Cunningham and Julian from the Fenner School of Environment and Society at ANU undertook the analysis and reporting on behalf of BA and the Cowra Woodland Birds Program. The Cowra results will be compared with COG's woodland bird monitoring trends and other long-term data sets. Many woodland bird species appear to be in serious decline, not all of which is drought related, and the prospects for woodland bird conservation are canvassed.

Everyone welcome

## What to watch out for this month

Over the past month or so the ACT bird scene seems to have been the quietest I can remember, judging from the lack of observations posted to the chat line, and from my own impressions in my local patch. While it was dry in May the mild weather has continued, apart from a sudden sharp cold snap in mid June. However, of the species that overwinter, there has been only the occasional report of an **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Fuscous** or **White-naped Honeyeaters**. It is very surprising that there have been no reports at all of **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike**, **Grey Fantail** or even **Welcome Swallow**. It's hard to believe they've all left this winter, so if you observe a species that you think should really be somewhere where it's warmer, please do record it for COG's database; only in this way will we be able to measure the effect of global warming on our bird populations. A feature of my local area has been the almost complete absence of **Striated Pardalote** over the past couple of months, and more recently, **Spotted Pardalote**. Finches too have been much harder to find, particularly in any numbers.

The lack of reports, or birds to alert you to look out for, allows me to further develop a theme I started last month, ie **where do birds roost?** The trigger for this is finding out on closer observation that a **Restless Flycatcher** came into roost in a Photinia under a red box in my neighbour's backyard every night I checked ( a total of 12 times) in the period from 23 May to 13 June. The key to this was listening for the call, which it usually only did only for 1-2 minutes after arrival (a maximum of 5 minutes), as it worked its way down from the higher branches into the shrubbery below. This was from 4:42-5:00 pm except for one occasion at 5:08 pm, with a rough correlation with the light; ie it tended to come in earlier on darker cloudy evenings. While I failed to find it on four occasions after 13 June, it was seen several times within an hour of sun rise or sunset in the Chapman horse paddocks opposite Kathner Street about 500-700 metres away, indicating it was still around but seemingly having found a better place to sleep.

Waiting for it to arrive also alerted me to other species settling in to roost, such as **Crested Pigeon** and **Magpie-lark**, both of which were relatively quiet in their preparations, unlike **Red Wattlebird** or **Red-rumped Parrot** which called as they approached their roost tree/site. The last-named have been regularly observed this year going into roost in small numbers in another neighbour's Chinese Elm, where a few **Eastern Rosella** (and probably **Crimson** as well) also often roost.



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I have been interested in the question of where birds roost ever since I discovered the **Satin Bowerbird** roost in Chauvel Circle just outside my GBS site in the late 1990s. Sadly this has not been re-established since the fires. One thing that surprised me at the time was that while there may have been up to 80 birds roosting in a back yard, they seemed to do this individually. My experience when spotlighting is that it is not unusual to startle a single bird such as a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** happily sleeping in a bush. Yet other species seem to do so in groups such as **Common Starling/ Common Myna** whose communal roosts in our area are often in dense-foliaged trees such as pencil pines. Particularly in autumn/winter these roosts can be easily identified by the combined calling before they settle, or as they wake up, with roosts of the former often being noisy all night.

Other species also roost together, at least in the same tree, with up to 10 **Galahs** often bedding down in our local area. Pre-roosting, they are often rather nervous and noisy, trying out a few different trees before settling, but generally quiet once having done so. On the other hand the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** is a very noisy rooster, at least from my one experience of a roost on the eastern edge of Royal Canberra Golf Course and behind the house where we lived in 2003-2004. Despite the noise I was never able to count more than about a dozen birds there at any time, and interestingly they seemed to roost in little groups rather than altogether. I was aware of other roosts in the area, such as around the Yarralumla Nursery, and recently there seemed to be a roost site in the planted gums in Rudd Street.

So in this quiet time before the first migrants start arriving back, why not look for where birds roost in your local area. I find this is relatively easy at this time of the year with the dark evenings. Looking for dropping on pavements is one clue, or simply keep an eye on local shrubs/trees or bird movements towards evening. If you're looking for a bigger challenge why not try to find where the big cockatoo/corella flock currently in inner Canberra is roosting. They certainly do not all go out to the Cotter, judging from the numbers flying toward there in our area. Based on the experience of past years, Telopea Park or Callum Brae (corner of Narrabundah and Mugga Lanes) are likely spots. Alternatively if you discover something interesting why not post it on the chat line; there's lots to learn about this often overlooked subject.

While it still might be mid winter towards the end of July you might expect the first spring migrants to arrive. Will the earliest this year be **Welcome Swallows** or **martins** or one of the **bronze-cuckoos**? Again please post any observations and ensure that such records are entered into the COG database.

Finally a reminder that it's the end of the reporting year so make sure that all your observation sheets are put in – with all your help I'm looking forward to a bigger and even better Annual Bird Report for 2008-2009.

*Jack Holland*

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## Field Trip reports

### Wednesday 17 June - Namadgi National Park.

21 members and guests gathered at the Namadgi Visitors Centre (NVC) for a slightly more extended than usual trip to the Park. Starting with the woodland loop we were straight into the more interesting birds with a **Speckled Warbler** seen in the car park and 2 **Jacky Winter** seen within 100m of the start. At least 4 **Scarlet Robin** were seen here also. Close to the road was a very large flock of mixed **Thornbills** (guesstimated as at least 50 Yellow-rumped and 30



Buff-rumped). **Honeyeaters** here were White-eared and White-plumed plus an Eastern Spinebill. This element of the walk gathered 23 species.

Moving on to the Naas area the more notable birds were 3 **Australian King-Parrots**, a **Brown Falcon** being severely harassed by 6 **Australian Magpies**, a female **Nankeen Kestrel** and 2 soaring **Wedge-tailed Eagles** (both subadult birds). The shrubbery along the river was quieter than expected. This element recorded 20 species in total with 10 of them being additions to the daylist.

Our final stop was at the Glendale Depot where we parked adjacent to the helipad thinking no-one was likely to use it today. This was more or less confirmed by a staff member. The image attached shows that our expectations were not quite on the money but possibly thanks to the direction of the wind or the skill of the pilot it wasn't a problem. **Brown Treecreepers** were heard more or less immediately and eating lunch was enlivened by a large group of **Superb Fairy-wrens**. As we moved off up the hill more Brown Treecreepers (to a total of at least 3) were seen for some reason favouring lichen-covered rocks to timber! 2 **Southern Whiteface** were picked out of a mobile feeding flock and a female **Flame Robin** was identified.

Moving even further up the slope an **Australian Pipit** was added to the list and then the fun started. An immature male Hooded Robin was seen perched on a mullein stem, then another immature of the same species followed by an adult male and female for a minimum flock of 4 of this species. At one point they were dived at by an **Eastern Yellow Robin** (2 of them in total) and we started getting distracted by at least 2, and perhaps 4, **Diamond Firetails**.

This element recorded 25 species with 11 additions to the daylist, for a total of 44 species.

*Martin Butterfield*

### **Superb Lyrebird survey, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, 20 June 2009**

The sixth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird** was run under cloudy and foggy conditions. Sixteen COG members met at the gates of the Reserve at 8.30 am and were soon dispersed to the five main walking trails, Gibraltar Rocks, Devil's Gap, Fishing Gap, Ashbrook and Camel Back.

There were 19-20 individuals recorded within the Reserve with an addition 3 birds recorded east of the Reserve. This compares with 6, 14, 12, 12 and 19 from the previous surveys within the Reserve. Of these, 9-10 were reported from Camel Back and 5 from Ashbrook again confirming the birds' preference for the wetter eastern facing slopes.

During the survey 30 bird species were recorded with the highest number (14) from the Fishing Gap and Gibraltar Rocks trails. Interesting observations included **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Grey Butcherbird**, **Grey Fantail**, **Grey Currawong** and a single **Scarlet Robin**. As usual **White-eared Honeyeaters** were very vocal throughout the Reserve.

Many thanks to the participants and the staff at Tidbinbilla for again allowing us early access into the Reserve.

*Chris Davey*



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

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

### **STOP PRESS!**

**Strzelecki Track/outback tour**  
8 to 26 August 2009  
Two places have become available  
on this long booked out tour  
5% discount applies.

**Plains-wanderer weekends**  
**2009 season**  
14/15 November, 28/29 November  
12/13 December 2009  
2/3 January 2010

### **2010**

#### **February 2010**

SW Western Australia  
Christmas Island  
Tasmania

#### **March 2010**

Thailand

#### **May /June 2010**

New Guinea

#### **June 2010**

Top End  
Alice Springs

#### **4 —22 September 2010**

#### **Strzelecki Track Outback Tour**

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

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



## Future Field Trips

The Guidelines for the conduct and advertising of COG field trips are published on the COG web site. Both trip leaders and members/participants should familiarise themselves with these guidelines. In particular, the Registration Form should be completed for each field trip.



### Sunday 5 July - Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve Morning walk

Meet at 8:30am at the southern section of the reserve (as shown on the map below) - if arriving by car, take the dirt road off Sulwood Drive that meanders a short way round to run parallel to Erindale Drive and to a large dirt area. Limited spaces available.

This outing will spend 2-3 hours examining small remnants of Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland, as well as looking at some outstanding understory revegetation near Farrer Trig, which is ideal habitat for smaller birds. Terrain is sloped, covering a couple of kilometres, so medium fitness required. Participants advised to bring water, sunscreen and morning tea, which we plan to enjoy at Farrer Trig, with great views of the Tuggeranong

Valley, Bullen, Tidbinbilla and Brindabella Ranges. To register or for further information, contact Matthew Frawley on 6155 1358 (work), 6296 1026 (home) or email: [scallywags@effect.net.au](mailto:scallywags@effect.net.au)

### Canberra's Winter Birds; Sunday 19 July – Day bus trip

Each autumn/winter a number of bird species come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the colder parts of the year in the suburbs or surrounding areas. Examples of these are two species of red-breasted robins (**Scarlet** and **Flame**) plus two species which are much less common (**Rose** and **Pink**), a number of species of honeyeater including **White-eared**, **Fuscous**, **Brown-headed**, **Crescent** and **Eastern Spinebill**, and **Golden Whistler**. Several other species such as **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** will overwinter in the ACT in small numbers. The aim of this outing is to learn about them and to try to observe as many of these species within the ACT in the one day. Several of them will be the subject of the July COG meeting Bird of the Month talk.

#### Congratulations to Richard (Dick) Schodde

Congratulations to Dick for being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 'For service to science, particularly in the field of ornithology'.

Dick is a well-known, respected and long-term member of COG, having filled many positions on the committee including President during the mid to late 1970s. He is particularly well-known to COG for his many 'Bird of the Month' presentations, always provided with humour and a deep understanding of the subject matter.

In the 1960s Dick was a botanist with the then CSIRO Division of Land Research involved in survey work in Papua New Guinea. In 1970 he was the founding curator of the Australian National Wildlife Collection based at CSIRO, now one of Australia's most significant biodiversity resources. Over the years Dick has published over 150 papers and books covering the systematics, biogeography and evolutionary history of Australian birds.

Again, congratulations Dick for the well deserved recognition of your contribution to ornithology, in particular your work that has led to recognising the importance of Australia as a source of many cosmopolitan bird families.

*Chris Davey (President)*

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As is best suited for these types of outings, transport will be by two 12-seater buses. This involves a total of 24 people, and a decision has been made not to allow tag-a-long vehicles, to avoid the outing becomes 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 \$20 per person, including the COG admin fee, subject to filling both buses. This will be payable on boarding the bus. One bus is full and the second is filling fast, so to book your seat 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.

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 we expect to stay within the ACT boundaries. Given the scarcity of some of these birds this winter, if anyone knows a reliable place to find any of them, please contact Jack Holland.

### **Saturday 8 August — Lake Ginninderra Waterbirds for beginners — Morning**

This is the second of our bird walks in 2009 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or [anthony.overs@gmail.com](mailto:anthony.overs@gmail.com)) 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 30th August - Local private property - Morning**

We will visit a local private property located between Bungendore and Braidwood and will walk through some remnant woodland. We should be able to see a variety of local bush birds, and Glossy Black-Cockatoos have been seen here in the past. Depending on the level of interest, we will arrange a car pool out to the property. If you are interested in participating please book with Suzi Bond ([suzi.bond@anu.edu.au](mailto:suzi.bond@anu.edu.au) or 6125 1038 - work). Please bring your binoculars and some morning tea.

### **Oolambeyan National Park, mid week 14-18 September**

Expressions of interest are invited for this mid week trip, staying in a comfortable homestead (shared bedrooms) at this large national park south of the village of Carathool off the Sturt Highway in the Riverina. COG had a successful visit there in 2006. Oolambeyan was primarily set aside as habitat for the endangered Plainswanderer. It is on the Riverina/Hay plain, with varied habitats including sand dune/Callitris, acacia/borree, rosewood/belar and black box woodland. At this stage, we have agreement for a small group who will be doing some bird surveys for the Parks Service, as part of our birding activities, and these places are tentatively filled. However, we expect to be able to take another 4-5 people if plumbing works are completed on time - this can't be confirmed until early Aug. Entry to the park is accessible to 2WD vehicles, but 4WD will be useful in the park. For more details or if you are interested in going on the list, please contact Jenny Bounds (ph 62887802)

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## **Meeting to discuss the 2010 Outings program**

During September each year the Outings program is decided for the following year. The program is a most important part of COG's activities and, although well attended, these outings are run by a few enthusiastic individuals.

Anyone interested in the Outings program is invited to a general meeting that will be held at the Conservation Council, 3 Childers St, Civic starting at 5.30 pm on 3 September 2009. At the meeting we will discuss the program for 2010. The COG committee would appreciate as much input from the membership as possible.

Chris Davey (President)

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## Canberra Bird Notes now on the Web

All 34 volumes of Canberra Bird Notes (CBN), dating from 1968 to 2009, have now been scanned and loaded onto the COG web site as full-text searchable PDFs and are available to members and non-members of COG free of charge.

The scanned volumes can be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/>. Click on *Canberra Bird Notes* at the bottom of the screen page and from the left hand column choose the volume of interest. Once the volume is loaded it is possible to search for a specific item. A brief history of CBN is provided with instructions on how to download particular volumes. Indices for volumes 21 to 32 compiled by Harvey Perkins are also available.

Scanning of CBN has been a 10 month-long task of 150 volumes and some 5,100 pages undertaken by Alastair Smith. In March 2008 in discussions with Alastair it was decided that having the scanned text 'searchable' would greatly enhance the value of the digitised documents and so in July 2008 the COG committee approved funds for the purchase of much improved optical character recognition (OCR) software. This purchase greatly improved the speed and accuracy of the scanning process.

I would like to thank Alastair for the great job that he has done and all those interested in the birds of our local region owe him a debt of gratitude. The availability of CBN on the COG web site will allow a much wider audience to learn about and appreciate the birds of the ACT and surrounding regions. I would also like to acknowledge the webmaster, David Cook, who has been responsible for adding all of the scanned volumes to the website, and to Harvey Perkins for undertaking the thankless task of providing indices to the latter volumes. — **Chris Davey**

## Committee news

The ten-year analysis of woodlands data is well under way.

COG is now affiliated with BOCA. This means COG no longer needs to take out its own insurance, and information on COG outings will be included in the BOCA calendar in the future.

Many members have now renewed their membership for 2009-2010. With annual membership still only \$35, all members are encouraged to ensure they are still financial. Your address label indicates the expiry date for your subscription. - **Sandra Henderson**

## 2009-2010 subscriptions

Members are reminded that membership fees are due at the start of each financial year. Many thanks to all who have already paid their subscriptions for the coming financial year. The cost of an annual subscription remains at \$35. Payment can be made by cheque or money order mailed to the COG mailbox (details on back page), electronic deposit (details are on the membership form which is downloadable from our website <http://www.canberrabirds.org.au>) or by paying at a COG meeting. — **Susan Henderson**

### Binoculars for sale

**Leica Trinovid**, 8x32, 4 years old, have 30 years warranty, \$1100.

**Bausch and Lomb**, 10x50, \$290 (hardly ever used).

Both in very good condition, both with case.

**Jenny Bounds**

ph 6288 7802

Dusky Woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*)  
Callum Brae, ACT. **Julian Robinson**







Malaysia  
Kuala Lumpur  
Singapore  
Indonesia  
Christmas Island



## Christmas Island boasts:

- Abbott's Booby and the Christmas Island Frigatebird, two seabird that breed no where else.
- A Fruit-Pigeon, Hawk-owl and White-eye found nowhere else.
- Breeding colonies of White-tailed and Red-tailed Tropicbirds.
- Robber crabs the largest land invertebrates on earth.
- Coral reefs and tropical rainforest.

Australia

Perth



## Discover the Magic

### A Haven for Birdwatchers

Often referred to as Australia's Galapagos, Christmas Island is an unspoilt tropical paradise quietly hidden away in the Indian Ocean.

Covered in lush rainforest, the island is home to 23 resident or breeding species of sea and land birds. The Christmas Island Frigatebird and the Abbott's Booby - two of the world's rarest and most spectacular seabirds can often be seen soaring in the skies alongside White-tailed and Red-tailed tropic birds.

A Fruit-Pigeon, the rare Hawk-owl and White-eyes are just a few more examples of the amazing variety of birds that co-exist with an extraordinary diversity of plant and animal life such as the migrating red crabs and the gigantic robber crabs.

### Bird'n'Nature Week

Every September, our Bird'n'Nature Week guests join scientists in their research with daily field trips - including colour-banding birds along on the remote rocky coasts and rainforest canopy; spotlight the rare Christmas Island Hawk Owl; learning first-hand the nesting biology of Red-tailed tropicbirds.

Nightly seminars, photography workshops and special biology guided tours are included which explore the natural beauty and exotic wildlife of Australia's most spectacular, yet rarely visited tropical island



Discover this unique bird paradise by participating in the



7-13 September 2009

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## CONFERENCES and OTHER NEWS

### Fivebough Wetlands — November waterbird conference — Call for papers

The conference *Wetlands and Waterbirds: Managing for Resilience*, organised by Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Trust, Charles Sturt University and the Waterbird Society. The conference will be held in Leeton 9-13 November 2009.

Delegates who wish to present spoken papers or posters should send a title and abstract of no more than 400 words to Dr. Iain Taylor [itaylor@csu.edu.au](mailto:itaylor@csu.edu.au). The initial closing date for abstracts will be 1 August 2009. More information is available at the website. <http://fivebough.org.au/wetlands-and-waterbirds-conference>. — **Sandra Henderson**

### Mulligan's Flat Large Dam restoration

I would like to update members who visit this important reserve regarding the restoration of the large dam wetland/dam wall which we have been pursuing with the ACT Government on and off for some years. The dam wall breached more than 10 years ago during a period of heavy rains and, as there is potential impact for housing downstream with any future flooding, originally a sophisticated engineering solution costing several hundreds of thousands of dollars was put forward by the ACT planning authorities, to be funded when further development occurred; eg. in Throsby which is between Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo reserves. The issue remained on the back burner until COG and other groups made representations to the Government last year, in the context of the developing Sanctuary at Mulligan's Flat. A restored wetland within the fenced area would be another great attraction there. The Chief Minister took an interest and asked TAMS to look at options to fix the dam wall, and it looked promising for a while, with a less expensive but effective solution being investigated. However, we have been very disappointed that the recent ACT Budget provided no funding for this project, although it's not surprising given the tight budgetary situation. However, we will continue to pursue this.

In relation to Throsby which is now on the longer term planning agenda (10 years+), we are hopeful the northern neck area at least (which has high quality native cover and is being conservation-managed by the reserve managers), if not all of Throsby, will never be developed for a variety of reasons. Efforts are ongoing in that respect. — **Jenny Bounds**

### Proposed Gungahlin Superb Parrot survey

As I am sure many are aware there has been a recent increase of the sightings of the threatened Superb Parrot in the ACT with breeding now reported from Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve and observations of birds hollow inspecting in other areas.

COG has been concerned that this change may not be reflected in the management plan for the species in the ACT, in particular, we have been concerned about the lack of information in the Gungahlin area. I am please to say that the Department of Territories and Municipal Services (TAMS) has agreed to our request to conduct a survey in the area this coming breeding season.

This is an exciting prospect for it will allow us access to areas in parts of the northern ACT that we know little about. Although the primary aim of the survey will be to determine the extent of breeding activity of the Superb Parrot in the area it will also allow us the opportunity to gather information on other species.

Details have yet to be finalised but at this stage the survey will go from September 2009 through to the New Year. We will encourage as many members living in the Gungahlin area to take up a Garden Bird chart to record Superb Parrots, and any other species, using an area defined by a radius of 100m from a garden or place of work. In addition, we will be conducting on-ground surveys one day a month during October, November and December. It is envisaged that members will be allocated to a team which will be responsible for surveying a defined area. At this stage it is likely that the on-ground survey would take one morning a month over a weekend and will involve some walking.

This is a great opportunity for COG to have a major input into the management of a threatened species in the ACT, we will be relying on members to help with the survey and I urge as many as possible to put their hands up to help.

Although early days, if anyone is interested in participating in this survey could they please let me know.

My email is [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au), telephone 62546324 — **Chris Davey**



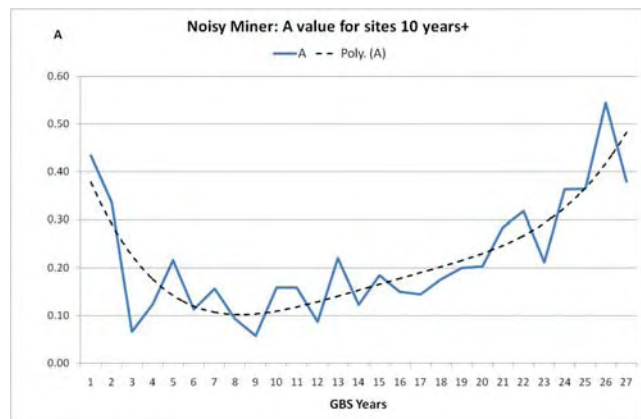
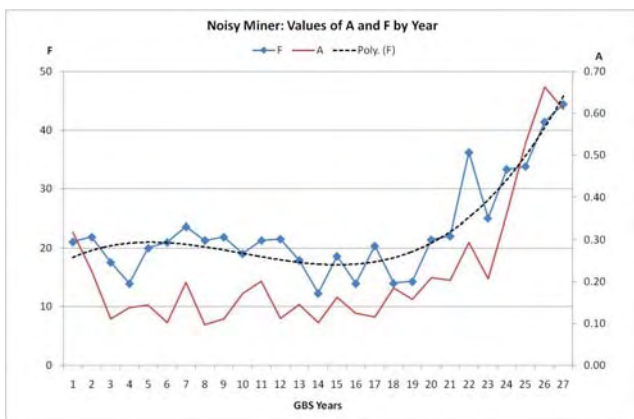
## Garden Bird Survey Notes

There have been very few chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant for the last few days of May and (most of) June.

- Satin bowerbirds seem to be active in a number of suburbs;
- A very large flock of Pied Currawongs in Scullin was noted as being unusually large when not attracted by a victim such as a Southern Boobook; and
- Tawny Frogmouths appear to be turning up again near nest sites (including mine at Carwoola).

### Increasing Noisiness

This is not an article about use of call-back! I have noticed a rather dramatic increase in the number of Noisy Miners within my site this year. This led me to examine the values of A and F for this species over the 27 completed years of the GBS. They are plotted in the LH chart below and show considerable increase over the last few years (the trend in F showing an  $R^2$  of 0.8). To minimise the effect of change in sites the value of A was recalculated using only sites in the GBS for 10 years or more. This is shown in the RH graph: again the trend is upwards and has a high value of  $R^2$  - approximately 0.79.



The average group size reported in the GBS is reasonably constant between years, and shows a standard within-year pattern, with the largest groups occurring after the young have fledged. There is very marked variability in the numbers reported at sites.

### Applications of GBS data

Information on Glossy Black-Cockatoos has been provided to assist in nomination of the species for protection in the ACT. A very bad graph of the seasonality of Satin Bowerbird observation was circulated on the chatline in response to a request on a chatline posting. GBS data was cited by the ACT Minister for Corrections in commenting on the decline of Common Mynas.

### GBS Redevelopment

The redesigned system has been distributed for data entry of Year 28 records.

**!!!! Charts !!!!!**

**Year 28 Charts will be collected, and Charts for Year 29 will be available for collection, at the July Meeting! Please return on time!!**

**CHANGE OF MONTHLY MEETING TIME**

**Remember the July Members' meeting will start at 7.30pm NOT 8.00pm.**

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage (*Blue Wren Cottage*) is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!!

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

It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact Barbara de Bruine  
(02) 6258 3531

[barbdebruine@hotmail.com](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com),

or see

<http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

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

Bird watching 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@actewagl.net.au](mailto:gramsay@actewagl.net.au)

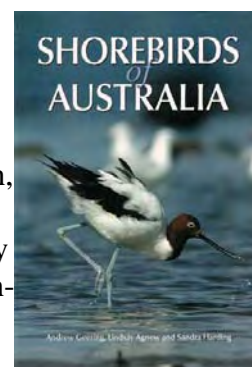
# COG SALES



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

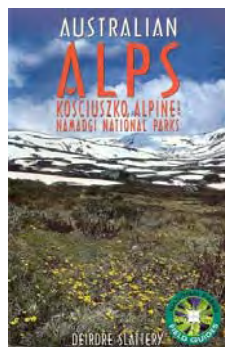
**Shorebirds of Australia (Geering, Agnew & Harding) \$33.00** — This title brings to-

gether the latest information about the evolution, ecology and behaviour of shorebirds and how they are distributed in Australia. This is a highly sought after title in the popular "CSIRO Publishing" series.



**Birdwatching on the Far South Coast** (see

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



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

**Watching Wildlife (Chris) - \$24.00**

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

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

**LIMITED STOCK: Messent Bird Calendar 2009 - \$8.00**

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

### Alec Chisholm: ‘the most querulous human being on earth’

Alec Chisholm died on a July day 32 years ago, in 1977, after 87 full and influential years. I, from my perspective as a very amateur student of birds and a passionate conservationist, regard Chis – as he was to all who knew him – as one of the great Australians of the twentieth century. I fear that many Australians now, even among those four reading this, may know him only vaguely if at all, and that would be unfortunate if true.

He was born in 1890 in Maryborough, Victoria, to a family of poor orchardists, ten of them living in a two-room mud brick cottage. It was depression time and he had to leave school at the age of twelve to find work but still, at the age of 18, published in the *Maryborough Advertiser* an important article called *Save the Birds*. In it he attacked the infamous slaughter of egrets for the hat trade; this article, reproduced as a brochure around the country, was influential in the eventually successful fight to end the trade. I am equally awed by the writing skills he must have taught himself, and by the courage of an 18 year old country boy in 1908 to express such emotions. The publication led to a life-time friendship with another giant, Mary Gilmore; he later wrote an introduction to one of her poetry collections, and she dedicated a poem to him. When, shortly afterwards, he went to work for the same newspaper it was owned by the father of EJ Banfield of Beachcomber fame and it fell to Chis to posthumously complete *Last Leaves from Dunk Island*.

In 1915 he went to work for the Brisbane *Daily Mail* where during eight years he became president of the Field Naturalists and the Gould League and among other things an adviser to the government on flora and fauna protection. In this role he advised on the framing of the 1921 Animals and Birds Act – landmark conservation legislation – and successfully threatened the leader of the opposition with unremitting newspaper hostility if he opposed it! He also led the fight against the koala slaughter in that state. His constant advertisements for any sighting of the already near-extinct Paradise Parrot led to the last photograph taken of it in 1922; at Chis’ death, he was the last Australian known to have seen a living Paradise Parrot.

He became one of the great ornithologists of his day, though totally untrained. He served as president of the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union and edited its scientific journal *Emu*, for which he also wrote numerous articles. In other fields he worked as press liaison officer to the Governor-General, edited the 1947 *Who’s Who in Australia* and the 10-volume *Encyclopedia of Australia*, and was editor of the Melbourne *Argus*. He wrote 16 books (half of them on birds), including classics like [Mateship with Birds \(1922\)](#), *Feathered Minstrels of Australia* (1926), *The Romance of the Lyrebird* (1960) and the wonderfully eclectic group of essays *Bird Wonders of Australia*, first published in 1934, but updated as recently as 1958. Some of the pieces come from the magazine *Walkabout*, a formative part of my youth. *Bird Wonders* was really a continuation of *Mateship*, a series of short delightful word-pictures that brought joyous details of Australian bird life into the worlds of those who may not have considered the topic before. The introduction by CJ Dennis, already a household name, doubtless helped its success. It is the writing of another time, with its rich literary allusions and names such as ‘Yellow-tailed Tit-Warbler’.

Despite his prolific writing, he belonged outdoors. In the preface to *Mateship* he points out that it is impossible to write such a book outside, as he had intended, because of the wonderful distractions! He cites the US writer John Burroughs who said “you cannot run and read the book of Nature”.

In England in 1938 he discovered the long-lost diaries of the great nineteenth century Australian bird collector John Gilbert, who worked for Gould. He was a big fan of Gilbert – as am I – but Henry Nix has suggested that he also unfairly denigrated Leichhardt in the process (*Gang-gang*, March 2005). In 1931 he arranged the live broadcast of a lyrebird from Royal National Park, almost certainly the first live broadcast of a wild bird in Australia. He wrote until he died – his last book review appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the week after his death.

When he was just 81, the other giant of early 20<sup>th</sup>C Australian ornithology, Tom Iredale, then 91, said of him ‘Chisholm is the most querulous human being on earth!’. And so he was – he spent a life querying why things were, and when necessary, fought hard to change them. Perhaps we too might seek to be more querulous, which would in itself do proper honour to a truly great Australian, who made the country a better place, for people and birds.

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





## WONGA

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## NEW MEMBERS

**COG welcomes the following new members:**

K Craven, Melba

J Buckley, Manuka

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**August deadline**

**Wednesday 29 July 2009**

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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*Vice President*—TBA

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*Address for correspondence*  
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Civic Square, ACT 2608

*Newsletter distribution*  
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

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## Gang-gang

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