



Gang-gang

September 2003

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 10 September

Details pg 3

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The Weddin mountains in drought

Last November, at the height of the drought, I travelled to the Weddin Mts National Park with Brisbane-based nature writer Tim Low. Tim is particularly interested in the ways nature responds and adapts to human induced landscape change and the trip gave plenty of food for thought. He also had a number of birds he was keen to see. Top of his list was **Superb Parrot**, gregarious and easy to see at spots all the way from Murrumbateman to the Grenfell side of Young, and clearly a farmland adapting species. He arrived in Canberra at the time of the great **Painted Honeyeater** hunt but it completely eluded us – despite searching Campbell Park and the many roadside mistletoe stops we made. All that juicy mistletoe wasn't going to waste, though, as **Superb Parrots** were seen foraging amongst it at several stops along the road. Behind Grenfell town in some fairly degraded scrubland, we found a pair of **Turquoise Parrots** – and dramatic evidence of drought movements with large mixed flocks of **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows** foraging for insects around a rapidly drying waterhole. Whenever they temporarily dispersed, there was a

flock of about 70 **Fairy Martins** ready to pounce on the scraps.

The landscape at the national park was pretty dismal with ample evidence of severe kangaroo and wallaby damage. Kangaroos were everywhere and wallabies were much more visible than usual. A few sheep foraged for weeds in the forested fringes but their numbers were obviously down. The vast majority of the bird activity was seen outside the national park, particularly in the Callitris woodlands of the Bimbi State Forest and adjoining private land. Again, we saw mixed flocks of **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**, with a few **Black-faced Woodswallows**, but this time in their thousands, constantly circling to land on open farmland where they appeared to be methodically stirring up insects from the little remaining grass and topsoil. In eucalypt foliage they appeared to be actively leaf gleaning. The very few **Dusky Woodswallows** we saw kept their distance between these spectacular and noisy swarms. A small number of **Blue Bonnets** were seen in the same area. The fence line leading to the camp ground was home during our stay to a pair of vocal and

behaviourally hawk-like **Pallid Cuckoos**, while a **Spotted Harrier** splendidly displayed over the adjacent paddocks.

The robins and seed-eaters were confined almost exclusively to the Callitris immediately south of the park boundary, ironically, where black cypress had been felled and left lying for fodder, or to enhance the commercially valuable white cypress. Every blade of grass not protected by fallen corrals of dead black cypress limbs and twigs had been demolished by the kangaroos and sheep, but in these little oases seeding grasses were at least growing, if not flourishing, and the birds were in their element. **Specked Warblers, Diamond Firetails, Superb Fairy-wrens, Peaceful Doves, Yellow, Red-capped and Hooded Robins**, a very vocal and visible **Gilbert's Whistler, Rufous Whistlers, Rufous Songlarks, Buff-rumped and Yellow Thornbills** and a **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** (in entirely the wrong habitat we thought), **Cuckoo Shrikes** and trillers, **White-browed Babblers** and rosellas were all active in these tiny islands of vegetation. **Brown Treecreepers** were curiously absent until a small party appeared on our last morning in the park.

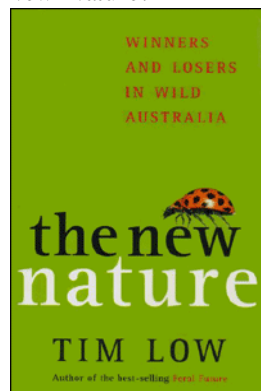
There were few honeyeaters in this area – mainly the large and gregarious variety, **Blue-faced and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds** and a few friarbirds around the camp ground and at Seatons Farm where the old avenue of silky oaks were in flower. This was to change quite dramatically with a drive into the State Forest. Nothing much was moving in this callitris dominant landscape until we encountered a sole mature silky oak heavy in blossom. We estimated there were more than 1500 flowerheads in which no less than seven honeyeater species were feasting; **Yellow-faced, White-eared, Fuscous, White-naped, White-plumed**, at least

two pairs of **Pied Honeyeaters**, and Red Wattlebirds. The tree was pretty clearly a human artefact, despite the absence of building remains, graves or other sign of human activity. A pair of **Turquoise Parrots** also popped up in the adjacent woodland.

So what food for thought did these observations provide?

- 1) species do not naturally recognise the difference between a national park and a humanised environment. At this time in this place, the birds were clearly favouring the latter.
- 2) Valuable micro-habitats had been created for the birds, presumably quite coincidentally, by timber probably felled for silvicultural purposes preventing kangaroos and sheep foraging on every last blade of seeding grass.
- 3) If not for one large, luxuriously flowering silky oak that should not have been where it was, a lot of honeyeaters, including drought refugees, might have gone hungry.

The birds and animals we saw on this trip were clearly able to share and prosper in a human modified habitat. It didn't matter to them whether they were in or out of a conservation refuge – they went where they could maximize their opportunities. Clearly, though, not all species can do this and we continue, as we further modify the environment, to create suites of winners and losers. Tim discusses this in his latest book "The New Nature."



Doug Laing
July 2003

From your Committee

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 12 November 2003 at the usual monthly meeting venue, the Canberra Girls Grammar School.

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
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.

Nomination form on page 15 of this month's *Gang-gang*.

Expired subscriptions

Many thanks for your ongoing interest and support to all those many members who have renewed their subscriptions for this year. This edition of *Gang-gang* is the last one for those members who have not renewed for 2003-4. Unless COG receives your renewal by 15 September 2003 we will leave you off future mail outs until you pay. So please, if you intend to renew this year, please do so straight away to avoid missing out on our great newsletters. Also why not take this chance to give a donation to the tax deductible Canberra Birds Conservation Fund?

Joan Lipscombe, Hon Treasurer

Field Trip Reports

Grassy Creek – Yaouk Valley

Sunday 20 July 2003

Sunday 20 July became a sunny, crisp winter day as we left Canberra. We drove through the scorched Namadgi National Park to the unburnt area and into New South Wales. From Bradley's Creek Road we climbed up into the ACT.

At first we heard only a few birds, **Crimson Rosella**, **Superb Lyrebird** and **Australian Raven**. At the highest point of our walk at approximately 1300 metres we came across a mixed flock of **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Brown** and **Striated Thornbill**, **White-throated Treecreeper** and **White-eared Honeyeaters**. A Superb Lyrebird rushed along beside us and other Superb Lyrebirds were heard.

We abandoned the idea of a lunch stop at the Murrumbidgee River as the fence line now extends almost to the river. To and from the Murrumbidgee we disturbed a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, so we had good views of the animal.

At our lunch stop back on Bradley's Creek Road we had six species, new ones included the **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and six **Grey Shrike-thrush**. A **Hooded Robin** was seen close to Shannon's Flat.

A short walk to Westerman's Homestead on Grassy Creek revealed the restoration of the cottage. More surprising was the pair of **Restless Flycatchers** low down on a bush.

An amble around the perimeter of Mt Clear Campground resulted in three species: Superb Lyrebird, Australian Raven and **Noisy Miner**. Ice remained in some sheltered parts of the creek. There was regrowth, which a couple of kangaroos were feeding on. It was a timely reminder of the burnt out country we were about to drive through to

Tharwa.

The McDonalds' and I were lucky ones to enjoy this well planned trip through a cross section of our Southern border.

Pat Williams

Waterbirds for Beginners

East Basin/Molonglo Reach

Sunday 3 August 2003

Fifteen members/guests joined me on this outing designed to help newer members learn about water birds. It was centred on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin and the adjacent Molonglo River (Reach) and Jerrabomberra Creek using the all electric boat, the "E.L. Cygnet". As this boat holds a maximum of 10 people, we split the morning into an early shift (a full boat lead by Jenny Bounds) and a smaller later one, which I lead. The advantage of the boat is that it allows both a quiet approach as well as a relatively quick and easy access to a number of different spots normally very difficult to get to.

The area is rich in waterbirds with large numbers of **Eurasian Coot** and **Dusky Moorhen** seen. While there were fewer **Purple Swamphen**, the three species were often seen together feeding in the open paddocks, so that participants could clearly see the differences in plumage and size. Several duck species were also seen, but unfortunately the vast majority were the **Pacific Black Duck**, with surprisingly low numbers of the **Australian Wood Duck** and only a few **Grey Teal**. Several **Hardhead** were seen as well but only by participants on the early boat. We enjoyed seeing a number of **Black Swan** flying low over the water, and in addition Jim the skipper was able to point out several on nests very well hidden under the willows.

A species not expected for a beginners

September Meeting

8 pm
Wednesday 10th

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

Our **short talk** will be by ANU PhD student Nadeena Beck, who is studying the White-winged Choughs. Come and hear the secrets of their social behaviour that she has uncovered to date.

Main Talk: Professor Henry Nix, COG stalwart and now Birds Australia President, will give the main talk, on birds of the arid zone. This will be a particular treat for all Newhaven enthusiasts and for those interested in developments at that reserve.

NEW: Letters to the editor

Numerous COG members have suggested that *Gang-gang* needs a column which allows members to express their views about the group and birding activities in general.

Well here 'tis!

Please send letters, snippets etcetera intended for this column to the editor. Contact details are on page 16 of this gang-gang. As with all sections of the *Gang-gang*, space allocated to this section each month will be limited. Therefore entries are more likely to be published if they are kept to a minimum length.

outing was a single **Freckled Duck** seen sitting on the same part-submerged log as where up to 4 were seen when COG did a trip on 31 May. I've always understood they were loafers, but this takes the cake. The bird obligingly came off its perch and swam sedately by at close range, allowing all participants to see the key identification features of Australia's rarest duck, the "ski-jump" bill and the "peak" at the back of the head. The second group saw at least one more, possibly two, in clear water slightly upstream, both of which took to the wing. **Australasian Grebe** were also seen, but surprisingly considering the relatively deep water, no confirmed Hoary-headed Grebe, though each bird needed to be examined closely given the identification difficulties that their non-breeding plumages present.

Several **Great** and **Little Pied Cormorants** were seen at close quarters, but somewhat of a surprise was the numbers of **Australian Darters** still in the area. Both groups saw at least 15, mostly spaced out at intervals along the river on a low perch just above the water, and characteristically drying their wings once the sun finally came out. Several were seen in the water where, with only their snake-like head and necks visible, they provided a sharp contrast to the cormorants, which have a much more significant part of their body above water. A highlight for the second group was one emerging from under the water with a fish in its bill, which it then proceeded to swallow whole alongside the boat.

Another surprise was that the majority of the Darters were males. While this was the third such trip I've taken since mid April, I clearly have still more to learn about their plumages differences, particularly the males. Several still had a very dark red brown patch about the neck, indicative of breeding, including what appeared to be at least one imma-

ture male with basically a dirty white chest and belly. While only old nests could be seen in the willows along the riverbank their continued presence seems a pointer to a further nesting season approaching.

Various small bush birds were heard in the surrounding willows and vegetation including **Golden Whistler**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **White-browed Scrub-wren** and **Silvereye**. However, the non-water bird highlight, though a species often associated with water, was very good views of a **Whistling Kite** obtained by both groups. Following my short presentation on raptor identification at the July COG meeting I was able to point out the key diagnostic features (broad, bowed wings with long fingers of dark feathers at the ends, a long rounded tail, and an M-shaped pattern underwing with a white leading edge). For the second group the bird sat obligingly for a while in a nearby bare willow, illustrating how much more difficult raptors can be to identify when perched.

All in all it was a very good morning for both beginners and those a little more familiar with waterbirds. Once again my thanks to Jenny Bounds for agreeing to help share the leading of this important COG outing. The "Cygnet" opens up the opportunity for exploring other parts of Lake Burley Griffin, and I am anticipating organising further trips during spring/summer/autumn of 2003-2004, including a repeat trip up the Molonglo River if the Darters do decide to nest there again in significant numbers next season.

Jack Holland

Merimbula Retreat Weekend

14-17 August 2003

This was a most relaxing weekend around the Merimbula/Bournda area, based at a comfortable house in a bush forest setting on the Merimbula to

Tathra Road. Of particular interest on this weekend was the rare and endangered **Beach Stone-curlew (Thick-knee)**, which has made its home in the area for the last six months. This species is normally found in coastal areas much further north. It took some effort to locate it, but finally with help from Barbara Jones and her colleagues from the South Coast Birdwatchers, we spent a magical half hour watching the bird feed on soldier crabs on the sand flats of the Pambula River. David Rees took some video footage which we will show at a future COG meeting. This is a most unusual bird, much thicker set than its bush cousin the Bush Stone-curlew (Thick-knee), with attractive markings, a heavy bill and interesting postures and gait. None of us had seen this species before.

The weekend was an opportunity for learning about birds and bird calls, and there were plenty around the property, including **Crescent Honeyeaters**, 2 pairs of **Jacky Winter**, **Brown Gerygones** in the rainforest remnants, and many birds out on the lawns around the house including a large flock of **Goldfinches** (unusual in a forest). We also



Beach Thick-knee (*Esacus magnirostris*)

Photo courtesy **David Rees**



Beach Thick-knee (*Esacus magnirostris*)
Photo courtesy **David Rees**

spent time at the Panboola Wetlands, the new reserve at the village of Pamboola on the river flats there, which is being managed in trust by a group of locals and already has some tracks and new plantings and a viewing platform. Of interest here was the first sighting this season of **Japanese (Latham's) Snipe**, and a **Swamp Harrier**.

On Saturday morning, we were taken to a private property on the south end of Wallagoot Lake with some members of the Southcoast Birdwatchers group; this had lake frontage and varied habitats, where **White-breasted Sea-Eagles** were in residence near a nest site and we saw the uncommon **Grey Goshawk**, plus many other bush and water birds. Other activities included the Merimbula Boardwalk around the lake, where lots of birds flock to feed on the mudflats at low tide, **Eastern Curlew** and **Pied Oystercatchers**, **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Great and Little Egrets** amongst others. Finally on the Sunday, we did a very nice walk around the northern end of Wallagoot Lake to Turingal Head. There, some of

us saw the **Southern Emu-wren** and it is also a good spot for **White-fronted Chats** on the salt marshes. This track joins up with the Kangarutha track running along the coastal cliffs and the long beach of Bournda National Park, with spectacular scenery.

We recorded 97 bird species, a very good total given it is late winter and few spring migrants. We enjoyed some videos of Southern African birds and Wild Dogs in Kruger National Park, good food and wine with a very convivial group, enjoyed latte coffee by the lake and the local orchid show. Thanks to everyone in the group - it was one of the most enjoyable COG events I've organised.

Jenny Bounds

"Ode to a Bush Stone Curlew"

Nature's messenger...by Bob

**Off have I heard you
in the depth of night
As your plaintive cry breaks
the solemn hush.
Like the damned bewailing t
heir awful plight
You weep it seems for the
soul of the bush.
Cur-looo, Cur-LOOO, your
haunting mournful call
Cleaves the still night air
like the sharp axe-blade
Hacked through your
hiding-place and left it bare.
We proudly staked our
claim, but nature, paid
The steep price for your long-
held bastion's fall.
Small wonder that your parting
cry is all
Sadness, brim-full of
anguish and despair.**

Future Field trips

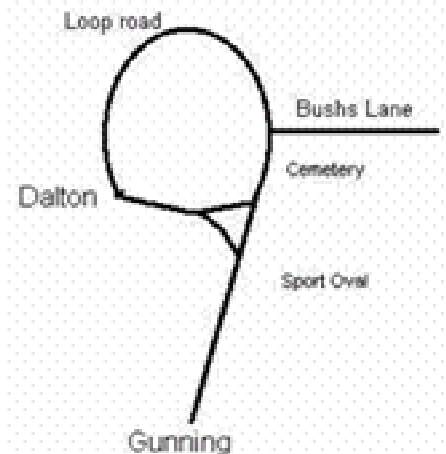
Oolong/Dalton-day outing

Sunday 7 September 2003

COG had a great day out at Oolong near Dalton last year. Gianni the owner has kindly agreed to another visit from COG at 9.00 am on Sunday 7 September this year. The property has a dam, some pleasant woodland, some wet soaks, open cleared land and for the energetic there is the option of a walk up the hill at the eastern part of the property the provide excellent views of the district. There are lots of opportunities for a wide range of bush birds.

Gianni is keen to develop the property for wildlife and birds, as can be seen from the website www.pcug.org.au/~gianni. Since COG was there last some walking trails have been marked. We'll meet at the Griffin Centre in Civic for some car pooling at 7.30 am, for a 7.45 am departure. Some who live on the northside could meet us at the property if they prefer. Please bring a hat binoculars, good walking shoes and your lunch. The property is on a slight slope, but most walking is on level-ish ground. There are, however, options to walk on steeper slopes.

To get there, we'll drive along the Federal Highway as far as Sutton, and continue through Gundaroo to Gunning,



From the town of Gunning, on the old Hume Highway, proceed towards the village of Dalton for about 10 km, leave the bitumen road at the Loop road. The sport oval and the cemetery are on the right. Proceed on the gravel road for about 200 m to the Bush's Lane street sign. The Bush's Lane is to the right opposite a hay shed. Proceed on this lane. The entrances to "Dalton Park" and the Oolong Sanctuary are about 1 km from the Bush's Lane sign. Please park your car on the parking area near the entrance.

It is preferred that participants contact the leader Alistair Bestow (6281 1481 A/H) before hand.

Tuggeranong Homestead - afternoon walk Saturday 13 September 2003

The Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead (MOTH) have invited COG members to join them on a combined outing to learn more about the Tuggeranong Homestead. This property has important links with our cultural history, both aboriginal and European. It is also the site for which Charles Barrett published in 1922 the first paper in the literature about the birds of the then Federal Capital Territory.

The outing will include an explanation and examination of the historical significance and cultural values of the place. MOTH is restoring a grassy woodland site and there is also the remnant of a cold plain (Tuggeranong Plain) grassland. We will be shown these and also we'll be looking at which birds live there now, compared with in the past.

Meet at 1 pm for a couple of hours wandering through the site, culminating in afternoon tea at the Homestead cafe, so bring some money along for this. Enter the site through the gate off Ashley Drive (and not front gates as previously advertised) on the western side of the property, where there is

plenty of room to drive in and park. For further information please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au). Please note that this outing replaces the one advertised as Local Nature Park for Sunday 14 September.

Mulloon Creek—morning outing Sunday 21 September 2003

Mark Clayton will be leading this walk on Mulloon Creek, which is a private property off the King's Highway approximately 10 km on the coast side of Bungendore. The area straddles the top of the Great Dividing Range and is thick sclerophyll forest with some interesting patches of gum and some more open areas used for grazing. A mix of birds associated with these habitats may be expected, including some returning summer migrants. Mark has a well-deserved reputation of being able to find, see and hear birds when no one else can. Accompanying him should be a real experience for members - if it's there Mark will find it!

Meet Mark (6241 3620 A/H) at 8.00 am opposite the primary school in the street NORTH of the Kings Hwy (this is the street those arriving in Bungendore from north Canberra via Macs Reef Road etc first come to and for those travelling via Queanbeyan, it is the first right AFTER the Kings Hwy turn to coast). If you cross the railway tracks you are just a little too far past the meeting point. We will car pool as parking on site is limited. The return to Bungendore is expected by lunchtime. If there is reasonable rainfall overnight the outing will be called off.

Weddin Mountains—long weekend camp-out 4-6 October 2003

The October long weekend camp-out will be held at the Weddin Mountains National Park. This follows the very

successful Easter 2002 COG visit when we saw over 80 species within 5 km of the Seaton's Farm Camping area, and many participants agreed that a visit in spring was highly desirable and could be even more successful. We propose to use the same area to camp, now re-named the Fuzzy Box Campground. Unfortunately this is still not completed, so we will be camping under identical conditions as last time. If preferred, participants could stay in motel accommodation in the nearby Grenfell. Over the 3 days we expect to visit again the callitris of the Bimbi State Forest, the ironbarks of Seaton's farm, perhaps again do a tranverse of the Weddin Range to Holy Camp and also to visit Gum Swamp near Forbes where a further 40 species, including a range of raptors and waterbirds, were seen.

If you intend to participate please contact Jack Holland 96288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au). While Jack will be organising and participating in the camp-out, he would still like to hear from anyone else can help lead this outing. Further details, including maps, bird lists etc will be available at the September COG meeting, or will be mailed out to confirmed participants.

Kelly Road—morning walk Sunday 12 October 2003

Instead of going to the Mulligan's Flat as indicated in the 2003 Field Trips Program (which due to the fires was brought forward to March), there will be a further opportunity for members and guests to accompany me to my favourite bit of woodland at Kelly Road, which runs parallel to the Monaro Highway just outside the ACT border about 10 km north of Michelago. At our last visit in December 2002, participants had excellent views of the **Hooded Robin**, with two males seen at one spot and a female feeding young,

with a young male nearby, at another. Close views of **Brown Treecreepers** (at least 6 birds in 3 different spots), **Restless Flycatchers**, **Diamond Fire-tail**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were also obtained.

Hopefully the bird life at Kelly Road will again be excellent this spring, in particular the 200 metre stretch at the southern end of TSR 36. Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au) at the Williamsdale Service Station at 7.30 am, for car pooling etc prior to the 5-10 minute drive down the start of this outing. The main part will involve a 1-1.5 km easy walk along this quiet road and is suitable for all members. Bring morning tea.

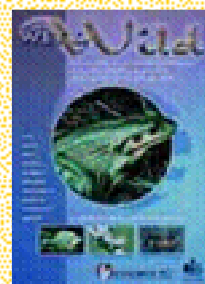
Monga National Park—day outing

Sunday 26 October 2003

David McDonald will lead a day outing to this area of wet forest just before the escarpment around 20 km east of Braidwood off the Kings Highway. Target species include the **Red-browed Treecreeper**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Pilotbird**, **Olive Whistler** and **Bassian Thrush**, not to mention flowering waratahs.

Meet at the Griffin Centre for carpooling at 07.30 am or, alternatively, meet at 09.00 am at the intersection of the Kings Highway and River Road on the right hand side of the highway. Allow about 90 minutes for the journey from Canberra. A map and other details will be available at COG monthly meetings or directly from the leader. Bring lunch and drinks. Registration for this trip is essential; please phone David McDonald 6231 8904.

COG SALES



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

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

Caloola Farm /Naas fire trail

weekend 21-23 November 2003

Preliminary notice is given of this outing, in particular members should note the change in dates as it was advertised for 8-9 November in the 2003 Field Trips Program.

It will consist of an atlassing event, with emphasis on obtaining data along the Naas fire trail. It will be over 2 nights, Friday and Saturday, staying at Caloola farm within an hour's drive from Canberra, where there is cottage accommodation at very reasonable rates and some overflow camping sites available. Much of the Naas trail was only patchily burned in the January bushfires, and it was not burned at all south of Horse Gully Hut. Several 4-WD vehicles will be needed. Access is being arranged and more details will be contained in the October issue of *Gang-gang*. In the meantime if you are interested, and particularly if you can offer help with a 4 WD vehicle, please contact Jenny Bounds (6288 7802 A/H), who will be leading this outing.



Satin Bowerbird (*Ptilinorhynchus violaceus*)
Photo courtesy **Helen Falow**

Wednesday walk 17 September 2003

No walk is being organised for this date to enable members to participate in the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens **spring bird walk** in the gardens that morning. Starts 8am at the gardens. Booking essential. For more information visit www.anbg.gov.au/friends/calendar/

Longer trips

COMBINED SHOREBIRD/ PELAGIC OUTING CENTRED ON WOLLONGONG

18-19 OCTOBER 2003

A combined shorebird/pelagic outing centred on Wollongong will be held on the weekend of 18-19 October 2003. Participants will drive down from Canberra on the Saturday morning, with shore bird watching around Lake Illawarra and environs that afternoon, and with a full day's seabird outing on Sunday (approximately 7.00 am to 4.30 pm). The pelagic trip will be through the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association Inc. (SOSSA), in their vessel the Sandra K. Further information on SOSSA may be obtained from the following web sites: members.ozemail.com.au/~sossa/ or sossa-international.org.

While Julie McGuiness/Sue Lashko will be the leaders on the day, Jack Holland (6288 7840 (A/H) or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au) is coordinating the arrangements. **Please note that this trip is now full, all deposits have been collected, and a waiting list has been started.**

Further information including several options for accommodation (it is expected participants will make their own bookings) will be available at the 10 September COG meeting. Due to some confusion about the maximum number of passengers and crew allowed on the boat, we are now limited to 21 participants and therefore the costs have risen slightly to \$68 per person (including the \$4 COG admin fee and the cost of two guides and all bur-lies). The additional \$43 per person will be due by the 8 October COG meeting.

COG GOES PLAINS- WANDERING TO THE MALLEE WITH EMU TOURS

Sunday 28 March to

Sunday 4 April 2004

This will be a repeat of the highly successful Emu Tour of April 2003 (see write up in the May edition of *Gang-gang*), but with an extra day spent in the Grampians. While only a short trip it will involve visits to a number of different habitats and consequently a wide range of birds may be seen. These include the Terrick Terrick National Park (**Gilbert's Whistler, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill**), a day in the rugged sandstone escarpments of the Grampians (**Long-billed Corella** and various **honeyeaters**), 3 nights at Whimpey's Little Desert Lodge (**Malleefowl, Southern Scrub-robin, Shy Heathwren** and **Purple-gaped Honeyeater**), a visit to the Kerang/Tullakool wetlands (a variety of water-birds/waders) and will culminate in 2 nights in Deniliquin where Phil Maher will again show COG members the **Plains Wanderer, Inland Dotterel** and his many other special birds.

As an added incentive Emu Tours are offering this longer trip at the same price as last year. They will also operate it with as few as 8 and a maximum of 12 participants. The cost will be \$1366 per person, and is based on COG's field trip policy guidelines including a COG administration fee of \$16 per person.

Accommodation will be en-suite twin share throughout, with the possible option of single accommodation on some nights for a single supplement. All accommodation, meals, transport and guiding is included in the tour cost - with the exception of lunch on the first and last days, an a la carte dinner at Halls Gap, drinks, and items of a personal nature. Travel will be in 20 seater Coaster bus.

To book your place on this very exciting tour please contact Jack Holland [6288 7840 (A/H) or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au], who can also provide further information, including a fuller itinerary. A \$100 deposit will be needed within a month of booking to ensure your seat on the bus. Deposit cheques should be made out to Emu Tours and sent to Treasurer COG, PO Box 301 CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608.

Booking and Cancellation Policy

Emu Tours cancellation policy will apply. Refunds of monies are only made if a replacement can be found to take the vacant place or if the tour is cancelled. Travel insurance, including cancellation cover, is strongly recommended.

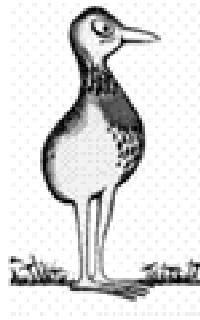
Other surveys/ Activities of Interest to COG Members

Mulligan's Flat Survey

Sunday 28 September 2003

The regular spring survey of the reserve, meeting at the gate off the Gundaroo Road at 7.15am. Regular surveyors, please confirm you are attending by phoning Jenny Bounds in the week prior on 6288 7802 (leave message on machine - no need to call if you are unavailable). I may have spots for a couple of new people to join us, who are confident Atlassers, viz know their local birds by sight - call me if interested. Wear sturdy shoes and bring clipboard, pencil and eraser, plus mug for morning tea. Survey usually ends by 10.30-11am.

Jenny Bounds



Australian Ornithological Services Pty Ltd

**PO Box 385 South Yarra Victoria 3141
Tel: 03 9820 4223 mobile: 0417310200
E: enquiries@philipmaher.com**

2004

- ◆ 17—22 March **Tasmania** (optional Melaleuca flight on 23 March) Accommodated tour seeking all Tassie endemic birds plus mammals such as Tasmanian Devil, Southern Bettong, Eastern Quoll, Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Includes pelagic trip.
- ◆ 9—13 April Easter camp **Oolambeyan National Park** (NSW) Good food and birding at one of the Riverina's newest national parks. Starts/finishes in Deniliquin
- ◆ 20—30 April **Mallee Parks and Reserves of Vic and SA** Camping tour through Victorian and South Australian mallee parks en route to Gluepot Reserve. Starts/finishes in Melb
- ◆ 22 May — 6 June Top end endemics tour **Darwin Kakadu NP** Kununurra. Accommodated tour seeking all the top-end endemics such as Black and White-throated Grasswrens, Gouldian Finch, Hooded Parrot and Banded Fruit-Dove. Starts/finishes in Darwin.
- ◆ 11—22 June **Gulf of Carpentaria Tour** Accommodated tour from Cairns west to Queensland's Gulf country through Georgetown, Karumba, Burketown, Mt Isa and Cloncurry. Key birds include Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens, Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, Black-throated Finch and Flock Pigeon. Starts/finishes in Cairns.
- ◆ 20 Aug —7 September **Strzelecki Track Tour** Accommodated outback tour seeking all the inland specialities such as Plains-wanderer, Inland Dotterel, five spp. of Grasswren, Bourke's Parrot and Hall's Babbler. Starts/finishes in Melbourne.
- ◆ 18—28 September **Forests and Woodlands of Central NSW** including Bird Routes of Barraba & Baradine districts. New accommodated tour taking in the best of the forests and woodland of central NSW such as Gillenbah State Forest near Narrandera, Goonoo State Forest near Dubbo and Pilliga Scrub and the Warrumbungle Ranges near Coonabarabran. Starts/finishes in Melb.
- ◆ 30 Oct—17 Nov **South East Australia**, optional Tasmanian endemics extension. Comprehensive birding tour of SE Australia and Tasmania seeking 300+ spp. Key birds on the mainland include Powerful Owl, Pilotbird, Spotted Quail-thrush, Plains-wanderer, Superb Parrot, Malleefowl, Striated Grasswren and Rufous Bristlebird. Takes in the full spectrum of habitats in SE Aust.

www.philipmaher.com

MIGRATING HONEYEATERS

The yellow faced honeyeaters should be on the move back into the ACT early in September. The inward migration is not as obvious as the outward migration. But where will they go this year? There is not much for them in the Brindabellas.

If anyone sees the birds returning, could they please let us know? We shall go to Warragandra homestead in the Shoalhaven valley to see whether they come through there in their thousands, as they have in the past couple of years.

Elizabeth Compston
8 Wells Gardens
Griffith, ACT 2603
phone 02 6295 3028

The next **COWRA WOODLAND SURVEY** will be held over the weekend of 20-21 September. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on thebradybunch8@bigpond.com.

EARLY MORNING WALKS during Australian Ornithological Conference (AOC) December 2003

In conjunction with the 2nd Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC), which will be held in December at the ANU, COG is organising some early morning walks in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) and the ANU. These will run from about 6.30 am for round 90 minutes, and are proposed for the ANBG on the mornings of 11 (Thursday) and 13 (Saturday) December and for the ANU on Friday 12 December.

I am looking for assistance to help lead these walks and am in particular interested in volunteers who know the ANBG/ANU well, including those who may have early morning access the ANBG. As small groups of not more

than 10 are proposed, it is expected that several leaders will be needed each day. If you can help please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au).

VOLUNTEER WARDENS for Barren Grounds Bird Observatory

Birds Australia is trying to establish a roster of volunteer wardens at its Barren Grounds Bird Observatory near Jamberoo, home to the alluring Ground Parrot and the endangered Eastern Bristlebird. It is seeking people who may be able to stay for periods of at least one month in a caretaker role. Please register your interest by contacting Chris Tzaros on (03) 9882 2622 or email c.tsaros@birdsaustralia.com.au.

DRAFT FIELD TRIPS PROGRAM FOR 2004

There has been only a limited response to the request for suggestions for the 2004 COG Field Trips Program. So if you have a favourite spot/trip that you think should be included, or where you think COG should go to again, or any reasonable suggestion, please let Jack Holland know (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@ea.gov.au). Ideas are needed by the end of September as the draft program will be drawn up and published with the November 2003 Gang-gang.

MONITORING BIRDS IN FIRE AFFECTED AREAS

Environment ACT has recently published "Wildfires in the ACT 2003 - Report on Initial Impacts on Natural Ecosystems", (Technical report No 17 July 2003). The report gives the results of flora and fauna surveys conducted by Environment ACT in fire affected reserves in the first few months following the fires, a snapshot of post-fire ecological conditions for future refer-

FGS#3 Survey questions

1. Where do you live (Country, state, city)?
2. What gender & age bracket do you fit into? [M/F] [<20] [20-40] [40-60] [>60].
3. How many years have you been 'birding'?
4. How many species of Australian birds have you seen (recorded on your life list, if you have one)?
5. Please indicate which Australian birding field guides you own (ranking in order of preference):
 - a. Cayley;
 - b. Flegg;
 - c. Morcombe;
 - d. Pizze & Doyle;
 - e. Pizze & Knight;
 - f. Simpson & Day (indicate edition);
 - g. Slater, 2 volumes;
 - h. Slater, Slater & Slater, 1 volume;
 - i. other ... please specify.
6. What is your favourite birding field guide for use throughout Australia?
 - a. Cayley;
 - b. Flegg;
 - c. Morcombe;
 - d. Pizze & Doyle;
 - e. Pizze & Knight;
 - f. Simpson & Day (indicate edition);
 - g. Slater, 2 volumes;
 - h. Slater, Slater & Slater, 1 volume;
 - i. other ... please specify.

Please indicate if you use more than one field guide on birding excursions (e.g. carry one and keep one in the car).
7. The reason(s) for your choices in Q5 & 6 (in 100 words or less!).

ence. This report is available on the EACT website:

www.environment.act.gov.au or phone 132281

No bird surveys were conducted as part of this study for various reasons, however, Environment ACT is keen for COG members to undertake ongoing monitoring of their Atlas and some other sites over time in fire affected reserves once these areas are declared safe to access. It is expected that some areas currently closed in places like Namadgi NP, the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and Tidbinbilla NR will be opened in the spring/summer.

COG members who have Atlas sites in these areas are encouraged to continue to Atlas their sites regularly once access is restored. Environment ACT is also keen to have COG members undertake regular surveys at sites where mammal and vegetation surveys will continue. For example, some sites along Warks Road, a longtime area of interest for COG, could provide suitable bird monitoring points. At the time of press, how this could best be facilitated had not been worked out, but initially any member interested in taking on a new Atlas site, can put their name and contact details down on a list which will be at the sales desk at COG meetings. More information will be provided at future meetings and in *Gang-gang*.

Jenny Bounds

BIRDING FIELD GUIDE SURVEY

During the two previous birding field guide surveys (FGS#1, FGS#2) Lawrie Conole mailed a questionnaire to the Birding-Aus e-mail list, inviting subscribers to participate in a survey of birder field guide preferences by answering six simple questions. The simple objective being to see which field guides birders preferred, and why.

At the time of the first survey (mid April 1998) Birding-Aus had about 410 subscribers – mostly Australian (and with a heavy Melbourne bias), but with a sprinkling of birders from most parts of the world. Lawrie received 68 responses; equal to a 17% sample or about 1-in-6 Birding-Aus subscribers. In October 1999, he conducted the survey again. This time there were 75 respondents from about 420 Birding-Aus subscribers (about 18%). Most were from recreational birders, but a few responses from professional ornithologists were also received.

A somewhat underdone analysis of the answers from FGS#2 can be seen at www.bluep.com/~oco/Fguide.html

It is our intention to provide something more substantial by way of analysis this time!

Since the last survey in 1999, a major new field guide (Morcombe) has become established, and Flegg's error-ridden photographic guide has been spruced up. We think it's now time for a new survey – FGS#3.

If you participated in either FGS#1 or 2, please join in again. If you are new to the survey – welcome! – and please send us your reply.

To participate in the survey, all you need to do is answer the questions on the previous page, and e-mail the results back to either Alastair Smith

at alclare@netspeed.com.au or Lawrie Conole at cicadabird@bluep.com by **no later than 15 September 2003**.

Nobody is identified in the web published results (which will be made available through *Gang-gang* or Canberra Bird notes), and so privacy is guaranteed – be as frank in your answers as possible.

Results will be collated and published online during October – November 2003. The URL and launch date for FGS#3 results will be published on Birding-Aus and BARD as soon as they are available.

REFERENCES:

Flegg, J. (2003). *Photographic Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. (New Holland: French's Forest).

Morcombe, M. (2002). *The Michael Morcombe Field Guide to Australian Birds*. (Steve Parish Publishing: Archerfield).

JOINT MEETING: CUMBERLAND BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB and BIRDING NSW

Cumberland Bird Observers Club and Birding NSW are delighted to announce a joint meeting on : **Tuesday 6th January 2004** at : Newington Armory Sydney Olympic Park. Entry via Jamieson Street (off Holker Street). Free parking available at Blax-



Jack Winter (*Microeca leucophea*) on burnt branch

Photo courtesy Helen Falow

land Common car park. Gate opens at 6.30pm for 7.00pm start.

Speaker: DR JIM FOWLER, Principal Lecturer in Environmental Biology at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

Presentation: "Seabird population monitoring near the North Sea Oil Terminal in Shetland – a 26 year study"

[Dr Fowler will also be giving a brief overview and presentation of the latest preliminary results of a study into the House Sparrow decline in the UK.]

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

BIRDS AUSTRALIA'S TWITCHATHON 2003 (NSW & ACT)

Weekend 25-26 October 2003

Measuring the outcomes of protecting remnant woodlands for birds in the Murray Catchment of NSW

For more information about the twitchathon see last months *Gang-gang* or contact:

Frances Czwalinna

Twitchathon Coordinator

Birds Australia, Southern NSW & ACT Group

P.O. Box 1322, Crows Nest, 1585

Telephone/Fax: Frances (02) 9872 4185

Email: secretarybird@bigpond.com

Website: <http://>

snag.birdsaustralia.com.au

SNAG thanks very sincerely each of the donors of the following prizes for their generous donation and for all the support they have given to this year's event.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only few kilometers away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle. Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week. Further details contact – Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@argay.com.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

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

Twitchathon 2003 Prizes

Children under 10 years prize for each of up to 4 children in team for most species seen by the team

"First Field Guide to Australian Birds book" together with Steve Parish's "Australian Birdlife Fun Activity Book".

Individual child under 10 years - prize for raising the most funds

A book voucher to the value of \$25 kindly sponsored by Envirobook, 38

Rose Street, Annandale 2038 Tel. (02) 9518 6154.

Children 10-16 years prize for each of up to 4 children in team for most species seen by the team

Michael Morcombe's Field Guide to Australian Birds

Individual child between 10-16 years prize for raising the most funds

A book voucher to the value of \$50 kindly sponsored by Envirobook, 38 Rose Street, Annandale, 2038 Tel: (02) 9518 6154.

Main race: 1st prize:

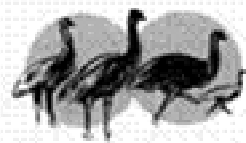
Weekend retreat accommodation in a luxurious tree-house style cottage at Bombah Point Eco Cottages, 969 Bombah Point Road, Bombah Point via Bulahdelah, NSW (from a Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) for members of the winning team. This retreat is adjacent to Myall Lakes National Park and has been designed and built on sustainable technology with care taken for the environment without compromising comfort. It offers solar power, spa bath, gourmet kitchen, gas BBQ, log fire and a DVD player. From Emu Tours emutours@ozemail.com.au

Main race: 2nd prize:

Weekend accommodation (one night) at award winning five star Tizzana Winery Bed and Breakfast at 518 Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, NSW 2756 Tel. 02 4579 1150. The garden of this great B & B is home to the Rock Warbler, among many other species. From Emu Tours emutours@ozemail.com.au

Main Race: 3rd prize:

Birdscaping plants for each member of the team, together with a book on birdscaping techniques. What better way



EMU TOURS

Nature Tours with the Focus on Birds

Join Richard and Roz for their 2003-04 tour program

SPRINGTIME IN THE MALLEE

5 to 11 November 2003 \$980

We combine two popular favourites - hunting for the endangered Plains-wanderer with Philip Maher; then spending most of the tour in Gluepot tracking down all the Mallee specials at a time when the Reserve is bursting with life. Mainly camping.

A SNOWY CHRISTMAS

24 Dec 2003 to 1 Jan 2004 \$1180

Spend the festive season at a lodge high in the Snowy Mountains - then travel along the Snowy and Deddick Rivers. All Christmas/New Year festive fare included. Half camping/half accommodated.

EMU GOES TO LORD HOWE ISLAND

13 to 20 March 2004 \$1900

One of Emu's favourites as Ian Hutton, the island's expert naturalist, spends the week with us. Includes flights by Qantaslink. Excellent, centrally-placed accommodation with cooked breakfasts & some other meals included.

EMU GOES TO MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

13 to 27 June 2004 \$2900 ex Lilongwe

These tours to 'the friendly heart of Africa' are proving rightly popular. Travel with Richard and a local guide to the best birding areas - including the outstanding South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. Book early!

Richard Jordan & Roslyn Hemsley EMU TOURS PO Box 4 Jamberoo NSW 2533

Phone (02) 4236 0542 Fax (02) 4236 0176

emutours@ozemail.com.au www.ozemail.com.au/~emutours

to improve upon your birdscaping techniques than by utilising the plants kindly sponsored by Miller's Garden Centre, 189 Windsor Road, Vineyard, NSW Tel. 02 4577 2576. Miller's Garden Centre contains 2.5 acres of nursery plants to enhance residential and local gardens large and small. The nursery is regularly visited by a square-tailed Kite.

Champagne race:

Champagne for each member of the team, of course!!

Most funds raised by an individual in NSW/ACT:

"Coracina" cottage accommodation over one weekend together with a hamper of wine and tasty treats. "Coracina" is a delightful cottage situated in Shearwater Crescent, Bawley Point - south of Ulladulla close to Lake Willinga and Murrumbidgee National Park, (beach habitat for Little Tern and Hooded Plover). Weekend covers a Friday to Sunday evenings for up to 8 people - 4 couples - generously donated by Prof. Henry Nix (President of Birds Australia!).

Fun prize to the person who sees or hears the rarest bird!

Tupperware picnic items, including a champagne goblet, small and not so small containers for salads, sandwiches and nibbles all compactly designed to enjoy on a day out birdwatching.

Club/society/group prize:

Cheque for \$100 to the club whose members have the most teams! (NOTE the change of category this year!) Encourage your club to get lots of teams together or sponsor one of those teams!

Lucky Twitcher's Prize :

Binocular cleaning kit and optical requisites kindly sponsored by Proust Optical, Westfield Shoppingtown, Figtree, NSW.

We hope you not only have lots of fun, but win one of these great prizes too!



Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

Photo courtesy **Ian Fraser**

Avian Whimsy # 13

Emus and Shemus, and other Emusements

Last month I shared some thoughts on the most ancient of living birds, the ratites. (At least, I wrote it - I have no way of knowing if you read it!) Australia has two living ratite species, of which cassowaries have probably only recently wandered across from New Guinea. I'm going to maunder a little about emus though.

As the great grasslands spread at the expense of the rainforests, the ancestors evolved longer legs and necks to

watch for predators, while greater and greater size progressively excluded more and more predators. Finally the evolutionary question had to be answered; "Right bird, any bigger and you won't be able to fly; what do you reckon?". And the ancestral emu said in effect "Aw jeez, I dunno... Nah, bugger it, I'm going to go for it!". (This is a little bit metaphorical you understand, but that's the gist of it.)

Emus were common around the Limestone Plains at the time of European settlement, but in less than 50 years they had been harried to extinction. Most of what we know about emus comes from the inland, but we do know that high country emus followed a similar pattern. They pair off in mid-summer, and dally for about five months. In late May and June she lays up to 20 large dark green eggs in a scrape on the ground, totalling up to 15kg. Not surprisingly, she reckons by now that enough is enough, and she plays no further part in Happy Families, though if she's still feeling frisky she can go off and do it all again with someone else! He broods for eight weeks, and during the whole time he lives off his body reserves without eating, drinking or defecating, rousing only to turn the eggs several times daily. Locally eggs were apparently laid in about July, which meant that the male was incubating in the snow. How do your child care trials compare with that?

The bumblebee-striped chicks can walk within hours, and run and swim within a week. As they get older, they are distinguished from older birds by a dark neck and head. Dad cares for them for 18 months, so he only breeds every other year.

Emus need a very nutritious diet, and wander across great areas to find it, following the rains and seeding shrubs, especially acacias, fruiting trees and

shrubs, hatching caterpillars and grasshoppers. This has led to many of their problems with European settlement. In Western Australia the Great Emu War of 1932 was fought between migrating mobs of over 20,000 emus, and the Australian army with machine guns and grenades, called in by the WA government. Jock Marshall in his pioneering conservation work *The Great Extinction* reports "History does not record the name of the CO emus, but he must have been a good chap". It seems that perhaps only a dozen emus were killed, and the Govt had to withdraw the military to save them from further embarrassment.

The booming of emus is a familiar inland noise, produced by a unique cleft and inflatable pouch in the trachea. The most powerful version of it is exclusive to female emus during breeding season, when it may be heard up to 2km away, but any camper will have heard it at night, as curious emus investigate an unfamiliar object, such as a tent.

The name emu is not, as we might suppose, of Aboriginal origin, but from the Portuguese 'emeu' for 'crane', which is how early sailors designated the long-legged giants. (These sailors were Dutch, but Portuguese was the lingua franca of the sea at the time; that however is of course utterly irrelevant.) The genus name, *Dromaius*, is from the Greek for swift.

It is generally believed that three emu species existed at the beginning of the 19th century. The King Island emu (known now only from a few bones) and the Kangaroo Island emu (of which just one skin exists) were apparently full species, while the Tasmanian emu (represented by three skins) was probably a race of the mainland species. 'Our' emu has prospered with inland watering points, but declined in settled areas.

As ever there is more to say, but my quota has been filled and some laws are *emutable*.

Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

Some good news from Helen's watch

Helen Fallow called me on the telephone in early August. Helen was so excited that I just had to share it with you all. Since the fires, Helen had only seen groups of Diamond Firetails numbering 5 or less. Last year, at the same time, she said, numbers were up to 30. The morning of her call to me, Helen had counted a group of 18—a wonderful sight, she said. No juveniles yet this year...but perhaps the fact that group numbers are on the increase means that there is some hope.

Helen provided a beautiful selection of Diamond Firetail photos for you all, but I could not fit them in this edition.

Perhaps Ian will do a whimsy to accompany the photos in the October edition?

Thanks Helen.

The editor



Diamond Firetail (*Steganopleura guttatum*) on burnt branch Photo courtesy **Helen Fallow**



Committee Nomination Form

Nominations for the election of officers and ordinary committee members should be submitted, in writing, signed by two members and the person nominated, to

The Secretary, Canberra Ornithologists Group
PO Box 301
Civic Square ACT 2608

by 5 November 2003.

We hereby nominate

for the position of

on the Committee of Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Nominated by and

Donations to Birds Australia for HANZAB

Many of you will know of the fabulous HANZAB volumes being produced by Birds Australia. Six volumes of the seven volume series are now completed. The seventh is well underway.

Alas, Birds Australia is desperately short of funds to complete this important work. It has launched an appeal to raise \$800 000.

Send your donation - cheque (payable to Birds Australia Research Fund), or credit card (Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard) - to HANZAB at Birds Australia, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East VIC 3123.

You should include a note indicating that the donation is towards the completion of the final volume of HANZAB.

Next newsletter

OCTOBER deadline
Friday 26 September 2003

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

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

COG info

President

Barry Baker, ph 6274 2402 (w),
mobile 0412 484 728

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Doug Laing ph 6287 7700 (h)

Membership inquiries

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

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)

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

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

COG membership

2003-2004 membership: Individuals, families and institutions: \$35. school students (under 18): \$17.50.

Office (6247 4996)

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

Office volunteers are not in attendance for regular opening hours.

Members access by prior arrangement.

COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
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