



Gang-gang

September 2004

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 8 September

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Field Trip Reports

Inaugural Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Lyrebird Survey: Saturday 17 July and Saturday 21 August 2004

The first survey was run under interesting conditions. With a forecast of hail, thunderstorms and strong winds 12 intrepid souls met at the gates to the Reserve at 8.00am ready to do battle with the elements. To our surprise the weather turned out to be mild and still. As all walking tracks had been recently opened after the January 2003 bushfires we were able to split up into groups and walk the Gibraltar, Devils Gap, Fishing Gap, Ashbrook and Camel Back trails. At this time

of the year **Superb Lyrebirds** are normally very vocal and hence July is a good time to obtain a measure of their abundance. The weather soon turned and before long all parties were able to enjoy a good fall of snow that lay on the ground down to about 900 m.

Lewin's Rail (*Rallus pectoralis*)
Commonwealth Park
Photo courtesy Geoffrey Dabb



recorded a total of seven calling Lyrebirds. All calls were heard from the Gibraltar and the Devils Gap trails, both of which occur on the eastern side of the Reserve. The birds continued to call during the snow storm so despite the weather we were able to obtain a good measure of their present numbers and distribution since the bushfires.

In addition to the Lyrebirds, 26 species were recorded of which the most frequent included the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Thornbill** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**. Interesting observations included the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill** and the **Diamond Firetail**.

On Saturday 21st August most of us returned to Tidbinbilla for a repeat survey. While we were assembling at the entrance gate we were entertained by the unusual spectacle of a flock of 16 **White-winged Chough** climbing to about 300m above the valley floor before circling and then rapidly descending.

Shortly after starting this second survey a strong westerly wind sprang up. For those on the east side of the valley the consequent noisy

conditions did not help our cause but the teams on the Ashbrook Creek and Camel Back trails were not so troubled. However, it seems that we drew a blank all the same. Well almost. The Gibraltar Rocks team heard a muffled snatch of Superb Lyrebird song, in a minor lull between wind gusts! The bird seemed to be calling from the same general area where we had heard a lyrebird in song the previous month. On this occasion, however, we did find a

display mound, albeit a poorly defined one but we could not find the 'obvious' display mound reported to us by the Tidbinbilla staff. It turns out that we had been searching about 75 m too far to the N and this apparently well-used mound, very near the track, must have been close to the one we did stumble upon!

All other teams drew a blank but I think everyone enjoyed their walk anyway. **Flame Robins** were certainly conspicuous with about 25-

30 moving about all morning over the grassland areas near the site of the old Visitor Information Centre. We also recorded a male **Scarlet Robin** courtship feeding a female and two **Rose Robins** in our combined total of 29 detected species.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the surveys and in particular to Monica for turning up to work early to open the gates for us in July.

Chris Davey & Peter Fullagar

Lake Ginninderra: Wednesday Walk 18 August 2004

Seven members braved a cool start to the day for our walk around the northern end of the lake. The best birding was in open grassland of the north west corner. Here Martyn located a flock of **Richard's Pipits** and we also got good looks at **Double-barred** and **Red-browed Finches**. Several **Golden-headed Cisticolas** perched on dead sticks close by as did a young **Black-shouldered Kite**. Careful scrutiny of the western picnic area revealed several **Great Cormorants** and a **Pied Cormorant**. We returned to the cars with a total of 37 species.

Tom Green

Swift Parrot/Regent Honeyeater Survey; Saturday 31 July 2004

Sue Lashko joined Jenny Bounds and me on our regular survey looking for these two threatened species to the NW of Canberra.

We spent most of the morning at Spring Forest south of Cowra. While there was virtually no flowering, there was some good birding nevertheless on an almost perfect winter day's weather. The highlight was 6 male **Flame Robins** together within the same binocular view, with surprisingly several **Eastern Yellow Robins** joining them pouncing on their prey from stalks well out of cover. There were also good numbers of **Diamond Firetail**, **Dusky**



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October 2004
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Well Respected Leader Alan Morris

December 2004
Tasmanian Endemics 4–9th(excludes airfare) \$ 2280
Start Hobart End Hobart
Leader Alan Morris

January 2005
Alpine Birds and Plants 22–26th \$ 1485
Start Canberra End Canberra
Local Plant and Birdo Expert : Leader Jules Gold

February 2005
Divine Lord Howe Island 12–16th (exc. airfare) \$ 1750
Start Lord Howe End Lord Howe
Leader the Lord of Howe himself : Ian Hutton

May 2005
Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfeld 2–8th (exc. airfare)\$ TBA
Start Canberra End Adelaide
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Woodswallow, Jacky Winter and **White-browed Babblers**. A couple of **Superb Parrots** and a single bird over later was a real surprise, as they're usually absent from this area over winter.

We moved on to Jindalee for the afternoon, seeing both **Grey-crowned Babbler** and **Apostlebird** on the way, NE of Koorawatha. There was substantially more flowering of the ironbarks at Jindalee, with lots of noisy honeyeaters calling each time we stopped for a look/listen. Highlights were a single **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, lots of **Noisy Friarbird** (again less than 2 hours drive from Canberra) with **Little Friarbird** joining them at one spot, and an overwintering **Olive-backed Oriole** surprisingly calling and feeding amongst the flowers.

The final species for the day was a cuckoo-shrike feeding by belly flopping into the tops of the wattles, and then often sitting obligingly on a perch only 10 m away to consume its catch. After consulting the books we concluded it was a dark morph of the **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** from its relatively small size, dark grey crown with only a very narrow band of black over the bill. In my experience this morph is very variable and poses difficulty in identifying. Unfortunately it did not call, its most diagnostic feature, in the 10 minutes or so that we observed it before heading home.

All in all a very enjoyable day's birding even though we did not see or hear either of the species we were looking for. However, there was an unconfirmed sighting of a **Regent Honeyeater** near Koorawatha shortly after. COG has participated in these surveys as part of a formal outing

over the past two years, so why not get a few friends together next year? Debbie Saunders will be only too pleased to suggest where to look.

Jack Holland

Waterbirds for Beginners: Yarralumla Foreshores Sunday 8 August 2004

The thick fog and cold conditions meant that only a few members and guests joined me on this outing designed to help newer members learn about water birds. This area is rich in waterbirds, though unfortunately many have been attracted by the easy pickings due to their regular feeding by a variety of people. This does, however, mean they are unusually tame, and can be approached at very close quarters.

Luckily the cold grey conditions did not deter the waterbirds. There were large numbers of **Eurasian Coot** and lesser **Dusky Moorhen**, seen together on one occasion with the **Purple Swamphen**, so that participants could clearly see the differences in plumages and size. The vast majority of the duck species present was the **Pacific Black Duck**, with lower numbers of the **Australian Wood Duck**. However, a male **Mallard** and several females were also seen, again allowing a direct comparison with the closely related black duck. We enjoyed seeing a number of **Black Swans**, one pair with cygnets but no nests could be found in the fringing vegetation. This is not an introduced species from the west, as the Canberra Times would have us believe!

On the pontoons close to our parking spot were several **Great** and **Little**

September Meeting

8 pm

Wednesday

8 September 2004

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

Our **short talk** for September will be Richard Allen, on trillers.

The **main talk** for the evening will be Judy Harrington, Park Ranger at Sydney Olympic Park. Judy works now as the "bird ranger" in the Visitor Services Department and particularly enjoys working with children. She also coordinates the nature-based holiday programs. Her talk is entitled "Rubbish to Restoration -managing habitats for birds at Sydney Olympic Park".

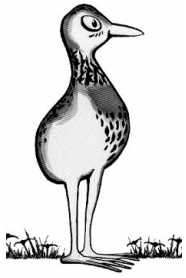
Please come along.
It should be a great evening!

Pied Cormorants, which could be seen and compared for size, plumage characteristics etc at close quarters. A surprise was that they were accompanied by two **Darters**, one appearing to be an adult female, and the other still an immature bird, perhaps bred nearby at the Black Mountain Peninsula. Again these could be examined closely and the differences with the cormorants, in particular the long neck and snake-like head, pointed out.

We were able to confirm that the **Silver Gull** nesting season had begun, with several nests, one in a

Letters to the editor

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



**Australian
Ornithological
Services P/L**

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

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2005 Birding Tours

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

9-14 March: Tasmania bird &
mammal tour, including Bruny Is-
land & pelagic trip

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

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

4-19 June Top End incl Kununurra

3-10 July New Caledonia
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Comprehensive birding tour seeking
all endemic, plus the near-endemic,
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*A little bit of France in the tropics,
2.5 hours from Sydney, with
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8-26 August: Outback trip
The 20th Strzelecki Track tour

Plains-wanderer Weekends
11 and 12 December 2004
18 and 19 December 2004
26 & 27 March (Easter) 2005

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quite advanced state, on two
boats moored in Yarralumla
Bay, and the start of a nest on
another in Orana Bay. A bird
was also seen carrying nesting
material between these bays.

There were fewer land birds due
to grey and cold conditions.
However, over 31 species was a
pretty good count for a morning,
with the added bonus of being
able to see the birds so close.

Jack Holland

Report of August COG Meeting

As we entered the meeting
venue, we were greeted by one
of Geoffrey Dabb's wonderful
DVDs, this time of the **Lewin's
Rail** in Commonwealth Park.
Geoffrey also featured in the
next segment, presenting the
Bird of the Month - the **Spotted
Bowerbird**. His highly
entertaining DVD was entitled
Spotty the Bowerbird, after the
book by Edward Sorenson in
1921. Unfortunately poor Spotty
died in a dust storm. Geoffrey
went further back in history to
Elizabeth Gould's painting of
the bird at its bower, with
freshwater mussels and bones
(particularly sheep vertebrae)
dominating. Unlike Gould,
Mathew's Birds of Australia
separated the bird into a western
and an eastern species. The
outstanding identification
feature of the Spotted Bowerbird
is its crest, variously described
as somewhere between pink and
lilac. While the crest is always
visible, it is most visible during
display. In the female, the crest
is smaller and may develop later
than in males.

Spotted Bowerbirds range from
central Queensland to Victoria,
although they are probably now
extinct in the south and east.

They are gradually retreating inland
and to the north, so that most
sightings are now from the Murray in
western NSW up to Townsville. The
closest birds to Canberra are in the
Weddin Mountains. They love water,
and will drink and bathe all day. They
live in little oases of fruit-bearing
shrubby, and move around
furtively, giving a harsh, rasping call.
Geoffrey concluded by suggesting
Spotty the Bowerbird as our new
national faunal emblem in place of
the kangaroo which, after all, has an
eyeball bigger than its brain. He has
designed a new flag featuring Spotty
the Boxing Bowerbird.

The main speaker was Martin
Butterfield discussing Atlassing in
Africa. Martin spent several years in
Tanzania working for their
Department of Statistics, which
didn't seem to help him solve the
problem of how to map 1100 bird
species with no more than 20 birders
in a population of 34 million.
Tanzania has excellent wader
viewing near Dar-es-Salaam, and, as
in Australia, the habitat is threatened
by developers wanting to build
marinas and resorts. By contrast,
owls are under severe threat because
of witchcraft. Huge flocks of birds
are not unusual. Flocks of up to 1
million **Quelea** (a finch) eat grain
locust-style and, like locusts, are
sprayed. **Wattled Starling** might
number 600 000 in a flock, and
Greater Flamingo 500 000. Hazards
for birders in Tanzania are much
more serious than in Australia. The
poor birder could be arrested,
mugged, pricked (by Acacia spikes)
or eaten. Neil and Liz Baker, who run
the local atlas as stress-relief from
their missionary duties, are recruiting
local Tanzanians to help, as they have
both excellent local knowledge and
eyesight, not to mention their
knowledge of local bandits. First they
have to convince the locals that it is
better to look at birds than trap them
for sale to European bird dealers or to
eat them.

Bird distribution in Tanzania is largely related to elevation in this tropical country which is 1 to 12°S of the Equator, and has a relatively narrow coastal plain as well as many ranges of mountains up to 600 metres and rift valleys. Deforestation to create more farm land, as well as firewood and charcoal, for a population that is growing 2.9% annually, is a major problem for bird habitat. So many areas have still not been properly surveyed, so that there are species that have not yet been described to science. So, if you go to Tanzania, collect bird data – you never know when it might be needed, or whether you will find a new species.

Sue Lashko

Future Field Trips

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve: Sunday 5 September 2004, morning outing – fire recovery

This outing is designed to allow COG members to see how the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, one of the places most devastated by the 18 January 2003 bushfires, is recovering and what bird species have remained or are returning. It will be led by Jonette McDonnell (262 9414 A/H), a member of both COG and the Friends of Tidbinbilla, who have been regularly monitoring the birds there since the fires. She will be assisted by ranger Monica Murani, who will also be happy to talk about recovery at Tidbinbilla more generally. Meet Jonette at 9:00 am at the Visitors Centre for a morning's inspection of various areas of the reserve. There will be some walking involved but mainly on fire trails and paths. Note that no entrance fee is currently being charged.

COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlasers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottneest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira - \$15.00
- **Birds of Rottneest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$9.00
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Guide to the Bird Habitats of NSW (ACT)** NSW Atlasers -was \$27, **reduced** to \$15.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

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

Lake Road: Sunday 19 September 2004 – longish morning walk

Lake Road runs along the foot of the escarpment on the southwest corner of Lake George. It is planned to walk along the road from where we will be able to see birds on the lake bed and on the forested slopes, as well as in the roadside trees and grassed areas. This is an easy flat walk beginning at the southern end of the escarpment and heading north before returning either along the road or the edge of the "lake". This time last year the mistletoe was flowering and there were large numbers of honeyeaters. For the past two years at this time, Sue Lashko has recorded about 40 species, including **Little Eagle, Speckled Warbler, Red-capped Robin** and **cuckoos**, as well as Echidna.

Meet Sue (6251 4485 A/H) at 8.00 am at the corner of Lake Road and Bungendore Road, before driving a few kilometres to the starting point for the walk. From the Federal Highway, turn right onto Macs Reef Road just after the Sutton overpass. Go to the end and turn right onto the Bungendore road. Lake Road is at the base of Smith's Gap, over the Cullerin or Lake George Range (it's called both). If you are coming via Queanbeyan and Bungendore, turn left at the roundabout in Bungendore, without turning right into Bungendore. Bring morning tea, water, hat and sunscreen. The walk will finish before lunch.

Buddigower/Charcoal Tank: long weekend campout 2-4 October 2004

COG will join Mark Clayton's bird banding crew for the October long weekend campout in these two reserves near West Wyalong. This will be a take everything camp as there are NO facilities in either reserve. All rubbish etc will need to be taken out. Access is more difficult

to Buddigower but with care, a conventional vehicle will get in OK. There are no problems getting into Charcoal. Buddigower is larger than Charcoal and covers a wider range of habitats, from pure Mallee to small areas of heath, extensive areas of Broombush (*Melaleuca*) and ironbark ridges. There are numerous old mineshafts in Buddigower so care needs to be exercised walking around. Both reserves have been severely affected by the drought so birds could be a bit of a pot-luck assemblage. However most migrants should have returned to the area. We will move from Buddigower to Charcoal on Sunday afternoon. For those who do not wish to camp, there are motels and caravan parks approximately 15 km away.

Mark will have further details including directions on getting there at the September COG meeting. If you can't make this, or wish to register your interest please call Mark Clayton on 6241 3620 (A/H). Mark can also be reached at Mark.Clayton@csiro.au, but this is less reliable. He apologises to members who have been unsuccessful in reaching him by this route, he's expecting this will be rectified by the time of publication.

Bundidgerry; Sunday 17 October 2004, morning on private property

A couple of years ago COG visited this delightful property near Murrumbateman. The property has a mixture of woodland and open pasture on undulating land, and has a stream and a small dam. The variety of landscape provides potential for a wide variety of species to be seen. The **Hooded Robin** has recently returned after a period of absence. The owners are continuing the process of rehabilitating the land, so it will be very interesting to see the effects these improvements have on the birdlife.

The walk will be over land that is undulating and including a steepish hill, as well as across the paddocks. Please could you bring along some drinks and morning snacks, as well as binos, good shoes and a hat. We'll meet at 7.30 am at the carpark at the corner of Constitution Ave and Allara St (now that the one adjacent to the Griffin Centre no longer exists), to arrive at Bundidgerry at about 8.30 am. Bundidgerry is located 1.5 km along John Jobbins Road, off Dick's Creek Road, as indicated on the map. **See page 11 of this Gang-gang for a detailed Map of how to get to Bundidgerry.** We will use the right hand gate and proceed the 1.6 km to the cabin. Although not essential, it would be appreciated if intending participants could contact the leader Alistair Bestow (6281 1481 A/H) before hand.

Taylor's Creek: Sunday 24 October 2004- atlasing opportunity on private properties – NEW OUTING

Taylor's Creek catchment lies between Tarago and the east side of Lake George, an area not often frequented by COG members or birders in general. The Taylor's Creek Landcare Group members are very keen to know of the birdlife on their properties, and this outing aims to help them find out. We will have access to a number of private properties and who knows what gems are hidden away amongst the rarely visited forest and woodland remnants. This outing is designed so that COG members will form small survey teams, each visiting a number of sites on different properties during the morning. We will finish with a sausage sizzle courtesy of the Landcare group, and a roundup of the findings for the morning. Anyone is welcome to attend, however, we will need some experienced birders to form the nucleus of each survey team. If you are interested in joining this outing, exploring some new territory

and meeting some enthusiastic landholders, please contact Nicki Taws, on 6251 0303, Mobile 0408 210736 or email on ntaws@austarmetro.com.au.

Bellmount Forest: Sunday 31 October 2004 - morning/early afternoon visit to private property

This will be a visit to the property north of Gundaroo of long time member Pauline Wicksteed, where COG has not been for a number of years. Pauline also has a keen interest in plants so that the focus will be on both birds and plants. As it will be mid spring both should be out, and all summer migrants should have returned by then. We'll spend the first part of the morning looking at these on her property, which consists of natural woodland and planted areas. We'll then have a look at the nearby TSR 48, which usually supports a good range of declining species, before coming back for lunch. If participants are interested a number of other spots in the area will be visited after lunch.

To get there take the Federal highway to the Gunning turn-off, then through Sutton and Gundaroo towards Gunning. 13 km from Gundaroo Village you reach Bellmount Forest, continue on the main road a further 100 metres to where a 100 km speed sign is and the gate is directly opposite to the right, number 5202. Drive in and meet Pauline (Ph 4845 1174) at 0830. The driving time from Civic is approx 40 minutes. Members may wish to arrange for some car pooling between themselves.

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

Preliminary notice is given of this trip, which is a follow up to our very successful outing to the Pejar Dam etc in February with the Goulburn Field Naturalists, and will replace the

advertised outing to the Bumbalong Valley. Details are still being finalised but we are expecting to again visit the Kenmore Dam and Quarry sites for a longer stay to catch the spring birds, as well as some other local spots. The Pejar Dam, which is now very empty, is being saved for another time, perhaps in 2005 if the drought has broken.

It is expected that some participants will want to travel to Goulburn for a Saturday afternoon's birding and to stay overnight, and others may want to come up on Sunday morning. More information will be in the October *Gang-gang*, meanwhile pencil this date into your diaries.

Wednesday Walk

There is an informal walk on the third Wednesday of each month (ie the wed. after the COG meeting. These are gentle outings to nearby places starting at 9 am and finishing by lunchtime.

The mid week walk for September will be **Wednesday 15 September at Campbell Park** to look for the early spring migrants. Meet at 9 am at the northern end of the office block on the airport side (turn right before reaching the offices and follow the road right around). It will be easy flat walking. Bring morning tea.

Longer trips

Cocoparra National Park: Monday 25 to Friday 29 October – weekday campout

Joan and Trevor Lipscombe welcome members and guests to join them and avoid the crowds on this weekday Springtime trip for leisured Coggies to this varied National Park about 30 km east of Griffith. They'll be looking for breeding birds and summer visitors both in the Park and at other locations in the area. These include the **Blue Bonnet, Mulga Parrot, Mallee Ringneck, Crested Bellbird, Budgerigar, Crimson**

Chat, Major Mithell's Cockatoo, Peregrine Falcon, woodswallows, cuckoos, honeyeaters, babblers etc. There's plenty of space on the campground for campers, caravans and tents, and we should have the place to ourselves. There are pit toilets but otherwise you will need to bring everything in and take everything out. E-mail Trevor and Joan Lipscombe for details at TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com or phone 6262 7975.

Advance Notice: Iron Range, November 2005

Advance notice is given that Mark Clayton's bird banding crew will be visiting the Iron Range in North Queensland late in November 2005. Members will be welcome to participate but will have to make their own way up there. If there is sufficient interest it may be possible to organise some transport from this end. If you are interested please contact Mark Clayton on 6241 3620 (A/H). Mark can also be reached at Mark.Clayton@csiro.au, but see comments above.

2005 Calendar 2005

While I've had quite a few suggestions for ideas about the 2005 COG Field Trips Program, there's always room for more. So if you have any places that you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit, past outings that you think ought to be repeated, or comments on the types of outings that should be included in our program, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). Offers to lead outings in 2005 will also be gratefully accepted. This year's program has run very smoothly because members have been happy to help organise and lead one, or at most two, outings for the year. That's all it takes folks, so please let's continue this co-operative spirit!

The 2005 program will be drafted

over the next month and will be circulated for comment with the November *Gang-gang*.

From the COG Committee

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 11 November 2004 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.

Committee nomination form on page 11 of this *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 2004-5. Unless COG receives your renewal by 15 September 2004 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?

Other surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of 18-19 September 2004. If you are interested in participating please contact Sue Proust on thebradybunch8@bigpond.com.

This survey comes highly recommended as an opportunity to see some of the more inland species that don't reach the ACT, often on private land otherwise not accessible. In the past there have been plenty of **Superb Parrots** at this time of year.

Mulligans Flat Survey Sunday 26 September 2004

The spring survey is on again, meeting at the reserve car park at 7.15am. Regular volunteers, please let Jenny Bounds know if you are available by leaving a phone message on 6288 7802. I will email a reminder nearer the time to those on my list. Bring mug for morning tea, clipboard, pencil and eraser. Sturdy shoes and hat recommended. New volunteers, who are able to identify most local woodland birds, are welcome to join the surveys - please phone Jenny to discuss.

Notices Notices

CBN envelope recycling. Many thanks to all of those people who have returned their CBN envelope in the past for reuse. The envelope that we are using now is no longer suitable to be re-used, because it is self-adhesive and therefore does not open very easily. The new envelope is better than the old one in the following ways:

It is a little smaller than the former one so the journal does not move about in it as much. This is better for the Post Office and results in less damage in the post.

It sticks well, also ensuring that it travels well in the post.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Bird-watching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot. The front beach at Rosedale is patrolled by the resident white sea-eagle.

Tariff - \$50 per night; \$250 per week (\$300 per week in school holidays); 3 night weekend \$125; 15 December to 31 January - \$400 per week.

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

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.

HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

Guerilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

Lovely, clean and quiet self contained 1 bedroom flat amid trees, own courtyard and garden, adjacent Burrewarra Point cliff top reserve. Close unspoiled walks, beaches. Over 120 bird species seen in the local area, half from the property and lots of other interesting fauna and flora. Reasonable rates. Contact Joan and Trevor Lipscombe 02 6262 7975.

It is self-adhesive and therefore easier to pack.

It doesn't need any tape, therefore saves a little money.

I would still encourage people to recycle the used envelopes as you would any other used paper.

Lia Battison,
Newsletter distribution

A big THANK YOU to those COGgers who spent time on the MDBC 'Olympic Birds' exhibit last month. COGs presence was well received by the MDBC and we hope that it will be the beginning of an ongoing relationship between the two organisations. Judging by the number of leaflets handed out, it was also potentially a good new member gathering activity. Thanks again.

The COG Committee

Calling all 2003-04 datasheets

Yes, it's that time of year again. Please dig out all your 2003-04 records that you have not yet submitted and drop them into the red box at meetings or send to our postal address, so that they can be processed in good time for the Annual Bird Report.

A new Twitchathon adventure: Habitat restoration for the endangered Regent Honeyeater in the Capertee Valley

This year Regent Honeyeaters will enjoy the fruits of fundraising conservation efforts and here's how you can help continue on with this great conservation project.

The Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater Project was kicked off by Twitchathon money in 1994 and with financial support from a number of different bodies, as well as the hard work of many dedicated volunteers, over 60 000 trees and shrubs have been planted in an effort to restore and enhance habitat for the Regent Honeyeater, and other woodland birds, in the single-most important

breeding area remaining for this enigmatic species.

The Regent Honeyeater Group plans to use some of the funds raised during the 2004 Twitchathon to purchase trailer-mounted tanks and pumps that can supplement those currently generously supplied by the local Fire Brigades. Additional Twitchathon funds will be used to fence sites of high conservation priority as they are identified as well as assist in follow-up maintenance of sites – weeding, fertilising etc.

So, get your 2004 Twitchathon Kit and start forming a team to 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 3 p.m. Saturday 30 October to 4 p.m. Sunday 31 October 2004. Note the change of time for starting and finishing. In the weeks before this event, show your work colleagues, friends and family the publicity material I forward you in your Twitchathon Kit and gently persuade them to sponsor you so many cents or even dollars for each species your team sees.

There are prizes for the most species seen by three winning teams but also prizes for the most money raised, the rarest bird seen by an individual, a Lucky Twitcher's prize and even some champagne. So don't think you have to be an A Class birdwatcher - remember it is all about saving an endangered species from extinction. A very small or very large effort by everyone can achieve the most wonderful outcome for this enigmatic species.

Volunteers wanted to help threatened shorebirds 2004/2005

Shorebirds, or waders, are under threat from habitat loss and disturbance globally these threats are affecting migratory shorebirds that migrate to Australia each year. While these threats are of concern and must be addressed through international

cooperation there are also serious threats to habitat loss and disturbance of both migratory and endemic shorebirds in Australia, especially in NSW. Conservationists are concerned about the future of many of our threatened species that nest in precarious locations such as our major beaches as well as the future of migratory species that visit Australian wetlands for up to seven months every year.

This summer (2004/2005) a combined force of bird groups, National Parks Service of DEC and many individuals throughout New South Wales will be conducting two major surveys requiring all the help we can get from anyone interested in birds and their conservation. There are two distinct projects, though there will inevitably be some overlap for some species.

Project 1 – Beach Nesting Bird Survey

The NSW Wader Study Group in association with most bird groups in NSW, National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Bird Interest Group Network (BIGnet) and many individuals will be conducting the next Beach Nesting Bird Survey along the entire coast of NSW over the weekend of 16/17 October 2004. This survey has been conducted every second year since 1994.

Two hundred volunteers needed!

A survey will be carried out over the weekend of 16/17 October 2004 and covers every beach in NSW. This biennial count was initiated in 1994 as an extension of the national Hooded Plover Survey. The main objective is to count Hooded Plovers, Beach Stone-curlew, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Little Terns and Red-capped Plovers and record any nesting activities. However as part of a day at the beach volunteers are encouraged to record other birds of interest including birds of prey and any beach washed birds. What better way to add to the pleasure of walking along a beach of your choice by

helping to protect coast nesting birds?

Project 2 – Adopt an estuary

The second survey is longer term and covers all species of shorebirds (waders) at all of the NSW estuaries.

Ideally we are looking for small teams to adopt an estuary or group of estuaries (some estuaries are very small and will have relatively few birds) and count the shorebirds there at least each quarter, monthly if possible, for one year. However one-off counts are useful at any time.

Every participant in either of the surveys will be issued with a kit including a map/maps of the area chosen, simple instructions of how to record the information, suggestions of what to look for, contact details of regional and state coordinators and where to send your completed data sheets.

Information from both surveys will be plotted onto maps and used for conservation and management plans, showing where the threats are, areas that need protecting and lots more information for land managers and conservation agencies.

If you are interested in taking part in either of these surveys and learning about shorebirds please contact the state coordinator: Phil Straw, NSW Wader Study Group, P.O. Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216. 02 9597 7765 or email: wadersnsw@optusnet.com.au who will put you in touch with your nearest regional coordinator and arrange for your beach or estuary survey kit to be sent to you.

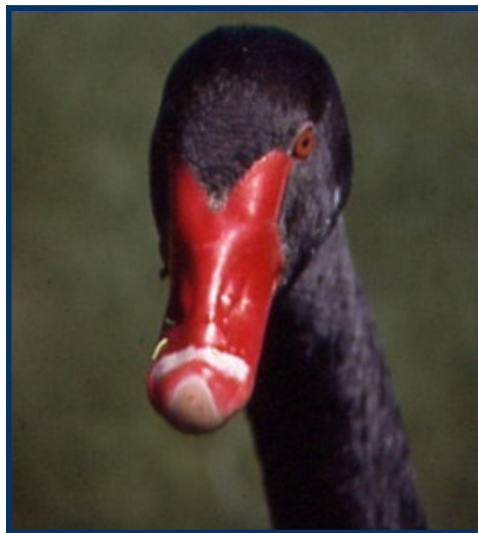
Avian Whimsy # 24

Heard this Swan? Swan Myths

As we come out of another winter, many birds are already busying themselves with nesting to have their chicks ready to gorge on the spring bounty. (They may not have been noting climate forecasts, but that's a separate story.) However, one familiar local bird regards these as

very feathered-come-latelies indeed. **Black Swans** start breeding in the depths of winter and by now the cygnets are well-developed. Part of the reason is doubtless that their exclusive diet of water weeds – when they're not being poisoned by white bread – is independent of the season.

A recent Canberra Times story reported on such a family, but made the remarkable assertion that Black Swans are native only to Western Australia, and have been introduced to the rest of Australia. It's been decades since I heard that particularly silly furphy, but one can always rely on the CT for a breaking story. Our only native swan in fact is found naturally throughout Australia except for the deepest western deserts and the tip of Cape York.



Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*)

Photo courtesy **Ian Fraser**

Another Gondwanan anomaly is the Black-necked Swan of South America, but of the seven swan species of the world, only ours is all black. And this created serious problems for certainty-seeking Europeans. The all-white plumage of the four northern hemisphere species, and perhaps the strong pair bonding, is doubtless the reason that they were attributed with characteristics of chastity and goodness. In many Norse and Celtic legends, swan maidens feature for their purity. Swans are

white, so swans are pure, ergo all swans must be white... (There are times when I don't feel too bad about not 'getting' philosophy...) The corollary was that black swans, definitively mythical, were regarded as a symbol of evil.

It was a most unpleasant surprise then when they discovered that such a creature actually existed in the strange and savage new lands of the south. When the Dutch explorer Willem De Vlamingh reported them from Western Australia in 1697 he was generally disbelieved. He was so impressed though – I hear that he failed philosophy – that he named the river the Swan for them. Aided by de Vlamingh's artist, Victor Victorszoon, these swans probably became the first Australian animals to be illustrated by Europeans.

Perhaps it was this widely-reported discovery which spawned the myth of Black Swans originally being solely a western bird. There is no excuse for it though; Governor Phillip commented on them in Dee Why Lagoon in 1788 and Bruny d'Entrecasteaux reported them from south-east Tasmania in 1792 (where he thought it was a new discovery). Fondness did not necessarily follow familiarity. I noted years ago that Police Magistrate Foster Fyans called them "useless and ugly", though I can no longer find the reference. (Can anyone help with that?)

Bizarrely, in 1992 the normally infallible *Handbook of Birds of the World* commented that Black Swans "may have spread to SW Australia during present century". One can only speculate on what the author and editor had had for lunch on that day! We do know that they (ie the swans!) were assisted to New Zealand, where they are now very well-established.

One final myth to dispel – that the term cygnet is independent of the number involved. If there's just one, then of course it's a singlet.

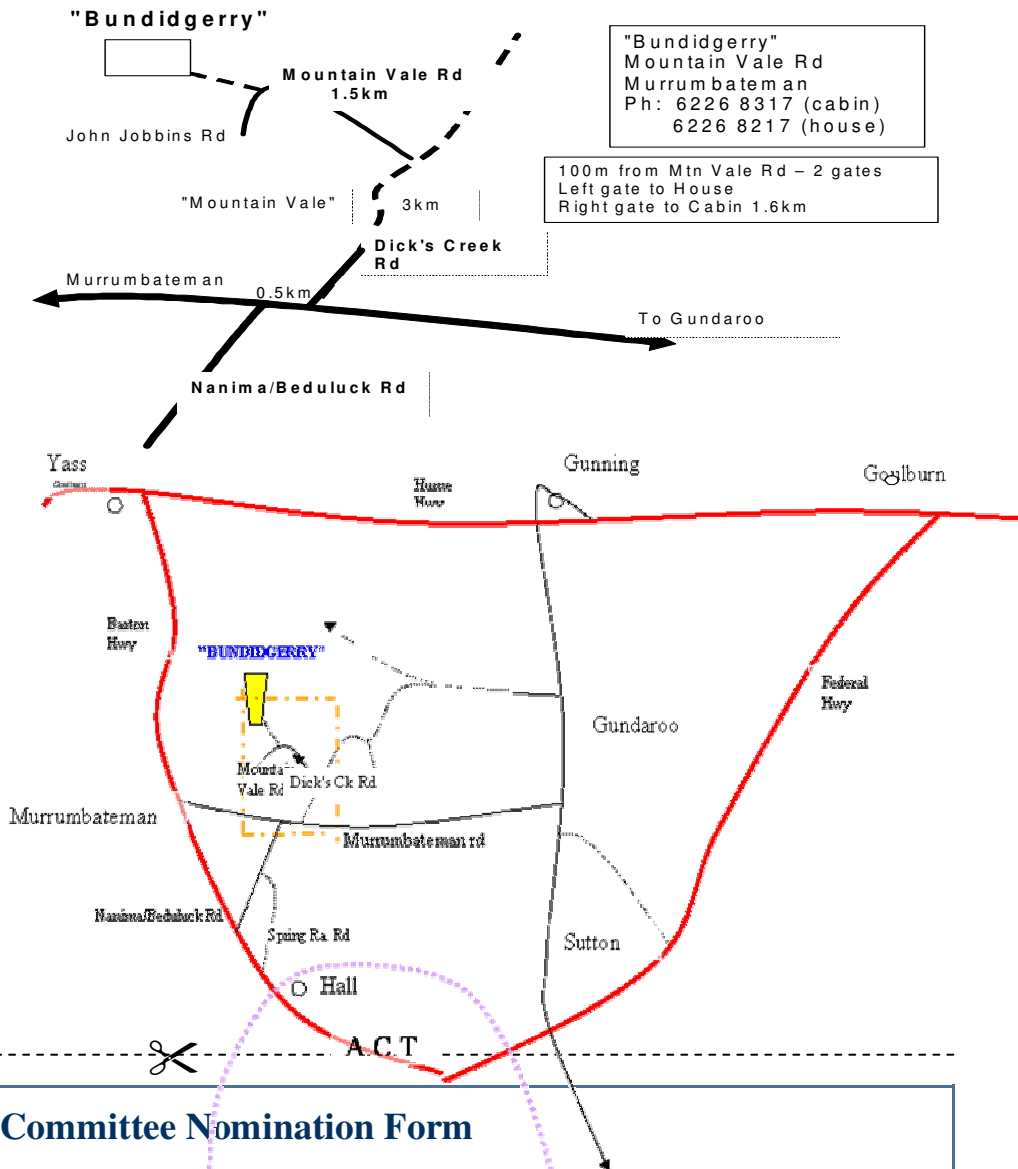
Ian Fraser ianf@pcug.org.au

GBS Central #5

Please get any year 23 Charts in as soon as possible. They could be dropped in to myself or Kay (or the Co-ordinatorial bicycle could be fired up to visit those who can't get 'em in otherwise and who live in the ACT)! Also, I repeat my welcome for any new observers (or experienced ones who haven't yet picked up their new Charts) to join us for year 24.

Mynas are involved in a couple of items this month. Data from 7 suburbs concerning these birds has been provided to Chris Tidemann for analysis in his project to control the beasts. A less formal control project has been implemented by one member. This consists of beating the roost tree with a large stick. Since it only shifted the birds to the neighbours plot I wonder if everyone goes and beats a roost tree every night, would get rid of them? Such a technique was claimed to have removed blowies from Mao's China.

Data entry proceeds apace. It is noticeable that (nearly) everyone is recording **Yellow-tailed Black-**



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 3 November 2004.

We hereby nominate

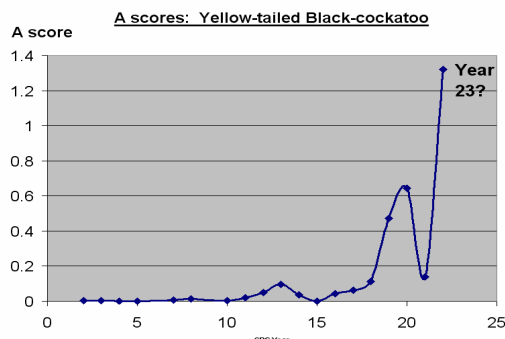
for the position of

on the Committee of Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Nominated by and

I accept the nomination (signature of person nominated)

Cockatoos as they travel around searching for food sources. Here is a graph of A values for the first 22 years of the GBS: what will this value be for year 23?



Two small procedural reminders. If people see officially unusual birds could they please put in a report to the Rarities Panel? If such records are not endorsed they shouldn't really be put in the database. Also, if people are away for the week could they remember to cross out the week numbers at the top of the chart? This is important for calculating the summary statistics.

Martin Butterfield

Next newsletter

OCTOBER deadline
Wednesday 29 September 2004

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to
Editors Gang-gang
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
 or send c/- The Secretary
COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

COG info

President

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

Vice President

Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303

Treasurer

Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975

Secretary

Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520

Membership inquiries

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

Address for correspondence

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

Gang-gang editor

Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)
and Sue Lashko

Newsletter distribution

Lia Battisson and helpers

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG membership

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

Office (6247 4996)

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

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Office volunteers are not in attendance for regular opening hours. Members access by prior arrangement.

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email announcement and discussion list for members and friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.

Join the list by sending an empty email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au.

Editor Canberra Bird Notes

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
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