



Gang-gang

May 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

Wednesday 12 May

Details pg 3

Contents



Field trip reports	1
From your committee	3
Future field trips	3
Avlan Whimsy #20	8
Membership application form	9
Garden Bird Survey	11
COG information	12



Yellow-faced Honeyeater
(*Lichenostomus chrysops*)

Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

SACRED IBIS

A frieze on a ledge;
Scimitar beaks sheathed
Inside warm wings.

The sun's early rays tint them
Flamingo pink.

Their preening surprises with its grace
Before the short, floppy flight down
To breakfast on the tip.

A later light discloses
Soiled scavengers
With flaky skin on bald heads.

It's a crime scene, the way
They plod together, stabbing the
refuse.

Sated
They will fly to a nearby lake
Not quite like the Ancient Nile

Were Thoth, God of writing
Visited earth in their guise
Proclaimed them sacred
To be buried with Kings;

And Artemis, Goddess of the moon
Bathed them milk-white
In her image.

Angela Johnson c2003.

Field Trip Reports

Yathong at Easter 2004

The Easter camp at Yathong was conceived and expertly coordinated by Noel Luff.

Yathong is a huge nature reserve, 107, 241 hectares, bang in the semi-arid centre of New South Wales. We were based at the refurbished shearers' quarters, some distance from the homestead, that location reflecting what the management plan calls the past 'rigid class distinctions' of the larger Riverina sheep runs.

In accordance with the trend at recent COG camps, half of our complement of 21 arrived on the Thursday, the nominal 'day before'. One of the first items into the spacious refrigerators – after a few small important bottles – was the **Barn Owl** that Tom Green had picked up by a roadside somewhere. A large proportion of the total bird list had been ticked by midday Friday.

The final species total was 99, with 36 of these being birds not likely to be seen around Canberra. It would have made the ton if we'd counted the Barn Owl or if Pat Moffat's non-specific cuckoo had been added, but Martyn Moffat was able to add the 99th bird – a **Zebra Finch** and the only finch

Letters to the editor

Please send letters, snippets etcetera intended for this column to the editor. Contact details are on page 12 of this *Gang-gang*. As with all sections of the *Gang-gang*, space allocated to this section each month will be limited. Therefore entries are more likely to be published if they are kept to a minimum length.

recorded.

It was distinctly warmish at times - even if you didn't take part in the scheduled scaling of the east face of the Merrimerrwa Ridge. Tom pointed out the reason for absence of entries in the visitors' book for December to March: no visitors with any choice would really want to be there in summer.

It was generally agreed that overall bird numbers were low as a result of the drought. Although a large tally of species was recorded, this was partly due to several 'tanks' having recently filled, and the presence here and there of greenish weed growth, mainly burrs of various kinds. Many species observations represented only one or two individuals across a large area and range of habitats.



'Yathong parrots' Blue Bonnet *Northiella haematogaster*, Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*, Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*, Mulga Parrot *Psephotus varius*.

Under the heading of 'highlights and other moments' the following come to mind.

The busy and ever-alert Mike Doyle striding across the grasslands in the rust-and-gold light of each outback sunrise to find the first birds

of the day. One morning they were **Banded Lapwings**.



'Ten-mile Tank'

Sue Lashko becoming expert in the daily routine of the **Blue-winged Parrots** as they fossicked for the small black seeds of Common Heliotrope at the home 'tank'.

An unusual case of binoparalysis when Fiona Johnson was failed by her prestigious brand of binos. Fiona forewent the option of limiting her observations to birds at a precise distance of 5.753 metres in favour of borrowing Stu Harris's slightly less prestigious but focusable reserve pair.

Noel Luff being rewarded for his tireless patrolling of the creek lines (if they can be called that) by the sight of a pair of **Square-tailed Kites**.

The park-like ambience of 'Ten-mile Tank', surely the Lake Como of the semi-arid zone.

The hotspot with woodswallows, budgies and at least 50 **Crimson Chats**, the latter all in seasonally bland plumage except for their reddish rumps.

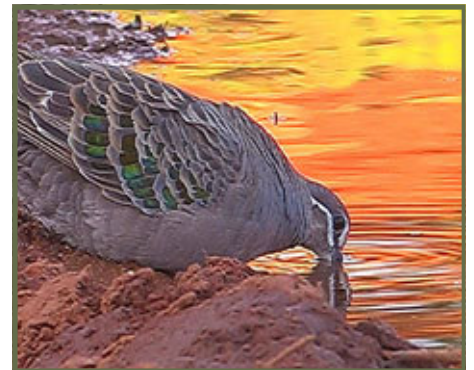
At night, the ghostly gleam of the white sheet of the moth-hunting, day-sleeping Andreas Zwick, with Ted Edwards on hand to tell you

everything about moths and butterflies you could remember wanting to ask.

Kathy Walter successfully performing the old mock-goanna act to scratch up a sleepy **Australian Owlet-nightjar** from a hollow - *but using her own fingernails for heaven's sake*. (Yathong is a good place for Lace Monitors - I noticed 6 at 5 different locations, one flailing across some roadside water like a charging crocodile.)

Everyone was grateful to Noel for the idea of a Yathong outing and his work to bring it about. Appetites for dry-country birds were stimulated rather than slaked, and most participants took advantage of the longish drive back to choose birdy routes and stopovers on the return to Canberra.

Geoffrey Dabb



'Bronzewing drinking at dusk'

All photos in this article courtesy of Geoffrey Dabb.

Angle Crossing Sunday 18 April 2004 Honey eater migration morning

The eleven COG members who participated in this outing were treated to a birdwatching spectacular. The count time was 3hrs and 20 mins. We saw thousands and thousands (13,516 in total) of migrating birds. Approximately 90% were **Yellow faced Honeyeaters**. There were a good number of **White-napped**

Honeyeaters, some **White-eared** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, **Red wattlebirds** and a few **Eastern Spinebills**. It was like watching shoals of fish turning and flashing in the sunlight.

Flocks of Red wattlebirds had begun congregating at the top of the hill from 11am. They were more reluctant to make the jump across the river than the smaller honeyeaters. We counted 210 Red Wattlebirds that did pass. Many more were milling about.

Our viewing spot was about 1 km from the crossing as we descended from the Tharwa side. The land has formed a small ridge and we parked near the farm gate. At the top of the main ridge there are the remains of a good stand of burnt pines. Just as you start to descend to crossing there is a group of remnant eucalypts. The honeyeaters used these eucalypts to gather before braving the open space. They headed down towards the river and are expected to have travelled through Williamsdale.

The raptors featured as well. When we arrived at approx 9am a **Peregrine Falcon** was hawking. It was so fast. Between hunting forays we had very good views of it as it perched high in the trees. It was possible to see its yellow lower legs and claws. Later it was joined in the air by a mate. Still later, in the distance we could see small birds dive bombing a **Wedged-tailed Eagle**. The ravens put in an appearance. A flock of 120 **Little Ravens** flew high overhead.

The migration spectacular was still in full swing as we left around 12.30pm.

Julienne Kamprad & Nicki Taws

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 21 April 2004 and considered, amongst other more routine business matters, the following items. If any COG member would like more information on any of these issues, please contact the

nominated Committee member.

The development by students at the University of Canberra of an Internet-based observation information system for COG data, including online data entry and retrieval, is well advanced. Policy issues relating to mandatory fields and access provisions were clarified; useability testing will begin shortly (David McDonald – 6231 8904).

The Committee agreed to the purchase of additional software to facilitate the upgrade of the COG website; database manager Paul Fennell will investigate providers to see if we can get a better deal, and will also investigate other domain names (David McDonald – 6231 8904).

The Birds Australia proposal for a pocket guide to the birds of the ACT is being progressed. COG has committed funds to the project, subject to resolution of a few outstanding issues in its agreement with BA (Jenny Bounds – 6288 7802).

Subscription levels for 2004-05 were considered, in the light of COG's overall financial position; in an effort to attract more members and not to dissuade current ones, it was determined that subscriptions should stay at the present \$35 p.a. for another year (Joan Lipscombe – 6262 7975).

As part of the current Environment ACT grants process, COG will apply for another Woodland grant, covering the next three years. A report on the Woodland survey has been received from coordinator Alison Rowell; this will be made available to the membership, either in a forthcoming issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* or as an occasional publication (Jenny Bounds – 6288 7802).

Barbara Allan, secretary

May Meeting

8 pm

Wednesday

12 May

*Canberra Girls Grammar School
cnr Gawler Cres and Melbourne
Ave, Deakin*

The main speaker will Matt Cameron, of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Western Region. He'll be talking about **Glossy Black-Cockatoos: patterns of resource use in ironbark woodlands.**

Don't miss it!

Future Field Trips

East Basin/Molonglo River; Sunday 9 May 2004 – Electric Boat cruise

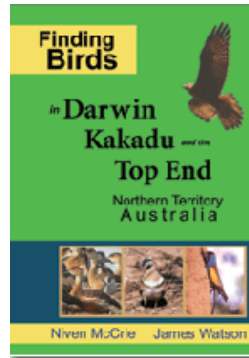
A repeat late autumn cruise on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin and the adjacent Molonglo River/Jerrabomberra Creek on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet", which allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. This season has been a good one for the nesting **Darters** and both **Little Pied** and **Little Black Cormorants**, with the last named not nesting here last year. With most of the leaves off the trees this should allow for excellent viewing of any late nesting. The area is also rich in other waterbirds and with the continuing dry weather a large variety should be seen.

This trip comes highly recommended for both first time and repeat customers. It will last about 2

COG SALES

- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **The Birds of Prey of Australia Field Guide** by Stephen Debus, \$12.50 (Special Price)
- **Messant Calenders 2004**, "Birds of Australia" and/or "Australian Wildflowers", \$8.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, SPECIAL PRICE for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$9.00
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Guide to the Bird Habitats of NSW (ACT)** NSW Atlasers -\$27.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 SPECIAL PRICE - \$45.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** by Pizzey and Knight -\$35.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens - \$25.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

COG T-shirts, Polo shirts, all above and other books on local flora and fauna available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Carol Macleay (for post and packing costs) on 02 6286 2624.



hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. As the boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers there are still a few spots available for the 8 am shift, but at this stage there has been limited interest for a second at 10 am. As the previous point of departure is longer accessible, this will now be from the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the new Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way). For further information and to book your place please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Swift Parrot/Regent Honeyeater Survey; Sunday 16 May 2004– all day car trip (Note new outing)

In response to the call in the April *Gang-gang* Anthony Overs has agreed to lead this outing, which will be a truncated version of the one he lead in July 2003. He proposes we meet in Boorowa at 7 am (participants may want to stay there overnight) and go straight to Spring Forest (a great spot on private property 25 km S of Cowra). We'll then move on to Cowra to check out the Japanese gardens and return via Koorawatha NR and maybe call in to Ksharthra (another private property).. This will be a long all-day outing and we expect not to return until late in the afternoon. It is recommended for reasonably experienced members who may be interested in being involved in future surveys. If you are interested please contact Anthony on 6254 0168, or by Email on anthony.overs.reps@aph.gov.au, who will also provide the meeting place. Car pooling will be encouraged, including leaving extra vehicles at Boorowa, as we come back through there in the afternoon.

Nursery Swamp; Sunday 23 May 2004 – day outing

On this trip we will visit one of the most delightful spots in Namadgi National Park to ascertain which birds may be found in the high country, post-fires (the area was burned in January 2003), in late autumn, and to obtain records for COG's and Birds Australia's Ongoing Atlas Project. We will drive to the Orroral Valley. The first part of the walk is uphill on a good track, then we continue along a valley through Black Sallee to Nursery Swamp, a fen at 1,100 metres altitude containing peat that has been dated to 10,000 years BP. The area is of great significance to indigenous people, containing both rock art and tool-making sites.

Meet at the Kambah Village shopping centre car park (corner Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent, Kambah) at 08.30 hours for carpooling. We will return in the early afternoon, so bring lunch and water, and be prepared for brisk weather conditions. Please register for this trip by contacting its leader, David McDonald, at telephone (02) 6231 8904.

Green Cape – 12-14 June 2004, Long Weekend Accommodation

COG has booked the two duplex cottages associated with the lighthouse at Green Cape for our outing over this long weekend in

June. Peter Fullagar will be leading, and in mid June he expects to see a mix of sea birds as well as whales close to shore (depending on the



Immature Male Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*) Photo courtesy **Geoffrey Dabb**

weather). In the nearby heath there are some specials such as the **Ground Parrot** and the **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, and there is likely to be a range of birds in the woodlands, also close by.

One cottage has been booked for Thursday to Monday, and the other from Friday to Monday. The cottages each hold a maximum of 6 people, consisting of separate rooms, the master bedroom with a queen size bed, one with two single beds (both already taken) and a double sofa bed

in the family/lounge room. There are potentially one or two spaces available as it has been difficult to achieve the right female/male/couple gender balance for the double sofa bed. If needed there is sufficient space to allow one participant to sleep on a camp stretcher or similar. Another possibility is a single male for Saturday and Sunday evenings only. There will also be the opportunity to camp at Bittangabee Bay, only 8 km away.

The costs per person will be in the order of \$32 per night (costs vary a bit depending on week or weekend rates), plus a \$2 per day COG admin fee. Please register your interest with Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). A \$25 deposit per person (paid to the Treasurer COG) within a month will then secure your place in the cottages. Information for participants including final costs will be available at the May COG meeting.

Mt Majura NR; Saturday 26 June 2004- evening search for the Glossy Black-Cockatoo - note changed date and time

Following the request for a leader in the April edition of *Gang-gang*, Steve Holliday has agreed to lead this outing to observe this vulnerable species which seems to be being seen more frequently in Canberra. From recent sightings it is clear that the best place to find the Glossy Black-Cockatoo is to wait until evening when they come in to drink at dams

Book Offer: Raptor Identification—Which Bird of Prey is that? A Field Guide to the identification of Australian birds of prey by Gordon Beruldsen

56 pages of Sketches, Tables, Diagrams, Maps and Text plus a fold-out comprehensive species comparison table.

Full colour, plasticised front and back colours —backpack size.

Not available from retail book shops. **Only a few copies left** so order now and don't miss out.



ORDER FORM

Please send me NOW.....copies of *Which Bird of Prey is that?* @ \$12.00 per copy

I enclose cheque/money order for \$.....(inclusive of packing and postage)

Name:

Address:.....

.....State:.....Postcode:.....

Mail to: Gordon R Beruldsen

47 Broadmoor Street

Kenmore Hills Qld 4069

Phone/fax: 07 3374 1253 Please allow 10-14 days for packing and delivery.

SEE OVER ALSO

in the Mt Majura Nature Reserve. Up to 10 birds have been observed doing this recently. Meet Steve (6248 0910) at 3.45 pm sharp at the small carpark in Mackenzie St near the end of Grayson St Hackett for a short flat walk of about 10-15 minutes to the dam. It should be okay to park in the street if there isn't enough room there.

If Glossy Black-Cockatoos are subsequently located in other spots, further arrangements may be made to look for these – see the June *Gang-gang*.

Wednesday walk – 19 May 2004 – Mt Majura Nature Reserve

Meet at 9am in the car park (entrance to Canberra Nature Park) off MacKenzie St (near Grayson St intersection), Hackett. This will be a good opportunity to see local woodland species during a stroll around the lower slopes, and there may be some steeper climbs if we look for evidence of the **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**, which has been present here for the past few months. Bring some morning tea or lunch.

Other surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

NATIONAL BIRD AWARENESS DAY

The day after World Environment Day, **Sunday 6 June 2004**, marks the first National Bird Awareness Day.

This event is being run by Birds Australia in association with Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA).

Experienced birdwatchers are required to help run tours on the 6th aimed at introducing novice or less experienced birdwatchers to birding in their local environments. These tours will be based around CVA offices, and tours will be assisted by a CVA officer.

Anybody interested in helping out please contact:

Andrew Silcocks

A.silcocks@birdsaustralia.com.au
03 9882 2622

Any TBNER or Atlasser that would like to participate in a tour should register with

Conservation Volunteers Australia
at 1800 032 501.

ANPS MEMBERS MEETING

8.00PM **13 MAY 2004**- HUGHES COMMUNITY CENTRE

Speaker: Dr. Keith McDougall
Keith McDougall is a plant ecologist currently working with the NSW Department of Environment & Conservation in Queanbeyan on threatened species issues. Prior to moving to NSW in 1997, Keith did his PhD on changes to vegetation in the jarrah forest of WA following infestation with *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, and was involved in research into control of the pathogen.

Topic: *Phytophthora cinnamomi* - a key threatening process in Australia

Phytophthora cinnamomi has recently been listed as a key threatening process in NSW, and in Australia. It was not regarded as a significant threat in NSW until recent surveys of its impact by NPWS and the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. This talk will give a characterisation of the pathogen (what it is, where it lives, species affected, how it is identified etc), and will discuss its distribution and impact in NSW and the ACT, measures that can be used to control and limit its impact, and how people who spend a lot of time in the bush (and could be potential vectors) can significantly contribute to our knowledge of this pathogen.

Pre-release Special Book Offer: Australian Birds their Nests and Eggs

A guide to the Nests and Eggs of those Australian Birds that are known to breed in Australia and on offshore islands. (excluding Christmas and Lord Howe Islands) by Gordon Beruldsen

FULLY REVISED AND UPDATED TEXT plus much new material.

Approximately 480 pages including over 70 new full colour plates. — Field Guide size 215 x 150 mm.

Due for release mid 2004. Order now and take advantage of this pre-release offer (Offer ends 30/06/2004).

ORDER FORM

Please send me NOW.....copies of *Australian Birds their Nests and Eggs* as soon as it's released @ \$35.00 per copy

I enclose cheque/money order for \$.....(inclusive of packing and postage)

Name:

Address:.....

.....State:.....Postcode:.....

Mail to: Gordon R Beruldsen

47 Broadmoor Street

Kenmore Hills Qld 4069

Phone/fax: 07 3374 1253 Please allow 10-14 days for packing and delivery.

FIRST 1000 COPIES WILL BE NUMBERED AND SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR

SEE OVER ALSO

COG has made contact with the Illawarra Bird Observers Club (IBOC) with the view of holding one or more joint outings, possibly a **shorebird trip** either late this year or early in 2005. We may also advertise outings in this column on our respective calendars that may be of mutual interest.

Meanwhile the IBOC has a WEB site that COG members may be interested in. It's an illustrated version of their handbook, and describes the spatial distribution of the 420 species recorded in their area since 1839. It also describes over 100 walks in the region.

You can find it by typing Wild Illawarra into your web browser (eg Google) or type the url which is: www.speedlink.com.au/users/cchafer

The dates for the **Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater surveys** are the weekends of 15-16 May and 31 July/1 August.

Debbie Saunders, the co-ordinator of this survey, indicates that there are usually several COG members who go out to the western slopes or south coast. She is wondering if someone may be interested as a leader for a small group or whether there could be several groups. Alternatively, if there is someone willing to lead a bigger group she could try to organise a visit to private property between Boorowa and Cowra (as COG did for a non-survey weekend last year). Another alternative is that the local reserves including Mulligans/Campbell Park/ Mount Ainslie could be surveyed as swift parrots do pass through Canberra most years, even if only briefly.

If you are interested in helping in any of the above ways please contact Debbie on saunders@cres.anu.edu.au, Ph 6125 2635 or Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH) or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au.

Notices Notices Notices

The Tess Kloot Collection

In October 2003 the State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street Melbourne Victoria 3000, accepted my extensive collection. This consists of ornithological and biographical files (567), newspaper cuttings (164), and an album containing photographs of people who have contributed to Australia's natural history (ca. 145). A separate component holds considerable biographical and pictorial material on Tom Iredale and his wife Lilian Medland.

The entire collection is housed in a series of archived boxes. An alphabetical catalogue accompanies the material.

At the suggestion of Mr Jock Murphy, Manuscripts Librarian, it stands as the TESS KLOOT COLLECTION.

Anyone seeking information covered by this collection is advised to contact the State Library. The reference number is PA 03/107.

Any information used for publication must appear with acknowledgement.

Tess Kloot

What to do if you see a Banded bird

If you come across a bird with colour or metal bands on its legs, you should report it to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, email ABBBS@deh.gov.au.

Always include the date, locality as precisely as possible, how you encountered the bird eg found dead, hit by car or as in this case seen alive (colour bands immediately identify this



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2004 Plains-wanderer Weekends

- ◆ 27 and 28 November
- ◆ 4 and 5 December
- ◆ 11 and 12 December
- ◆ 18 and 19 December

18-28 Sept **Forests and Woodlands of Central NSW including Bird Routes of Barraba & Baradine**
New accommodated tour taking in the best of the forests and woodland of central NSW. Starts/finishes in Melbourne

2005 Birding Tours

12 -28 March: New Zealand
NZ options: 11 Feb pelagic for **NZ storm-petrel**; 1-2 March Kapiti Island for **little spotted kiwi**

9-14 March: Tasmania

16-23 March Kangaroo Island

24-30 April: New Caledonia

18-29 May: Gulf Country Q'ld

4-19 June Top End incl Kununurra

8-26 August: Strzelecki Track

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2005

26 & 27 March (Easter)

26 & 27 November

3 & 4 December

10 & 11 December

17 & 18 December

31 December & 1 January

www.philipmaher.com

individual without the need to catch it to read the metal [silver] band), your name and address as the finder so the banding office can get back to you. If the bird is dead please remove the bands if possible, write the number and tape the bands on a piece of paper with the above details and send it to the address on the band or give it to the ABBBS (or a COG committee member who will pass it on). Remember that other countries have banding schemes and "their" birds, especially sea birds, sometimes turn up in Australia. The ABBBS also deals with the bands of other countries.



Clamorous Reed-Warbler
(*Acrocephalus stentoreus*)

Photo courtesy **Lindsay Hansch**

Avian Whimsy # 20

Cheerio Shearwaters!

We are, quite rightly, impressed and mystified in April by the north-bound journey upon which millions of yellow-faced (and other) Canberrans are just now embarking. From places like Montague Island though, and islands around Victoria and Tasmania and the south coast, a far more epic journey is also beginning. The **Short-tailed Shearwaters** (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) are about to fly 15,000km to their wintering waters off the Aleutian Islands, at an astonishing rate. The maiden flight of one nestling was from near Ceduna to the Bering Sea, in just six weeks. This works out at a non-stop

travelling rate of 360km a day, but in fact with a good wind behind them the birds are known to be able to travel at 90kph, and cover up to 1800km in a day...

In September they'll come back, with apparently obsessive punctuality, rarely varying their return date by more than a day or so. A colony may comprise just empty burrows one day and be fully occupied by tens of thousands of raucously duetting birds the next. Pairs are stable from year to year, and occupy the same burrow they left in April. They are real home-bodies; while recovering from their enormous flight across the central Pacific they spend a few weeks clearing out burrows and lining them, and mating. On 12 November precisely (at least in Port Fairy) the whole population leaves

for a two-week honeymoon at sea.

On return she lays one large egg, some 15% of her body weight. The Big Day for this in all the Australian colonies is 25 November – no really, these birds make German railway time-tabling look downright slipshod. From then on, the parents alternate brooding for 10-14 day shifts, living off their body fat. He takes the first shift, while she goes to sea to recover from the effort of producing the egg.

The **Short-tailed Shearwater** is just one species of the 70-odd petrels, evolved for a life on the open sea to a degree that probably only the albatrosses can match. The short hooked beak has sharp cutting edges and is ideal for seizing slippery squid, either from the surface at night or as much as 20m below it during the day. However it has also been suggested that krill is an important part of their economy and that the 'off duty' parent spends its 14 days slipping down to the edge of the Antarctic pack ice to krill-fill. It certainly seems to me that this would be of far greater nutritional value than low energy squid, an especially

HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

Guerilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

Lovely, clean and quiet self contained 1 bedroom flat amid trees, own courtyard and garden, adjacent Burrewarra Point clifftop reserve. Close unspoiled walks, beaches. Over 120 bird species seen in the local area, half from the property and lots of other interesting fauna and flora. Reasonable rates.

Contact Joan and Trevor Lipscombe
02 6262 7975.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

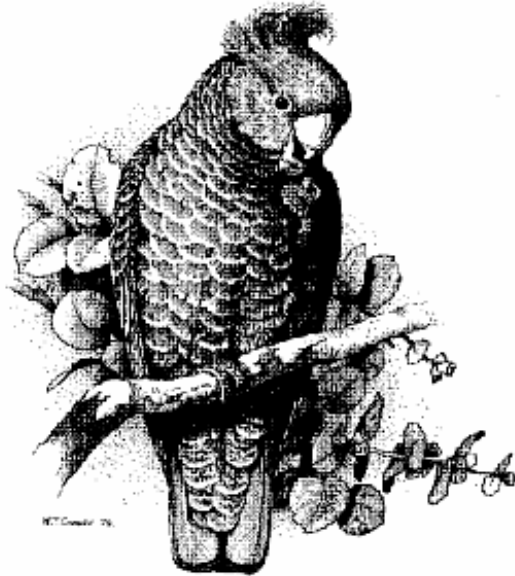
Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometers away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle. Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week.

Further details contact – Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@argel.com.au

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. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 – 62583531) for further information.



It's that time again!

Membership renewal fees are due from 1 July.

Please complete the form overleaf and send it in to renew your membership.

Your membership and your friendship is valuable to COG.

We're in for another great year of birding.

NOTE

Some members have already paid for next year.

Please do not pay again.

You can tell from the label on your Gang-gang/CBN

or by checking with Joan Lipscombe

(ph 6262 7975, joanlipscombe@bigpond.com)

whether you need to pay or not.

If your label says "sub expires 30 June 2004",

It's time to renew your membership.

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc Membership Renewal/Application 2004-2005



Please complete this form and post it with your payment to:

The Secretary
Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.
PO Box 301
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

Title and Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone (home): _____ **(work):** _____ **(mobile):** _____

I/We enclose \$ _____ as renewal/New Membership being:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$35 | Optional donation to Canberra Birds Conservation Fund \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institution - \$35 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family* - \$35 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (18yrs or under) - \$17.50 | |
- | |
|--|
| <i>(office use only)</i> Subtotal \$ _____ |
| GST \$ _____ |
| Total \$ _____ |

* **Family** memberships: please list the names of all members covered by the family membership:

If you would prefer **Gang-gang in full colour electronic format** (PDF requires Adobe Acrobat Reader (get free online) to be sent to the above email address in lieu of printed copy please tick here ()

Are you interested (can you help) in any of the following COG Activities? (please tick)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atlassing/Bird Surveys | <input type="checkbox"/> Data entry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administration/Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading Outings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity/Exhibition Stalls | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publications | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Issues |



significant point while breeding.

I have taken groups to await the return of the parents at dusk (every day at least some come back) at Port Fairy and have always found it a rewarding and moving experience. As light fades there is the hint of swirling movement out to sea, activity that is just beyond certainty. Then suddenly, as our eyes are straining, we are surrounded by silent swirling bodies, plumping down into burrows all around us. The crooning, crowing welcome home chorus is ecstatic and all-enveloping.

The egg hatches in mid-January and the chick is then left during the day while both parents forage at sea to build up both their and its strength for the gargantuan journey that awaits them. Before fledging the chick may weigh twice as much as the adults. As the chick grows, it must wait longer and longer between feeds, until the parents are again away for two weeks at a time.

Not all the chicks get to make this journey. In the Bass Strait Islands licences are issued to take some 600,000 fat chicks a year from the burrows. The feathers go into doonas and sleeping bags, the fat into dairy cattle food supplements (!) and the oils into the pharmaceutical industry. This is not an indigenous traditional industry (unlike in New Zealand, with different species), but arose to support the sealers after they'd destroyed their primary source of income. It seems that the population is stable, at some 23 million birds, though this is minuscule compared with Matthew Flinders' famous account of a single flock of over 150 million birds in Bass Strait in 1798 (see AvIan Whimsy #3 September 2002). I'm not entirely convinced that this harvest is sustainable though in a species which only starts breeding after 5 or 6 years and produces just one chick a year, given that burrows are trampled in the process, that cats take a large toll on some islands and

that tens of thousands of birds die annually in North Atlantic salmon nets.

The remaining chicks however, do something truly remarkable. Their parents simply head off when they've had enough of parenting, without even a note on the mantle piece. By now the chick has been coming out of the burrow at nights to flap and socialise about the colony. When it gets hungry enough it takes its first flight – to the Arctic.

As I said at the start, it's an epic journey and an epic story, almost overwhelming in its sheer grandeur.

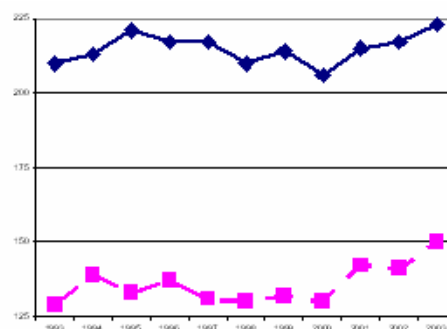
Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

I have firm evidence that no less than three people read my last column. Thank you – that should be enough to ensure my contract for at least another month.

GBS Central

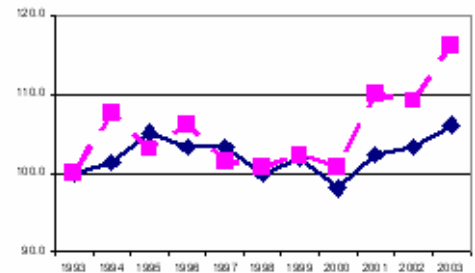
This is the first of what is hoped to be a regular set of notes about what is going on in the sites of the Garden Bird Survey (GBS). Since I am writing this before I have told many folk about it, this first example isn't going to report from many individual sites! In fact it will report on one ex-site and a couple of active ones.

However I'll start with an overall comment which flowed from a user data request for data about the number of species seen per year. The first graph below summarises the number of species reported in the Annual Bird Report (ABR) for the GBS sites – broken line – and the Area of Interest as whole – solid line.



There is obviously a large gap

explained by the birds that don't deign to appear in our gardens but require to head for the hills (or wallow in swamps looking for Golden Rusk points). To overcome this I expressed the series as an index, with the value of each series for 1993 set to 100. Here is the new graph.



While the pattern is similar for the first few years there is a marked change in trend in the last four years. Almost certainly this is due to new sites – especially Marnix' reports from Gunghalin.

The news from an ex-site relates to one on Gossan Hill Bruce which included for a while roosting frogmouths. Although the owner of the site has since left the ACT the frogmouths are still around the area (although probably last seen a few metres outside the boundary of the site. With luck they may decide the view ids better 200m NW and come to my site!

My site has recorded 47 species since I returned last October. Although down on what I had expected, given conditions in the site I was quite impressed with this until I saw a 2003 Chart for a site in Curtin which listed 101 species over a full year! No wonder the observer uses electronic submission.

For the future I hope observers will send me (by email to mfutter@bigpond.com or ph 6253 1286) interesting and topical GBS observations or analyses to report in this column. I'll also use observations from GBS site reported as such on the chat line to share those with members who are not emailers.

GBS Coordinator



Eastern Bristlebird
(*Dasyornis brachypterus*)
Photo courtesy **Lindsay Hansch**

Female Gang-gang Cockatoo
(*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
Photo courtesy **Lindsay Hansch**



Next newsletter

JUNE deadline
Wednesday 26 May 2004

Send updates to
Tanya Rough,
Editor *Gang-gang*
rough.boden@apex.net.au or
Tanya.Rough@ea.gov.au
Ph: 6161 0151 (ah)

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; 150 for Atlassing Snapshots), except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with articles encouraged.

COG info

President

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

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520

Membership inquiries

Contact Alastair Smith 6281 3221 (h)
or 0401 993 381 for changes of
address or other details

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and Sue Lashko

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battison and helpers

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

<http://www.canberrabirds.dynamite.com.au>

COG membership

2004-2005 membership: Individuals,
families and institutions: \$35. school
students (under 18): \$17.50.

Office (6247 4996)

COG maintains an office in room
G5, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street,
civic.

Office volunteers are not in
attendance for regular opening
hours.

Members access by prior
arrangement.

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email announcement
and discussion list for members and
friends of COG: 'Canberra Birding',
also known by the nickname 'cog-1'.
Join the list at

<http://www.topica.com/lists/canberrabirds>
or by sending a blank
email message to [canberrabirds-](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@topica.com)
[subscribe@topica.com](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@topica.com).



Gang-gang

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

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA