

Gang-gang

October 2010

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 13.10.10

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 shorter talk will be by **Lucy Wenger** called “**Where do the Birds in My Garden Come From?**”

Starting as a school project, bird species from Lucy’s garden were compared with species found in two nearby reserves (one on a hill and one by a creek). The one year study used the COG Garden Bird Survey methodology.

Leo Joseph will give the main presentation entitled “**Honeyeaters, Quail-thrush, Parrots, and many more: Updates from recent research at the ANWC.**”

Ever looked at the books and wondered about why all those different looking honeyeaters are placed in one genus, *Lichenostomus*? Or those odd quail-thrush with chestnut breast bands being on different sides of the continent with the Cinnamon Quail-thrush geographically between them? How about eastern and western White-naped Honeyeaters? Are they really the same species? And there’s that dreaded word “species”. What on earth does it mean when we look at Crimson, Yellow and Adelaide Rosellas? The Australian National Wildlife Collection has in recent years launched a major assault on these questions and in this talk Leo will be presenting a summary of some of the weird and wonderful findings that have been emerging and why the study of the evolution of Australian birds is still such a wonderful field to be working in!

What to watch out for this month

Nearly one month into spring it seems clear that this year will be a quite different one from those of the past few much drier years. The wet and cold weather for the first half of September resulted in a number of the altitudinal migrants delaying their departure to the higher areas. This was very noticeable for the **White-eared Honeyeater** for which there were a number of reports during this period. The one in my GBS site was very conspicuous and vocal for the first three weeks of September, whereas usually it has already departed or at least is quiet. The **Crescent Honeyeater** was also still being reported by a number of observers in this same period. Perhaps less surprising have been reports of **Golden Whistler** as this species often seems to stay a bit longer.

Some **Flame Robins** were also still being reported in suburban Canberra up to mid month, as well as several **Rose Robins** at that time, presumably passage migrants as very few, if any, were reported over winter. Another very noticeable sighting, enjoyed by many members, was the 20 or so **Swift Parrots** first reported by Matthew Frawley on 3 September, but which then stayed around feeding in the planted flowering eucalypts at the Tuggeranong Town Centre, delaying their migration to Tasmania at least up to the third weekend of spring. Any sightings of any of the above species within the suburbs of Canberra in late September and into October will be significant, so please ensure you enter them into the COG database.

On the other hand the wet, cold and windy weather seemed to delay the arrival of the earlier arriving spring migrants until mid September. While a few had been reported early on, the general movement of **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** did not start until then, or even later. By contrast the latter were present in Bron King’s mid-

Everyone welcome

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Melba garden all winter, yet another example of how a distribution can be very local; we certainly couldn't find them during our preparations for the winter birds bus trip. Some **Fuscous Honeyeaters** have also been reported, most notably with the Swift **Parrots** in Tuggeranong, but also in the Botanic Gardens, where they may have overwintered. Keep your eyes and ears open for these species, as they are usually only present in suburban Canberra for a month or so before moving to the mountains to breed.

Again while a few were reported earlier, the major influx of **Noisy Friarbirds** did not seem to occur until around the third weekend of September, when based on the reports they moved into Canberra in good numbers. Flocks of **Silvereyes** have also been reported moving through, including many of the buff-flanked form on their way to fly over Bass Strait to Tasmania. A number of large flocks of **Dusky Woodswallows** have also been reported from the beginning of spring, though it has been hard to tell which are newly arrived as opposed to having stayed over winter. The first **Superb Parrots** for spring have also been reported, though Nicki Taws has observed them in Cook all winter, with a maximum of about 20 birds present. Due to the wetter spring it may be a better year for the traditional migrants such as **Dollarbird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Sacred Kingfisher**; indeed there have already been a number of reports of the last-named from surprisingly early in September.

On the other hand cuckoos seem to be less numerous so far this spring, with up to the last couple of days few reports of **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, and to my recall no records yet of **Eastern Koel** (or are observers still reluctant to post sightings of this increasingly common species?). Also to date there have been no reports of **Leaden Flycatcher** or early **White-winged Trillers** or **Rufous Songlarks**, so perhaps my prediction that the two last-named species may not be as abundant this year due to the improved conditions inland is coming true. Watch out for these species, and also **Rufous Fantail**, **Satin Flycatcher** and **Cicadabird**, which are often among the last to reach Canberra, where they stay only briefly before moving to the mountains to breed.

The signs are for a good breeding season, with some notable reports already including two observations of **Scarlet Robin** feeding dependent young on the outer edges of Canberra, and **Varied Sittella** and **Western Gerygone** nest building. A remarkable early breeding event of **Noisy Miners** has been reported by Michael Lenz, who observed that at the end of the first week in September the ANU had 15 groups with either young out or in the nest, but some still building a nest. Readers may recall these had a late breeding spell with 11 groups with young in April. Interestingly, in April Michael could not find any other **Noisy Miner** groups outside the ANU (Ainslie, O'Connor) with young, but in early September all sites checked in Ainslie had either young out or still in the nest (11 all together), and the O'Connor group from April had a nest with 3 large young in it. **Tawny Frogmouths** have also been widely reported on nests, pointing to a good breeding season for this species.

As always make sure all your significant sightings of arriving or departing birds, or of breeding activity are provided to the Records Management Team and can be considered for the *2010-2011 Annual Bird Report*.

— Jack Holland

Field Trip reports

4-5 September — Little Forest Plateau

Fifteen intrepid souls ventured forth on what was hoped to be a lovely weekend of bird watching in the plateau heath land and coastal rainforest. We stayed at the Lake Conjola Entrance Caravan Park and unfortunately the weather was against us. With rain virtually all day on Saturday we opted to change the program and try for Little Forest Plateau on Sunday as the forecast suggested it would be sunny, but windy. Little did we know! On Saturday we walked out to the point in the drizzle and managed to spot a few waders at the lake entrance and with the wind increasing we got distant views of **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatross** and a number of **shearwaters**. When the rain eased off a bit on Saturday afternoon we ventured south to the South Pacific Heathland Reserve near Ulladulla where David and Noela McDonald had visited the day before. What a beautiful spot it turned out to be with a multitude of flowering natives. Highlights included Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*), a couple of orchids - Waxlip and one of the Sun Orchids, Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrate*), numerous heaths and acacias. We went to bed on Saturday night having arranged an early

morning start for Little Forest, confident that the weather would be better. Well, after a night of storm force winds gusting up to 130km/hr and all of us thinking that the roof of our cabin was going to blow off, we rose to a devastated caravan park. The wind continued to rise until mid morning, so all thought of going anywhere was cancelled. Fortunately all of our party came away unscathed, although Bill and Catherine Hindson had to move their caravan in the early hours of the morning to a more protected spot. The park had numerous large trees that had blown over squashing a car, playground and semi permanent cabins. One cabin had been blown apart by the wind and the owner's furniture was sitting out in the weather, with all the side walls of the cabin gone. We drove home dodging fallen trees and powerlines, suitably disappointed. For those game, we will try for a re-run next year, hopefully without the weather!

— Kathy Walter

15 September — Wednesday Walk

A select group of seven members attended Cooleman Ridge in brilliant sunshine but with a chilly breeze. Perhaps due to the breeze, the birds were not that obvious, although we did record 33 species which is not a bad haul. Surprisingly no cuckoos were seen or heard.

We recorded five species of parrots/cockatoos with Eastern Rosellas being the most numerous. A pair were closely inspecting a spout close to the start of the walk, with one bird eventually going inside. Other breeding activity noted was an Australian Magpie building a nest and Common Starlings inspecting hollows. A White-winged Chough nest was seen in a tree close to the start, but although the nest appeared in good order it didn't seem to be in use at present (we didn't see or hear any Choughs).

A full birdlist will be loaded to the COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/index.htm> under "Trips" (click the pelican)! — Martin Butterfield

18-19 September — Monga weekend

We had hardly stepped out of the car and set up camp, after arriving on Friday night, when we heard a Sooty Owl calling quite close to camp. Some frantic activity then ensued, with a mob of avid birdos scurrying through the bush, fording rivers, climbing embankments and leaping over fallen logs in order to try to find this elusive bird. It called frequently in quite close range and we managed to narrow down the tree it was in, but still couldn't get the spotlight on it. A couple of people eventually got a glimpse of it flying away. Bruised and battered, some of us with wet feet, we trudged back to camp elated that we had come close, but disappointed that we hadn't had a good look. We vowed to try again the next night.

Margaret McJannett and Charles Buer had organised a fantastic camping spot right beside the Buckenbowra River in Monga National Park. It was alive with birds, frogs and flowering plants. The dawn chorus rivalled the frog calls of the night before with Rose Robins, Crescent Honeyeaters, Azure Kingfishers, a Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Large-billed and Yellow-throated Scrub Wrens all seen within 30 metres of camp. We did a number of walks in the area and were impressed with the flowering plants. Highlights included acres of Clematis and Indigofera and some spectacular tree and rock orchids. Throughout the day on Saturday we discussed our strategy for spotting the Sooty Owl that night. Some thought we should sit round the fire and 'will' it to fly in and perch in the large Casuarina five metres from camp. Some thought if they drank enough they would see it for sure, maybe even two! Some thought we should stake out the tree from the previous night in the hope that it would appear out of a hollow. In the end we waited till we heard the first call just on dusk and then, being a little more alert, searched for movement and eyeshine. We got a brief view again and



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2010: Celebrating 30 years of Plains-wanderers

Plains-wanderer Weekends:

6/7 & 20/21 November
4/5 & 18/19 December 2010

Proposed tours 2011: Laos, Malaysia, New Guinea

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

www.philipmaher.com



Sooty Owl at Monga
(*Tyto tenebricosa*)
Photo by Julian Robinson

then we could hear it calling from the same tree as the previous night. Still, despite desperate searching with the spotlight we couldn't pick up any eyeshine! And then Charles 'legendary owl spotter' Buer got the spotlight on it, in the very top of the tree, perched on a dead branch out in the open. What fantastic views we had, made all the sweeter by the hard work in getting them. Thanks to Margaret and Charles for a truly fabulous weekend. — **Kathy Walter**

Future Field Trips

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

Sunday 17 October — K2C bird surveys, Bredbo region

COG undertook the inaugural K2C surveys in April this year. The surveyed properties proved to be rich in many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or PH. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

Wednesday 20 October - Mountain Creek Toad TSRs

Next month's mid-week walk will also be a drive! We plan to do a repeat of the Mountain Creek Road TSR trip which we did last year. We will meet at Stromlo Forest Park to carpool. I suggest we will move off at 9:00am so those wishing to check out the White-fronted Chats may wish to arrive closer to 8:30 for a brief prowling round the SFP area. Last year we didn't pay much attention to Cavan TSR as it was the last we reached. This year it is planned to go there first (about 25km from Urriara Crossing) and work our way back through the Mullion and Tinker's Creek Reserves.

Notes: (1) It has been raining so the Reserves may be a tad squelchy. (2) The drive will include about 40kms of dirt road. If there is significant rain (actual or forecast) in the days immediately prior to the 20th the venue for the outing will be changed. An email will be sent out on the 18th confirming arrangements. (3) Bring lunch and water.

Sat-Sun 23-24 October — Goulburn area — overnight campout/accommodated

This trip will be the joint outing for 2010 as part of our continuing links with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS). We will be travelling to Goulburn early Saturday afternoon, returning mid Sunday afternoon, looking at, inter alia, their new bird hide at Arthursleigh on the Wollondilly River, as well as the proposed wetlands at the old brick pits close to Goulburn. As usual we will have dinner with our hosts on the Saturday evening. There will be the opportunity to camp, or for those who prefer, motel/hotel accommodation in town. To book your place, or for further information please contact Jack Holland PH. 6288 7840 (AH) or e-mail: jack.holland@environment.gov.au.

Sunday 14th November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past seven years at Campbell Park. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start

with the usual very short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, looking for signs of nesting etc, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to birdwatching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Though every year has been different, it is expected we won't be walking very far as there is usually a "hot spot" where most of the nesting occurs.

Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

If you are interested in participating or for further information please contact Jack Holland, PH. 6288 7840 (AH) or E-mail: jack.holland@environment.gov.au

Sat-Sun 20-21 November - Bumbalong Valley campout on private property

This is a repeat visit following COG's camp-outs in the area in February 2002, November 2006 and March 2009. The Bumbalong Valley is a very sheltered valley straddling the Murrumbidgee River about 10 km N of Bredbo. The area is generally not accessible and COG is very fortunate to have the opportunity to again visit. After setting up camp mid Saturday afternoon we propose to do a survey of the birds on the property and the adjacent river. On Sunday morning we will proceed upstream along the river to survey back along the road, and probably access a couple of properties to identify the birds present.

We will be camping overnight on the local property at the Northern end of the valley where we camped in March 2009, on a take everything in, take everything out basis. Participants should aim to arrive mid afternoon on the Saturday, and it is expected we'll stay until mid Sunday afternoon. Car pooling will be encouraged.

To book your place, or for further information please contact Jack Holland, PH. 6288 7840 (AH) or E-mail: jack.holland@environment.gov.au

Blitz Update — 27 September 2010

General information about COG's bird blitz and an Excel spreadsheet showing who is surveying in which COG grid cell for the bird blitz on 30-31 October has now been updated on the COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au under the blitz icon. There is also a map showing the grid cells, or parts therein, which have been spoken for. Don't worry if your favourite spot has already been adopted as we welcome more than one survey for each site. That said, there are many areas not yet covered. I'm still looking for 4WDs to survey along some of the fire trails in Namadgi NP (I arrange key access for the locked gates) - in particular, Smokers Trail, and part of the Cotter Hut trail.

Closer to the city, these potentially excellent birding sites have not yet been adopted:

- in the north: Hall village and environs; the grassland reserves; Mt Majura; Mt Ainslie; Mt Pleasant; Campbell Park; Percival Hill.
- in the east: Newline; Fairbairn pines.
- in the south: Tuggeranong Hill; Tidbinbilla; Castle Hill; Oakey Hill; Mt Taylor; Isaacs Ridge; Nursery Swamp; Yerrabi Track.
- in the west: Shepherds Lookout; Woodstock NR; Uriarra Xing; Bullen Range; Blue Range Hut; Stromlo Forest Park.

If you are able to undertake surveys of one or more of these spots (or anywhere else in the ACT for that matter) on the weekend of 30-31 October, I'd love to hear from you! Contact blitz@canberrabirds.org.au to book your spot, or phone 6254 6520. — **Barbara Allan, Blitz Coordinator**

Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc., will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 10 November 2010**, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2009 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of president's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2010-2011
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (a nomination form is printed below and forms will also be available on the night of the AGM)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given.
11. Close of meeting

Book Launch

The World of Tidbinbilla: Where to go... What to do... How to find... and the People of Tidbinbilla, will be launched by the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Simon Corbell, on Saturday 9th October, at 11 am, at Floriade in the Corporate Marquee on the lawns of Stage 88.

The book is a user-friendly guide to the natural and cultural worlds of Tidbinbilla & Birrigai.

Experts from a range of fields have freely contributed to the book about the natural and cultural aspects of Tidbinbilla - the animals, plants, geology, and the people - as well as the activities which people can do at Tidbinbilla and Birrigai.

COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate

for the position* of

(*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)

on the 2011 COG Committee.

(Name):

(Signature):

I second the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

I accept the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

(Nomination forms may be submitted any time up to immediately before the AGM at the November monthly meeting. Nominations can be submitted by mail to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608. Forms submitted by mail must arrive in the PO Box by 29 October 2010. All nominees and nominators must be financial members of COG.)

Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*)

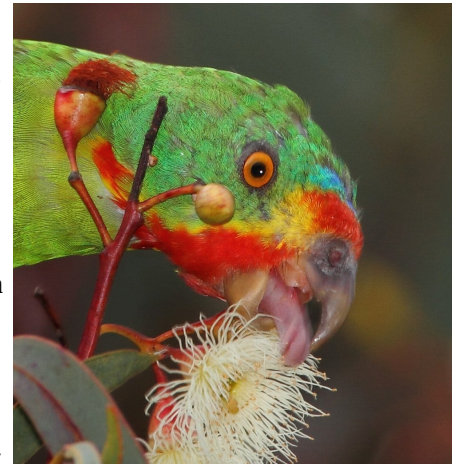


The arrival of a flock of **Swift Parrots** in the Tuggeranong Town Centre created much interest among COG members and considerable chatter on the Chat-line (as well as in the flowering gums in the car park) and prompted these photographs and comments from Geoffrey Dabb.

The non-pointy end of the Swift Parrot.

The transiting parrots at Tuggeranong town centre enabled close views of individuals of this highly variable species. Here are two points about the feeding end.

- First: the unusual tongue is the essential tool. The flexible spoon-like tongue darts out to retrieve the food, as shown in this picture. The action is almost too quick to be seen.
- Secondly: the variable bill colours have not been properly described in the literature. Birds we see heading north after breeding in Tasmania generally have bills of a pinkish buff. In most adults heading south in Spring the bill and cere is a sooty colour ranging from pale to dark pinkish-grey, sometimes appearing blackish. Females probably have darker bills. Along with variable plumage, bill colour can vary considerably between individuals.



This bird is likely to be a male, as indicated by the strongly red under-tail coverts, but even expert breeders can have difficulty determining the sex of some individuals. — **Geoffrey Dabb**

Request for Assistance

Vanessa Pirotta, a student at the ANU, is seeking assistance from COG members to increase her knowledge of the geographic and host distribution of the new pathogen *Escherichia albertii*, or *E. albertii*.

We would also like to better understand the impact of this pathogen on Australia's native birds. We are therefore asking people such as wildlife carers and vets who regularly handle native birds, and people who keep backyard poultry or aviary birds to provide faecal samples for us.

Please contact us if you are interested in providing samples, and we will send you the materials and instructions required for you to safely collect a faecal sample from your birds and to return the sample to us for analysis. If you wish, we will let you know if we find *E. albertii* in the samples you send. If you are interested in providing samples or would like further information please contact either Dr. David Gordon (David.Gordon@anu.edu.au) or Ms. Vanessa Pirotta (u4540454@anu.edu.au)

NSW and ACT Twitchathon 2010



Glossy Black-Cockatoo
(*Calyptorhynchus lathami*)
Photo by Stuart Harris

This year's Twitchathon, to be held on 30/31 October 2010, aims to raise money to assist both the Murray region's **NCWG Bush Stone-curlew Captive Breeding and Release Project** and the **Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project**.

The **Bush Stone-curlew Project** involves an informative education campaign about these birds, a variety of on-ground habitat works, and the promotion of an extensive predator control program amongst the local landholders. It also provides support and management for a captive breeding and release program. In October 2008 the project undertook its first release of 15 captive bred **Bush Stone-curlews** at Moulamein. This was followed in 2009 by the release of a further 11 birds. Their tracking and monitoring data has indicated that the majority of these released birds have successfully survived. Currently there are another 13 Bush Stone-curlews being prepared for release in spring 2010.

The **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** was established on Kangaroo Island in 1995, and there has been a gradual increase in the population from less than 200 to 340-360 birds in 2009. The **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** is a specialist feeder, relying almost entirely on seed on the Drooping She-oak *Allocasuarina verticillata*. They are threatened by nest predation, nest hollow competition and a shortage of suitable nest hollows. Inappropriate fire regimes, drought and land subdivision also contribute to losses of feeding and nesting habitat or reduction of its quality. Our sponsorship money will be used to help keep core project activities going.

How to join the Twitchathon

- Contact Pixie at the BASNA Office for your 2010 Twitchathon Kit;
- Form a team with three or even a dozen friends and family and go birdwatching over this October weekend. You can travel anywhere in NSW and/or the ACT. See how many species of birds your team can find from 4 pm Saturday 30 October to 4 pm Sunday 31 October 2010.
- Get sponsors. In the weeks before this event, persuade family and friends to sponsor you so many cents or even dollars for each species your team sees. You just need either lots of little sponsorships or a few big ones!

There are a number of very fine prizes. Full details are available on the Birds Australia website (birdsaustralia.com.au - follow the "What's on" link) or from **Alan Morris**, Twitchathon Co-ordinator, Tel: 02 9647 1033, Fax: 02 9647 2030, E-mail: basna@birdsaustralia.com.au



An unusual nesting site for a
White-browed Scrubwren
Photo by Barbara Allan

News from the committee

- Please consider nominating for the COG Committee. Elections will be held at the November AGM (see notice in this issue). In particular, we would encourage anyone with an interest in taking over the role of Treasurer or Vice-President to make contact with current President, Chris Davey (contact details are on page 12) before the AGM to discuss these positions. It has been several years since COG has had a Vice-President, and the current treasurer will not be re-nominating.
- COG will be participating in the Australian National Botanic Gardens 40th Anniversary open day on October 24.

— Sandra Henderson (Secretary)

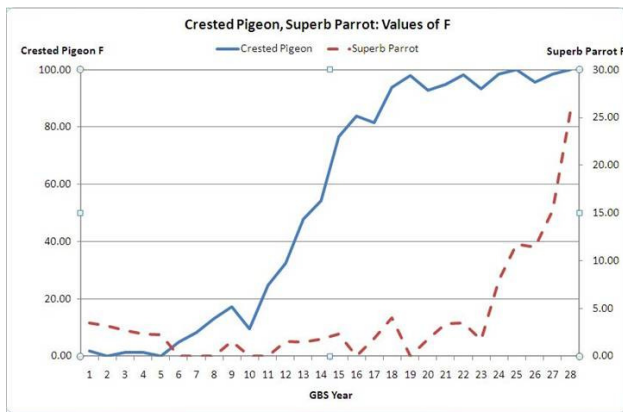
Garden Bird Survey Notes

There have been a few recent chatline postings that are directly GBS-relevant:

- **Rainbow Lorikeets** in Wanniasa
- **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** in Florey;
- **Australian Ravens** breeding in Kambah;
- **Tawny Frogmouths**, **Pied Currawong** and **Australian Magpie** all nesting in Carwoola.

The next Crested Pigeon?

Over the period of the *Garden Bird Survey* the reporting of **Crested Pigeons** has increased dramatically (from 0 in some early years to being the 6th most abundant species in Year 28). A recent flush of reports of **Superb Parrots** appearing earlier (or in one case not leaving the area over winter) led me to compare the reporting patterns of the two species.



This first graph shows the value of the F (or frequency) statistic for the two species. This represents the percentage of sites at which the species was reported at least once during the year. The pattern for the A (abundance) statistic was very similar.

Eyeballing the chart suggests considerable similarity between the two patterns allowing a time lag of 11 years. This becomes very clear if the values of F for **Crested pigeon** (years 1 – 11) are plotted alongside those of **Superb Parrot** (years 18 to 28). It is possible that the ‘surge’ in the parrots is emphasised by recent reports from sites in Gundaroo and Murrumbateman (not operating in years 1 – 11) but the overall similarity of pattern would still be evident.

A final point of similarity is that both species commenced their “colonisation” through Belconnen. By year 11 the **pigeons** were being reported in Tuggeranong, while **Superb Parrots** have only just started being reported in that area in year 29.

Charts

A good number of members have taken up charts for Year 30. If other folk would like to join the survey team please email me

(martinflab@gmail.com) and I will arrange to get a chart to you. We are very well into processing the 83 charts that have been returned. **However a number of people who took up charts last year have not communicated with me and it is becoming urgent that charts are returned or people let me know that they have not been able to complete them.** — Martin Butterfield.

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.

Birdwatching 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
Canberra
Gardens



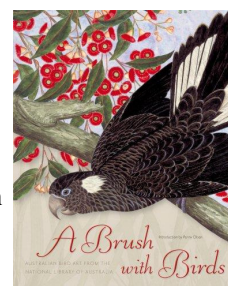
Birds of Canberra Gardens (\$20.00 for book only or \$25.00 with ***Bird Calls of the ACT*** CD included - members prices only)

Nearly 230 bird species have been recorded in and around Canberra suburban gardens over the past 27 years in the COG Garden Bird Survey. The life and times of most of these birds are described in this book, illustrated with brilliant photographs and abundance graphs. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* describes the abundance and distribution of birds and discusses how and where to find them throughout the year. It also provides some ideas on how your garden may be made more attractive to native birds. *Birds of Canberra Gardens* is an excellent introduction to the birds of Canberra.

Boom & Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country Edited by Libby Robin, Robert Heinsohn and Leo Joseph - \$27.00 for members.

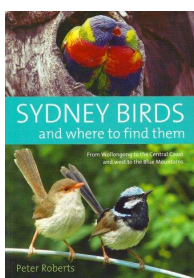
A Brush With Birds with Introduction by Penny Olsen (\$23.00 for members).

The paintings of Australian birds in *A Brush with Birds* are by artists whose work is represented in the National Library of Australia. They span the years from first settlement to the 1970s, telling us about the times as well as the birds, and showing how the style of bird art has evolved. This book is lavishly illustrated with vibrant and luscious art and it includes the stories of the artists behind the paintings.



Owls: Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia by David Hollands (\$55.00 for members)

The Owls of Australia: A Field Guide to Australian Night Birds by Stephen Debus, illustrated by Jeff Davies, photographs by David Hollands (\$20.00 for members)



Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them by Peter Roberts (25.00 for members)

Covering the Sydney Region from Wollongong to the Central Coast and West to the Blue Mountains, *Sydney Birds and Where to Find Them* features the 30 top bird-watching localities in and around Sydney. These birding hot spots stretch from Tuggerah Lakes on the Central Coast to Lake Illawarra near Wollongong and from the Blue Mountains in the west to some surprisingly accessible sites tucked away in the heart of the city. Each locality entry lists the key species to look out for, including rare and seasonal visitors. It describes how to access the location, both by public transport and road, and what amenities to expect; maps are featured wherever necessary.

Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's Australian Natural History series (\$27.00 each for members):

**Kookaburra
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Australian Bustard (coming soon)

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**Wedge-tailed Eagle
Mound-builders**

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Avian Whimsy #85 — Stork Talk

High over the Thomson River at Muttaborra a mixed flock of waterbirds spirals up a thermal, **ibis** and **spoonbill** looking small beneath the dozen **pelicans** wheeling above them. Unexpectedly sliding in from the side, a lanky giant dwarfs them all, black and white wings over a white body, bunches of red toes trailing behind, long black neck and head gawking out in front.

In Uganda a similarly black and white **Saddle-billed Stork**, but with a broadly red and black banded bill on which is perched an incongruous yellow ‘saddle’, is oblivious to the sprawling crocodiles and hippos as it elbows its way through a crowd of cormorants and Egyptian Geese. On a sandbar in the Rio Madre de Dios in Peruvian Amazonia lounge two louche **Jabirus**, snowy white with bare black heads and necks and red collars, sitting with their legs bending the ‘wrong way’ from our narrow perspective. And on a Hungarian roof top, as though a scene from a post card, a pair of stunning **White Storks**, black wings and tail, red bills and legs, stand with every impression of pride over a huge stick nest which contains three somewhat wobbly chicks.

Storks are found in every vegetated continent, and in all the realms of storkdom only Australia and North America have just one species, in both cases recently arrived. The **Wood Stork** that extends to the far south-eastern United States is really a South American species which crossed the Isthmus of Panama against the flow of northern species pouring south, within the last couple of million years. The **Black-necked Stork** over Muttaborra owes its place in that thermal to an ancestor which flew – or even walked – across the Torres Strait in similarly recent times, as Australia-New Guinea ground north-west into Asia, the homeland of the **Black-necked Stork**. It is found through much of India, and from Pakistan to Malaysia – but not, curiously, in Indonesia. (Its glorious rotund genus name, *Ephippiorhynchus*, is pretty much incomprehensible without knowing that it is congeneric with the Saddle-billed – oddly the authors of HANZAB seemed not to have realised that back in 1990 when volume 1 was produced. *Rhynchus* is a bill, but the *ephippion* means essentially of or on a horse – ie a saddle!). There is a strong sense too that in due course the Australian birds will be described as a species separate from the Asian ones; indeed the name **Satin Stork**, *E. australis*, has already been proposed.

The most generally accepted taxonomies place storks in the order Ciconiiformes, with ibis/spoonbills, herons, Shoebill and Hamerkop, but reputable variants range from giving the 19 stork species sole occupancy of the order, to chucking in everyone from penguins to grebes to albatrosses to eagles! Not that the storks have much to say on this – or on much else really. While it is a myth that storks are utterly silent other than bill clattering, they do have greatly reduced or even absent syrinxes (the muscle-controlled organ low in the trachea which is the origin of bird vocalisation) and stork talk tends to be limited to hisses and grunts.

Apart from clattering, the bill can perform various feeding functions. The heavy triangular beak of the three *Leptoptilos* storks (two southern Asian **Adjudants** and the African **Marabou**) is one of the more formidable weapons in the bird world. **Marabous** brawl with **vultures** for a share of lion kills but prey widely too, including on young Nile Crocodiles. They are enormous birds, whose 3.5 metre wingspan is mentioned in the same breath as that of the **Andean Condor** (although the condor is kilograms more massive); in cities like Kampala they scruffily dominate the urban skyline, imparting a definite sense of menace. The two **Openbills**, of Asia and Africa, have a rather disconcerting gap between upper and lower ‘jaw’ (maxilla and mandible), apparently in part to manipulate water snail shells, especially the big Apple Snails. More specifically however, the top bill holds the unfortunate snail down while the upcurving sharp bottom tip pierces the muscle that normally holds shut the operculum, the snail’s drawbridge, and hoiks out the goodies. **Black-necked Storks** in Australia have long been referred to as **Jabiru**. Obviously this is by confusion with the South American stork (the only one belonging to a single-species genus incidentally) but I think that this just begs the question. Why should this bird have been so well-known to Australian settlers that they appropriated its name? I think there’s a story here, but I can’t for the moment find it. Another popular sobriquet, especially in north Queensland, is **Policeman Bird**, presumably for its erect and lonely vigils, and perhaps the piercing yellow eye of the female. They are great wanderers, and have on very rare occasions turned up in Victoria; there is even a 1981 record (or rather two, a couple of weeks apart) from Jerrabomberra! So far that’s the only one, but the world is warming and I’m an optimist, so my eyes are upward. On stalks. — **Ian Fraser** (ianf@pcug.org.au)





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NEXT NEWSLETTER

November deadline

Wednesday 27 October 2010

Please send, articles, advertisements, updates etcetera to the Editors at
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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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