

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2017-18

The 2017-18 was a steady year for COG.

The year saw COG maintain and enhance its very effective collaboration with the ACT Conservation Council, strengthen its partnership with the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust including through signing an MOU and work actively with the BIGnet group of NSW birding clubs meeting on matters of mutual interest and concern. We will be host to next years meeting of bird clubs from all over NSW.

Committee is busy working on plans for a number of projects for next year including a member survey, ongoing database matters and further development of a Committee only admin area accessible on our website.

General

We have all enjoyed Sandra Henderson goal for this year – a new birding spot every week! Sandra has challenged us with monthly reports in GG with her endeavour to go to at least one new place each week Thanks Sandra

Ryu Callaway has many of us out looking at cockies. His Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Little Corella roost sites survey has been very interesting and revealed some very large and regular roosts. Thanks to Ryu

The most left field news this year came from Kay Hahne and Philip Veerman. At the June meeting we got to see an “historical item of interest”. According to Jenny was a roller a much more robust than but not as colourful machine as the Lilac-breasted variety.) This gadget was the brainchild of Philip Veerman, who wanted some kind of aid to help him with data entry from the many Garden Bird Charts handed in each year since 1981. Well done Kay and Phillip.

Finally, I acknowledge two COG members who received awards this year.

Ian Fraser OAM Australia Day
Alison Russell-French OAM Queens birthday

Congratulations to both.

Gang Gang Newsletter

Hard-copy of the Gang-gang newsletter to cease from 1 July 2018 Over recent years, COG's income has not covered its outgoings, and COG has an ongoing annual deficit. In March, the COG Committee considered options for reducing this shortfall. After much discussion, a decision was made to cease the printing and distribution of hard copies of the Ganggang newsletter. The Committee values the newsletter and all contributions to it and is committed to continuing its production.

This move will result in a considerable saving and will mean that membership fees will not need to increase this year. The Committee also considered that cessation of printing was an environmentally responsible thing to do.

Gang-gang will continue to be available on the COG website, as a colour pdf that can be downloaded and printed if you wish. The majority of the membership already access Gang-gang on the website, and some have been doing so for many years.

Committee

In 2017-18, COG has again been very well-served by a dedicated and enthusiastic Committee and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their contributions.

We started the year with the two executive members and 7 committee members and with positions of Treasurer and Vice President Vacant. Lia agreed to act in the role of Treasurer and has done that for the whole year. This has been a wonderful continuing contribution from Lia. Steve Read stepped up from Committee member to Vice President during the year. I would like to acknowledge Steve for that appreciated involvement.

On the committee we started the year with Jenny Bounds, Sue Lashko, Lia Battisson, David McDonald, Paul Fennell, Nick Nicholls and Steve Read. Prue Watters then joined during the year. With Lia remaining as Acting Treasurer and Steve becoming Vice President we effectively had an Executive of 4 Neil Hermes (President), Steve Read (Vice President), Bill Graham (Secretary) and Lia Battisson (Acting Treasurer) and committee of six.

Jenny Bounds (Conservation Officer),
Chris Davey (Records Management and Survey),
Sue Lashko (Editor of Gang-gang, meeting-room organizer and Outings Officer),
Paul Fennell (management and oversight of the COG Database),
David McDonald (advice on COG Constitution and policy issues) and Chatline
Bruce Lindenmayer (connecting COG with CIMAG).

Retiring Committee

On behalf of the Committee I would like to extend our thanks to those Committee members who are standing down as committee members:

Lia Battison Treasurer on three occasions since 2003

Sue Lashko 2005 (Editor of Gang-gang, meeting-room organizer and Outings Officer)

They have been stalwart supporters of and contributors to the Committee for 28 years between them.

As well as Committee members, we have been well served by a number of other members who have provided invaluable service to COG: Jack Holland COG's Public Officer and is responsible for the members' meetings speakers program which has been both fascinating and broadly focused over the year; Sandra Henderson manages COG membership and the monthly raffles; Michael Lenz produces the Canberra Bird Notes with the help of Kevin Windle; Duncan McCaskill manages the Garden Bird Survey; Barbara Allan for the Bird Blitz and the Rarities Panel; Nicki Taws who is the COG Records Officer; and Kathy Walter and John Goldie for managing the sales desk; Julian Robinson continued as Website manager; Dianne Davey Distribution of COG publications. Bruce Lindenmayer generously volunteered to assist with the tea and coffee we have after meetings. All of these people have generously given their time to help COG members and the organisation.

Updated Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT

Updated Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT – November 2017 COG's Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT was updated in November 2017, under the authority of the Committee of COG.

The new version is dated 22 November 2017 and contains 305 taxa. The taxonomic order and nomenclature—English and scientific names—used in this checklist largely follow Birdlife Australia's Working List of Australian Birds, version 2.1 (BLA's WLAB), in accordance with COG's policy on the matter. The 'Status' column reflects the likelihood that an experienced birder would record the species during a day of bird observing, at the right time of year, in the appropriate habitat. The Checklist identifies threatened species, i.e. those declared Endangered or Vulnerable in the ACT or NSW.

Under the auspices of COG's Committee, David McDonald prepared the 2017 revision, supported by Chris Davey and with inputs from some other COG members. The main updates reflect:

- Changes to BLA's WLAB taxonomic order and nomenclature, e.g. changing the Australian Pipit to Australasian Pipit and *Ninox novaeseelandiae* to *Ninox boobook*
- Additions to the ACT list that have been endorsed by COG's Rarities Panel, e.g. Tawny Grassbird, and
- Changes to the status of some species, e.g. White-bellied Sea-Eagle changed from non-breeding to breeding.
- In addition, the Supplementary List that was appended to the previous (2014) edition is no longer present. This is because it included many species for which there are no accepted records.

These have been deleted, and the species in the former Supplementary List with valid ACT records have been moved into the single, consolidated, Annotated Checklist. The status of the re-introduced species, e.g. Magpie Goose and Bush Stone-curlew, has been clarified. Thanks to David McDonald

COG Membership

There are currently 447 members which includes family memberships counted as 2 and 2 organisational members of COG.

To all our continuing members you are a vital part of our organisation and your support for COG is very much appreciated.

Steve Wilson Medal 2017

The Steve Wilson Medal Sub-Committee (Neil Hermes, Alison Russell-French and Bruce Lindenmayer) has selected Dr Michael Lenz as the recipient of the 2017 Steve Wilson Medal for 2017.

Michael joined COG in 1977, and as a scientist with a deep interest in bird surveying and long-term rigorous records, soon found himself involved in these activities. Michael served as COG records officer between 1980 and 1982 and organised bird surveys of Lakes Burley Griffin and Ginninderra for several years.

Most notably, in 1979, Michael initiated monthly surveys of Lake George and in 1980, Lake Bathurst, both of which he has continued to the present day. Patiently, Michael has established and maintained friendly relationships with local landholders, included them in his results and given talks to local landcare and other groups. BirdLife Australia has designated Michael as the “Guardian” for Lake Bathurst, which is one of BLA’s regional Key Biodiversity Areas.

Over the years, Michael has promoted the systematic recording of all birds in COG’s Area of Interest and in 1980, initiated the Annual Bird Report as a summary of all available observations. Michael also served on sub-committees for the Garden Bird Survey and for the COG ACT Bird Atlas Project.

Currently, Michael continues quarterly COG Woodland surveys at Mt Ainslie, roughly monthly visits to a Travelling Stock Route near Gundaroo, again in co-operation with local landholders and rangers.

Michael has edited Canberra Bird Notes for more than 5 years, including the 50 year Anniversary Edition in 2014, and over the years, has written numerous articles for CBN and given talks at COG meetings.

Michael Lenz has been an outstanding member of COG over several decades and a most worthy recipient of the 2017 Steve Wilson Medal.

Conservation

Jenny Bounds continues as Conservation Officer, and represents COG in various forums and stakeholder groups, such as ACT Grassy Woodland Stakeholder Group, and the Kosciusko 2 Coast (K2C) forum. COG has again collaborated with the Conservation Council ACT and other groups to progress conservation matters impacting on birds, particularly those relating to ongoing greenfields development in Gungahlin and the Molonglo Valley, and the implementation of offsets arrangements.

This year COG has provided submissions/comment on these main issues:

- Molonglo Valley Stage 3 EIS Exemption application – COG did not support this which included development boundary changes and the unresolved buffer for Kama NR from future housing; COG has long advocated for a substantial and effective buffer for Kama to mitigate urban edge effects; the submission noted that the urban development in Molonglo has had significant detrimental impacts on birds, particularly on birds of prey species and the Brown Treecreeper population in the Valley.
- Molonglo River Reserve draft Plan of Management released for public comment – a key matter the width of the buffer for Kama NR was not defined in the draft Plan
- A submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly's Nature in our City Inquiry – COG raised the need for whole-of-landscape planning into the future (instead of site by site planning), the ongoing loss of scattered, mature eucalypts, inadequate urban edge buffers and poor urban/bush interface management, and the extension of cat containment in the ACT.
- Ongoing consultation with Local Land Services in NSW concerning management of local TSRs important for birds, eg Nelanglo near Gundaroo.
- Hot air balloon trials at Jerrabomberra Wetlands early in 2018.
- Attendance and input to the K2C forum, in the last twelve months a key issue has been the future of K2C given the lack of project funding opportunities to continue the group's important on-ground landholder engagement and land connectivity initiatives in the region.
- Ongoing work through the ACT Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group on:
 - offsets arrangements, to assess the outcomes of biodiversity enhancements at sites; and
 - future planning issues on the western edge of Canberra (possible development front west of Molonglo suburbs and west of the Murrumbidgee River at Point Hut Crossing); this will have significant environmental implications for the river corridor.

In 2015/16 COG partnered with several other groups under the umbrella of the Conservation Council ACT to submit a nomination to have clearance of hollow bearing trees (mature eucalypts, including paddock trees) declared a threatening process in the ACT. Jenny Bounds prepared material concerning impacts on two listed ACT bird species (Superb Parrot, Brown Treecreeper), based on COG's surveys of Superb Parrots in Gungahlin and Molonglo Valley, a study of Brown Treecreepers in and around Kama Nature Reserve by Chris Davey, and also COG database records. The nomination was considered and expanded by the ACT Scientific Committee, with a positive outcome in September 2017.

Surveys

COG continues to conduct, or its members participate in various bird surveys:

- K2C twice a year (Nicki Taws coordinator for Greening Australia)

- Jerrabomberra Wetlands/Fyshwick Sewage Ponds (quarterly surveys, Chris Davey, Sue Lashko and others)
- Latham's Snipe surveys (coordinated by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust)
- Annual Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla NR (Chris Davey, Peter Fullagar)
- Lord Howe Island annual survey in September (Chris Davey, Peter Fullagar)
- Lake Bathurst and Lake George (Michael Lenz)
- The annual COG Blitz in October (Barbara Allan coordinator)
- The annual ANU bird surveys at Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo reserves (part of the long-term woodland experiment).

Woodland Bird Monitoring Project

COG's long-term woodland survey at 15 locations (142 monitoring points) continues. Jenny Bounds coordinates the project's operations. Many thanks are due to the team of COG members and their helpers who survey the sites quarterly; the commitment of the site coordinators over time is a significant factor in the success of this survey and deserves recognition. With more than ten years data at all sites (some sites since 1995). COG is in a position to plan and undertake a significant analysis of this data in the future.

The COG website

During the year the COG website was visited by an average of 200 different people each day, similar to last year. Newly available statistics reveal some possibly surprising patterns of usage. I would like to thank Julian Robinson for his ongoing efforts in managing and maintaining the COG Website.

Records Management

Essential support for the COG database is provided through the Records Management Team and the Rarities Panel. I would like to acknowledge the contributions provided by Nicki Taws as Records Officer, Tony Harding, Helen Mason and many others for data entry and to the members of the Rarities Panel consisting of Richard Allen, Jenny Bounds, Grahame Clark, Dick Schodde, Nicki Taws and Barbara Allan (Secretary), all who have offered to continue in their various roles.

Outings

Once again COG has been able to run a very comprehensive outings program and our special thanks to Sue Lashko for all her efforts in making this a great success for COG members. This is a vital part of COG's activities for members and that the planned outings for the year are mostly fully attended is testimony to their popularity.

In addition to the scheduled outings, the ad hoc group that has organised the Wednesday walks have once again operated most successfully and have managed to attract a most enthusiastic and intrepid group of followers with outings taking place each month of the year, notwithstanding some very testing weather conditions this year. On behalf of COG members our thanks to Martin Butterfield and others for organising these events.

Canberra Bird Notes

I would like to thank Michael Lenz for his great work as Editor of the Canberra Bird Notes and all those who have contributed to CBN over the past year. CBN is a well-respected and valued source of information about the birds of the Canberra region.

Particular appreciation is also due to Paul Fennell and Jaron Bailey for their work on the Annual Bird Report.

Monthly meetings

Jack Holland has arranged yet another most interesting year of both local and interstate speakers at the COG monthly meetings in 2015-16. I would like to thank Jack for his sterling efforts in bringing to the members engaging and informative presentations each month.

Our appreciation to all those who have assisted with the provision of the refreshments that follow the monthly meetings, and to Sandra Henderson for taking on the responsibility of providing the raffle prizes and selling the tickets. All of these add to the enjoyment of the occasions and provide opportunity for members to socialise.

CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list

At the end of the year, COG's CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list had 324 subscribers, a similar number to the same time last year. The list, managed by David McDonald, continues to provide a useful forum for people to discuss the birds of the Canberra region, their environments, and COG's activities.

New subscribers, including people new to birding who seek support from more experienced birders, are welcome to subscribe. During the year there were 2,723 emails distributed over the list, an average of about 7 per day. The list manager has commended subscribers for the way they use the list: positively, productively and politely.

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund (CBCF)

The Fund, established in the year 2000, is a tax-deductible gift recipient, and members and friends of COG are encouraged to donate to it. During the year, the Fund provided support to one project that contributed to the achievement of its conservation objectives. The recipient was the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust and the funds were provided to enable the Trust to purchase binoculars for use in its new introduction to birding courses, conducted at Mulligans Flat. At the end of the year the Fund was assessing a second application that was funded in the following year. The Committee of Management of the Fund (Dr Penny Olsen, Geoffrey Dabb, David McDonald) invites enquiries from people seeking financial support for projects that are consistent with its environmental objectives. Although most of the projects funded to date have been academic research, the Fund can support any projects that encourage interest in, and develop knowledge of, the birds of the Canberra region; promote and co-ordinate the study of birds; and/or promote the conservation

of native birds and their habitats in the Canberra region. COG members are encouraged to promote the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund, encouraging friends and businesses alike to make tax-deductible donations to it in the interests of the birds of the Canberra region, and their environments.

In conclusion

I thank all the COG members who have actively contributed over the year to COG and our many and varied activities. COG is well recognised for its effectiveness as an organisation dedicated to the conservation and enjoyment of birds.

COG continues its work in conserving our birds as well as providing a great organisation for those who love birds.

Neil Hermes
President
10 October 2018