



# Gang-gang

September 2006

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

**8 pm Wednesday**

**13 September 2006**

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

Our short talk, entitled 'A family of Australian Ravens with a difference' will be given by long-term COG member **Dr Michael Lenz**.

Our main speaker will be **Dr Janet Gardner**, a post-doctoral Research Associate in the School of Botany and Zoology at the ANU. Janet's talk is entitled 'Plumage development and the timing and sequence of moult in the Speckled Warbler, *Chthonicola sagittata*.'

Between 1997 and 2000 Janet studied the breeding biology and social organisation of a local population of Speckled Warblers. As part of this study, she collected data on plumage and moult patterns.

**Everyone welcome**

## What to watch for this month

Up until the last week of August we seemed to still be very much at the end of winter, as very few spring migrants seemed to have arrived. However, there were quite a few late winter reports of the **Rose Robin**, and of **Crescent Honeyeaters**. **Scarlet Robins** also seem to have been more common this winter, judging by sightings on the NW end of Cooleman Ridge Chapman. The pair of **White-fronted Chats** at the corner of Coppins Crossing and Uriarra Roads typically seem to have stayed in the one spot for well over a month (and can be reliably found if you are patient), as have the **Brown Gerygones** in the rainforest area of the Botanic Gardens.

It has only been in the last week of August that there have been reports on the COG chat line of **Pallid Cuckoos** calling, a sprinkling of reports of the **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Olive-backed Oriole**, but only single reports of the **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Clamorous Reed Warbler**, **Rufous Whistler** and the **Grey Fantail**. Keep an eye out for these early arriving spring migrants in your local area in September, as they may not have reached there yet. I've certainly seen/heard none of them round Chapman so far, though **Red Wattlebirds**, a partial migrant, were very active round my garden last weekend. Among the most prominent early arrivals this season seem to have been **Tree and Fairy Martins**. A surprise has been several reports of the **Rufous Fantail**, which usually is not seen until October. On the other hand I'm not aware yet of any reports of the **bronze-cuckoos**.

While based on the spring migrant reports it seems to be a relatively late season, there certainly have been reports of nesting activity, including **Weebill**, **White-winged Chough**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Noisy Miner**, **Spotted Pardalote** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, not to mention that the **Australian Magpie** swooping and **Pied Currawong** nest robbing season is nearly upon us again. Certainly the local **Common Blackbird** has been singing close to our house, and a **Masked Lapwing** has been sitting on a nest in the backyard of a neighbour's house since early August, with a pair of **White-faced Herons** nest building nearby. Very soon the prime 2006 nesting season will be in full swing, with the questions as to what will be in the ACT this spring/summer and what will be breeding still to be clarified.

**Jack Holland**

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## Field Trip reports

### 19 July 2006 — Australian National Botanic Gardens

The Wednesday walk in the Australian National Botanic Gardens was enjoyed by a small group of COGites, ably led by Louise Muir. The weather was pleasant and, with Louise's guidance, we were able to explore many less frequented parts of the Gardens, including the tropical glasshouse. Birds were not too plentiful, however, and we failed to find the "special" robins, though we all enjoyed excellent views of a bold and handsome **Eastern Yellow Robin**. The Garden "regulars" all put in an appearance – **Gang-gang Cockatoos** and **Australian King-Parrots** flew past, **Crimson Rosellas** sampled the water in the water-bubblers, **Eastern Spinebills** and **Red Wattlebirds** were their usual active selves, while the **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **White-browed Scrubwrens** were numerous. The **White-winged Choughs** frequented Hudson's Cafe, and Louise was able to show us a nest they used last year. While we didn't see the **Satin Bowerbirds**, we did see the remains of a former bower. There must have been plenty of nectar around, as **White-naped Honeyeaters** were over-wintering. In all, a pleasant morning – and many thanks to Louise for her guidance.

Judy Harrison

### 6 August 2006 — Lake Ginninderra

A dozen people attended the *Waterbirds for Beginners Walk* at Lake Ginninderra. The morning started quite cool, but we were peeling off our coats later in the morning sunshine. The shores of Ginninderra Peninsula are a great spot to get close views of the common waterbirds. We had good views of **Purple Swamphen**, **Dusky Moorhen** and **Eurasian Coot**. **Masked Lapwings** were in several spots. We spied **Great, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants** either out fishing or flying by. A couple of Great Cormorants perched near to us giving us a closer look. A pair of **Wood Ducks** were actively investigating a tree hollow for a nest site. Other waterbirds included a distant **Black Swan** and a couple of **Pacific Black Ducks**. We observed a domestic duck, a coot and a swamphen standing close together, enabling great views of the differences in the feet. To my surprise we did not see a single **Darter** all morning. Bush birds observed included a male **Gang-gang Cockatoo** (a highlight for many of the beginners), **Crimson Rosella**, **Eastern Rosella**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **White-plumed Honeyeater** (in abundance), **Red Wattlebird**, **Australian Magpie**, **Magpie Lark**, **Superb Fairywren**, **Red-browed Finch**, **Crested Shrike-tit**, **Spotted Pardalote**, **Striated Pardalote** and **Nankeen Kestrel**. On the walk back across the peninsula we saw **Richards Pipit**, **Welcome Swallow**, **Tree Martin** and **Fairy Martin**.

Anthony Overs

### The call of nature and the Scarlet Robin — A COGite's field trip true story

In late May I did a walk to Gibraltar Rocks in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve with two family members. It was a beautiful warm late autumn day, with clear skies and not a breath of wind. On the way to the Rocks we saw **Scarlet** and **Flame Robins** in the lower grasslands (a unique treat for my cousin from South Africa). After a long climb we reached the hilltop just before the saddle which heads to the Rocks and I felt a minor call of nature. The area not being blessed with the usual conveniences, I stepped off the track and as I was in the process of ... well, urinating ... a male **Scarlet Robin** flew out of the nearby bush and perched on a long grass stalk not two metres away. I could almost imagine his thoughts ... "I heard a waterfall, I see water but it just doesn't look right". After about fifteen seconds he flew to another grass stalk nearby for a second look and when the waterfall stopped, flew off, I suspect somewhat disappointed, back into the bush.

A somewhat surprising but enjoyable event for me in more ways than one and beats the hell out of using whistles and squeakers to get birds to come to you.

A. Nonymous



**Scarlet Robin** (  
*Petroica multicolour*)  
Photo by David Cook

## Future Field Trips

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

### Saturday/Sunday 16-17 September — Frogs' Hole Creek, Frogmore;— overnight campout on private property

COG has been invited for a follow up visit to observe the birds on this property at Frogmore, 26 km to the NE of Boorowa, about 2 hours drive from Canberra. This is an undulating bush block of close to 150 ha, with a large number of old eucalypts of several species including Yellow Box, White Box and Apple Box and patches of very old Black Cypress Pine. A large number of plantings have gone in over recent years and quite a lot of re-growth of callitris and other native species is evident since grazing was limited. Over the past 6 years over 125 different species have been recorded here, including a number which are close to their eastern limit such as **Cockatiel, Blue-faced Honeyeater, both Babblers, Gilbert's Whistler and Apostlebird.**

A total of 75 bird species were recorded during the COG visit in late April 2005 - a very impressive total considering the time of year. Six new bird species were added to the property list. Large numbers of **Diamond Firetails** and **Hooded Robins** were seen as well as a large mixed flock which included **Scarlet Robins, Varied Sittellas** and many thornbills and Weebills and small honeyeaters. **Striped Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Superb Parrots, an Australian Owlet-nightjar** and both **Pied** and **Grey Butcherbirds** were good sightings. This follow up visit is timed when most of the spring migrants should have returned.

We will be camping overnight near the creek on a take everything in, take everything out basis. Participants should aim to arrive early afternoon on the Saturday, and it is expected we'll stay until mid Sunday afternoon. Car pooling will be encouraged, so if you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)). There has been a pretty good response to this camp-out and more detailed information will be forwarded to participants early in September.

#### Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 8 pm on Wednesday 11 October 2006 in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin — **Barbara Allan, Public Officer**

#### Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2005 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of president's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2006-07
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (nomination forms available at meetings or from the secretary)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given.
11. Close of meeting.



### Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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

[enquiries@philipmaher.com](mailto:enquiries@philipmaher.com)

#### 2006 Birding Tours

**Plains-wanderer Weekends**  
**Good Food PW Weekend**  
18 & 19 November 2006

#### Regular Plains-wanderer weekends

December 2 & 3, 9 & 10,  
16 & 17 and 30 & 31

#### 2007 Birding Tours

**Tasmanian Endemic Bird and  
Mammal Tour**  
18—24 February  
Bruny Island, Melaleuca, pelagic

**South West Western Australia**  
27 February — 7 March

#### Thailand

7—24 April  
co-led with Uthai Treesucon

**Gulf of Carpentaria**  
June 2007—Cairns return

**Strzelecki Track**  
August 2007

**Central Coast NSW  
inc nearby national parks**  
November 2007  
Barrington, Gloucester & Copeland  
Tops, Munghorn Gap and several  
others parks

**All above tours are accommodated**

[www.philipmaher.com](http://www.philipmaher.com)

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## 20 September – Wednesday walk — Campbell Park

The mid week walk for September will be to Campbell Park, for observing the early spring migrants and nesting activity. This is arguably the best patch of grassy woodland for observing these events in spring in the ACT. Meet at the far end of the Campbell Park Offices car park (by keeping to the extreme right of the road/parking spots system) at 9 am and bring morning tea.

## 30 September to 2 October — October Long weekend: Nangar National Park

**Nangar National Park** is situated off the Eugowra-Orange Road, approximately 15km east of Eugowra. Full details were published in July's Gang-gang. Because of limited camping facilities, however, the trip has been fully subscribed. Anyone wishing to put their name on a wait-list should contact Margaret McJannett on **phone** 6161 3450 or **email** [mcjannett9@hotmail.com](mailto:mcjannett9@hotmail.com).

## Saturday/Sunday 7-8 October — Bungonia — overnight campout on private property

As part of our continuing links and joint outings with the Goulburn Field Naturalists Society (GFNS), COG has been invited to observe the birdlife on a private property belonging to GFN members near the historic village of Bungonia. This is a large 300 ha property bordering Morton National Park, with a topography varying between flat, undulating and hilly. About 5 kilometres of Jacqua Creek flows through it. Half of this length was virtually totally logged and has been replanted and fenced off. The remainder of the creek is not fenced off, but does contain some former riparian vegetation and beautiful waterholes.

No formal bird surveys have previously been undertaken for the property, though the owners have kept a bird list over the more than 20 years they have lived there. At this time of year there should be a peak for a mix of spring migrants and more coastal birds not commonly found in Canberra. On Sunday we will be doing a circular walk for about 5-6 hours through the property, taking in some of the varied habitat including the best part of the creek. If time permits we may look at some other areas. On a visit in late August **Spotted Quail Thrush, Southern Whiteface** and several **Jacky Winter** were seen.

COG will have access to the Old Bungonia School where there is plenty of room to pitch tents, an external shower and toilet block, a large BBQ, or if wet, cooking facilities inside. There is also a wood fire inside if it is cold.

Participants should arrive in Bungonia mid afternoon of the Saturday when, after setting up, we will do some local birding in the adjacent Bungonia Village Park, alongside Bungonia Creek, and the nearby TSR, and stay until mid Sunday afternoon. Car pooling will be encouraged, so if you're interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)).

## Sunday 15 October — Castle Hill — morning local outing

The land holders of 'Booroomba' Station near Tharwa have kindly agreed to a limited number of COG members undertaking a morning field trip to their block below Castle Hill. This wonderful area of grassy box woodland was not burned in 2003 and has been part of COG's woodland survey since the survey's inception.

Meet at Tharwa in the car park adjacent to the bridge at 8.30 am for car pooling so that we can minimise the number of vehicles we take onto the property.

As this is a private leasehold, numbers will be strictly limited, and participation will only be available to those who have registered. For further information, or to register to participate, please contact the trip's leader, David McDonald, on phone 6231 8904.

## Monday 16 to Friday 20 October — Mid Week Accommodated Field Trip: Oolambeyan National Park

Only two vacancies left for this visit to this new national park on the edge of the Hay plain (SW of Griffith), which was purchased to preserve **Plains-wanderer** habitat. Tom Green, Sue Lashko and I did a rekky there in late April - amongst

### Letters to the Editor

Members are invited to take up the impassioned challenge issued by Ian Fraser in this month's AvIAN Whimsy and forward their views on the issues raised by Ian, or indeed on any issues of general interest to COG members.

Because of space restrictions, letters should be limited to between 150 to 200 words and should observe the usual courtesies.

E-mail contributions preferred but snail mail will also be transcribed for inclusion in what we hope will become a regular feature.

The Editors



## PROPERTY FOR SALE

### Glenrowan North East Victoria

- 290 acres of box - ironbark country in the very heart of Kelly Country
- 255 acres under conservation covenant, balance includes cleared 25 acre paddock
- Extraordinary diversity of woodland birds including Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Hooded and Red-capped Robins, Speckled Warbler, Painted Button-quail, Painted Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail.
- Brilliant 80m<sup>2</sup> solar passive dwelling
- Planning permit for eco-tourism business
- 20 mins Benalla, Wangaratta, King Valley
- 5 minutes off the Hume Freeway  
95km south of Albury, 215km north of Melbourne

**\$347,950**

**contact Garry Nash First National,**  
23 Baker St, Wangaratta. Ph 03 5722 2663

the birds we saw there last time: **Painted Honeyeater, Pied Honeyeater, Banded Lapwing, White-winged Fairy-wren, Singing Honeyeater, Black-faced Woodswallow.** There is a variety of habitats in this 20,000 ha park, sand dune callitris pine and rosewood community, shrubland and grassland, and spring should be a very good time for birds. Accommodation is in the homestead which has several good sized bedrooms with bunk-style beds, plus cooking and bathroom facilities - set in a very nice garden with verandahs. There is a size limit on the group and, depending on the number of people who go, rooms will be shared between 3-5 people. There will also be conditions on vehicle access in parts of the park, so we will do a lot of activities on foot. You will need to provide your own bedding, food etc - we will organise some communal meals and there is a new gas barbecue area which we can use. Access to the park is good, on unsealed roads suitable for 2 wheel drive. As part of the deal with the Parks Service we will be providing bird lists, which will contribute to the management plan being developed for the park. It is a very good opportunity to stay in this new park, which may not come around again. For enquiries or to register, phone **Jenny Bounds**, 6288 7802 or email Jenny: [jbbounds@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jbbounds@optusnet.com.au).

**Sunday 22 October — Googong Dam — extended morning outing**

The Googong Dam is another former regular spot for COG outings that has not been visited for some years. Googong has a bird species list of about 150 which includes both water and woodland birds. Recent sightings by COG members have included **Hooded Robins, Speckled Warbler and Pied Cormorant.**

Ian Anderson (Ph: 6281 0609) will lead this outing. It is planned to check the birds around the Googong Dam. Those who wish can then continue on to the Tin Hut Dam area at the southern end of the Googong Catchment. They could then drive through the Burra Valley to the Monaro Highway at Williamsdale.

Meet at the Googong Visitors' Centre Carpark at 8 am. The Visitors' Centre is reached by taking a signposted left hand turn off the Old Queanbeyan to Cooma Road, about 6 km from Queanbeyan. The road continues on to reach the Monaro Highway at Guises Creek.

Googong Dam area has good picnic facilities. Bring morning tea/lunch if you wish.  
**Sunday 5 November — Jerrabomberra Grassland Reserve — morning woodland and grasslands birds walk**

This will be COG's second attempt to reach the SW corner of this reserve where there is a patch of very good grassy woodland with **Brown Treecreepers, Southern Whiteface, Dusky Woodswallows** etc. Last year at this time the attempt to trek there about 2 km from the Canberra Model Aircraft Club facility was scuttled when at the last minute we had to access it from the Callum Brae Reserve gate, which proved too far to do it in a morning. Now a new entrance from the SE corner of the reserve has been prepared, which involves about a 900 metre walk up a gentle hill to reach this woodland. On the way to the woodland, which few people, including COG members, have ever been to, there will be an opportunity to improve your ability to identify grassland species such as **Skylarks and Richard's Pipits.**

Meet at the entrance in the SE corner of the reserve at 7:30 am. This is on the western side of the Monaro Highway. Since this is double carriageway it is best approached from the South, and 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. The meeting spot is next to the private



**Hooded Robin**  
(*Melanodryas cucullata*)

Photo by David Cook

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driveway about 100 m past the creek with tall trees and only about 500 metres N of the lights. Please note this can be a very busy road (hopefully not at the meeting time) and care should be taken when parking (though there is adequate room once off the road), and, in particular, extreme care should be taken when leaving after the walk. Depending on the route taken, there should be no fences to negotiate. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)).

### **22-26 November — Fivebough Wetlands Forum and Birding and Nature Fair**

There has only been a limited response to the call last month to see if there was sufficient interest in this event to make it a formal COG field trip, and unless this changes early in September with this reminder notice, it is likely that only a small (probably informal) COG party will attend, with car pooling/sharing to help defray petrol costs.

Activities will involve lectures and workshops about birds and other aspects of the natural world; birding and nature-related market stalls; displays of interest to the bird watching industry; wetland birding and nature tours; entertainment, art, and varied cultural activities. Details of the draft programs etc are on the home page of the Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Trust at <http://www.fivebough.org.au/>.

There is no competing field trip activity that week/weekend, so if you are interested please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)) as soon as possible so the level of COG involvement can be determined.

### **17-24 March 2007 — COG Tour to Lord Howe Island**

This is a special package for COG which is unlikely to be on offer again. The tour will have a focus on a waders' project, with three first class guides - LHI expert guide Ian Hutton, plus Chris Hassell from Broome Bird Observatory and Peter Fullagar (seabird expert and COG member). Some 13 of the 14 regular seabirds should be on the island, as well as the special LHI birds like the **Woodhen**.

The itinerary will be similar to the COG tour to LHI in November 2005 trip with walks, boat trips, talks etc, but include the wader study project, and Peter and Chris will give lectures on their specialities as well as Ian's LHI ones. Participants will be briefed on the aims of the project, participate under direction of Peter and Chris, and be mailed out results of the project paper; plus any ongoing reports that follow on will be reported in COG magazine each year. It should be a very full and interesting week. Accommodation is at the comfortable Somerset Apartments (see [www.lordhoweisle.com.au](http://www.lordhoweisle.com.au)). Evening meals are organised at a variety of restaurants.

Inclusive cost per person: \$2550.00 (includes taxes, 7 nights accommodation at Somerset Apartments - twin/double share—, transfers to/from the airport to accommodation, Ian Hutton Package of 6 x Evening Meals, Museum dinner/talk, glass bottom boat trip, round Island boat trip, four museum slide shows, North Bay day trip—birds and snorkeling).

There are still a number of places available on this special tour. Please contact Jenny Bounds for more information or to book (ph 6288 7802 or email: [jbbounds@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jbbounds@optusnet.com.au)). Bookings will need to be confirmed with a deposit of \$200 per person, cheques made out to Oxley Travel and mailed to Jenny at PO Box 403, Woden, ACT 2606.

**Note:** Single bookings will need to be matched for shared accommodation. Single supplement may be available on enquiry at extra cost (likely to be in the order of \$600). Not included: travel Canberra/Sydney/Canberra; breakfasts and lunches; Ian usually provides a barbecue lunch on the North Bay excursion.

## **Report on August COG Meeting**

Jack Holland delivered the short talk on the basic points for raptor identification as a lead-up to the Raptor Twitchathon on 3 September, when the aim is to see all 11 species of raptors which breed in the ACT. He emphasised the need for a different approach from bush birds, with the wings and tail patterns in flight and what the bird is doing being important factors. He suggested that three pairs of raptors cause the most difficulty for observers: Whistling Kite/Little Eagle; Brown Goshawk/Collared Sparrowhawk; and Peregrine Falcon/Australian Hobby. Jack used the first pair to illustrate the sorts of features to look out for. They are summarised in the table below:

	<b>Whistling Kite</b>	<b>Little Eagle</b>
<b>Colour</b>	brownish	brownish, but light/dark phases
<b>Wings</b>	lighter leading edge; darker trailing edge	dark leading edge; white centre; dark trailing edge (distinct M pattern in light phase)
<b>Tail</b>	long & rounded	short and square, faintly barred
<b>Wings in flight</b>	bowed (hard to tell)	flat
<b>Call</b>	noisy whistle	quieter whistle

In the main talk, “*Some ornithological escapades in South America and Australia, or how I amused myself for 11 years*”, Leo Joseph from the Australian Wildlife Collection of CSIRO, took us on an amazing and envy-making journey beginning in Uruguay in 1994. There, among the rolling hills and Tasmanian blue gums, he studied bird migration, particularly Austral migration, ie, within South America. This is of two types: temperate-tropical, where the birds breed in the middle of the continent and migrate to the tropics for the winter, thus experiencing humidity all year round; and temperate-temperate migrants, which breed in the southern part of South America and move to the central region for the rest of the year. His travel then took him to “the Joys of Chile” with its Torrent Ducks and Austral and Slender-billed Parakeets, before he took up a position at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. As luck would have it, the academy had been contracted to carry out surveys in the Iwokrama Rainforest Reserve in Guyana, set up as a model of sustainability in the 1970s, and Leo was able to have a ‘stopover’ on his way to Philadelphia and enjoy **Kotingas, Harpy Eagles and Oilbirds**, to name a few, as well as study the **Painted and White-eared Parakeets** with their many sub-species which are still being discovered and named.

Research in Australia followed focussing on the ‘leapfrog’ distribution of Australo-Papuan Rainforest Birds, such as **Sooty Owls and Logrunners**. Birds from central east Australia more closely resemble New Guinea species than species of the Wet Tropics of Queensland. Somehow he found time to facilitate the exhibition in Australia of John Gould’s collection which, by an accident of history, had ended up with the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Leo is now working on **White-browed and Masked Woodswallows** which, despite nesting together, show little or no hybridization. There our whistle-stop tour ended, with us all thinking — “someone’s got to do it”!

## Other activities of interest to COG members

### Mulligans Flat Survey - Sunday 24 September

A notice for regular volunteers that the spring survey at this woodland site will be on Sunday 24 September - please note your diaries. I will email a reminder nearer the time. Meeting time is 7.15am sharp at the usual carpark on Gundaroo Road. Wear sturdy shoes or boots and bring clipboard, pencil and eraser, and mug for the usual morning tea afterwards. Note that due to urban works, the old Gundaroo Road has been closed off and you can no longer access the carpark from the south. You need to access from the north; it’s signposted from the re-routed Gundaroo Road which runs off Horse Park Drive. **Jenny Bounds** 6288 7802

### 2007 COG Field trips program

The field trips program for next year will be drafted over the next couple of months. This will be the sixth year in a row that I will be primarily responsible for its preparation. Despite some members forwarding proposals in response to the August ad, the cupboard is still quite bare. So I’ll need to rely on you all more than ever; and if you have any new places you think are worth visiting next year, favourite places that COG should visit again, 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](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)).

Most of all offers to lead outings in 2007 will be gratefully accepted. The 2006 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!

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## COG's Bird Blitz 2006

Members are reminded to keep the weekend of **28-29 October** free, for this year's bird blitz. We will again aim to have a minimum of one 20-min, 2-ha survey done in each of the 165 grid cells in the ACT, and it would be wonderful if every ACT-resident COG member participated! Would all members with 4WD vehicles who are intending to participate and who are prepared to go behind locked gates in Namadgi National Park but who have not yet advised me, please do so soon ([allanbm@bigpond.net.au](mailto:allanbm@bigpond.net.au) or 6254 6520). Preference in the allocation of grid cells will be given to those who survey an area regularly. If you are keen to see the greatest variety of birds, I suggest you opt for a grid cell containing a Canberra Nature Park – the following have no “owners” yet: Percival Hill; Gungahlin Hill; Black Mountain; Mt Majura; Mt Painter; The Pinnacle; Red Hill; Callum Brae; Mt Mugga Mugga; Mt Taylor; Farrer Ridge; Isaacs Ridge; Jerrabomberra Grasslands; Wanniasa Hills; Cooleman Ridge; Urambi Hills; Tuggeranong Hill; Rob Roy; Gigerline; Mt Pleasant. Or if you fancy going further afield, how about opting for any of the following: Blue Range Hut; the Orroral Valley; Square Rock; Woods Reserve; Newline; Yankee Hat; Woodstock; Shepherds Lookout; even Tidbinbilla? Why not spend a morning or a day discovering a different part of the ACT and being part of this important exercise. If you are a beginner and would like to accompany an experienced blitz birder, let me know and I'll try and match you up with someone. **Barbara Allan**

## The Hobbyists' Haven and Collectors' Corner

Over the last few years Lifeline has received in donations an eclectic mixture of books, pamphlets and ephemera that will appeal to the specialist collector and hobbyist. These have been difficult to sell at previous bookfairs because they have been too fragile or specialist in nature for the general Bookfair and not of sufficient interest for the antiquarian Bookfair.

These items will be displayed in a separate area and offered for sale at very reasonable prices at the next Lifeline Bookfair on Sunday 24 September from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The Natural History category includes books etc on the following topics:

- various floras of different parts of Australia (SA, NE NSW, Tas, etc)
- various botanical keys to plant groups
- *Wildlife in Australia* – complete volumes and odd issue from the 1940s and 1950s
- *Handbook to Horticultural and Viticultural Cultivation 1921*
- complete bound and unbound volumes of *Australian Native Plants*
- *Wildflowers of Australia* – booklet published by Shell Australia
- *Bakers book on Hardwoods*
- bound and unbound 1940/50s volumes of Crosby Morrison's *Wildlife*
- mixed books on gold and minerals
- journals of the Entomological Society

Other categories included in this special sale are: Militaria, Game Playing and Modelling, Science Fiction miscellanea, Craft and Small Collectible ephemera (stamps, coins, cards), Old Car and Truck Manuals, Transport, Old Computers (pre-IBM PC), Old Records, Technical Manuals and Pamphlets

## News from the committee

COG has been pursuing the question of the nature and extent of the NCA's assessment of the impact of waterskiing in East Basin on wildlife. As the information was not forthcoming, we submitted a FoI request. The NCA's preliminary assessment of the charges was \$2,313.39, most of this being for examination, consulting, decision-making time and preparation. The committee reluctantly decided that it would not be money well spent. While we could contest the charges, on the grounds of wrong assessment, financial hardship, or that the release should be in the public interest, we opted instead to send a letter protesting the lack of openness in the NCA's decision-making process.

COG has been invited to mount a static display in the Discovery Centre between 23 October and 3 November, as part of the Urban Biodiversity Project launch. Members are sought to assist with the setting up of the display, on the morning of Monday 23 October, or with the dismantling on Friday 3 November, or with occasional attendance to promote COG to



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passing members of the public. We may also be called upon to lead bird walks. If you can help, please contact the secretary on 6254 6520.

On the conservation front, a submission to the Lower Cotter Catchment Draft Strategic Management Strategy has been finalised. In general this Strategy, which will return the Lower Cotter area to native vegetation over time, and no more pine plantings, is supported by COG, as it should provide more and enhanced habitat for a variety of birds.

A response to the Draft Bill for new Planning laws has been sent. COG is generally supportive of the new system which should see an improved environmental impact assessment process, an issue COG has commented on in past letters to the planning authorities about developments in bird habitats like East O'Malley.

Jenny Bounds has finalised a draft nomination of the Little Eagle as a vulnerable species in the ACT; this will now go through a COG review process.

Several people are working on fact sheets for four of the woodland sites. The Newline and Red Hill ones are completed, and should be on the Conserving Birds page of the COG website soon, along with a number of other enhancements to that page.

The brief and contract for the next round of data analysis for the woodland project data (1998 to 2005 data) have been agreed, and this work will be undertaken over the coming months.

A new woodland site is under consideration for the Jerrabomberra Valley area.

If you would like any further information on any of these matters, please contact any committee member.

### **Help wanted!**

We remind members of the AGM on 11 October. Several committee positions will need to be filled. The vice-president, secretary, membership officer and the editors of *Canberra Bird Notes* are stepping down; and we would welcome volunteers to take on a variety of jobs, including finding speakers for general meetings, and providing refreshments for supper on meeting nights. If you can commit a little time to make a contribution to COG by taking on one of these tasks, our president Jack Holland would love to hear from you on 6288 7840.

### **Subscription renewal final reminder**

If you have not renewed your COG membership, this will be the last *Gang-gang* you receive. Please check your mailing label if you are uncertain whether you are financial – or ask the treasurer.

At least three members who paid their dues by EFT are unidentifiable, having failed to provide their name or COG ID. If you inserted either “JR” or “bird club” on your EFT payment please contact Lia Battison on 6231 0147 (after hours) so that your payment can be properly recorded.

## **Threatened Species Day on Christmas Island**

As part of the inaugural Christmas Island Bird Week, Tim the Yowie Man talked to visiting ornithologists on the Island to discover which threatened species live there. The talks and audio updates of his discoveries can be accessed via the National Museum of Australia's website [www.nma.gov.au/events](http://www.nma.gov.au/events).

Updates, including sounds and images, were to be posted at 10 am Wednesday 30 August, 10 am Tuesday 5 September and finally at 10 am on Threatened Species Day Thursday 7 September.

## **Myna Matters Update**

The following is an update on developments in the effort to protect our wildlife from the impact of Indian (Common) Mynas in and around Canberra and Queanbeyan.

The big news is that the RSPCA Council has agreed to a collaborative arrangement with the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) to help tackle the problem of Indian Mynas: the RSPCA at Weston is now providing a euthanizing and disposal service for CIMAG members and the public who have trapped mynas. This provides another option to people to humanely euthanize the birds and to dispose of them in a hygienic and environmentally sound way.

The Group continues to grow strongly with some 160 people on the membership / contact list — there are now around 60 people who are trapping across the Canberra region. We have also been fielding inquiries from people in Victoria

and Sydney / Newcastle who are interested in setting up similar community-based action groups.

July capture figures have been collated: a further 814 mynas were removed from the Canberra environment, bringing to 3593 the total number of mynas now removed by CIMAG trappers.

**Bill Handke** (Canberra Indian Myna Action Group — 6231 7461 or [handke@grapevine.net.au](mailto:handke@grapevine.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. Contact Barbara de Bruine

(02) 62583531.

### PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

#### South Rosedale

*Arupingi* is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck, while for the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction. Contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay

(02) 6286 1564

or e-mail

[greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au](mailto:greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au)

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

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## AvIan Whimsy #45 — With extreme prejudice

Is obloquy preferable to oblivion? I'm not sure, but my hope for a response to Whimsies probably borders on desperation at times, and where cajolery failed to elicit one last time, perhaps provocation can succeed this time!

I'm biased. Actually I think that we all are, and I further think that that's fine as long as we acknowledge it. My strongest bias is based on my concept of what it means to be Australian and my relationship to the land. I am not especially 'proud' to be Australian; pride is for me an utterly irrelevant concept with regard to country. We can take no credit for the existence of the things that make the land and its life so very special (though plenty of shame for the damage wrought). On the other hand I feel very very privileged indeed, but with that privilege comes a weight of responsibility. Despite all the changes already imposed on the Australian environment, it is still recognisably unique and ultimately a product of a unique set of climatic and geographical circumstances. I believe that we have a duty to resist further 'global homogenisation' of that environment, as far as we can.

Accordingly I am unequivocally biased, where a choice has to be made, in favour of native species and against exotic ones. There are probably examples where choice is unnecessary; **Goldfinches** seem only to be interested in exotic seeds and **Greenfinches** are probably too scarce here to be an issue. We need to be pretty careful about this though.

Take **Blackbirds** for instance. This Whimsy actually had its genesis at a meeting I recently attended where a high profile and highly respected (including by me) birdo expressed a fondness for Blackbirds. It is often asserted that they do no harm, but I think the precautionary principle requires us to adopt the French or Mexican legal position and make no presumption of innocence. I imagine we have all observed aggression by Blackbirds towards native species, but more insidious to me is their ability to penetrate a range of relatively pristine habitats far from humans. I've seen them thus in dense coastal heathland on the Coorong and in tall wet forests in Errinundra and the Brindabellas. It is not reasonable to assume that there are empty niches there waiting to be filled, so it is probable that they are displacing something else. Ergo, I believe that complacency is misplaced.

I have heard it said that even among COG members there are those who oppose **Indian Myna** control on the grounds that all things have a right to live. My private suspicion is that this is an urban myth and that such individuals do not exist, but if they do and you are one, here is my challenge to you. You know and I know that it is an untenable position. For instance, in a given nest hollow we can have myna chicks or **Rosella** (or **Kingfisher** or **Dollarbird** or treecreeper) chicks, but not both; allowing the mynas and rosellas both to live is not then an available option and the mynas virtually always win out. So, I am declaring my bias by saying that I prefer rosella chicks to myna chicks and am prepared to intervene to ensure that they prevail. In return I want you to say publicly that you prefer the mynas, because by allowing them to live and breed we are ensuring that the rosellas will not. In no way am I declaring that my position is 'right' – it is only a bias after all – and it is not one whit more valid than yours. It's just that we both need to be prepared to declare our biases, and acknowledge the implications of our stance.

One might reasonably point out that rosellas and kingfishers (say) can't use the same hollow either but firstly, after millenia of millenia of coevolution a *modus vivandi* was long ago reached – existing nests are not usurped and chicks and eggs not evicted or smothered. Secondly of course we have drastically reduced the already finite number of available hollows, thus putting the less aggressive native species at a disadvantage entirely of our making. I think that imposes on us an obligation. Another frequently heard comment is "it's not their fault – humans are the real problem". I would suggest firstly that that's a red herring – it's not about 'fault', which is an irrelevance as applied to animals. Secondly, while logically valid, it doesn't go anywhere with regard to resolving the problem; in fact it's usually an excuse for doing nothing, which is not an ethical option.

But all of this is just reflecting my own bias. What's yours?

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

(And next time, something lighter – I promise!)



## WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com

phone 02 6251 3136

www.visitnsw.com.au (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

## NEW MEMBERS

COG welcomes the following new members:

**Peter Cowper**, Flynn

**John Dawson** and Jenny, **Stuart** and **Joanne Mason**, Hawker

**Freeman family**, Reid

**Ian Johnson**, Fisher

**Mark Osgood** and **Joanne Lawrence**, Kaleen

## Next newsletter

**October deadline**

**Wednesday 27 September 2006**

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to the

Editors of *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*

**Lia Battisson** ph 6231 0147

*Secretary*

**Barbara Allan** ph 6254 6520

*Address for correspondence*

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

*Newsletter distribution*

**Judy Collett** and helpers

*Membership inquiries*

**Alastair Smith** ph 6161 8608(h)  
membership@canberrabirds.org.au  
for changed address or other details

*Gang-gang editors*

**Sue Lashko** and **Greg Ramsay**  
ph 6286 1564  
Email: gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

*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.

*Office*

COG no longer maintains an office. For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone **Barbara Allen** on 6254 6520

*COG website*

www.canberrabirds.org.au

*COG membership*

**2005-2006 memberships:**

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

*COG E-mail Discussion List*

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'. Join the list by following the links on the COG website or 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**



## Gang-gang

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