



Gang-gang

JUNE 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING—All Welcome

7:30pm Wednesday 13.06.2012

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 first presentation, entitled: '**Are reserves protecting woodland bird diversity in the ACT?**', will be by **Laura Rayner**, a PhD student at the Fenner School for Environment and Society. Protected areas of the ACT have been described as "very close to adequate" with regard to their capacity for biodiversity protection. Such judgements are based on international areal conservation targets, rather than regional assessments of ecological effectiveness. So how are our woodland reserves performing on the ground for birds? Based on COG's long-term woodland bird monitoring data, one could argue: not very well.

The second presentation will be by **Karen Ikin**, also at the Fenner School, entitled '**Conserving our city's birds**'. Karen will present findings from her completed PhD research on how different habitat features (such as large trees, shrubs, parks and reserves), in Canberra's established suburban areas, urban fringe and future urban areas, affect the diversity of our city's birds. She will show how this understanding can help guide urban planning and management strategies to achieve positive conservation outcomes.

What to watch out for this month

It will only just be officially winter when this issue of Gang-gang reaches your letter- or in-box, but the early cold weather seems to have had a significant effect on summer visitors staying on this year, and on the number of birds that can be found. COG chatline reporting dropped significantly during May and this was particularly underlined while looking for spots to take the participants on the bus trip reported elsewhere in this newsletter. (Cont' page 2)

Earlier there had been some correspondence on the chatline about the cause of the shortage of small birds in winter in Canberra, with views expressed that the **Noisy Miner** moving into areas may be one factor. While undoubtedly a factor in some places, my years of experience in the local area, including being a very active atlaser from 1977 for both BA atlases and the COG atlas, and organising and leading COG outings including the winter bird bus trips, has taught me that winter has always been a time when small birds can be very quiet and hard to find. For example, while much reduced, there is often still a mixed feeding flock (MFF) in my GBS site, but it is much quieter and therefore often difficult to find. One reason for this seems to be that birds call a lot less compared with the warmer times of the year, probably to save energy in favour of their main activity of finding enough food to satisfy their requirements in a much shorter colder day.

One well known feature of Canberra birds in winter is their flocking behaviour and most people are familiar with the flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Galahs** and **Corellas** that are often seen flying noisily through or more often feeding on the ground on roadside, median strips, ovals etc. A less recognised aspect is that I find it easier to observe birds going to roost. Benj Whitworth posted on the chat line that he had seen 350 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** come in to roost at the Weetangera cemetery, a known winter roost site. I have also been seeing this species heading W over Adelaide Avenue on my way home from work. Given that their former roost sites at Mount Stromlo are no longer there, it's not clear to me where they're heading to, perhaps the pines and other trees round the Royal Canberra Golf Course in Yarralumla? They certainly don't seem to be the same as those relatively few heading out to the Cotter over my place, where I have regularly seen **Crested Pigeons** and **Galahs** settling down to roost, the former close together but the latter well spread out in the trees/bushes.

An example is that in early May, I was surprised to find a group of 9 **White-winged Choughs** flying into a tree close to the dam at the end of Kathner Street in Chapman, and even more surprised to then find them settling down to roost considering it was only 4:40 pm, well over half an hour before the sun went down, though it was relatively cloudy. They were huddling close together in a line on a branch, and while this behaviour is described in HANZAB, it was the first time I've ever witnessed it. It was also of interest that it was in the same tree in which they had unsuccessfully tried to breed late in 2011. I thought they might have roosted there regularly, but have not been able to find them anywhere in the area since. Perhaps like the **Common Mynas**, who have recently had a couple of roost sites near my home, they change sites regularly.

Of the last species to leave each autumn, the **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** have still been regularly recorded, much more so than the **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Olive-backed Oriole**. There also still seem to be plenty of **Welcome Swallows**, and some **Superb Parrots** are still being reported. There have been one or two reports of the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Mistle-toebird** and **Australian Reed Warbler** during May, and a **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** was seen at the ANBG during preparations for the winter birds' trip. Any sightings of any of the summer migrant species mentioned above, or in my previous columns, should be reported.

Of the winter visitors to Canberra, there have been very few reports of **Flame Robins** (though as reported elsewhere during the winter birds trip lots were seen south of Tharwa), and there have also been just a few reports of the **Rose Robin**, but no **Pink Robins**. Likewise there have been only a few reported observations of **Yellow-faced** or **White-naped Honeyeaters** during May, and the **Fuscous Honeyeater** has only been reported from the winter birds' trip. While there has been one report of the **Swift Parrot**, there have been no reports in May of **Crescent**, **Yellow-tufted** or **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**.

Once again, due to the relative lack of reporting to the COG chat line, I've had to rely on the Eremaea database for recent sightings of the above.

So while winter is a quieter time on the Canberra birds calendar, there are still things to look for. For example, just as this column was going to the editors there are reports on the chat line of a **Restless Flycatcher** and a **White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike**. Both species tend to be associated with Canberra winters, though not exclusively so.

— Jack Holland

Field Trip Reports

Stirling Ridge -- 3 May

Four COG members spent a morning exploring Stirling Ridge in Yarralumla starting from the Southern Cross yacht club, through woodland to the Mexican embassy & then up onto the ridge before returning to the lake. Forty species of birds were seen, being a mixture of woodland birds & waterbirds. The highlights were male **Golden Whistler**, female or imm. male **Satin Bowerbird**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **White-eared Honeyeater** & numerous **Pardalotes** & **Thornbills**. A pleasant morning in clear, calm conditions.

— Ian Hufton

National Arboretum - 13 May

A cold and windy start to the day welcomed 8 COG members and friends to the Arboretum.

During a visit to the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park, Himalayan Cedar Forest, Cork Plantation and forest plantings in between we managed to record 26 species including 70 **Rock Dove**, 45 **Red-rumped Parrot**, a flock of 19 **Little Raven**, a single **Scarlet Robin** and two **Double-barred Finch**. It appears that the clearing of Sweet Briar, Blackberries, log piles and a general clean-up has led to a reduction in the number of the smaller species, in particular thornbills and **Superb Fairy-wrens**, whilst the provision of straw and associated seeds as a means of stabilising and covering the ground has led to a significant number of ground-feeding seed-eaters such as the **Rock Dove**, **Red-rumped Parrot** and **Crested Pigeon**.



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2012 tours

Mid May Gulf Country

Cairns, Georgetown, Karumba,
Gregory R, Cloncurry & Mt Isa

1 — 13 July Top End

Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra

17 — 23 July

Alice Springs/MacDonnell Ranges

6 — 25 September

Strzelecki Track, Outback

31 Oct — 7 Nov

New Caledonia

11— 19 November

SW Western Australia

**Check our website
www.philipmaher.com**

Shepherd's Lookout—16 May

17 members and guests gathered at the appointed time and place. Although still quite cool (about 5C) the day soon heated up ornithologically with Steve pointing out a **Speckled Warblers** nest the development of which he had followed and [reported on the chatline](#).

Moving out towards the Lookout platform we observed at least two pairs each of **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Scarlet Robins**. The latter were using the dried *Verbascum* stalks as perches for surveying the surrounding territory. At least 4 **Speckled Warblers** were feeding on the ground near the Lookout and a range of bush birds were seen in the surrounding scrub.

We then moved through an unlocked gate into another part of Woodstock where Lindell showed us the roost hollow of an **Australian Owlet Nighthjar**. It was tough to get a photograph due to the position of the sun relative to the nest but everyone did see the bird snoozing happily.

We then moved back towards the gate adding a few more species (including 2 **Black-shouldered Kites**, 2 **Red-browed Finches** and 4 **Double-barred Finches**). By the end of the walk we had recorded 32 species - not bad for a cool Autumn day. While chatting in the parking area a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** flew overhead and 4 **Galahs** passed by, making the total count 34!

As usual, a full species list will appear on the Trips element of the COG website in due course.

— **Martin Butterfield**



Testing the Lookout

Canberra's Autumn/Winter Birds; Sunday 27 May – bus trip

Though it was held earlier than in previous years, the lack of birds that seems to have characterised the second half of May 2012 made it more difficult than usual to choose where to go to in this annual event. The aim of this trip is to learn about the species that come down from the mountains and higher areas around Canberra to spend the cooler parts of the year in the suburbs and surrounding areas, as well as any summer migrants which may spend the winter here in small numbers.

The closing of many of the Canberra Nature Parks earlier in the week for the annual kangaroo cull further limited our options, and ruled out several favourite spots where birds are usually guaranteed, so we stuck to our original plan to do something different and head south to look for birds along the river corridor. This paid immediate dividends as, at our first stop, the extreme southern end of Pine Island, as we opened the bus doors, we could hear a mixed feeding flock (MFF) in the gums and Casuarinas above us. This mainly consisted of **Spotted Pardalote**, **Weebills**, **Brown** and **Striated Thornbill**, and, at lower levels, **Superb Fairy-wren**, as well as a flock of **Red-browed Finches** on the ground. In amongst these was a target bird, the winter visiting **Golden Whistler**, a bird in female/immature plumage but yellowish underneath. It allowed us very clear views and gave some lovely renditions of its call, leading us to conclude it was a young male. Also seen and heard was a **White-eared Honeyeater** with all participants having good, though distant views. A lone **Silvereye** and a **Striated Pardalote** were also seen by some, surprisingly the only representatives of these species seen all day, as most seem to have left Canberra already this year.

Our plan to take pot luck and stop where we saw bird activity as we worked our way slowly southwards was less successful until we turned onto Smiths Road south of Tharwa, and Jenny saw **Flame Robins** on the fence. We stopped and watched up to 8, including several males, in typical habitat, with short and surprisingly green (better for insects?) grass and lots of perches from which to pounce, such as dead Verbascum stalks. Moving along we found at least double this number around and beyond the temporary bridge over the Gudgenby River, and later another three high on wires near the Tharwa Bridge, a surprising number given the apparent scarcity of this species closer to Canberra this year. Our stop at the nearby Tharwa Sandwash afforded good views of a co-operative female **Scarlet Robin**, but its partner stayed well out of sight. In fact, the only male we saw was one flying across Tidbinbilla Road, again a surprise given the comparatively high numbers in areas surrounding Canberra this autumn.

Our last stop was the Australian National Botanic Gardens, where again we encountered a MFF of a similar composition as soon as we alighted from the buses. This one contained a yet to depart **Grey Fantail**. A walk through the lower parts of the gardens revealed a still fully blue male **Superb Fairy-wren**, many **Eastern Spinebills**, a couple of active **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** feeding high in a gum, a lone **White-naped Honeyeater** seen by some briefly on an open perch before it vanished and, higher up in the gardens, a group of at least 6 **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, again feeding high in a gum. However, the undoubted highlight was a resplendent male **Golden Whistler** which, though feeding high in the trees, was very co-operative and allowed everyone great views.

As we returned the participants to their cars at the National Library, we passed flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Galahs** feeding under the trees south of the lake, very typical of a Canberra winter.

A total of about 40 species were seen for the day, including 12 of the 20 or so target species we were looking for. These included **Welcome Swallows** hawking high for insects at a number of spots. Given the weather of the preceding three days, we were again lucky with an almost perfect late autumn day, save for the wind that picked up from the south during morning tea at Pine Island, but luckily died down later. Again participants learned lots about the winter Canberra bird scene, and thoroughly enjoyed socialising in the buses and while bird watching. My sincere thanks again to Jenny Bounds for driving the second bus, and for helping with the planning and guiding of this event.

— **Jack Holland**

Kosciusko to Coast

K2C bird survey - Sunday 22 April 2012

The 5th K2C bird survey was held on a cool overcast morning on 22 April. We weren't bedevilled by fog as on previous autumn surveys but we didn't see much sunshine either which seemed to keep the birds quiet at some sites. In particular it was the sort of weather which doesn't favour honeyeater migration and there was almost no sign of the usual autumn mass movement apart from a few flocks of **Red Wattlebird**.

Eight teams from COG covered 35 sites on 21 properties from Williamsdale to beyond Bredbo. Several sites could not be visited on the day and were surveyed during the following week. A total of 75 species was recorded during the morning, with most of the expected autumn woodland birds, but few waterbird species. Two species were seen for the first time in the survey, both on the lovely "Cockatoo" property. Three **Painted Button-quail** were flushed in the survey site and three **Spotted Quail-thrush** were seen on the walk in

Threatened species were again a feature of many sites and are one of the reasons these surveys are so enjoyable. **Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail, Speckled Warbler, and Scarlet Robin** were seen in good numbers, as well as **Southern Whiteface** and **Restless Flycatcher**.

Some of the late-staying summer migrants included **Dusky Woodswallow, Olive-backed Oriole** and **Rufous Songlark**. Winter migrants such as **Golden Whistler, White-eared Honeyeater** and **Flame Robin** were conspicuous at many sites. Of interest was a spectacular flock consisting of 110 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** and 70 **Little Corella** all perched in the one tree at "Ingelara". **Black-shouldered Kites** were also prominent at many properties, hovering over grassy paddocks.

Sincere thanks to the COG volunteers, landholders, K2C Facilitator Lauren Van Dyke, and Greening Australia. Scottsdale Reserve was not available this time for our usual post-survey gathering so we enjoyed lunch at the Snowy Mountains Café, courtesy of K2C.

The next survey will be held on **14 October 2012**.

— **Nicki Taws**

Jerrabomberra Wetlands—update and call for volunteers

As most of you will be aware Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve has a new Management Plan and a task within this is to create a Master Plan for the reserve's future development. COG members will be able to have input into the Master Plan when it goes out to public comment either as individuals or as a COG submission.

But COG members can also become actively involved in the reserve now by helping out with work on the ground. We have started volunteer work parties with the aim of establishing a strong 'Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands' to assist with many aspects of the running of the reserve. Below are a list of dates, both mid-week and weekends for the next few months.

The work activity for the below dates will be focused on completing and maintaining the Jerrabomberra Creek revegetation work – finish planting and in spring the control of weed growth in this area. We will also start to tackle the African Boxthorn – recently declared a Nationally Significant Weed.

The Friends will not be purely about weed control and planting – there are many other programs that they can run or assist with; eg feral animal monitoring, water quality, habitat improvement such as maintaining islands in Kellys Swamp, photo monitoring.

If people could try and let me know that they are coming then it enables me to gather enough resources for the planned activity. If you have any questions regarding volunteering please feel free to contact me by email or come and have a chat if you see me at Wetlands.

Michael Maconachie, Ranger, JWNR, ACT Parks and Conservation

michael.maconachie@act.gov.au

Tuesdays 9.30 to 12.30 - meet at the car park on Dairy Road

5 June, 3 July, 7 August, 4 September, 16 October

Saturdays 12.00 to 15.00 meet at the car park at Dairy Road

9 June, 21 July, 11 August, 1 September, 13 October

Garden Bird Survey Year 32

The next Garden Bird Survey year (32!!) starts on the 3rd of July. New Charts will be available for collection at the June Meeting.

— **Martin Butterfield**, GBS Coordinator

Future Field Trips

Before the start of each trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities. The form reads as follows:

I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.

Changes to trips are notified on COG chat-line

<http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>

and trips page of COG website: <http://canberrabirds.org.au/>

Saturday 9 June — Western Birds— Bendick Murrell NP — All Day

This is being planned as a "back to the future" trip to a location COG visited several times in the late 80s to mid 90s when it was a State Forest. Bendick Murrell was declared a Nat. Park in 2011 <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/parkContact.aspx?id=N1173>.

Jenny Bounds and I recently drove up for the day and explored a little of the park, very little as the recent rains had made the tracks very boggy. However, there were some nice western birds there, especially **Grey-crowned Babblers** and **Little Friarbirds**. I have yet to have a comprehensive discussion of the trip with the rangers (based in Queanbeyan) and so will aim to give more details later. Look for updates on the trips page of the COG website, in June Gang-gang and possibly on the chat-line.

It will be an early start from Canberra, or people could stay the previous night in Young or Boorowa. Please pre-register with Michael Robbins by email: mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au to facilitate car pooling

Saturday 16 June — Superb Lyrebird Survey at Tidbinbilla

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the Superb Lyrebird to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. If interested and for further details please contact Chris Davey on 62546324 (h), email chris_davey@aapt.net.au.

Please note that if the weather is inappropriate on the Saturday we will try to run the survey the following day.

Wednesday 20 June — Lake Road, Bungendore

The next Wednesday Walk will be on 20 June 2012. The walk will be to Lake Rd Bungendore and we should meet where that road comes off the road to Smith's Gap. The exact venues we will visit will be determined later and will be advised on a message to the Chatline.

Sunday 24 June – Australian National Botanic Gardens

Meet **Anthony Overs** at the bus stop at the top of the carpark at 9.00am. This walk is suitable for beginners (bring field guide and binoculars) and experienced birders. No booking required.

Sunday 1 July – Glendale, Namadgi National Park

Meet **Sue Lashko** in the Namadgi Visitors Centre carpark at 8.30am, where we will carpool before driving south to Glendale Depot. We will spend the morning birding along the track between Glendale and Brandy Flat hut, a distance of 5km. Depending on the bird activity and the energy levels of the participants, we may or may not reach the hut. Bring morning tea and lunch, as well as warm clothing. No booking necessary.

Sunday 15 July - Superb Lyrebirds - Tidbinbilla NR

This walk will be along the Lyrebird and Cascades Trails in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. These have been rebuilt after the 2003 fires. We will be looking for the birds that are using the rapidly regrowing wet forest of the eastern slope of the Tidbinbilla Range. You will hear Lyrebirds and hopefully see one. Come prepared for changeable weather conditions. Bring morning tea if you wish; we will finish well before noon.

Registered participants meet 8 am at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve car park (adjacent to the Visitor Centre). The usual vehicle entry fee to the Reserve will apply.

Registration is essential as the number of participants will be limited. Bookings may be made by phoning the trip's leader **David McDonald** on **6238 3706** or by emailing him on david[at]dnmcdonald.id.au.

Saturday & Sunday 21-22 July — Eden Pelagic (two single day trips)

As there is sustained interest in the Eden pelagics, a day trip, led by Anthony Overs, has been organised for July. This will again be run from Eden Harbour with Freedom Charters. As usual we will travel to the edge of the continental shelf in search of seabirds, cetaceans and seals.

We will meet at Eden Harbour early on Saturday morning (time to be confirmed) and aim to return to dock by 3pm. Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but no doubt there will be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip. Seasickness pills or other remedies are recommended for those prone to seasickness. All participants should bring water, lunch, and sunscreen. More detailed instructions will be available closer to the day.

This trip is now full but to go on the waiting list, in case of cancellations, contact Sandra Henderson (6231 0303 or shirmax2931@gmail.com).

Sunday 29 July - Mount Majura Vineyard

This is a repeat of a most excellent field trip run last year in the Mount Majura Vineyard (MMV). MMV is now the ACT's only working vineyard that offers both wine making and cellar door facilities and sits at the foot of Mount Majura, on the eastern side. Stuart spends nearly every working day outside and has managed to 'tick' more than 68 species within the parameters of MMV, which be-

lies the notion that agriculture (viticulture) creates 'poor birding zones'. To his surprise, with the advent of winter, an avian exodus did not occur; on the contrary, large flocks of **Diamond Firetail**, **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, and both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robin** were sighted on a regular basis. 'Nothing can be promised; at worst you will experience a nice morning walk, with some hills, fresh air, outstanding views and some tidbits of info about MMV and Canberra wine in general. Please dress appropriately for this walk, as the terrain ('terroir') is quite open and the ground can be uneven and rocky in parts (though we will be sticking to established paths as a rule). Rabbit holes hidden by grass pose a threat to ankles.

Meet at 8.45 am in MMV's large car park off Majura Rd (<http://www.mountmajura.com.au/index.html>) which runs between Canberra Airport/Pialligo (in the south) and the Federal Hwy/Horse Park Drive (in the north), for a prompt 9 am start.

Before entering the vineyard, the bottom of your shoes will be sprayed with Methylated Spirit which will prevent the spread of Phylloxera fungal spores which have had, and could have, a devastating effect on the root systems of grape vines.

The walk will finish by 11-1130am. There are toilet facilities and the cellar door will be open if people wish to avail themselves of a seated wine tasting at the conclusion of our walk.

No booking required. **Stuart Harris**



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South West Birds & Botany 15 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 20th October 2012 Experience the biodiversity of W.A.'s famous South West region.	Lord Howe Island 8 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 3rd November 2012 Join LHI expert Ian Hutton to see unique & diverse island wildlife.

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ANU winter bird monitoring

ANUgreen would like to thank COG for participating in their autumn bird monitoring program, which included a workshop on 1 April and a survey on 14 April. Both events were very successful, with nearly 40 volunteers attending either event, including ANU students and the wider ACT community.

ANUgreen is now preparing for its winter bird monitoring program and we hope that COG will continue to support us. Details as follows:

Bird workshop Saturday 7 July

Location: Innovations Building 124 ANU, corner of Eggleston and Garran Road

Presenters: Sue Lashko, Kevin Windle (COG)

Tim Yiu (ANUgreen)

Workshop rundown

- 1. Bird identification (using pictures and online databases)*
- 2. Survey methodology*
- 3. Field trial*

Bird survey Saturday 14 July

Location: Innovations Building 124 ANU, corner of Eggleston and Garran Road

We are looking for COG members to participate in our survey, where they will be asked to lead a team of 2-3 volunteers. The 2-hectare 20-min search method will be used, and each team will do a maximum of 6 neighbouring sites. The whole survey should take less than 3 hours.

**A thank you BBQ will be provided afterwards.*

Exact times will be confirmed closer to the date.

Please contact the ANUgreen Biodiversity Officer **Tim Yiu** (tim.yiu@anu.edu.au) for registration and inquiries.

Winter Birds Survey: June 6—July 31

The Winter Birds exercise is on again, previously done in 2010. The object is to record any Winter occurrence of 12 species generally regarded as absent from this area in the colder months although perhaps not ‘migrants’ in the sense that they quit south-eastern Australia altogether.

The exercise is for the 8 weeks to July 31, starting next Wednesday June 6.

The target species are:

Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
A Reed-Warbler
Rufous Whistler
Rufous Songlark
Western Gerygone
W-t Gerygone
Noisy Friarbird
Olive-backed Oriole
Dusky Woodswallow
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Superb parrot



During those 8 weeks all observations of those species in the COG area, with numbers and the (shortly stated) location, are to be sent to me by email. Reports can be sent when obs are made or weekly or as convenient. I shall give periodic reports and a final report.

In 2010, 56 observers contributed at least one report and all those species were recorded except for the **Rufous Songlark** and the **White-throated Gerygone**. My own view is that this year bush bird numbers overall are at a low point, and conditions in the local area might prove to be less hospitable for the species concerned. However, we shall see. The exercise depends on your willingness to send me reports.

— Geoffrey Dabb : gdabb@iinet.net.au

Gang-gang Cockatoo Reporting Month: June 2012

In August 2010 and June 2011, Gang-Gang Cockatoo surveys were conducted in the Canberra urban area in an attempt to estimate Gang-gang numbers. These consisted of observers heading to known Gang-gang hotspots and counting numbers during one hour on a specified day.

These surveys failed to locate significant numbers of Gang-gangs, leaving the question of the abundance of Gang-gangs in the Canberra urban area unanswered.

In an attempt to get a baseline measurement of Gang-gang abundance in this area using a survey methodology that can easily be repeated from year to year, a Gang-gang reporting month will be conducted in June 2012.

During this month please report all sightings of Gang-gangs anywhere in the ACT to: calyptorhynchus@gmail.com

Obviously, it will be easier if you collect your sightings and supply them to me weekly, or in one hit at the end of the month.

Please report:

1. Gang-gangs observed as you go about your ordinary business, ie at home, around the suburb, from work etc *or* Gang-gangs observed when you go birdwatching in 'urban bush-land' (but not further afield). So if you go to Callum Brae, Black Mountain or whatever, count these, but not if you go to Namadgi, Tidbinbilla etc.
2. Birdwatching trips in urban bushland where *no* Gang-gangs are observed.*

“Rules”

1. Give an accurate location or latitude/longitude reading.
2. Give a time accurate to ten minutes.
3. Describe the weather conditions at the time.
4. Give a number for the Gang-gangs observed and try to identify by sex and age, ie adult male/adult female, immature male (immature female may be impossible to identify in the field).
5. If heard only, report as 'heard', specifying place and time. If more than one bird is heard report the number heard.
6. Describe the behaviour of the birds, ie if feeding specify which trees they were feeding in, any interactions etc.

Describe the birds' movements, eg flying over, flew into trees then fed, feeding then flew away, direction of flight etc

If you observe a group of birds, and then observe a group of similar numbers in the same place, say, an hour later, then they are probably the same birds, so don't report them again, but if you observe a group in one place and a group in the same place at any greater time interval (two, three hours later), then report both sightings.

I will collate the records and publish them, and if a survey using the same methodology can be conducted in subsequent years, trends in Gang-gang abundance from year to year will be able to be monitored.

In this and future surveys the ratio of number of sightings to number of observers will be calculated. Observers not encountering Gang-gangs should report that they were observers but found no Gang-gangs, as otherwise observer effort will be understated (and thus the sighting ratio overstated, making it misleading as an indicator of population trends).*

If you look for Gang-gangs in June please report the results whether or not you find Gang-gangs.

Not finding Gang-gangs is just as important as finding Gang-gangs!

*The reason for wanting nil returns is that the metric for the survey is going to be:

A-B/C

Where A =number of reports of GGs

B =number of nil returns from urban bushland trips

C =number of observers submitting observations

— **John Leonard**

COMMITTEE NEWS

- Work on COG's new website continues to progress, with initial testing being undertaken.
- Committee members are continuing discussions with other groups which have databases which COG may wish to cooperate with.
- COG will be represented at an ACT Government Restorative Justice Conference for a number of young people convicted of vandalism at two recreation sites.

— **Chris Davey**

Photo Ops 9 — About the House

Bird photography opportunities, like charity, begin at home. If you have the right vegetation and garden structure your backyard is a photographic gift unmatched by any Canberra reserve or hotspot further afield.

Not only is it possible to attract large numbers of birds to your garden by clever choice of plantings and thoughtful placement of branches, bird baths and stray sunflower seeds, but you have the benefit of familiarity with their habits and, since you live there, plenty of time to observe and prepare for photography. Most advantageous of all you have a gigantic and extremely comfortable bird hide. (The house is possibly surpassed as a bird hide by the car due to the latter's mobility, though this is debatable since the home does offer greater predictability and familiarity).

It's not surprising then that people get some of their best bird photographs at home. Obviously the interest of these shots will depend on the garden and the quality of bird it attracts, and it is here that my own situation is less than optimal. Living in an apartment is not great for birds. When I bought the place I partly chose it because the unit faces onto a golf course, thinking that green and trees would mean interesting wildlife, but that turns out not to be the case. Most of my birds are 'black and white' and common and I must have one of the lowest species counts of any garden bird survey in Canberra. No sparrowhawks tearing apart small animals on my fence and no honeyeaters at all other than the occasional **Red Wattlebird** flying past the top floor on its way to somewhere interesting.



Still I have a bit of fun capturing what birds do spend time in this very urban environment. The Silvereye reminded me of the gorgeous girl alone in a bar waiting to be picked up by a handsome young brain surgeon but who instead ("why me?!!") is accosted by the town drunk – in this case a **Superb Fairywren** that had just finished bathing in a puddle.





Both species of **Rosella** like to sit above my car destroying the Chinese Elms and dropping branches on the roof, but I don't mind because they are by far the most colourful of our avian visitors.

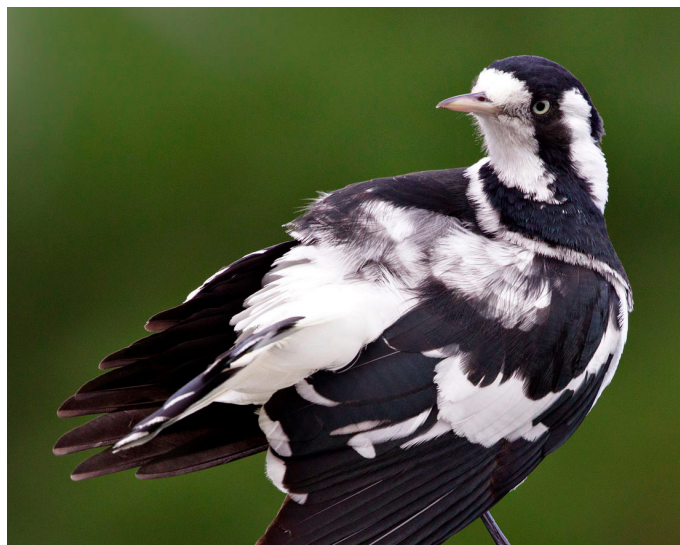


The **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** portrait is of my regular mate, the one who turns up about weekly for a few of those sunflower seeds, occasionally bringing 50 of his/her closest friends to the roof that angles up to the office window. When this happens I am likely to hear a polite tap and look up to see a dozen curious faces silently peering at me through the glass, looking comical and very endearing.



A pinnacle of bird excitement here was having **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** in the pine tree. Although the photo suffers from being taken through the fence, it remains one of my star 'at home' photos simply because it is probably the most exotic bird I've seen here.

The **Maggie-lark** is normally difficult to photograph in my experience, until this visit when I managed to get some great views as they sat on the eye-level fence between us and the golf course.



Finally, a couple of photos I've taken in other people's gardens – a **Little Friarbird** in northern NSW caught in the kind of action I imagine garden owners see all the time, and a family of **New Holland Honeyeaters** having a raucous dinner-table conversation near Yowrie on the south coast.

—Words and Photos by Julian Robinson

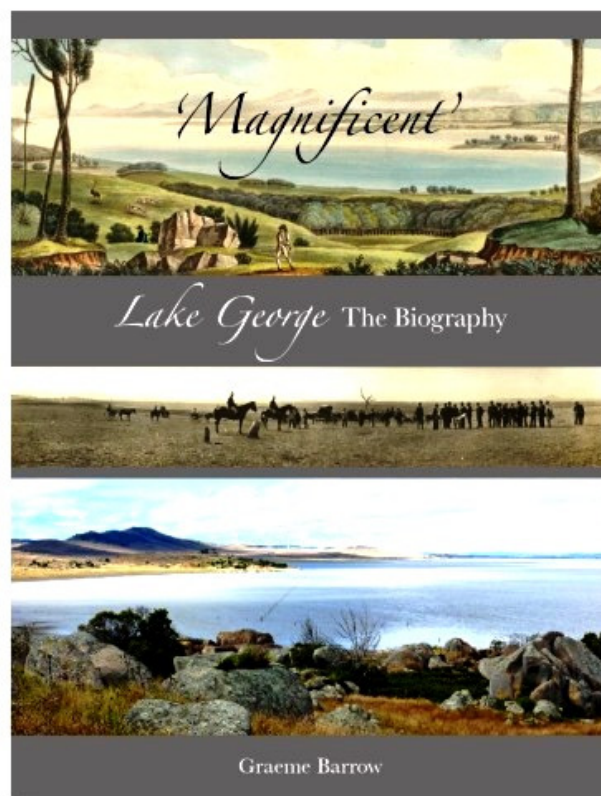


New book about a mysterious lake

Lake George is a vast sheet of water not far by road from Australia's national capital, Canberra. It attracts fascinated interest because its waters regularly disappear before returning, sometimes years later. Indigenous people knew of the lake for thousands of years before Europeans discovered it in 1820.

Settlers built homesteads around the lake, some of which survive to this day. Lake George was in contention to be the site of Australia's national capital and is famous for its extraordinary bird life. Its waters can be highly dangerous and in the space of eighteen months in the 1950s, seven adults and three children lost their lives in separate boating accidents.

124 pp, maps, illustrations. ISBN 9780977532858



Price: \$30 including postage.

Orders/payment: Graeme Barrow, 3 Verco Street Hackett ACT 2602

Ph 02 6262 7533. Email: granorab@grapevine.com.au

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, or

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.

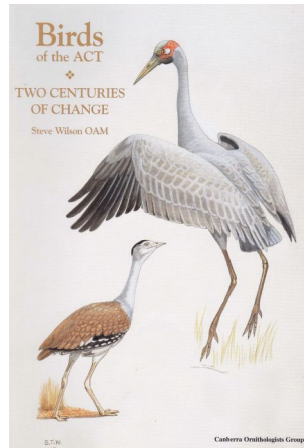
Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay

6286 1564 or

gramsay@grapevine.com.au

COG SALES

Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change, Steve Wilson OAM, Canberra Ornithologists Group

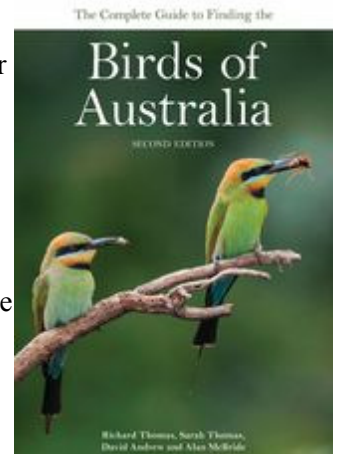


Published by COG in 1999, a number of this historic book were found in COG's dusty archives recently. The book provides a 'history of recorded birds' of the ACT for two centuries. It drew on knowledge of birds by local indigenous groups, early settlers, scientific publications, records of pre-COG bird-watchers and then on the garden survey. It contains a Margaret Preston woodcut and illustrations by Robin Brown. Many of the people who contributed to the book are still active members today.

A beautiful book for only \$10.

The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed, Richard Thomas, Sarah Thomas, David Andrew, Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.



Old stock specials—\$20 or less

CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series

- Australian Magpie: Biology and behaviour of an unusual songbird, \$20
 - Kookaburra: King of the Bush, \$20
 - Wedge-Tailed Eagle, \$15
 - Herons, Egrets and Bitterns, \$10
- Also:** – Watering house and Garden (LandLinks) \$15
Also: – titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): including: **Albatross, Mound-builders, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Bustard.**



WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com
phone 02 6251 3136

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

M. Buszynski, Hughes
P. & L. Kowald, Wanniasa
D. Le Roux, Queanbeyan
B. Inglis, Scullin

NEXT NEWSLETTER

July deadline

Wednesday 27 June 2012

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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Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership
2012-2013 memberships:
• Individuals, families and institutions: \$35
• school students (under 18): \$17.50.

Membership inquiries—
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cogoffice@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

Cog library
For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on 6254 6520

COG E-mail Discussion List
COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'. Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

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Gang-gang

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