



Gang-gang

MAY 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 09.05.2012

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 speaker will be Veronica Doerr of CSIRO on her proposed project on Functional Connectivity. The presentation will include some background as well as outlining how the COG membership might be able to assist.

The main presentation will be by Anastasia Dalziel, a Ph D student at the Research School of Biology ANU, entitled "Lyrebird songs and dances."

The **Lyrebird** is one of the most celebrated but elusive of Australia's birds. Anastasia will present the findings of a five-year study investigating the ecology of mimicry in the male superb lyrebird. She will show how lyrebirds integrate mimicry with both their own songs and their elaborate visual displays to create a performance of a level of sophistication previously only reported in humans.

What to watch out for this month

April has continued the 2011-2012 season pattern with many birds staying or breeding surprisingly late. However, there have been some exceptions, as no **White-throated Needletail/Fork-tailed Swifts**, **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** or **Satin Flycatcher** have been reported so far this month. Some species just made it, with last reports of the **Rufous Fantail**, and the big surprise, a **Brush Cuckoo**, on 1 April (no joke!). The latter was seen during the woodland survey at Newline, and after an image was posted on the chat line by Julian Robinson was identified as a barred morph unusual for this area. The last report of an **Eastern/Pacific Koel** calling was in Narrabundah on 2 April, just before the reporter went away for 2 weeks. Another juvenile **koel** was reported to me from Duffy in late March, making this the eleventh for the season.

Several species seem to have stayed on until about the end of the first week of April, including the **Western Gerygone**, **Noisy Friarbird** and the **Leaden Flycatcher**, whereas some other species, such as **Tree Martins**, the **White-throated Gerygone**, the **Pallid Cuckoo** and the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** were somewhat surprisingly recorded up to the middle of the month. Likewise the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and **Superb Parrot** were still being regularly recorded towards the end of the month, the latter particularly in Cook, as was the **Rufous Whistler**, a species which usually departs during April. However, most surprising was that after more than five weeks of absence, a **Sacred Kingfisher** was reported at Callum Brae on 21 April. A **Mistletoebird** was recorded at the same time after a break of nearly four weeks. A late **Australian Reed Warbler** was also recorded on the same weekend, this species is very quiet post breeding and is easily overlooked.

From the chat line reports it appears that the **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** migration began in earnest on the last three days of March, and a number of posters have noted that it seems to have been the best and most sustained for a number of years, including between 10,000 -12,000 birds in a single day through the established major migration route over Lindsay Hansch's place at Jerrabomberra. While ebbing, the migration was still taking place three weeks into April. Numbers of **White-naped Honeyeaters** in these flocks have been varied, but if the migration sustains they should dominate the flocks by the end of April and into early May, so please keep an eye and ear out for them. Red Wattlebirds, in flocks of up to 100, have also been seen migrating during April.

Everyone welcome

The last species to leave each autumn, the **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Grey Fantail**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Olive Backed Oriole**, were still being seen and regularly reported at the *Gang-gang* deadline towards the end of April. These are often seen into the second week of May, though varying numbers of these species may overwinter in Canberra.

By the time this *Gang-gang* reaches you in the first week of May any sightings of any of the species mentioned above will be very significant and should be recorded in the COG database.

Of the altitudinal migrants which come down to Canberra each autumn the **Scarlet Robin** and the **Golden Whistler** have been widely reported during April (including some males of the latter), with the **White-eared honeyeater** to a lesser extent. By contrast, **Flame Robins** have not yet been widely reported, possibly due to the unsuitably long and rank grass in the open areas they favour on the edges of the suburbs. However, there have been several already reports of the **Rose** and **Pink Robin**, watch out for these which may either be passage migrants or stay in an area for a while, with the female of the latter in particular posing identification difficulties. There also has been one report of **Swift Parrots**, look out for these winter migrants from Tasmania, particularly where gums are in flower or are heavily infested with lerps. As this column was being finalised for the editors there was the first report in a Canberra garden of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, so keep an ear out for the loud call of this species which usually arrives early in May.

Reports of breeding activity have been fewer in April, with the highlight young currently being fed in the **Speckled Warbler** nest found by Steve Wallace. A late report of an adult **Grey Butcherbird** feeding a begging juvenile in O'Connor has added to the debate as to whether the spate of reports in Canberra gardens this year are mainly young birds dispersing. Mixed feeding flocks (MFF) continue to be reported, and if the one in my garden over last weekend is any guide, activity will increase as the days get shorter and small species have less time to gather their daily energy requirements.

May will be a time when all of the movement and activity of the past couple of months starts to die down before winter, but please continue to keep your eyes and ears open for what might still move through your local area, and please record all significant observations, as well as any late autumn breeding or MFF activity, and ensure these are reported for inclusion in the COG database.

I'd like to express my thanks to Frank Antrim for alerting me and showing me how to easily extract information about recent sightings from the Eremaea data base. This has allowed much more accurate information about recent sightings of some species than I have previously been able to obtain. — **Jack Holland**

Field Trip Reports

Weddin Mountains and Yathong Trip Report — Easter

The extended Easter trip that took in the Weddin Mountains National Park and the Yathong Nature Reserve was very successful. It can be characterised by the expression "quality not quantity". This applied to the birds as well as the participants.

About a dozen persons took in each section of the trip with 10 doing both sections.

Because it was spread over 10 days I will not give a blow by blow description of the trip. Instead I will give some of the highlights.

First of all the weather was perfect and the mosquitoes and other bites almost non-existent. The country is in perfect condition with lots of water still lying around. On one day we did an extended trip which included Lake Cowal. The lake was in flood with water backed up to the Newell Highway. It was magnificent, although the farmer whose land the water was covering would probably think otherwise. For those of you who know Chat Alley (near Lake Cargelligo), driving through fresh water flowing over the road was a treat.

And now for the birds. A total of over 150 species was seen over the ten day period (89 for the Weddins and 83 for Yathong). Some of the more interesting sightings were:

- **Red-lored Whistler** – an immature in Nombinnie Nature Reserve.
 - Both **Heathwrens** – the **Chestnut-rumped** was seen a Holy Camp in the Weddin Mountains and the **Shy** was seen at the Malleefowl pens at Yathong.
-

- **Plumed Whistling-Ducks** – on Lake Cowal.
- **Glossy Ibis** and **Nankeen Night-Herons** – also on Lake Cowal
- **Turquoise Parrots** – a pair on the Weddin Gap Trail
- **Wedge-tailed Eagles** – up to 14 at the one time over the cliff line at the Ben Hall Cave Campsite.
- **Southern Scrub-robin** – calling its heart out in Nom-binnie Nature Reserve.
- **Australian Owlet-nightjar** – spotlighted by two participants at Yathong
- **Spotted Nightjar** – flushed by myself from the side of the road when driving out of Yathong on the final day.

All in all a very successful and enjoyable trip. Thank you all for attending. — **Noel Luff**



Southern Scrub-robin
(*Drymodes brunneopygia*)

Photo by Jim Stephenson

Kelly's Swamp and Fyshwick Sewerage Works — 5 April

Six COG members and two guests from Wisconsin spent a pleasant morning strolling around Kelly's Swamp and the Fyshwick Sewerage Ponds. For the later part we were joined by Michael the new ranger for Jerrabomberra Wetlands. He also very kindly gave us tea and biscuits afterwards while telling us about the plans for the area. Our birding highlights were hearing and seeing a large number of **Golden-headed Cisticolas** at both places, and an **Australian Reed-warbler** who thought its' appropriate habitat was the top of a willow tree. Our lowlight was not getting a good enough view, AND then not seeing it fly off when we tried to get a better view, of an **Egret** sp. The number of **Grey Fantails** around the swamp, especially between the first two hides, was amazing, more than 20, but so hard to estimate that we settled on 20 as our count. We saw a total of 40 species at Kelly's and 20 at the Sewerage Ponds, or 44 different species for the morning and that was before we went to tea with Michael and added another two. — **Michael Robbins**

Wednesday Walk — Tharwa Sandwash — 18 April

Ten Wednesday Walkers met on a morning which threatened rain but it held off until the end of the walk. A **White-faced Heron** was spotted in the river as we drove in. There were many birds around the carpark area, including **Scarlet Robins**, **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Weebills**. We walked from the locked gate, along the main track, since the lower track is now quite overgrown and the steps to the main track are buried under tonnes of fill. At the end of the track a succession of nice birds came and went from the dead trees on the hillside – **Diamond Firetails**, **Speckled Warblers**, **Scarlet Robins**, an **Eastern Yellow Robin** and several **Southern Whiteface**. Along the track we came across more **Diamond Firetails**, numerous **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, a **Rufous Whistler**, **Goldfinches** and



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more **Speckled Warblers**. A **Black-shouldered Kite** flew across the river above us. A very large male eastern grey kangaroo came down to the river, made its way across, and bounded up the hillside a few metres away. 40 species in all were recorded for the morning. — **Sandra Henderson**

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 the trips page of the COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/> and on the COG chat-line at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>.

Thursday 3 May — Stirling Park

This Thursday walk will be through the woodland south of the Yacht Club up towards the Embassy of Mexico along the ridge and then back to the Club. Ian Hufton hopes to find good birds as he did for the Wednesday Walk on 17 Feb 2010, on which we had great views of **Speckled Warblers** and young, female and male **White-throated Treecreepers**, as well as young **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** and a heap of waterbirds. Coffee at the club afterwards. Meet at 8.30 am at the Yacht Club near Lake Burley Griffin, Mariner Pl off Alexandrina Drive, Yarralumla. Booking is not required. Ian Hufton (huftons[at]grapevine.net.au)

Saturday 5 May — Australian National Botanic Gardens (Beginners' walk)

This morning walk will be the first for 2012 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours.

Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter.

Registration is essential. Please book your place with Anthony (6254 0168, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Sunday 13 May — National Arboretum

This walk will look at how local birds have taken to the habitat provided by the National Arboretum. We will visit the Cork Oak Plantation and the Himalayan Cedar Forest before moving on to look at the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) block and other areas of unique plantings. Hopefully the **White-fronted Chats** will still be present.

Bring hat, sunscreen, water and binoculars. Members of the Friends of the Arboretum are also welcome to attend.

Meet at 7.30 am at the front gates. We will need to park near the front gates as vehicle entry is not possible. No booking required. — **Chris Davey**

Sunday 27 May — Canberra's Autumn/Winter Birds — 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 the **White-eared**, **Fuscous**, **Brown-headed**, **Crescent** and the **Eastern Spinebill**, and the **Golden**

Whistler. Several other species such as the **Dusky Woodswallow**, the **Grey Fantail** and the **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. Some passage migrants might also still be moving around in late May to add to the interest.

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland will lead the outing. 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, otherwise the outing becomes logistically very unwieldy. The point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am. This is quite central, 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. The costs will be \$20 per person, including the COG admin fee. This will be payable on boarding the bus. To book please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au). If you are still contemplating joining, one bus was full and the second one starting to fill at the Gang-gang copy deadline on Anzac Day.

In this annual outing we will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these species are likely to be present. As usual, 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 will stay within the ACT boundaries.

NOTE: Cancellations at short notice which cannot be filled from a wait list may have to pay the full fare if a loss to COG results.

Saturday 9 June — Western Birds — 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 National 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\[at\]home.netspeed.com.au](mailto:mrobbins[at]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.



Superb Lyrebird
(*Menura novaehollandiae*)

Photo by David Cook

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

As there is sustained interest in the Eden pelagics, two single day trips, led by Anthony Overs, have been organised for July. These 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 each morning (time to be confirmed) and aim to return to dock by 3pm, thus leaving enough time to drive back to Canberra on Sunday afternoon. 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.

The cost will be \$100 AUD per person. To secure a place on this outing, please contact Sandra Henderson (6231 0303 or shirmax2931@gmail.com). Note that you may book for one or both days. Please make this clear when booking and, if booking for one day, specify Saturday or Sunday. Payment in full must be made by the end of April. Sandra will provide you with payment details. In the event that you have to withdraw from the trip, if a replacement person can be found, your money will be refunded. Both trips are restricted to 12 participants and will be filled on a first paid basis. Note that the Saturday trip is almost full.



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Autumn Woodland Surveys Report

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team had an enjoyable morning on Sunday 25 March, under partly cloudy skies but with little wind. Some sites were quiet, while others had lots of birds. The woodland around the Woolshed and sites 3-5 transect nearby had a very large mixed feeding flock move through, including four **Varied Sittellas** with immature birds, three **Speckled Warblers**, five **Scarlet Robins**, four species of thornbills, **Weebills**, **White-eared** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Rufous Whistlers** and **White-throated Gerygone**. **Scarlet Robins** were reported at five sites, several sites had **Golden Whistlers** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** which have just returned from the mountains to winter in the reserve, and there were good numbers of **Silvereyes** moving around. Other highlights were two **Olive-backed Orioles**, and an **Australian Hobby** at site 23. A notable highlight was four **White-throated Needletails** swooping low over site 21 on the eastern side of the reserve; this is the first record on a survey of this species (although there are previous records for the reserve). A special search was undertaken by one team along the old coach road to the NSW border on the eastern side of the reserve to look for any introduced **Brown Treecreepers**; one was found, along with some other interesting birds, a late moving **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and a **Double-barred Finch** (a species not seen around Mulligans on a survey for some years). A total of 51 species was recorded.

Gooroo NR North

Nicki Taws reported that her survey in the northern part of the reserve was dominated by the larger birds. **Rosellas** of both species were in profusion. **Noisy Miners** were also abundant, roaming in mobs beyond their normal haunts to areas where they are not normally recorded and feeding in the heavily-flowering mistletoe. Several **Grey Butcherbirds** were heard in different sections of the reserve. The only small bird which was found at most sites was the **Spotted Pardalote**. Other small birds such as thornbills, **Weebills**, **Grey Fantails**, whistlers etc were clustered into large feeding flocks, as they usually are at this time of year, but the flocks did not coincide with the survey sites. **Scarlet Robins** were calling at several locations. Summer migrants still present included **Olive-backed Oriole** and both **gerygones**. **Eastern Spinebill** were feeding on the mistletoe and a lone **White-naped Honeyeater** passed through. Also recorded were **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **Grey Currawong**, and the usual **Brown Goshawk**. No **Hooded Robins** were found, and they haven't been seen for several surveys now.

Gooroo NR South

Steve Holliday, with Prue Buckley, Dave and Kathy Cook, had a lovely morning on April Fools' Day for the first woodland survey of the year. Birds were distributed rather unevenly with some southern sites being alive with small birds, while northern ones were very quiet. Some highlights were a **Peregrine Falcon**, a male **Rose Robin** (possibly two different birds), **Diamond Firetails** at 2 sites, and a good number of **Scarlet Robin** records including five birds at one site. Also recorded were a **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Dusky Woodswallows** (three), **Speckled Warblers** (two sites), several **Mistletoebirds**, 10+ **Grey Fantails** at one site and **Varied Sittellas** (six). Cool weather arrivals (apart from the already mentioned robins) were **Golden Whistlers** (three) and **White-eared Honeyeaters** (three +). There was no evidence of honeyeater migration although a **White-naped** was heard at one stage. Four species of **thornbill** were recorded, with **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped** in good numbers. Other wildlife included a couple of Shinglebacks, three species of frogs heard (including *Litoria verreauxii*), and nine species of butterflies, among them Imperial and Spotted Jezebels, Stencilled Hairstreak, Common and Shouldered Browns, and a White-banded Grass-dart. Also noted were Pasture Day moths, and a large colony of Brittle Greenhood orchids (*Pterostylis/Diplodium truncatum*), also known as Little Dumpies. This autumn flowering orchid has also been spotted at a number of places in Goorooyarroo recently.

Mt Majura NR

John Goldie and Kathy Walter surveyed their sites on 24 and 25 March, finding most sites very quiet with only one good mixed flock within the 100m radius of one site. This included **Speckled Warbler**, **Weebills**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, both **pardalotes**, **Grey Fantail**, **Silvereye** and **White-throated Tree-creeper**. Unexpectedly they found quite a bit of breeding activity, or at least birds defending hollows etc. A magpie appeared to be on the nest; whether it was actually sitting or whether it was trying to defend its nest spot from a couple of currawongs is not certain. Also of interest was

how wet some of the sites were and at least one site had a large number of big trees that had fallen over. In addition, the new housing estate adjacent to the reserve in North Watson is almost finished opposite one of the sites. There is also a new walking track that has been recently constructed and seems to come from the estate and goes through site 4. It will be interesting to see if it has any impact on the bird life.

Campbell Park/Mt Ainslie NR

Michael Lenz reported on his survey on a mainly overcast Monday morning, 2 April, with 34 species recorded over nine sites, with an additional 10 species outside the survey plots. Three mixed feeding flocks made the survey more interesting: **Speckled Warblers**, six **Double-barred Finch**, six **Varied Sittella**, two **Grey Butcherbirds** (one only seen, immature), several **Rufous** and **Golden Whistlers**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater** and **Scarlet Robins**. Four species of **thornbills** were recorded, far more than in the recent past, but only very few **Superb Fairy-wrens**.

Newline

Sue Lashko with Julian Robinson reported they had an extraordinary morning on 1 April with the highest number of species on a survey at 61, and probably the most birds in total they had had for one visit there. Conditions were challenging with chest high, wet grass in places and voracious and prolific mosquitoes. Some of the less common or new species for Newline included **White-faced Heron**, an adult and juvenile **White-bellied Sea-eagle**, **Australian Hobby**, adult and juvenile **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Dusky Moorhen** on a dam and immature **Brush Cuckoo**. A large puddle in the front paddock attracted **Red-browed Finches** (at least 43 in one flock), **Double-barred Finch** and **European Goldfinch**, as well as a **White-throated Treecreeper** and **Willie Wagtails**. A **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, a pair of **Olive-backed Orioles**, seven **Dusky Woodswallows**, two **Brown Treecreepers**, two **Varied Sittellas**, a **Grey Currawong** and a **Leaden Flycatcher** were also present close to the front gate. **Speckled Warblers** were recorded at several sites and **Silvereyes** were everywhere. It was interesting to see the change in species as the morning progressed with the dozens of **European Starlings** present at 7.30 am all but absent by 11 am, perhaps off feeding on shorter grass.

Symonston - Callum Brae NR

Sandra Henderson undertook the survey on 31 March, a fine and dry day, but very soggy underfoot in parts, and very wet in the long grass. 44 species were recorded for the morning. There were large numbers of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, with over 60 counted. At one site, six **parrot** species were recorded within the 10-minute survey period - this included the **Long-billed/Little Corella** pair known to frequent the area. Outside survey sites, a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and the flock of **Diamond Firetails** was still down near the gully, as were **Dusky Woodswallows**. A **Brown Goshawk** was causing consternation up near the pump station, and possibly the same bird was later seen in the more usual spot on the hillside towards the centre of reserve. **Little Corellas**, **Galaha**s and **Crimson Rosellas** were all seen inspecting hollows. **Speckled Warblers** were recorded in two areas - up near the quarry fence, and about half way down the track on the farm side of reserve.

Jerrabomberra NR woodland

Jenny Bounds reported difficult conditions for the survey on Tuesday 3 April with high grasses, rampant weeds, some boggy ground and very damp vegetation. Fleabane is the weed of the season there; it was wall to wall in places, but a bit better than head high, impenetrable thistles (the predominant weed of the last couple of spring/summer seasons). 41 species were recorded, not bad for autumn, including **Speckled Warbler**, **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers**, a **White-throated Gerygone** still around, **Dusky Woodswallows** flying high above, **Eastern Spinebill** (feeding in mistletoe) and **Double-barred** and **Red-browed Finches**. There were only 2 migrating **White-naped Honeyeaters** (no **Yellow-faced** that morning). Of interest were **Scarlet Robins** at four of the sites, possibly three pairs; it is unusual to record this many robins there, probably reflecting the seasonal conditions, good ground cover and a lot of eucalypt re-growth. On the edge of the grasslands were one **Black-shouldered Kite**, a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** and two **Golden-headed Cisticolas** (a first for the survey there, the damp, rank grasses attracting them no doubt).

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battison reported a perfect morning for the survey on 30 March. The most interesting site was site 6, where ten species were recorded, including **Red-browed Finch**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Superb Fairy-wren**. Flocks of up to 56 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** flew overhead or flitted from tree to tree on their passage through. Other highlights were **Golden Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Common Bronzewing**, **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Grey Currawong** and a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, displaying. In all, 26 species were observed during the surveys and an additional 10 outside the survey sites.

Naas Valley

Julie McGuiness reported a very pleasant survey on a warm, calm and mostly clear Sunday morning, 1 April. Dams were full, with some very damp drainage lines, 100% grassy/weedy ground cover (though not nearly as high and in parts impenetrable as this time last year) and the eucalypts and mistletoes looked splendid. For the most part, there were small numbers of birds only, even in the mixed feeding flocks, including **Scarlet Robin** (four), **Jacky Winter** (two), **Dusky Woodswallow** (three), **Diamond Firetail** (one), **White-throated Gerygone** (two), **Rufous Whistler** (two) and **Golden Whistler** (one). Unexpectedly, there were none of the usual **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Speckled Warblers** or **Southern Whiteface**. Also, thornbills were lower in number than usual. Perhaps this might have been due to the 100% ground cover. A few small parties of up to 10 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were on the move, as well as a flock of **Silvereyes** and one of 10 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, though almost no pardalotes were detected. A couple of **White-eared Honeyeaters** were down from the mountains, a juvenile **Australasian Grebe** was on a dam, a couple of **Noisy Miners** mooched around a decent-looking nest on one site, and a **Brown Falcon** and a (calling) **Australian Owlet-nightjar** (the latter a first for this survey) were also recorded. Julie reported a big change in the vegetation, particularly eucalypt regrowth since the site was first surveyed in 2005, when most sites were almost completely bare of any understorey and eucalypt saplings were sparse.

— Compiled by Jenny Bounds

COMMITTEE NEWS

- COG annual subscriptions will remain at \$35 per year for the coming financial year. Unless you've joined since April 1 this year, your subs for next year fall due on July 1. Subs can be paid by cheque or money order to the mailbox, by electronic funds transfer (PLEASE identify yourself) or by cash at a meeting. Address and bank account details are all on the membership form (application form is on page 11).
- The Forward Plan has been revised by the Committee and is printed in this issue of Gang-Gang.
- Some COG Committee members have been involved in a meeting with the ACT Government about the apparent increase in numbers of Spotted Doves in the ACT.
- Jenny and Alison attended the recent BIGNet meeting in Cowra, where the issue of group affiliations with Birdlife Australia was raised but not resolved.
- COG has made a submission to the ACT Government on possible development of the suburb of Kinleaside.
- Some interested COG members are looking at record systems, such as the Atlas of Living Australia, Eremaea and Birdlife Australia with a view to possible closer collaboration.
- COG has signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the ACT government for supply of information on threatened species.

— Sandra Henderson

2012 — 2015 COG Forward Plan

The Forward Plan for 2012 – 15 takes into account the core COG objectives of:

- a) Encouraging an interest in the birds of Canberra and region;
- b) Increasing our knowledge of the local birds; and
- c) Helping to conserve our native birds.

Realistically, the Forward Plan also takes into account the capacity of COG to undertake projects, and recognises the many activities already being undertaken by COG members, including surveys, data recording, the Website and Discussion List (Chatline), publications and conservation, as well as the monthly meetings and outings.

The Forward Plan includes both projects to be undertaken by COG members, and also financial support to other projects which are in accord with COG's objectives.

The Plan recognises three categories of projects. Major projects are likely to need the most manpower and/or money to come to fruition. Smaller tasks should be completed relatively quickly and are likely to need only modest resources. There are also projects which will need significant additional resources and are therefore unlikely to be addressed in the near future.

Major projects

1. Update the COG Website. This project is in progress at the start of 2012.
2. Further development of the COG database.
3. Encourage the recording of more local bird calls to be made available on the COG Website.
4. Continue to improve sets of display material that can be used primarily for COG exhibitions — but would also be useful for educational purposes and for interesting young people and the public in general in birds.
5. Continue to nominate those species in decline in the ACT listed as Threatened in New South Wales but not listed in the ACT.
6. Continue to fund the operation of COG's woodland project.

Smaller more immediate, less expensive projects

1. Develop pamphlets/brochures for the reserves making up Canberra Nature Park, and other popular bird watching venues – using a three-tiered approach:
 - Pamphlets (similar to that for Mulligans Flat) for a small number of key sites;
 - Fact sheets including bird lists and maps, for other sites, to be made available on the website; and
 - Further bird route pamphlets.
2. Support for CIMAG initiatives.
3. Improve user friendliness of map support features for COG atlassing
4. If required identify financial and logistical support to update the 'COG Observations Record' data sheet input program.
5. Prepare a scientific paper based on the results of the Woodland bird survey data for possible publication in an appropriate peer-reviewed journal

Projects which will require very significant additional resources

1. Revise the ACT Bird Atlas — undertake a scoping study which would identify the financial and manpower requirements to produce a new Atlas or equivalent that will provide reference material on the distribution and abundance by habitat type of birds in the ACT.
 2. Fund and/or support projects by bodies such as Birdlife Australia which are relevant to COG's area of interest.
-

CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP INC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/APPLICATION 2012/2013



Instructions for use

Membership fees for 2012/13 are **\$35** and are due on 1 July 2012 for most existing members — check your *Gang-gang/CBN* label to confirm when your membership expires, and to find your membership number.

You can pay by **cash** or **cheque** at the meetings or by **cheque/money** order through the post — do not post cash.

Mail your payment to

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

Electronic fund transfer (EFT) is only available to renewing members. If paying by EFT please notify the Secretary at cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au with details including your initials, surname and/or COG membership number. If we cannot identify your payment you may be struck off as a non-renewer. Also ensure you update your contact details if there have been any changes.

Transfer funds to

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., St George Bank, A/c Number 050111462, BSB 112-908

COG Membership No.
(check mailing label)

Title

Name

Street Address

Town/suburb

State

Postcode

Home phone

Work phone

Mobile

Email address

*** For Family membership, list names of all family members covered by membership**

Amount paid _____ being for (please circle relevant category):

Individual Membership \$35 — * Family membership \$35 — Institution \$35 — Student \$17.50 — Canberra Birds Conservation Fund Donation \$

Please indicate (by circling) if you are interested in any of the following COG activities:

Atlassing/Surveys—Data Entry—Administration/Office—Leading outings—Publicity/Exhibition—Youth education—Publications—Conservation

Please indicate (by circling) if you would prefer to be notified by email when the following COG publications have been published on the website in lieu of receiving a printed copy.

Gang-gang Canberra Bird Notes

Photo Ops 8 — Lerping Birds

One of the reasons I love photographing birds is that the activity improves my powers of observation by, roughly, a million times. Many interesting things appear in photos that have eluded me in real life – so many that it's worth my taking photos just for the self-educative value.



A recent example is my observation of a curious posture adopted by birds as they savour lerps, those white or silvery protective coverings produced by the larvae of some psyllid insects on the underside of eucalypt leaves. Lerps are made from a sweet waxy substance secreted by the psyllid nymphs that dries to form the hard covering that so many birds love to eat. A 1989 study found that the best lerp-eaters of 29 species tested were **thornbills**, **Weebill**, **pardalotes**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Brown and Fuscous Honeyeaters**, though it is probable that a majority of passerines eat lerps some of the time.

Some famous lerp-eaters were presumably not represented in their study – **Bell Miners**, **Swift Parrots** and **Regent Honeyeaters** all being well-known and often discussed lerpers. **Superb Parrots** too are heavy users and there are some interesting videos of them lerp-eating that show the activity much better than my still photos (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/superb-parrot-polytelis-swainsonii/male-feeding-lerp>), taken by Stephen Wallace and Geoffrey Dabb).



But the stills do show an interesting possibly coincidental similarity. I've three photos of birds with lerps actually in their mouths and I remember in each case at the time of taking that the birds seemed to be in slightly odd poses, and also that they held these poses for quite a long time – more than four or five seconds. Only once (the **White-plumed Honeyeater**) was I aware that the bird was in possession of a lerp as I took the photo; in the case of the **Striated Pardalote** and **Grey Currawong** I'd only noticed the odd posture and surprisingly long time I had in which to take shots. My interpretation of the unusual stance and stillness is that they were engaged in savouring the sweetness of the lerp with their tongues and that this pose might indicate a state of concentration or enjoyment. While this could be entirely wrong, it is striking that the three birds all look so similar and remained that way for so long.



Unfortunately for my brilliant theory, the above-mentioned videos provide no support at all as the **Superbs** are shown busily and voraciously eating lerp after lerp continuously – no hint of pausing, savouring or posing for them.

Below is a **Spotted Pardalote** that landed on the pictured branchlet, looked around for a few seconds at each of the nearby leaves and then gobbled what I assume were three lerp before moving on. I include this photo as an excuse for mentioning a 1984 study that concluded that 9% of a pardalote's energy is wasted in escaping from honeyeaters who chase and harass the pardalotes in defence of their lerp supply. If true, this certainly demonstrates the importance of lerp as food to both the honeyeaters and the pardalotes.

Finally, in case anyone was wondering, as I was, whether birds also eat the insect hidden under the lerp, the answer according to the 1989 study is that they do, most of the time. Good to see them getting some protein with their sugar.

— Words and photos by Julian Robinson



'Oldest' breeding Osprey lays 62nd egg at Loch of the Lowes

An **Osprey** which is thought to be the UK's oldest breeding female has laid her 62nd egg at a Perthshire reserve.

The bird, known as Lady, returned in March to the Loch of the Lowes reserve near Dunkeld, where she has nested for 22 consecutive years.

On average, ospreys live for between 10 and 15 years in the wild.

The egg was spotted recently by Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) staff and volunteers monitoring [the webcam trained on the nest](#). (Control + Click to follow the link to the SWT nestcam)

If the egg which is now being incubated hatches, a chick is expected in the next five or six weeks.

Scottish Wildlife Trust ranger Emma Rawling said that Lady kept "surprising" experts at the SWT as she still seems committed to breeding, even at her advanced age.

In 2010, experts feared Lady would die after she fell ill and stopped eating. However, she recovered although she did not lay any eggs. She returned to her nest in 2011 but her eggs failed to hatch. This year, Lady returned to the Loch of the Lowes again after completing the 3,000-mile migration from West Africa.

Female ospreys normally produce about 20 chicks in a lifetime. Lady has produced 61 eggs and has now seen 48 fledge.

From the British Media

Starling numbers decline

The BBC has reported that the RSPB's annual wildlife survey has recorded the lowest number of **starlings** in UK gardens for 30 years.

Since the Big Garden Birdwatch began in 1979, the average number of starlings spotted by participants has dropped from 15 to just three.

Although the species was the number two "most spotted" bird, it was seen in fewer than half of UK gardens.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) confirmed that starlings were a "conservation concern".

Other species that have declined since 1979, according to the Big Garden Birdwatch, were **house sparrows**, **chaffinches**, **blackbirds** and **robins**

The RSPB and its partners are currently carrying out research to find out the reasons behind the decline.

As Dr Rob Robinson from the BTO explained, studies so far point to a decline of traditional, established pastures as a major threat to the birds.

Worker sentenced for killing Buzzards

A gamekeeper in South Lanarkshire has been ordered to carry out 100 hours of community services admitting to poisoning four **Buzzards**. He had previously been fined £300 for the separate offence, of trapping a buzzard for at least 48 hours.

Falcon flies off during display

The star attraction at a bird of prey centre near Glasgow, a six year old **Saker Falcon**, disappeared during a performance. Although fitted with a radio transmitter, the bird had either dislodged it or flown out of range. The centre's manager was concerned for its safety as it had been raised at the centre from fledging and had never had to fend for itself.

New boat service to renowned Puffin colony

Birdwatchers will be able to view one of the largest **Puffin** colonies in Britain next year with the launch of a new boat service to a world renowned seabird island.

The isle of May, in the mouth of the Firth of Forth off Scotland's east coast, is home to around 45,000 pairs of **Puffins**, as well as **Guillemots**, **Razorbills**, **Kittiwakes**, **Fulmars** and **Shags**.

Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Seabird Centre are running the excursions which are led by expert guides. The boat trips also pass close to the Bass Rock providing an opportunity to view the 150,000 gannets that live there.

Nest raider jailed for fourth time

A man who stole eggs from the nests of Golden Eagles in Scotland has been jailed for the fourth time. A Londoner, he pleaded guilty to 10 charges including the theft and possession of eggs snatched from nests of rare birds across the country. He was sentenced to six months in prison, the fourth time he has been imprisoned for similar offences.

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.

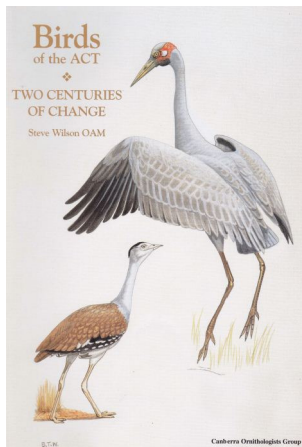
Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay

6286 1564 or

gramsay@grapevine.com.au

COG SALES

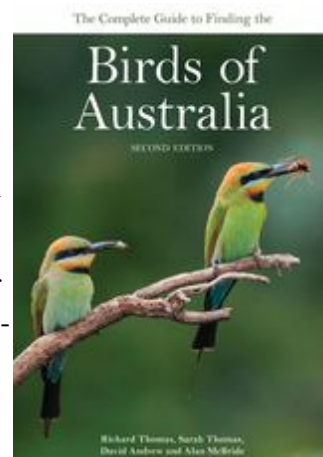
Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change, Steve Wilson OAM, Canberra Ornithologists Group



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

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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.

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phone 02 6251 3136

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

C Baddeley, Cook

J Lynch, Dickson

NEXT NEWSLETTER

June deadline

Wednesday 30 May 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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Newsletter distribution
Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership
2010-2011 memberships:

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

Membership inquiries—
Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303
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

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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