



Gang-gang

September 2005

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Monthly Meeting

8 pm Wednesday

14 September 2005

Canberra Girls Grammar School cnr Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin. The meetings are held in the Multi-media Theatre at the School. Enter off Gawler Crescent using the school road signposted as Gabriel Drive. If that carpark is full, enter using Chapel Drive.

Our **short talk** will be given by ANU PhD candidate, Rachel Sims, who is studying the impacts of the cooperative breeding, colonial nesting and migration on the reproduction and social lives of **Dusky Woodswallows** in Namadgi National Park. Her talk is entitled "Everybody needs good neighbours: sociality in Dusky Woodswallows".

Our **main speaker** is Dr Stuart Rae, on "Birds and windfarms".

Stuart is an environmental consultant and visiting fellow at the ANU. He is based in Canberra and although only recently (2001) resident in Australia, he has travelled here most years since 1983.

Everyone welcome

Join COG or Renew your COG membership now!
See membership form in this *Gang-gang*.

What to watch out for this month

Spring is in the air and lots of bird movement can be expected in September. The early migrants should be here soon, if they haven't arrived already. Look out for the return of the **Grey Fantail**, few of which seem to have overwintered this year as opposed to the **Dusky Woodswallow**, which has been regularly reported in some very large flocks. Also look out for the **Noisy Friarbird**, the **Olive Backed-Oriole**, the four species of **Cuckoo**, the **Clamorous Reed Warbler** on the lakes and returning **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** (again few seem to have overwintered). Other such as the **Golden Whistler** and the **White-eared Honeyeater** will be moving to higher areas, as the **Flame Robin**, again very conspicuous this winter seem to have done already, at least from the Chapman area. Watch out also for early breeding - **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Australian Magpie**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Pied Currawong** are among the known early nesters. Most importantly make sure that valuable records are not lost but are entered into the COG database.

Jack Holland

Field Trip and Survey Reports

Waterbirds for Beginners - Sunday 7 August—Lake Ginninderra Peninsula

Ten people joined me for a beginners outing at Lake Ginninderra peninsula. The group included a ten year-old girl and her mum, both new to birding. The weather was clear and sunny but the breeze coming off the water was a bit fresh! We began with some birding basics, including learning how to use binoculars to spot birds quickly, keeping the sun behind you, etc.

Starting off with waterbirds was good for the beginners, as some of the common waterbirds at the peninsula are large, obvious and fairly tame, affording close long views. We were able to get great views of **Purple Swamphen**, **Dusky Moorhen**, **Eurasian Coot**, and **Australian Wood Duck**. Close views of several male **Darter** sitting drying their wings were a treat. Each of the beginners was able to identify the diagnostic features of these species. Our find of the day was a **Black Swan** on a nest, located in the reeds beside the jetty at the southern tip of the peninsula.

On the walk around the peninsula we observed a few of the common bush birds including **Red Wattlebird**, **Crimson Rosella**, **White-plumed Honeyeater** and **Superb Fairy-wren**. We were able to pick the difference between male and female **Magpie-lark** and **Australian Magpie**. We had great views of several **Red-rumped Parrots** squabbling near a nesting



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October 2005

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Part 1 Tropical Cairns 1st-6th \$ 2250
Leader Klaus Uhlenhut
Start & End Cairns

Part 2 Lamington to Sydney \$ 3950
Leader Alan Morris
Start Lamington End Sydney

December 2005

Christmas Island \$ 2850
Leader Dion Hobcroft
Start & End Perth

January 2006

Alpine Birds, Plants & Everything \$ 1485
Leader Dion Hobcroft

February 2006

Divine Lord Howe Island
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hollow. On the way back to the cars across the top of the peninsula we had brief views of a **Richard's Pipit**.

Anthony Overs

COG Field Trip Leaders Workshop, Sunday 21 August 2005

A small but select group of current COG field trip leaders and prospective leaders joined Anthony Overs and me in this "workshop" held in the Crosbie Morrison Centre at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. This consisted of about 90 minutes worth of presentations/interactive discussions on the current field trips program (see elsewhere in this issue of Gang-gang), on the principles for leading COG bird walks, and COG's draft Guidelines for the Advertising and Conduct of COG Field trips (also see elsewhere in this issue). This was followed by an outdoor activity to put some of these into effect. As the presentations/discussions took longer than expected there wasn't much time for this, but participants did manage to find the **Satin Bowerbird** bower, the male **Crescent Honeyeater** calling loudly, and a recently fledged **New Holland Honeyeater** being fed by its parents.

Winter Birding with Bob Rusk

After being idle for so long, in regard to my birdo activities, I was really looking forward to the walk organised for the following Sunday. My memory of previous winter outings in and around Canberra had dimmed to lovely healthy crisp sunny morning adventures. So when the morning of adventure did arrive, it brought along its winter companion, you've guessed of course, it was raining. Not showering mind you but, as they say in the weather fraternity, "Good solid rain!". Sleepily peering out the window to confirm this and you start thinking "Is this a good idea?".

As the sleepiness dissipates, the feeling of not wanting to go begins to descend heavily on you. Thinking of at least 100 reasons why you shouldn't go, but still you wearily begin to get ready anyway. Engaging your brain into neutral you prepare your departure by numbers, e.g. # 1 - put kettle on, # 2 - wash face type of thing, and all the while thinking "will I or wont I go?". Soon reaching the count of # 14 - bins, # 15 - sandwiches, # 16 - wet weather gear, # 17 - look around, # 18 - forgotten anything ? # 19 - don't think so! # 20 - O.K. lights out, # 21 - lock the door.

In dreadful mornings like this, to cheer yourself up a bit, I find that slamming the door shut as loudly as possible ensures that all the cosy little souls in your house, and the surrounding neighbourhood, who were lying snuggled in their beds seconds ago are now sitting bolt upright and wide awake in shock. This gives a wonderful boost to your sense of well being, leaving you with an inner warmth that has to be felt to be believed. If need be you can always apologise on your return saying "Did I wake you? sorry, the wind caught it!". It's advisable to have not even a hint of a smirk while saying this, which I may add can be extremely difficult as it brings the delightful morning memory simply flooding back.

An annoying thing I find regarding these outings is that when

people give directions to a site that they themselves have frequented often, their estimation of time, distance and difficulty to get there is halved by each visit they have been there. The end result being that a 2-3 hr long safari is soon reduced by their reckoning to a 5 minute stroll in the park, which in reality entails a 2 hr drive along the highway followed by bumping, splashing and sliding for 30 mins on one of these "Only 2 mins down this delightful little farm road on the left that you can't miss" but still manage to do twice!.

I'm still thinking "Will I, Wont I, while perilously negotiating this so called "delightful", heavily mined path with 600mm deep pot holes all the way, when I come across our intrepid twitcher group, their cars cosily nestling under some trees, steaming exhausts issuing from behind their individual private saunas. Now, each cars occupant has been dreading this moment, when the last car arrives, as it is then that they will have to enter the real world and decide to "go or not to go?". They too have had the dreaded "will I?, wont I?" since leaving home and now the moment of truth is finally upon them. On my arrival, each cars occupant opens their door a fraction of an inch and no further in reluctant readiness, thus carefully ensuring that no rain gets in or heat gets out. On such a day as this none of the group will ever be accused of contributing to the global warming by even one micro degree. The stalemate lasts for only a couple of minutes before our intrepid team leader grits his teeth and thrusts open his door to the elements and strides out. All the sauna doors open and close now in unison. The group quickly gather to decide on the plan of action. "What do you reckon?" our leader asks. The silence is deafening, and for a split second it seems all will be well. "Oh JOY" back safe and sound in bed soon. Then someone with more bravado than sense,(there's always one) mutters "Well were here now, so we might as well go". No-one ever rude words back at them, no-one knocks them clean out, no-one protests, no ifs or buts even. They all just turn zombie like toward the warm beckoning cars in a severely traumatised state to prepare for the ordeal.

Dressed now in their expensive state of the art, triple stitched (with welded seams) wet weather gear, everyone sets off. It should be noted that this rain gear has been subjected to the most stringent quality assurance tests known to man. But lo and behold within 2 minutes of walking in the rain you begin to sense the first cold damp spot on the back of your neck. This "sensed" damp spot soon becomes an uncomfortable trickle that runs down the groove of your spinal column before damming up briefly (but long enough to spread cold comfort along the belt line). It soon breaches this dam and now floods in a torrent down the much larger groove where the spinal column terminates. The question now arises to which boot the frigid water will fill first? If you are a male this ultimately depends on two things, one being to which side you dress, and the other, the temperature of the water. It should be stressed here that the colder the water, to which side you dress rapidly becomes less of an issue and soon ceases to be a factor in the equation all together. The frigid water soon gathers speed down any leg it now chooses, first bleaching the feet, before pickling and then snap freezing them, producing toes which resemble albino prunes. These are revealed in all their glory at the sodden sock removal ritual on arrival back at the car.

On these treks I've also noticed that for some reason everyone seems to cope with the terrain so much easier than I do. Octarians, Sectarians,



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23—30 April 06
Central Australia birding tour
Alice Springs, Uluru, Glen Helen
Accommodated

15—30 May 06
Top End
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau, Lake Argyle Accom.

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New Caledonia birding tour

15 August – 2 September 06
Strzelecki Track Outback Tour
Accommodated
check website for availability

7– 24 April 2007 Thailand

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people with one leg, people with no legs even, seem to glide up these slopes while I soon find myself in a distressed condition, gasping for breath and suffering severe cramps within 10 mins or so of starting off.

If you, like me, find yourself in a similar situation and not wanting to lose "face" by holding the group up, here's a little tip that always works. When on a walk, all of the trekkers will be looking down at the treacherous pathway and selecting a spot where they will put their next tentative step. So, when you find yourself struggling at the back of the column (which I invariably do), you should shout out loud "Look!" pointing straight ahead to the front of the column. This has the effect of stopping everyone dead in their tracks with the person immediately ahead of you turning around to see where you are pointing. Of course when he turns back to look in that direction, his vision is obscured by the people in front. This has a type of domino effect with the vision being obscured in both directions. When the leader of the group, who should have had the best view, finally receives all of the necessary information it is, alas, too late. The "bird" has flown.

"What was it ?". "Not sure, I just caught a glimpse!, but it can't have gone far!", then mumbling under your breath but loud enough so everyone can hear "I only hope its what I think it was !" Everyone's now on full alert and tippee toeing forward slowly with great expectations for the next 10 mins. This break in the safari gives you that much needed respite. A word of warning though, this shouldn't be used again this trek, unless by some huge wonderful fluke, something is indeed flushed out while the tippee toe process is in progress. AND! ! should this flushed bird be miraculously something of note, you will receive great Kudos and be bathed in envious looks by your fellow birdos with snippets of "eagle or hawk eye" being banded around quite freely within earshot.

And then of course there's the next monthly meeting to look forward to. This is as close to "Sainthood" as you can get without actually dying. This is your 15 mins of fame, you're right up there, you've become a twitcher sex symbol. This is what makes all the torture of these freezing, rain drenching winter outing ordeals worthwhile. The look of grudging reverential awe from the "250" club members while you relate how you spotted the (by now renowned) "miracle" bird. You should also put the "one up-manship knife" in a bit by stating how you think you almost nearly spotted another bird that hasn't been seen for yonks and was thought to be extinct in the area prior to your almost sighting it. But being a birdo above reproach, you refuse to even consider a lifetime tick or indeed filling in a rarities form until it's seen and verified by your peers.

It would benefit you immensely if you could give a bit of a sigh here while giving a long pensive opportunity lost type of look "And" if you could possibly squeeze a tear out, oh! I swear any doubts held about you will have vanished. You will then probably be blessed and given life time membership with your portrait hung up in pride of place. It's now a guarantee that next years return trip to that area will have become a pilgrimage and fully booked every year come hail, rain or shine. Which reminds me, I'd better book in early because you never know, maybe I did nearly see a miracle or something.

Bob Rusk P.S. I suggest you book in early too, because, like I said " you never know"!

Future Field Trips

Cuumbeun Nature Reserve; Sunday 18 September 2005– morning outing

David and Kathy Cook will be leading the first COG walk to this newly declared nature reserve S of the Kings Highway and straddling the Captains Flat Road E of Queanbeyan. The reserve was declared in January 2001 to protect rare tablelands forest particularly yellow box woodland. It's a reserve of some 968 ha consisting of many large trees, good understorey in places, and plenty of hollows. In late summer visits there were quite a few birds present, including **Brown and White-throated Treecreepers, Speckled Warbler, Spotted Quail-thrush, Striated and Spotted Pardalotes, Striated Thornbills, Grey Fantails, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike** and juvenile **Southern Boobooks**. In the early spring you might expect to see a number of migrants as well.

Kathy and David have recently again visited the reserve and the highlight was a surprising number of **Brown Treecreepers**, with lots of fallen timber making it ideal habitat. They are planning to do a circuit through part of the reserve for about 5 km, which should take a fairly leisurely 2.5 hours, with lots of stopping. There are no tracks for the first half, and the going could be a bit tough, with lots of debris and a couple of gully crossings. The second part follows a rough road, but is quite steep as it rises to the highest point. Then they will either keep following the road back to the start, or may go bush. If time permits, there is another part of the park on the Queanbeyan side of Captain's Flat Rd, which they haven't been to yet but it looks promising.

The best place to park is at one of the entrances off the Captain's Flat Rd, where there is plenty of space on either side of

the road, and not nearly as cramped/dangerous as the entrance from Kings Highway. The instructions for getting there are as follows:

Take the Kings Highway exit from Queanbeyan. Turn right into Captain's Flat Rd (which is approx. 1.3 km past The Kingsway, just out of Queanbeyan up the hill on the right). Travel approx. 2.4 km along Captain's Flat Rd and look for the parking area and entrance to the reserve on the left (it's just past the Wanna Wanna Rd intersection, which goes off to the right, and almost opposite a bus shelter on the right, where there is also parking space).

Meet Kathy and David (Ph 6236 9153) there at 8:30 am. Note this is a moderately difficult walk, and you are advised to contact the leaders if you have any concerns about your ability to participate.

Long Weekend camp-out - Leeton Area (Riverina); Saturday to Monday 1-3 October 2005

This will be a repeat of the very successful outing at the end of September 2000. Once again David McDonald is organising and leading it, and COG will again camp beside the Murrumbidgee River, in a River Red Gum forest, in the Whitton Punt Reserve. Last time there were **Superb Parrots** exhibiting breeding behaviour at the camp site, and besides exploring a variety of State Forests etc, where other bush birds typical of a more inland situation should be seen, some local wetlands will be visited, most notably the excellent Fivebough Swamp.

This is a 'bring everything' camp. Some participants may prefer to arrive on Friday 30 September. Bring your own drinking and washing water. We will arrange for toilet facilities, and erect COG's gazebo for get-togethers. During the course of the weekend we will pass through nearby towns where water and other supplies may be replenished, and it is expected hot showers may be had for a small charge.

To register your interest in participating in this camp please contact David McDonald (6231 8904), who can also provide you with further information.

Bibaringa Spring; Sunday 16 October 2005, morning walk

'Bibaringa' is a private property located on the Cotter Road owned by the Guth family and is utilised primarily for horse agistment. Mindful of the fine balance required to sustain both horses and local endemic wildlife, the custodians have taken measures such as leaving fallen wood (much after 2003 fires), selective paddock fencing and sub-saturation agistment to encourage what natural flora and fauna remain to flourish. As a result, bird enthusiasts at this time of year would expect to find the following on, or over Bibaringa: **Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail and White-winged Triller**. The possibility of any combination of 'local' **Woodswallow, Southern Whiteface and Peaceful or Diamond Dove** also exist.

Bibaringa is peppered with stately Yellow Box (*E. Melliodora*) and has strong populations of aging Red Stringybark (*E. Macroryncha*), some of which sport nesting holes, more so now after limb shear from the 2003 fire. **White-browed Woodswallows** have been observed nesting in pockets left by fallen limbs the past two springs though on both occasions it was early November, so here's hoping.

If interested, meet walk leader, Stuart Harris at the entrance to Bibaringa (see above) at 8 am. Stuart has been walking on, and observing the birds of Bibaringa for over 5 years now, with the kind permission of the Guth family. 105 species have been recorded in this relatively small area over this time. Please bring a drink bottle and sturdy footwear as the walk will be undulating and over sometimes rocky, or even moist ground (much topsoil was lost post January 2003 and Bibaringa's meaning is 'place of springs'). Depending on group consensus, our party may take in some of the elevated views around Bibaringa, which afford sweeping vistas of the Murrumbidgee Corridor. Consensus will again determine the walk duration though it is not envisaged to go beyond 12 noon.

For those unsure of its location, Bibaringa is only ten minutes from Cooleman Court shopping Centre in Weston and 1 km on the right past the Mt Stromlo turnoff, heading west, and well short of the Cotter itself. Stuart can be contacted at home on 6232 4998, mobile 0437 394 882 or on sharris@cpe.com.au

Jerrabomberra Grassland Reserve, Sunday 23 October 2005; morning birds and grasslands walk

This will be a joint outing with the Friends of Grasslands (FOG) to this recently declared reserve where the focus will be on grassland fauna and flora. It will be an opportunity to learn about native grasses and other flora, as well as improve your ability to identify **Skylarks** and **Richard's Pipits**, and with luck the **Singing Bushlark**, which seems to have become increasingly rare in the ACT and for which the habitat could be suitable. We have also invited an ACT ranger to attend to give the government's perspective about the importance of preserving native grassland, and some history of the reserve. Hopefully this will also include information about the earless dragon and the striped legless lizard, both of which might be seen. At the SW corner of the reserve there is a patch of very good grassy woodland with

Brown Treecreepers, Restless Flycatchers etc, which we plan to visit towards the end of the morning.

Meet at the Canberra Model Aeroplane Club facility (also know as the Aero Club) at 7:30 am. This is the only (low) structure on the western side of the Monaro Highway about halfway between the Hindmarsh Drive flyover and Lanyon Drive. Since this is double carriageway it is best approached from the South, if you are coming from the north the best option is to go down to Lanyon Drive and do a U-turn through the lights. Please note this can be a very busy road (hopefully not at the meeting time) and extreme care should be taken when parking. Note also that there may be some fences to negotiate, this will become clearer when a recce is undertaken this month. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Wednesday walk – 21 September 2005 Australian National Botanic Gardens

The mid week walk for September will be to this popular spot to view the local specials, early nesting behaviour and returning spring migrants. Meet at the bus stop in the car park at 9:00 am. Bring morning tea.

Longer trips

Green Cape – Tuesday to Friday 25-28 October; Mid-week accommodated

This mid week trip is a reprise of the very successful COG trip in June 2004. COG has again booked the two duplex cottages associated with the lighthouse at Green Cape, and Peter Fullagar will again be leading. At the end of October he expects to see a mix of sea birds (including shearwaters) as well as whales close to shore (depending on the weather). In the nearby heath there are some specials such as the Ground Parrot and the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, and there is likely to be a range of birds in the woodlands, also close by. Highlights from COG's 2004 visit included three species of **albatross, Brown Skua, Black-faced Cormorant, Striated Fieldwren, Southern Emu-wrens**, not to mention the very tame **Ground Parrot**.

The two cottages have been booked for 3 nights. The cottages each hold a maximum of 6 people, consisting of separate rooms, the master bedroom with a queen size bed, one with two single beds and a double sofa bed in the family/lounge room. There will also be the opportunity to camp at Bittangabee Bay, only 8 km away.

The accommodation costs will be \$100 per person for the 3 nights, including the COG admin fee. As expected the cottage accommodation has proven to be very popular. However, due to some changes there is now a spot available on one of the comfortable double sofa beds. This could suit a couple or could be shared with one of the options being the use of a blow up mattress or camp bed on the floor as there is plenty of room. To book your place, or to put your name on the waiting list in case of cancellation, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). A deposit of \$30 will ensure your spot in one of the remaining spots in the cottages.

2006 COG Field Trips Program

The 2006 COG Field Trips Program will be drafted over the coming month or so, and a draft is expected to be published for members' comments in the October 2005 edition of *Gang-gang*.

The COG Field Trips Program was also discussed at the COG Field Trips Leaders Workshop on 21 August. For the past two years the basic program has been built around at least 2 outings per month, a shorter local one (early) and one further a field later in the month. It has also included campouts etc on all the long weekends (except Christmas, New Year and Australia Day), with more frequent outings in spring (close to weekly). Winter has been the quietest period, and there has been some flexibility, with ad hoc trips added as the opportunity arises. There have been no/few longer commercial trips.

The general philosophy has been to try to find interesting new places with leaders who know the spot. We have tried to avoid picking an outing/spot and then finding a leader, and not going to places just because we haven't been there for a while, particularly not going there out of season. We have tried to spread it around, with not too many repeats (spots and leaders).

There has been a mix of outings, trying to ensure there are several things on the program to attract every member. These range from beginners walks, outings to find specific birds, sea/shore birds trips, some bus trips, campouts and staying in full accommodation.

We're looking for some feedback from the general COG membership. What are the membership's views? We'd like to know if the balance is right? Do we want more frequent outings? Do we want different opportunities?

Also if you have any places you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit, past outings

that you think ought to be repeated, or any type of outing that you think would be suitable please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Most of all offers to lead outings in 2006 will be gratefully accepted. This year's program has again run 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 and keep making a success of this very important part of COG's program!

COG's draft Guidelines for the Advertising and Conduct of COG Field Trips

As noted elsewhere in this *Gang-gang*, these were presented for the first time to the participants in the COG Field trips Leaders workshop on 21 August. Some useful comments were made which are being incorporated, but it was agreed the draft would benefit from comments from the wider COG membership before they are officially adopted and implemented in the 2006 COG Field Trips program. To enable members to comment, the amended draft is being put on the COG web site. Copies will also be made available at COG meetings etc, for interested members who do not have access to computers. Your participation and comments on these important draft guidelines are sought. Please provide these to Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

Notices

The next **Cowra Woodland survey** will be held over the weekend of 17-18 September 2005. If you are interested in participating please contact Malcolm Fyfe on 6253 0772 or mfyfe@tpg.com.au.

Mulligan's Flat Survey - Sunday 25 Sept 2005. Regular volunteers please note your diaries that the spring bird survey will be on Sunday 25 September, meeting at 7.15am sharp at the gate to the reserve off Gundaroo Rd. I will email a reminder to those on my email list around 2 weeks before the survey. Please let me know asap by phone message or reply to my email if you are available. As I am away most of the week prior to the survey, advice of who is available by 18 Sept will assist greatly. Wear sturdy shoes and bring clipboard, pencil and eraser etc, plus bring mug for the usual morning tea and tim tams. New volunteers can participate in these surveys, but you need to have a good knowledge of our local birds, viz be able to identify most by sight and be starting to learn calls - contact me to discuss before 18 Sept. Jenny Bounds ph 6288 7802.

Overdue subscriptions Memberships now due. Many thanks to all those many members who have showed their ongoing interest in and support for COG by renewing their subscriptions for 2005-6. This edition of *Gang-gang* is the last one for those members who have not renewed. Unless COG receives your subscription for 2005-6 by 15 September 2005 we will have to leave you off future mail outs until you pay. If you intend to renew please do so straight away to avoid missing out on our great newsletters and CBNs. Contact me on 62627975 or joanlipscombe@bigpond.com if you are unsure whether you have paid or not. Membership renewal form on Page 11 of this *Gang-gang*.

Also why not take this chance to make a tax deductible donation to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund?

Joan Lipscombe Hon Treasurer

Back copies of CBN Joan and Trevor Lipscombe wish to dispose of a virtually complete set of CBNs and indices from Vol 7 (4) 1982 to Vol 30 (2). Excellent condition. Free to the first taker. Phone 02 6262 7975 or email joanlipscombe@bigpond.com.

Newsletter Co-ordinator Role. The Newsletter Distribution Co-ordinator role is expected to become vacant at the Annual General Meeting. The commitment required is as follows: Once a month coordinate the efforts of a very willing team to send out approx 250 *Gang Gangs*. Four times a year, instead of the above, send out approx 350 Canberra Bird Notes with *Gang Gangs* placed inside them. The current co-ordinator can assist for the first three months. Contact Jack Holland if you would like to assist your club in this way for a couple of years."

Birds in Your Backyard; A **bird identification training day** to be held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Thursday 8 September 2005, 8am -9.30am, RSVP Essential (by Monday 5th September), Ph: 02 6253 3035

E-mail: admin@act.greeningaustralia.org.au.

The 2005 **Annual Birds Australia Congress and Campout** will take place in Bendigo from Friday evening September 30th, as well as Saturday and Sunday 1st and 2nd October. The Campout is from Monday till Friday 3rd till 7th October and will be based in Epsom, a suburb of Bendigo. The Congress title is "Challenges for Bird Conservation in the 21st Century: Birds in a Changing Environment" and we are very pleased to have Prof Richard Kingsford, Uni NSW and wetlands and waterbird specialist as our Keynote speaker. Broad details including the registration form are currently on the website <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/congress>. Phone/Fax 03 9482 2112.

Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8 pm on Wednesday 12 October 2005 in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls' Grammar School, cnr Gawler Crescent and Melbourne Avenue.

Agenda 1. Opening of Meeting. 2. Apologies 3. Confirmation of Minutes of 2004 AGM
4. President's Report 5. Adoption of President's Report 6. Presentation of Annual Statement of Accounts
7. Adoption of Annual Statement of Accounts (in this *Gang-gang*). 8. Appointment of Auditor for 2005-6
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) and ordinary committee members.
(Nomination form on Page 12 of this *Gang-gang*) 10. Other matters for which notice has been given. Close

NSW and ACT Twitchathon 2005. October 29-30. Proceeds to go to the Environmental Education Programme for the Birds Australia Gluepot Reserve in the Murray Mallee. This year Gluepot Reserve near Waikerie in South Australia will be the recipient of our fund raising conservation efforts, specifically, to provide facilities and equipment for the new Environment Educational Programme. Gluepot Reserve is Australia's largest community owned and managed conservation reserve. Situated 64 km from the River Murray in South Australia's Riverland, the Reserve is managed and operated entirely by volunteers. Some 54,390 ha in size, it is home to 18 nationally threatened species of birds, 53 species of reptiles and 12 species of bats. There are few areas in the world which support such a concentration of threatened species.

Many people from NSW have been to Gluepot Reserve to see its rarities such as Black-eared Miners, Striated Grass-wrens, White-browed Treecreepers & Red-lored Whistlers, while some have been there as part of the Volunteer Ranger Program. This Twitchathon Project will provide vital facilities for the fourth crucial "element" in the Reserve's long-term Plan of Management – the provision of Environmental Education.

For more information or to join the Twitchathon 2005, **Contact Alan Morris for your 2005 Twitchathon Kit TODAY.**

There are prizes for the most species seen by three winning teams as well as prizes for the most money raised, the rarest bird seen by an individual, and prizes for children. Contact Alan for a full list. Don't think that you have to be an A class birdwatcher to take part. Whichever method you chose for your Twitchathon – the laid back (ie the Champagne Race), the deadly serious, or the donor only version, remember it is all about educating others into the importance of nature conservation, particularly the conservation of Australian birds.

Alan Morris, Twitchathon Co-ordinator (For Birds Australia, Southern NSW & ACT) c/- 3 Murray St Bateau Bay NSW 2261. Telephone: 02 43 342776. Fax: 02 9436 0466. Email amorris@ceinternet.com.au.

Report of August COG meeting *Sue Lashko*

A large number of COG members ventured out as light snow fell in parts of Canberra, to hear two excellent speakers. Michael Lenz's short talk focussed on the breeding behaviour of Jacky Winters at Campbell Park. This nondescript little bird is widespread in Australia, but is found mainly in east and southeast Australia. In the ACT, it is common at Mulligan's Flat, Castle Hill, Newline and Campbell Park, but numbers are declining. It generally inhabits relatively undisturbed woodland with a shrub or regrowth understorey and patches of bare soil. It breeds between September and January in Canberra, and builds a shallow nest, often in the open. Both the immature and the adult have drab uniform plumage. Young juveniles have a white line of spots on the primary wing coverts, and a spotted head, back and breast, but after moult they lose their spots except for those on the primary wing coverts.

Michael has closely followed the breeding success of Jacky Winters at Campbell Park since 1986, when there were three breeding pairs. In 1989 there was just one pair, and for the next 13 years no breeding was recorded. Then, in 2003, one pair bred successfully twice. What was particularly interesting was that an immature bird from the first brood was seen feeding one of two birds from the second brood, while the adult male fed the other juvenile. This may happen when the female is lost or deserts the young. The immature bird also chases away potential predators. Michael observed juveniles being fed for up to 25 days, compared to the 20 days recorded in HANZAB.

Our second speaker was the equally popular Esteban Fuentes who gave a most entertaining address entitled 'The Raptor Community of Canberra and the Development of the Molonglo Valley.' Twelve species were confirmed as breeding successfully in the ACT in the 2002 and 2003 breeding seasons:

Common Sparrowhawk, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Australian Hobby, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Whistling Kite, Little Eagle, Southern Boobook.

All except the White-bellied Sea-Eagle nested within the city limits. A surprising non-breeder in 2002 was the Black-shouldered Kite. This may have been due to low rodent numbers that year. Breeding success for the other species

varied from about 50% for Nankeen Kestrels to 80% for Little Eagles and 91% for the Southern Boobook, under extremely dry conditions in both seasons.

Esteban described and illustrated how he studies the food habits of raptors in the ACT: first, find the nest and the roost where the bird cleans its prey; prey remains and pellets are then collected from inside the nests and on the ground for analysis. The species can be divided into feeding guilds – groups of raptors that are eating the same prey. Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle and Whistling Kite primarily eat mammals and large birds. Brown Goshawk and Brown Falcon favour small vertebrates and insects, with the latter including water and garden snails in its diet. Nankeen Kestrel and Southern Boobook feed mainly on insects, especially beetles. The most specialised species are the Peregrine Falcon, with 99% of their prey being birds, and the Black-shouldered Kite which mainly eats house mice and other rodents. The Australian Hobby lives on the BBBs: birds, beetles and bats, while the Common Sparrowhawk is equally fond of beetles and small birds. White-bellied Sea-Eagle take water-based prey, primarily fish and water birds. Other studies, mainly in arid areas of Australia, have found that rabbits make up 50% of the prey in six of these raptor species. In the ACT, the availability of a variety of prey is an important factor in breeding success.

Esteban commented on the possible impact of future residential development in the Molonglo Valley, which at present has the best raptor habitat in the ACT. All species except the sea-eagle breed there. Raptors can be considered as an umbrella species – their presence and breeding indicate the existence of a broader community comprising other birds, kangaroos, wallaroos, rodents and insects. Many raptors show strong fidelity to nesting sites in the region, with records of Peregrine Falcons using the same nest on the same cliff since the 1960s. Wedge-tailed Eagles invest a lot of time building a large nest and thus also show strong site fidelity. If the proposed Molonglo Valley development goes ahead as planned, Esteban predicted that Australian Hobby and Collared Sparrowhawk will stay; Brown Goshawk, White-bellied Sea-eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle will be gone as they need large areas to forage; Black-shouldered Kite will go because they need grassland, as will Brown Falcon due to the lack of a diverse diet. Little Eagle and Nankeen Kestrel will be gone, as will Peregrine Falcon if their nesting cliffs are close to houses. Boobooks will also go, as they need large areas of forest as demonstrated by the impact of the Gungahlin Drive Extension which has seen the 5 breeding pairs from the area reduced to just one. Although, it is planned to leave a 200 metre vegetation strip along the Molonglo River, the farmland and burnt pine areas will be covered in houses. This loss of habitat for raptors is also lost habitat for prey species. It is hoped that the extent of the development can be reduced, especially west of Coppins Crossing and that the river corridor can be widened.

As with Esteban's previous talk, the audience was captivated by his lively, informative and humorous presentation. Unfortunately his visa runs out in October and he will be returning to Mexico. I'm sure everyone joins me in thanking him for his two wonderful presentations and we hope to see him back in Canberra in the future.

From the Committee

At its meeting of 17 August the committee agreed to write a letter of support for Environment ACT's seeking of funding for the enhancement as water bird habitat of a disused quarry along Jerrabomberra Creek, and also to carry out regular survey work there. COG has also made a successful application to the 2005-2006 ACT Environment Grants and has received funding of \$13,150 to enable it to continue the Woodland Bird Survey.

Conservation Matters

COG made submissions to:

- the Planning System Reform Project, focussing on the need for improved environmental impact assessment, especially when native vegetation/habitat for birds is impacted
- the ACT Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment - Inquiry into Urban Vegetation and Wildlife Corridors, which included views on how to achieve better legislative protection for native vegetation/wildlife corridors.
- EHN which is proposing a wind farm on Molonglo Range (east of Googong Dam) acknowledged COGs letter about progress with their EIS and concerns about impacts on Wedge-tailed Eagles; we expect to do a site visit in a couple of months when siting plans and environmental assessments are more developed.

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland met with the National Capital Authority to discuss the proposal for water skiing trials (4 hours a day for six months) in East Basin on Lake Burley Griffin. COG put very strongly that the "trial" should not go ahead without a full public examination of the potential environmental impacts, as this activity would be very close to a significant bird conservation reserve and restricted area, as well as a bird breeding area in the Molonglo River.

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland met with Mark Lintermans, Senior Aquatic Ecologist from Environment ACT, to inspect a wetland site in the Jerrabomberra Valley, a potential area for rehabilitation and enhancement of bird habitat.

COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

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

COG has agreed to provide a letter to support a grant application which would develop a management plan for rehabilitating the site, and COG has agreed to undertake ongoing bird surveys quarterly.

Jenny Bounds has been invited to represent COG at the 'Sustainability and Bushfire Recovery Conference' to be hosted in late September by the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment.

COG has become concerned about the status and management of Jindalee State Forest, west of Harden in NSW, after recent visits by members found that the forest was very degraded from overgrazing and activities like trail bike riding; this has been a favourite place for COG field trips and is a valuable habitat for woodland birds. We will be following this up with the managing authorities.

COG has a new page on 'Conserving Birds', on its website, which highlights woodland species and grassy woodlands protection, and some information on COGs woodland project. We expect to develop this site over time. We appreciate being able to use Helen Fallow's wonderful bird photos on this page - thank you again Helen for your support.

Jenny Bounds and *Julie McGuinness* are COGs Conservation Officers and can be reached on email: conservation.officers@canberrabirds.org.au.

Conservation Council's Strategic Plan

The Conservation Council of the South East and Canberra (CCSERAC) has been developing its strategic plan for 2005-2008. COG has been assisting in this process through its 3 delegates. While the overall plan was agreed to at the quarterly meeting held on 24 August (and will be available on the web site (www.ecoaction.net.au), this is underpinned by 6 policy objectives, on which comment by member groups is being sought. The most relevant of

these to COG and its members is the Biodiversity Policy Objective, and this is available from COGs Conservation Officers by post to PO BOX 301, CIVIC SQUARE, or by E-mail to conservation.officers@canberrabirds.org.au. COG is re-examining our relationship with CCSERAC in the light of the recent one-off supplement of \$1000 to help them through their funding difficulties. Therefore membership input is vital. If you have any comments could you please make them in writing to our conservation officers. These can either be by post to PO BOX 301, CIVIC SQUARE, or by E-mail to conservation.officers@canberrabirds.org.au, by 7 October 2005.

AvIan Whimsy #?? Sorry folks, no room for Ian's fabulous banter this month.....but he has written some, so be sure you'll see it in next months *Gang-gang*. And to wet you're appetite, the title is 'Tickling the Ivories'.



Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc - Membership Form 2005-6
Please include this form with your payments

Individual, family, institutions FT Students 18 years old or younger

Payment methods

- at meetings (cash, cheque, PO)
- mail to COG, PO Box 301, Civic Square, 2608 (cheque, PO)
- Renewing members only: EFT your subscription and optional CBCF donation to St George Bank, BSB 112-908, Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc, account number 050111462. Ensure your surname, initial and COG ID number are included in the transfer. Please also send a membership form by email directly from the website, by post or hand it in at meetings.

Name (Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Prof)
 Address.....
 Phone numbers.....
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Type of membership (please circle one) Individual, family, institution, student

Family members included.....

Do you wish to receive full colour *Gang-gang* only through the website? Yes/No

Payment:

Subscription \$ _____
 Optional donation to the tax deductible Canberra Birds Conservation Fund \$ _____
Total \$ _____

Make the best of your membership by helping out with some of COG's many activities. Please tick if you would like to help with any of the following activities

- Atlassing/bird surveys** ()
- Leading outings** ()
- Youth education** ()
- Publications** ()
- Publicity/exhibitions** ()
- Conservation issues** ()
- Data entry** ()
- Administration** ()

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 October 2005.

We hereby nominate

for the position of

on the Committee of Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

Nominated by and



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 61618608(h)
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for changed address or other details**

Address for correspondence

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COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608**

Gang-gang editor

**Tanya Rough 0414 719 846
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

**2005-2006 membership: Individuals,
families and institutions: \$35. school
students (under 18): \$17.50.**

Office (6247 4996)

**COG no longer has an office in the
Griffin Centre.**

**For all queries or access to COG's
library phone Barbara Allan
on 6254 6520**

COG E-mail Discussion List

**COG has an email announcement
and discussion list for members and
friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.
Join the list by sending an empty
email message to [canberrabirds-
subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-
subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).**

Editor Canberra Bird Notes

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au



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