



# Gang-gang

November 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 10 November

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Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*)  
Photo courtesy Geoffey Dabb

## Field Trip Reports

### Remnants and Revegetation 21 August 2004

Twelve COG members gathered on the Gundaroo property “Strathearn” to discover the birds inhabiting a patch of revegetation established by the owner, Ingrid Davis, nine years ago. The suggestion of Spring on this warm August morning was confirmed by the first **Noisy Friarbird** of the season flying overhead. In Spring and Summer this patch is usually alive with Grey Fantails and Rufous Whistlers, but none was apparent this day. We were able to find many of the small insectivorous birds typical of revegetation, including all the **Thornbills** except the Yellow.

As a contrast, we spent some time in the lovely remnant woodland between the house and the front entrance. The woodland has a good tree cover but little in the way of understorey. Larger birds such as **Laughing Kookaburra, Pied Currawong, Red Wattlebird, Sulphur-crested**

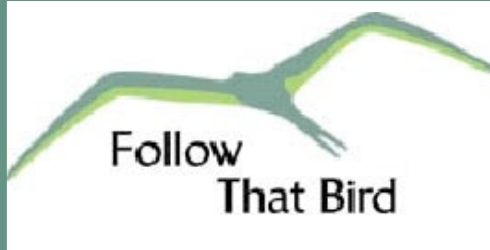
**Cockatoo and Crimson Rosella** were more common, but smaller birds were scarcer. Eighteen species were recorded in the revegetation, and twelve in the woodland.

*Nicki Taws*

### Taylors Creek 24 October 2004

Where’s Taylors Creek? After a phone call from the Taylors Creek Landcare Group earlier in the year asking about the possibility of COG conducting some surveys in the area, I realised that I had hardly been near the area even though it is well within COG’s area of interest. A couple of visits to this area east of Lake George between Bungendore and Tarago, a chat to the Landcare Group, and the idea was hatched of a COG atlassing type of outing with small groups of birdwatchers visiting a number of properties on the one morning.

The survey day dawned overcast and deteriorated into mist, drizzle and a shower or two. However with 25 COG members split into 7 groups, we surveyed 32 two



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Introducing our small well serviced bird-watching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre. All prices include three star accommodation and meals. For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

### December 2004 \$ 2280

Tasmanian Endemics 4-9th  
(price excludes airfare) Start Hobart  
End Hobart. Leader Alan Morris

### January 2005 \$ 1485

Alpine Birds and Plants 22-26th  
**Start Canberra End Canberra**  
Leader Jules Gold: Local Plant and  
Birdo Expert

### February 2005 \$ 1750

Divine Lord Howe Island 12-16th  
(price excludes airfare) Start Lord  
Howe End Lord Howe. Leader Ian  
Hutton: the Lord of Howe himself

### March 2005 \$ 470

Newcastle Waders Weekend 12th &  
13th **Early morning Pick Up Canberra**  
Leader Alan Morris

### May 2005 \$ TBA

Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfeld 2-8th  
(excludes airfare) **Start Canberra End  
Adelaide.** Leader Alan Morris

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hectare sites, and completed an additional 10 area searches and 10 incidental records across 11 rarely visited COG grids. The sites sampled a range of vegetation types including Snowgum, Yellow Box – Redgum, Brittle Gum – Peppermint and Scribbly Gum woodlands, Silvertop Ash forests, patches of Black Casuarina, and several dams across eight properties.

A total of 86 species was recorded, quite an impressive number considering the weather. Some of the common birds in the remnant woodlands were **Striated Pardalote, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper** and **Noisy Miner**. In the forested areas **Leaden Flycatcher, Olive-backed Oriole, Golden Whistler, Gang-gang Cockatoo** and **Eastern Yellow Robin** were recorded. Revegetated sites supported all of the Thornbill species, **Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail** and **Rufous Whistler**. And a range of waterfowl was seen on the dams, including **Musk Duck, Shelduck, Hardhead**, and both **Grey** and **Chestnut Teal**. Some of the highlights included **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** on one of the dams, **White-fronted Chat**, and a flock of 100 **White-browed Woodswallows** moving ahead of the rain-bearing clouds. The Landcare Group put on a sumptuous sausage sizzle for us which was greatly appreciated, and allowed us to share our findings for the morning in the dryness of a woolshed while the

heavens really opened up.

The day was of mutual benefit to COG and the Landcare Group, allowing us access to an area rarely visited by birdwatchers, and giving the landholders information about the birdlife on their properties. Thankyou to the COG members for persisting despite the weather, & to the Landcare Group for providing access and lunch.

*Nicki Taws*

### Buddigower Nature Reserve 2-4 October 2004

After weeks of dry weather the prelude to the October long weekend brought good rainfall, albeit daunting for campers venturing out on unsealed and very sticky tracks into the Buddigower Nature Reserve. Half a dozen COG members arrived on Friday evening in inclement weather. Tents were promptly erected before the possibility of more rain. Hammers were certainly not required for the tent pegs as they just slipped easily into the sodden ground. Our hopes for fairer weather were raised a little later around the campfire when we spotted a few stars. The remainder of the weekend was fine with moderate temperatures; perfect for birding.

On Saturday more COG members arrived bringing the camping number up to 15. Another couple who stayed at West Wyalong dropped in throughout the weekend.

It was a very interesting weekend with banders Mark, Anthony and three assistants. Seventy-seven birds of 21 species were banded: Mark banded 45 birds (11 species)

*Continued bottom opposite page...*

## Report of October COG Meeting

Entomologist Dr Michael Braby gave us a most interesting short talk on the **Mistletoebird**, the only Australian member of the flowerpecker family, the Dicaeidae. It is a tiny bird, about 10 cm, which flies swiftly and high, and is often solitary. The male is most distinctive: glossy blue-black above; grey-white below; throat, upper breast and undertail coverts brilliant scarlet; underside has a broad black central streak. The female is grey above, greyish-white below, with the most helpful identification feature being the pale scarlet undertail coverts. It occurs throughout mainland Australia, east Indonesia and Torres Strait Islands. In the ACT, it is not often seen in suburbia, in wet forests or subalpine areas; it is most commonly seen along the Murrumbidgee River. It is nomadic, and seasonally abundant in the ACT in spring and summer, in response to the availability of mistletoe fruit, its predominant food (though it has been reported as eating insects, nectar and other fruits). The mistletoe fruits pass through the bird's stomach quickly, in 30-60 minutes, and the sticky seeds tend to adhere to the branch on which the bird is sitting and may germinate there. In the ACT, Mistletoebirds tend to breed in late spring. The nest is pear-shaped, with a side entrance, suspended from a horizontal twig amongst foliage, and built of plant down, matted with spiders' webs. The

female builds the nest and incubates the white eggs, usually three in a clutch.

Michael's real interest in the Mistletoebird emerged when he showed illustrations of some of the common local mistletoe species, *Amyema miquelii* and *A. cambagei*, with their attendant caterpillars and butterflies, including *Ogyris amaryllis*, *O. genoveva*, the handsome black and white-striped *Comocrus behri*, and *Delias harpalyce*. Now we will know what else to look for in mistletoes, when the **Painted Honeyeater** fails to show up!

Our main speaker for the evening was Dr David Hollands, who provided us with a splendidly illustrated talk about the compilation of material for his latest book, *Owls: Journeys around the World*. David's interest in owls goes back to at least 1961, the year of his black and white photograph of **Barn Owls** in, yes, a barn in England. For his latest book, he visited Finland, Austria, South Africa, Argentina, Costa Rica, Alaska, Japan and Christmas Island, observing and photographing a huge variety of these enigmatic creatures: from the **European Eagle Owl** to the **Ural Owl**; the **Burrowing Owl** of Argentina which he found living and nesting on the ground in an outer suburban housing estate; the revered but still hunted **Snowy Owl**; the **Spotted Owl**, icon of the Alaskan conservation effort; **Blakiston's Fish Owl**, the Japanese whopper twice the weight of our not-insignificant

and Anthony banded 32 birds (13 species). It was great to see the birds close up and observe so much detail. The banders were very informative about the morphometrics of the various species. Some of the highlights were two **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, one **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, one **Sacred Kingfisher**,

one male **Mulga Parrot** and a male **Red-rumped Parrot**. On close inspection the two Bronze-Cuckoo species are quite disparate in colour and diagnostic markings. Great views of **Dusky Woodswallow** were possible when these were netted & banded.

When not observing the banding

# AGM

**8 pm Wednesday  
10 November 2004**

*Canberra Girls Grammar School  
cnr 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 carpark is  
full, enter using Chapel Drive.*

This months meeting is not to be missed with the Annual General Meeting; a special surprise short talk by Mark Clayton; launch of the COG online data entry and retrieval system; all interspersed with Geoffrey Dabb videos, including something on waders, broilgas, riflebirds, visiting swift parrots

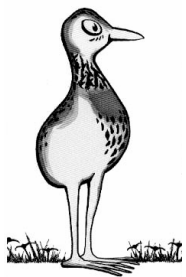
**Don't miss it.**  
It should be a great evening!

**Powerful Owl.** And yes, David has his eye on a breeding pair of the latter, and he was keen to get home to Gippsland to check if the young had fledged!

David brought a few copies of his new book and kindly donated one for our raffle. If you missed out, you can purchase one from David Hollands – Wildfilm, PO Box 125, Orbost, 3888, for \$59.95 plus \$10 p&p.

*Barbara Allan*

activities the remainder of the COGgies broke off into small groups and spent time walking the reserve at their own leisure. Some of the parrots observed within the reserve other than those netted were **Australian Ringneck**, **Cockatiel** and **Galah**. Some of the other birds seen were **Eastern Yellow** and **Red-capped Robins**,



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### 2005 Birding Tours

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

**9-14 March:** Tasmania bird &  
mammal tour, including Bruny Island &  
pelagic trip

**16-23 March:** Kangaroo Island, SA.  
Great Ocean Road – Coorong NP

**18-29 May:** Gulf Country Q'ld  
Cairns Karumba Georgetown Mt Isa

**4-19 June:** Top End incl. Kununurra

**3-10 July:** New Caledonia  
**(rescheduled)**

Comprehensive birding tour seeking  
all endemic, plus the near-endemic,  
species on Grand Terre and nearby  
islands of the Loyalty group. Birds  
include the incredible **kagu**, plus  
**cloven-feathered dove**, **horned  
parakeet**, **crow honeyeater**, **white-  
bellied goshawk**, **red-throated  
parrot-finch**, **NC imperial pigeon**  
*A little bit of France in the tropics, 2.5  
hours from Sydney, with reputedly the  
richest biodiversity per square  
kilometre in the world.*

**8-26 August:** Outback trip  
The 20th Strzelecki Track tour

### Plains-wanderer Weekends

11 and 12 **December 2004**  
18 and 19 **December 2004**  
26 & 27 March (Easter) 2005

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**Jacky Winter, Grey Fantail, Red Wattlebird, Spiny-cheeked, Yellow-tufted, White-plumed, Blue-faced and Brown Honeyeaters, Brown Treecreeper, White-winged Triller, Southern Whiteface and White-browed Babbler. Rufous and Gilbert's Whistlers**, (alas, the latter not seen by me ... yet!) were also present. And a pair of **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, absolutely stunning in the sunlight, displayed their beautiful colours flying above the campsite. In all, 68 bird species were seen throughout the reserve, including **Ground Cuckoo-shrike** which flew over the campsite on Monday morning as we were breaking camp. A couple of the more botanically aware birders identified many orchid species in the reserve, two of which were Donkey (*Diurus* sp.) and Spider (*Caladenia* sp.) Orchids. Two Lace Monitors and a scorpion were also seen not far from the campsite.

Many thanks to Mark Clayton for allowing us to be present at this banding weekend, and also for his very entertaining and interesting stories around the campfire each night.

*Pamela Morse-Evans*

### BUNDIDGERRY

**Sunday 17 October 2004**

Eleven of us met at the meeting point before car-pooling, and making our way to the Bundidgerry property near Murrumbatemen. Amongst our party were Ernst and Inge, being visitors from Germany.

Simon Dixon met us at his 400

acre property at about 8.30am, before we moved off in a loop around part of the property. The day started as being cool, cloudy, and a little breezy, and was not looking very birdy for the first part of the walk as we made our way up the hill through the woodland regrowth. The only birds of note were a pair of **White-necked Herons** flying overhead. However, the wind died away, the light brightened, and the birding improved. A couple of restless **Noisy Friarbirds** were found guilty of trying to hide their nest from us! It appeared to be in the final stages of construction, hanging in the foliage of a eucalypt. Some of our party located the chortling of the **Olive-backed Oriole**, while others tried to determine if the red eye seen peering from the Friarbird nest was a young one. The jury decided that it was in fact not an eye, but a red spot on nest's support branch(!) Some of the more popular birds that were audible as we made our way from the dam, and along the stream in the more open country, including the **Laughing Kookaburra, Willie Wagtail, Crimson Rosella, Superb Fairy-wren, Galah, Buff-rumped and Yellow Thornbills. White-plumed Honeyeaters** were seen in a copse along the creek line amongst the wattle and eucalypts, along with more Superb Fairy-wrens in the last of the blackberry canes.

The action really started though as we moved to the northern end of Bundidgerry, when a couple of miss-placed **Common Bronzings** were found quite happily strutting their stuff in an open paddock. Stuart had brought a scope, and so we were able to

get good views of them. A flock of distant **Australian Wood Duck** peered at us over a dam embankment, but couldn't stand the excitement any longer and flew off. A dead tree provided us with **Dusky Woodswallows**, an unperturbed **Crested Pigeon**, a few **Goldfinch** and a couple of starlings (note the lower case for 'starlings'). We obtained wonderful views of **Mistletoebirds** - normally quite elusive- in their brilliant red-orange and steel blue suits, being displayed in the full sun. A wonderful **Nankeen Night Heron** decided that we were all too much for it, and it flew on down the creek line to hide in a large tree. There were several young **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** flitting about under the watchful eye of a **Brown Falcon** seen perched high on a dead tree. A **Nankeen Kestrel** was seen hovering in the distance.

It was at this stage of the walk that some of the party decided to do some horizontal birding, by lying on the soft grass, with their eyes closed, in the warming sun. Clearly these folk were exercising their audio skills, listening to the rise of the **Pallid Cuckoo**, the eee-chong of the **Rufous Whistler** and the strike of a **Grey Shrike-thrush**, and occasionally opening an eye for the odd **Little Pied Cormorant** flying overhead.

Zzzzzzz.....

And if you have been interested to read this far and were not at the excursion, you will be busting to know if we saw the **Hooded Robin** as suggested in the pre-walk sales pitch. Well, we did. A young male was seen by Ernst during the closing stages of the

## COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **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 - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **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
- 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.

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walk, which was shared among most of the party, although the robin was not too keen to be seen by everyone. We then pointed our noses toward the cabin where we partook of a little refreshment after more than three hours of birding. The species count was about 37 for the morning, for which we thanked Simon very much.

*Alistair Bestow*

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## Future Field Trips

### **Callum Brae woodlands Sunday 7 November 2004 morning local outing**

A morning walk to look for nesting birds and spring/summer migrants in the new nature park taking in the Callum Brae woodlands. Geoffrey Dabb, who knows this area very well as he has been regularly monitoring the birds there for the COG Woodland Survey, will lead this outing. If there is interest and time permits another woodland survey site on the west of Mugga Lane will be visited also.

Meet Geoffrey (6295 3449) at 7:30 am in Narrabundah Lane, about 300 metres east of its intersection with Mugga Lane.

### **Campbell Park Sunday 14 November 2004 Morning Nest workshop**

This is a repeat of the very successful outing held one year ago at Campbell Park, arguably the best bit of grassy woodland in Canberra. It has been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The aim of the morning is to brush up on members' skills and will involve a short presentation including tips on the

## Surveys/other Activities of Interest to COG Members

The Eurobodalla NHS are happy to have COG members along on their usual November outing to look at nesting **Little Terns**. The local "carers" will be in attendance to explain how they fence off the nests etc. A good range of other estuarine birds are usually to be seen.

This will take place on **Sunday 28 November** looking at the Tuross

types of nests built by different species of birds, how to find nests or nesting behaviour. It will be followed by several hours looking for signs of nesting, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching. Let's hope this year is as successful as last year was.

If you interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)). Meet at 7.30 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. A big thank you to Anthony Overs who will be helping Jack conduct and lead this event. We'd be grateful for any tips on where birds are nesting shortly before the day.

### **Goulburn; Saturday/Sunday 20-21 November 2004- Overnight visit (Amended outing)**

This trip is a follow up to our very successful outing to the Pejar Dam etc in February with the Goulburn Field Naturalists (GFN), and replaces the advertised outing to the Bumbalong Valley. The focus will be on some of the now Greater Argyle Council sites where special permission is needed for access. It is expected that some participants will want to travel to Goulburn for a Saturday afternoon's birding and to stay overnight, and others may

Estuary or Brou Lake. So if you are in the area meet at Potato Point turn-off in Bodalla at 9 am. Leaders Barbara Allan and Tom Green; Ph 6247 0630

The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of **4-5 December**. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on [thebradybunch8@bigpond.com](mailto:thebradybunch8@bigpond.com).

want to come up on Sunday morning.

On Saturday afternoon we propose to visit the Gorman Road sewage ponds (where **Spotless Crane, Musk** and **Pink-eared Duck** were seen in June) as well as to make some brief visits to some sites at Towrang, to the east of Goulburn.

On Sunday we will commence with a revisit to the Kenmore Dam, followed by a much longer walk starting at the nearby Kenmore Quarry and along the northern bank of the Wollondilly River along the southern edges of the ranges leading to the Blue Mountains National Park to Murrays Flat. **Spotted Quail-thrush, Freckled Duck** and **Diamond Firetail** were seen here on a recent GFN outing.

The COG co-ordinator/leader will be Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)), while the leaders/organisers from the Goulburn Field Naturalists will be Peter Mowle/Rodney Falconer.

For those intending to come down on Saturday we will meet at 13:30 at the turn off to Taralga several km through the main street of town. Those coming down on Sunday should be at this same

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spot by 7.30 am. Members staying overnight will need to make their own accommodation arrangements – we're recommending the Governors Hill Motel (02 4821 1766) or the Governors Hill Carapark (02 4821 7373) in Sydney Road, which are convenient to the meeting place. Arrangements are being made for a Saturday evening joint meal. If you are intending to participate please contact Jack Holland beforehand.

### **Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve; Sunday 5 December 2004 morning walk**

This will be the first time COG formally visits this newly declared Nature reserve in which we have been carrying out COG Woodland surveys for some time. So if you haven't visited it yet here is your chance to find out what birds can be found there. Early summer should see a peak of activity and **Speckled Warbler, Whiteface,** maybe a **Brown Treecreeper** are expected. Other summer migrants should also be seen. The walk, which will be restricted to the southern section of the reserve, will be led by Steve Holliday who helped organise and has conducted the COG surveys there. We are also hoping that the ranger responsible for the reserve can be present to give his perspective.

Meet Steve (6248 0910) at 8 am at the car park at the SW corner off Horse Park Drive (see map on the COG website at:

<http://www.canberrabirds.org.au/GoorooyarrooNR.htm>.

### **East Basin/Molonglo River; Sunday 12 December 2004 Electric Boat cruise**

The final outing for 2004 will be a further cruise on the upper parts of

Lake Burley Griffin and the adjacent Molonglo River on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet". As members will be aware this boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The main focus will be to view nesting, with three species of cormorant and lesser numbers of darters having already started, but the area is also rich in other waterbirds.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)). As the boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers there will be an early and, depending on the level of interest also a late shift, one at 7 am and the second at 9 am. Note that the point of departure is now 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).

### **Wednesday Walk**

**17 November 2004**

The Wednesday walk this month will go to **Shepherds Look out**. The meeting place is on Stockdill Drive, Holt. It is the burn-out zone 3 km down past the Belconnen Golf Course. If people are interested, and the track is navigable, this could be made a 3.5 km walk to Urriara Crossing with a car shuffle. Expressions of interest to Martin Butterfield on 6253 1286 or preferably by E-mail on [mfbutter@bigpond.com](mailto:mfbutter@bigpond.com) by 8 November please. Martin will check out the track and report to the November Meeting.

## **Longer trips**

### **Possible longer COG specific trip for 2005**

As members are aware COG did not run one of the above in 2004 for a variety of reasons, one being the very low level of interest in the one Emu Tour that was advertised late in 2003.

Despite this several members have contacted me about the lack of opportunity to join other COG members on tours starting/finishing in Canberra. Consequently I have been discussing the possibilities with Janene Luff of Follow That Bird based in Sydney, a bird tour company which doesn't appear to be well known in COG circles.

We have discussed a tentative COG specific trip next winter. The proposal we favour as the best destination at the time of year is for a trip along the NSW coast to Coffs Harbour, and a return journey with different stops. This is briefly outlined below:

**"The Green Gold and Blue of Coffs Bird Routes"** 6 day/5 night - Canberra - Coffs Harbour - Canberra with different locations on the return journey. One of the most attractive parts of the east coast of Australia, an area of diverse landscape with much to offer the cold weary Canberra bird-watcher. Long stretches of beautiful sandy beaches separated by rocky headlands and backed by numerous peaceful lakes, these waterways hold nesting cormorants at this time of the year. So engaging in their habits of parental change over; with exercise, feeding and calling making time stand still. South West Rock's surrounding inlets offer the unique, large-

## 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 cliff top 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. Bird-watching 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 kilometres 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@actewagl.net.au](mailto:greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.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.

eyed **Beach Stone-curlews**.

Nambucca and Scott's Head have the beautiful **Brahminy Kites** at nest, their soaring unequal in colour or beauty. Woolgoolga Flora Reserve our most northerly point, promises to be a highlight - among the many of Alan Morris' special spots.

June 28 to July 3 2005 are the preferred dates as a perfect time to get away from the Canberra cold. Alan Morris, who is well known to COG members, is the expert guide and he is flattered at the chance to spend time with members of COG.

Approx Cost depending on minimum no. of people - 6 persons **\$1800.00** approx. At this stage the main aim is to gauge whether there would be sufficient interest in such a trip to make it viable. This needs to be known before Christmas to allow more specific plans to be developed. So if you are interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)).

There have been several expressions of interest to last month's ad but not enough yet to make it a viable trip, assuming not all these are firm. Could anyone interested therefore please contact Jack as soon as possible. Jack would also be interested in feedback as to what kind of longer commercial trip members may be interested in.

### Iron Range, November 2005

Advance notice is given that Mark Clayton's bird banding crew will be visiting the Iron Range in North Queensland late in November 2005. Members will be welcome to participate but will have to make their own way up there. If

there is sufficient interest it may be possible to organise some transport from this end. If you are interested please contact Mark Clayton on 6241 3620 (A/H). Mark can also be reached at [Mark.Clayton@csiro.au](mailto:Mark.Clayton@csiro.au). While this is still some time away Mark would like indications of interest now or as early as possible, given the extensive organisation it will involve.

## 2005 COG Field Trips Program

The draft 2005 COG Field Trips Program is included on the following page of this *Gang-gang*. This contains a mix of old favourites, some revisits to recent successful spots and some new ideas or places to visit. Thank you all who have suggested spots and particularly those who have offered to organise and lead trips.

As far as possible we have kept to last year's policy of at least one short local and one further afield trip each month, usually separated by a fortnight. This allows plenty of opportunity for members to offer additional trips or to invite other COG members on a trip they are planning.

At one stage it looked like the draft would be less advanced than usual but a late flurry filled in some of the vacant spots. However, there is still some flexibility at this stage and there are also still some free spots and/or some leaders needed, in particular the location of the outing for the June long weekend still needs to be resolved.

So if you have any places not included that you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit, or past out-



ings that you think ought to be repeated, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)) by 17 December. The final program will then be published with the February 2005 *Gang-gang*.

Jack Holland

## From the COG Committee

### Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 10 November 2004 at the usual monthly meeting venue, the Canberra Girls Grammar School. Details page 3.

### Agenda

1. Opening of meeting
2. Apologies for non-attendance
3. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
4. Presentation of Annual Report
5. Adoption of Annual Report
6. Presentation of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts (enclosed)
7. Adoption of Treasurer's annual statement of accounts
8. Election of officers (President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary) and ordinary committee members
9. Other matters for which notice has been given
10. Closing of meeting.

## DRAFT PROGRAM - COG 2005 FIELD TRIPS

	Place	Type of Event
Sat 15 January	Lake Burley Griffin	Evening electric boat cruise
<i>Sun 16/23 January</i>	<i>Brindabellas</i>	<i>All day</i>
Sun 6 February	Jerrabomberra Wetlands	Morning
11-14 February	Cape Conran Coastal Park	Extended weekend camp-out
Sun 20 February	Lake Burley Griffin	Birding on bikes
Sun 6 March	Brooks Hill Reserve	Morning
Sat – Mon 19-21 March (Canberra Day)	Wee Jasper	long weekend shearers' quarters accommodation
Fri – Mon 25-28 March (Easter)	Goonoo State Forest	Extended long weekend –camp-out
Sun 10 April	Honeyeater migration	Morning
<i>Sat-Monday 23-25 April</i>	<i>Anzac Day weekend</i>	<i>What kind of outing does COG want for this weekend??</i>
Sun 8 May	East Basin/Molonglo Reach	Waterbirds by Electric Boat
Sun 22 May	Botanic gardens	Beginners morning
<i>11-13 June long weekend</i>	<i>Jervis Bay??</i>	<i>Long weekend accommodation*</i>
Sat 25 June	Tidbinbilla	Lyrebird survey
Tues 28 June – Sunday 3	Coffs Harbour	Accommodated trip
Sun 10 July	Robin twitchathon (7 species)	Extended morning – bus?
Sun 24 July		
Sun 7 August	Lake Ginninderra	Waterbirds for beginners morning*
Sat 20 August		
Sun 4 September	Gorooyarroo to Mulligans Flat walk	Car shuffle*
Sun 18 September	Campbell Park	Leaders workshop
1-3 October long weekend	Riverina (Leeton/Griffith)	Camp-out
Sun 16 October	Bibaringa	Morning
<i>To be decided</i>	<i>Green Cape revisited</i>	<i>Weekday or extended weekend</i>
Sun 23 October	Jerrabomberra Grassland Reserve	Birds and grassland morning with FOG
Sun 30 October	Bird Week blitz	All day atlasing bonanza
Sun 6 November	Reveg and Remnants	All day
Sun 13 November	Jindalee	Day trip by bus
Sat - Sun 20-21 November	Garuwanga via Nimmitabel	Overnight/2 nights camp-out
<i>Sun 4 December</i>	<i>Local Nature Park</i>	<i>Morning*</i>

\* Leader needed  
Entries in *italics* still to be finalised

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### **Report from October meeting**

COG members will be delighted to learn that our nominee for the prestigious Australian Natural History Medallion, Dr David Lindenmayer, has been successful. David has been awarded the 2004 medallion for his work in ecology and conservation biology. He will be presented with his medallion by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria at 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn, 3130 on Monday 8 November. Any member of COG who happens to be in Melbourne on that day is welcome to attend the presentation. Phone 03 9877 9860 for details.

The first edition of the Fullgar/Slater CD of calls and songs of ACT birds is progressing apace and should be available for purchase at the November COG meeting. It contains mainly new material, and more extended sequences in some cases than the old tape. We're hoping to bring out a revised edition every year, as better material comes to hand.

A copy of the 'pocket guide' to the birds of Canberra, produced in conjunction with Birds Australia, and with financial support from Australian Capital Tourism, will be distributed to all COG members in

the next issue of *Canberra Bird Notes*.

The Committee has been contacted by three people who failed to receive their copy of the October *Gang-gang*. We try very hard to get our publications out to you but sometimes they go astray, for reasons apparently beyond our control. Please leave a message on the COG office answering machine 6247 4996 or email [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au) if you have failed to receive a publication and we'll send it asap.

The Draft ACT Lowland Grassland Conservation Strategy (Action Plan No 28) has been published by the ACT Government. Public comments are due by 21 December. This strategy covers natural temperate grasslands and their fauna, including several endangered lizards and plants. There are no threatened birds covered by the strategy (these are documented in the Lowland Woodland Strategy), but the strategy is of general interest and has linkages to the woodland strategy in terms of the mosaic of different habitats and transitions between them in our natural landscapes/ecosystems. Copies of the Strategy can be obtained (\$5) from the EACT shopfront in Macar-

thur House, 12 Wattle St Lyneham. or accessed on line at [www.environment.act.gov.au](http://www.environment.act.gov.au).

### **The 2004-2005 COG Committee**

As indicated at the October COG meeting I intend to stand again for President for next year. I'm also happy to report that most of the current committee will be staying on with me, though at least one long serving member is seeking a break. While it's great to have a stable committee of hard working volunteers, we do need to attract some new blood each year, and there are a number of vacancies, in part because we do not have the full complement of 10 ordinary members on the current committee. So if you have some time to help and feel that you have something to offer COG through serving on the committee please contact me [Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au))] to discuss the possibilities.

A nomination form was included in the last two editions of *Gang-gang*.

*Jack Holland*

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## ***Avian Whimsy # 26***

### **1974: when the birding world came to Canberra**

August 2004 passed, as far as I noticed at least, without acknowledgment of one of the most important anniversaries in Australian, and certainly Canberran, ornithology. It marked 30 years since Australia and Canberra truly stepped onto the world birding stage – or more to the point, provided a stage for world ornithology to tread. That year, for the first time in its 90 year history, the International

Ornithological Congress left the Northern Hemisphere – in fact it had only ever left Europe for one venture to North America.

Among the 800 distinguished and less known scientists from around the world who descended on Canberra for the event was a totally undistinguished young Honours student from Adelaide University. His academic career went no further than that year – but I remember the awe and excitement of that freezing winter week as a highlight of my life. To hear first hand

the words of Ernst Mayr, Joel Cracraft, Allen Keast, Stephen Davies, Karl Immelman, Henry Nix, Jared Diamond, Harry Frith and Ian Rowley was probably as close to a religious experience as I'd come!

One thing I recall is the realisation that young scientists, given such a stage, often gave more charged and stimulated talks than established 'names', who too often seemed only to be repeating things they'd said and written many times before and whose careers

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certainly didn't rely on it. One such exciting young scientist I remember was a Californian called Veronica Parry, who presumed to tell us very many things we hadn't got around to finding out about Kookaburras. Her enthusiasm was – and in my memory is – palpable.

Another Congress name that had already been causing much excitement in those days was that of Charles Sibley, an American who was doing interesting things with egg white proteins and making iconoclastic mutterings about the origins of Australian birds. (There were other mutterings about the supposed origins of some of the egg whites, but these, while also interesting, were never more than speculation.) Sibley, with Jon Ahlquist, was still to pioneer the use of the DNA hybridisation method which would turn all the old prejudices out and firmly fix Gondwana – and even 'Australia' – as the home of the world's passerines.

It must be remembered that in 1974 it was still generally taken for granted that Australian birds had to have recently derived from the Northern Hemisphere – most small Australian passerines were lumped as Old World sylviid warblers and our venerable treecreepers were still assumed to be 'just' Old World creepers. This was based more on European bias and

Australian cultural cringe than on biological evidence. The fact that the concept of Continental Drift as an explanation of distribution had only just been generally accepted had certainly slowed the process. To a hitherto sheltered young would-be biologist, rapidly learning a bit about life via university at the time of the Vietnam War and conscription, the suggestions that our avifauna might be as truly Australian as marsupials and eucalypts was intoxicatingly alluring! Nor was I unique in this of course.

In 1974 the logistics of mounting a Congress in the Antipodes were still formidable; perhaps as formidable in fact as persuading the European Grand Old Men (and they were certainly all of those things 30 years ago!) to come to Australia. The Grandest of them all, Jean Dorst, pointed out to Harry Frith the difficulties for European delegates of travelling to a Congress "far away from their home country". It didn't seem to occur to him that Southern Hemisphere ornithologists already knew rather a lot about that...

Among the major drivers for the venture were two CSIRO ornithologists. Harry Frith was Chief of Wildlife Research at Gungahlin and Dominic Serventy had recently retired from the Wildlife Survey Division in Perth. Both were ratites – giants in the bird

world in their own right, and true Gondwanans. And the problems they and the committee faced went well beyond the obvious ones.

For one thing the ANU was still being built (though in those days it was buildings, rather than car-parks). More dramatically, the delegates arrived to a transport and fuel strike. Light planes were chartered to bring delegates from Perth. African delegates crammed into an old Kombi van, hired from an on-site entrepreneur, to make a night drive from the Sydney airport. Frith telegraphed Bob Hawke (then ACTU President) and Clyde Cameron (Minister for Labour) pleading for oil to save the delegates from freezing! In the end the Congress had to start a day late – but all I remember is the sheer thrilling excitement of the whole thing.

The full story is in Libby Robin's wonderful history *The Flight of the Emu*. It's a story we should all be aware of, because it changed the face of Australian ornithology – and for that reason, if you read just one Whimsy this year, I hope it's this one. I'll pretend you did anyway!

*(My thanks to Steve Holliday for the loan of his Congress Proceedings, after I accidentally gave my precious copy to St Vinnie's!)*

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

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## GBS Central #7

The database here at GBS Central is now somewhat larger than it was with the data from all charts now residing therein (and backups are being created). It is my intention to declare this set (now

up to 58 sites for year 23 after receipt of a final Chart) as the basis for the data to be used for the Annual Bird Report (ABR). If anyone out there still has a Chart for 2003 – 04 I'd still like it returned, and it will get added to the database after the tables for the

ABR have been completed.

There have been some very unusual species reported in GBS sites in the past month. As well as the media starring **Swift Parrots** from Cook the species has also been reported from a site in Higgins. These will be the fifth

and sixth GBS records for the species. The first GBS record of a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** for 10 years, and the third overall, has come from Sutton.

Several observers have reported the return of **Leaden Flycatchers** to their sites and **Dollarbirds** have been reported across the Territory so could be expected to turn up in Gardens any time now.

GBS data has been supplied to an ANU researcher to assist in some

research on population dynamics and comparing trends which assume linear population growth and exponential population growth.

I'll now get on to preparing the ABR material: I hope next month to be able to answer the question posed a couple of issues back about the value of A for **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**.

*Martin Butterfield*

## Next newsletter

**DECEMBER** deadline  
Wednesday 24 November 2004

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to  
Editors *Gang-gang*  
[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au)  
or send 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. Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

## COG info

### President

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email [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto: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)**  
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### Gang-gang editor

**Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)**  
and Sue Lashko

### Newsletter distribution

**Lia Battisson 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

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

[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

**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 Birds'. Join the list by sending an empty email message to [canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).**

### Editor Canberra Bird Notes

[CBN@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:CBN@canberrabirds.org.au)



## Gang-gang

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