



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016-17

The period from November 2016 to October 2017 has been a year of continued high membership numbers for COG. This is attributed to the wide range of activities and services offered. Meeting talks continue to be of great variety and interest, and *Canberra Bird Notes* and *Gang-gang* continue to be professionally produced. The excursion program is amazingly regular and diverse and this year included a trip to the Pilliga. However, generally, it has been a steady-as-she-goes year for COG. We have maintained and enhance our very effective collaboration with the ACT Conservation Council and have strengthened our partnership with the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust.

There have been continued, but unfortunately unsuccessful, efforts to develop relationships with ICON Water on the management of the wetlands adjacent to Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Hopefully the 2017-18 committee will have greater success.

While COG remains strong, growing and relevant and continues to do important work across many fields, many of which are described below, there has been difficulty in getting enough committee members to run regular monthly committee meetings. While this has been an inconvenience to Committee members, it has not unduly affected broader operations. It would be nice to have a larger group of committee members to maintain efficient oversight of our activities.

### COG Membership

In past two years there has been a healthy increase in the number of members. There are currently 431 individual and family members and 2 organisational members of COG. Last year there were 447. In the previous three years there had been an average of just under 300, which was similar to the decade-long average. The recent increase may have been due to the activities and profile gained during our 50<sup>th</sup> year celebrations. However, every year there is a regular turnover of membership.

### Steve Wilson Medal

The Steve Wilson Medal was inaugurated in 2014 on the occasion of COG's 50th Anniversary. In its third year, in recognition of their meritorious service and significant contribution to COG over a long period the Steve Wilson Medal was presented to Jack Holland and David McDonald. Congratulations to these well-deserved awardees.

The list of all current SWM awardees is:

- 2014 Grahame Clark  
 Jenny Bounds  
 2015 Chris Davey  
 Barbara Allan  
 2016 Jack Holland  
 David McDonald

### **COG Committee**

In 2016-17, COG had 8 members on the Committee and I thank them for their time, effort and patience and their significant contribution to the smooth running of COG. In addition to the President the Committee consisted of

Bill Graham (Secretary),  
 Lia Battison (Treasurer),  
 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  
 Julian Robinson continued as Website manager in an ex-officio role.

The quorum for a COG committee meeting is six so on occasions we had difficulty getting enough members to Committee meetings.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to extend our thanks to Chris Davey, a long-standing Committee member who is standing down after a long and productive innings.

In addition to Committee members already named many others have contributed in a variety of vital ways.

Jack Holland is responsible for the members' meetings speakers program;  
 Sandra Henderson manages COG membership and the monthly raffles;  
 Michael Lenz produces *Canberra Bird Notes* assisted by 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;  
 Gai Neumann assists with *Gang-gang*;  
 Jaron Bailey is the database manager;  
 Dianne Davey looks after distribution of publications;  
 Kathy Walter and John Goldie for managing the sales desk, and  
 Bruce Lindenmayer (once President) is now the official "tea lady"

**Field trips**

Once again in 2016-17 COG has run a very comprehensive outings program thanks to Sue Lashko. These trips have been almost every weekend, as well as three mid-week trips to the South Coast and an extended camping trip to the Pilliga and Moree. On behalf of COG members our thanks to Sue.

The monthly Wednesday walks have continued to be very popular and thanks go to Martin Butterfield for organising these.

**CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list**

At the end of the year, COG's *CanberraBirds* email announcement and discussion list had 329 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 3,141 emails distributed over the list, an average of about 9 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.

During the 2017 year the Fund made one grant: 'Bringing back Bush Stone-curlews'. The recipient was the ACT Woodlands and Wetlands Trust (Dr Kate Grarock, Sanctuary Ecologist), and the purpose was to support the purchase of radio transmitters that were attached to the re-introduced Bush Stone-curlews at the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. This was done to track their movements within and outside the reserve, providing crucial information on their movements and locations to inform the re-introduction experiment.

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.

## Surveys

### Woodland Project

The COG woodland project quarterly surveys continue as one of the core, long-term surveys which COG members undertake. In the last year, some changes were made to administrative arrangements, and more accurate GPS coordinates were taken/confirmed for all sites. At an appropriate time in the future (and when resources are available), COG expects to undertake further analyses of this data to determine trends in species. There is now more than ten years of data at all the woodland sites. Jenny Bounds is the overall coordinator. Thank you to all involved in this important project, including the individual site coordinators and their helpers who do the surveys.

## Surveys

Chris Davey has organised COG survey program again this year. General observations and on-going surveys continue to inform us of the status of birds within the ACT and local region. The surveys include collecting observations for a long-term study at Mulligans Flat/Goorooyarro Nature Reserves by the ANU. This study is now in its 10th year. Also, quarterly surveys at Jerrabomberra Wetlands/Fyshwick Sewage Ponds, the annual 'Blitz', now in its 12th year, and the Superb Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, conducted since June 2004, have been completed. COG continues to provide volunteers twice a year to the Greening Australia 'K2C' project, now in its 8th year. COG members continue to supply observations to the Latham's Snipe survey, run by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust.

## Conservation

Jenny Bounds has continued another year as Conservation Officer, with support from other Committee members (Chris Davey, David McDonald) on some items. Jenny has represented the interests of birds on several committees/reference groups, including K2C Committee and the National Park Feasibility Reference Group to consider a proposal for grassy woodland reserves to become national parks (this proposal did not proceed). We are keen to recruit more support for COG Committee business, and someone with an interest in conservation who might provide some assistance would be welcome. COG continues to work with the Conservation Council ACT Region and other groups with the aim of achieving good outcomes for bird habitat protection and enhancement.

Highlights this year have been:

- providing comprehensive submissions on the Superb Parrot and Brown Treecreeper (based on COGs records) to support the nomination to the ACT Government of loss of mature hollow bearing eucalypts as a threatening process (a Conservation Council managed project)
- participation in a Biodiversity offsets effectiveness project with other member groups of the Conservation Council, looking at the implementation of offsets in the ACT, and outcomes for biodiversity/birds.

Other submissions/consultations include:

- providing comments on the Draft ACT Migratory Birds Action Plan (in addition to COG data which underpins this plan)
- submission on an EIS exemption application for Molonglo Stage 3 residential development, which would have changed agreed offsets' boundaries and resulted in an inadequate buffer for Kama NR from urban edge effects
- letter to the ACT Government concerning Latham's Snipe habitat on Horse Park Drive next to Forde/Yerrabi Pond, potential impacts from road duplication
- supporting the Red Hill Regenerators in their efforts to protect the Red Hill NR from a rising number of apartment/housing developments around the reserve's edges, including the latest plans for unit development on Federal Golf Course land (which COG has also opposed in the past)
- consultations with Local Land Services, Yass (Jenny Bounds, Michael Lenz, Nick Nicholls), concerning the ongoing conservation management of Nelanglo TSR near Gundaroo (also known as TSR 48)
- providing input to ACT Government Natural Resource Management (NRM) investment plans; this focussed on key habitats for threatened birds (map based data was also provided)
- providing Birdlife Australia with advice regarding conservation issues, bird data and assistance in annual reporting on their Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in COG's area of interest (Aust. Alps, South-west slopes – Superb Parrot, and Lake Bathurst).

### **The COG website**

The COG website continued a steady rise in usage over the year (10% more users and 15% more site visits) reflecting mostly that more people are using the website to access meeting and trips information. The most popular uses this year were: Our Birds (information on bird species found in our region); COG trip information; photo gallery; COG meeting information; Chatline information; Gang-gang newsletter; popular birding spots; online form for joining and renewing; Canberra Bird Notes. Website information is regularly updated by members including Sue Lashko, Jack Holland, David McDonald, Martin Butterfield and Julian Robinson.

I would particularly like to thank Julian Robinson for his ongoing efforts in managing and maintaining the COG Website.

### **COG Database**

As is widely known for decades COG has built up a very valuable set of historic bird databases for the birds in our Area of Interest (AOI). It is also now recognised that large amounts of data on birds in our AOI are now held by organisations outside COG. The challenge of managing the interface between COG's historical databases, contemporary COG data collection and third party organisations remains.

### **Rarities Panel**

I would like to acknowledge the contributions provided by the Rarities Panel consisting of Richard Allen, Jenny Bounds, Grahame Clark, Dick Schodde, Nicki Taws and Barbara Allan (Secretary) for their important work maintaining the integrity of our databases.

### **Gang-gang**

This year we again thank Sue Lashko and Gail Neumann for editing, layout and publishing of our newsletter. Gang-gang is a great source of information and news and members may not be aware of the work that goes into producing the newsletter every month. Many thanks also go to Dianne and Chris Davey and helpers for the distribution of the newsletter and Canberra Bird Notes.

### **Canberra Bird Notes.**

Thanks again go to Michael Lenz for his great work as Editor of the Canberra Bird Notes and all those who have contributed to CBN in 2016-17. 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, Steve Wallace and their team for their work on the Annual Bird Report.

### **Monthly meetings**

I thank Jack Holland for arranging another interesting year of both local and interstate speakers at the COG monthly meetings in 2016-17. The Group is amazingly well served by the hard work by Jack in the (seemingly) seamless way in which a never-ending range of interesting speakers are found to address our meetings.

Bruce Lindenmayer assiduously provides refreshments that follow the monthly meetings (in the role of "Tea Lady", a badge of honour he proudly wears) and to Sandra Henderson for taking on the responsibility of providing the raffle prizes and selling the tickets. All of these activities add to the enjoyment of the meetings and provide opportunity for members to socialise.

### **Finally**

My personal thanks go to all members who have contributed to COG over the year. This of course includes all committee members but also to those whose contribution may be small but vital. Jobs such as mailing, doing the tea and coffee and editing assistants. Thank you to you all.

### **Neil Hermes**

President, 8 November 2017