



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021-22

The Committee

Whilst, under various constraints, it has been another tough year to manage COG's affairs in 2021-22, COG has again had a strong and enthusiastic committee. I would sincerely like to thank each of the committee members on behalf of the whole Group for their contributions. We have continued to meet using Zoom for our committee meetings as this has proved more convenient for committee members.

This year the four executive members were Neil Hermes (President), Steve Read (Vice-President), Prue Watters (Treasurer) and Margaret Robertson (Secretary).

General members of the Committee were Jenny Bounds, Nick Nicholls, Chris Davey, Alison Mackerras, Kathy Eyles, Brittany Brockett, Bill Graham and Clare Henderson, a committee of twelve.

The Support Team (COG's Cogs)

As well as Committee members, COG has been well served by many other members who have provided invaluable service to COG: Jack Holland, COG's Public Officer, 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 remains on the Rarities Panel; Nicki Taws is the COG Records Officer and organises COG's Bird Blitz; Kathy Walter and John Goldie manage the sales desk; Julian Robinson continues as Website manager; David McDonald manages the COG chatline; Dianne Davey distributes COG publications; and Sue Lashko organises the outings program and is the editor of Gang-gang, assisted by Gail Neumann and Sandra Henderson. All of these people have generously given their time.

The Committee noted the sad death of Bruce Lindenmayer, a long-term supporter and contributor to COG. Full acknowledgement of his contributions appears in Canberra Bird Notes.

We have continued the feature in Gang-gang that acknowledges COG's support team. We have been highlighting in short articles the contribution of those who

contribute to the works of COG outside the formal committee They are truly COG's Cogs. Thanks to Nathan Finger, COG's Cog in charge of COG's Cogs, and to Julian Robinson for the title to this series.

Databases and data management

COG has a long history of strong collection and dissemination of reliable data on birds of our region. This has continued this year. Here is a review of some work in this area.

COG has been represented in input to several bird-related projects coordinated by Conservation Research in the ACT Government, and has provided relevant data for some projects such as the Gang-gang bushfire recovery work.

The COG woodland bird monitoring protocols/survey methods have been adopted by other projects for bird monitoring/surveys, e.g. Molonglo Valley environmental offsets, and other environmental offsets sites managed by the ACT Government.

COG publishes (using its bird survey data) an annual bird report, a summary of the status of all bird species recorded in the COG area of interest (the ACT region) which is available on the COG website. This is a major source of data which can be used to document the changes which are occurring in the bird population in the ACT and surrounding area and is also an important source of data for many other studies.

As was highlighted in last year's report, there are challenges of keeping up with modern information technology (web-based systems, apps etc.), to support database systems. COG data underpin lots of our conservation lobbying and governmental credibility.

There is a need to employ professional services in information technology to design, manage and update the critical database systems on which bird data are stored and retrieved for the various purposes, including requests for data from external parties and for COG's own analyses of data, as well as the programs for data-entry, particularly on-line data entry systems.

The Committee is working with a commercial database design company to develop a new database for COG, then to migrate into it all our data across current disparate databases. Progress on this has been slow on this for a variety of Covid and technical database reasons. The Committee hopes to have significant progress on this in 2022.

COG Membership

At the end of the last financial year we had a membership total of 439. Although the number was slightly less than the previous year, it was a good result as we moved out of the Covid restrictions. In the latter half of the year, meetings, outings and surveys resumed without interruption. The support by the general membership through the challenges of Covid is greatly appreciated.

Conservation

Jenny Bounds continues as COG Conservation Officer, with an expanded Conservation Team providing input, namely Clare Henderson and Steve Read. Jenny continues to represent COG in various forum and stakeholder groups,

including the Biodiversity Working Group of the ACT Conservation Council, and the ACT Government Biodiversity Conservation Forum, a regular meeting with Government for environmental community groups.

Chris Davey represents COG on Ginninderry Bush on the Boundary and so allows us to comment on any activity in the Murrumbidgee Conservation Corridor.

COG submissions on most conservation matters are posted on the COG website, and members are encouraged to go there for more detail.

Bird data collection programs

COG's long-term Woodland Bird Monitoring Project surveys 15 locations (142 monitoring points). 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.

The COG team (Jenny Bounds, Chris Davey and Nicki Taws), with Dr Laura Rayner (ACT Government) and analyst Dr MJ Evans (ANU), finalised the report covering the analysis of the COG woodland project survey data collected in the period March 1998 to September 2019 (21 years 6 months). The report was published on the COG website and a soft-cover version was designed and printed. An official launch of the report with invitees from Government and community, Landcare and other groups was held late in 2022. A summary version of the report was published in Canberra Bird Notes.

The Team is progressing a sub-project of the woodland 21-year data analysis, on the colonisation of Noisy Miners at woodland sites and impacts on small birds.

The COG Garden Bird Survey (GBS) also continues, now in its 42nd year; COG has published two editions of the Birds of Canberra Gardens from GBS data, a highly successful coffee-table style book for Canberra residents to identify and encourage birds in their gardens.

The annual Bird Blitz was in late October, covering as much of the ACT as possible. We all thank Nicki Taws for taking up the reins of the Blitz.

Latham's Snipe surveys (coordinated by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust) of this migratory wader are part of a national and international monitoring program. The annual Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve continues, and monitoring of birds near the new suburb of Whitlam was also coordinated by Chris Davey. The Lord Howe Island annual bird survey has been conducted for the NSW Parks and Conservation Service; this survey had to be cancelled this year due to Covid restrictions.

Surveys of waterbirds at Lakes George and Bathurst continued, a long-running monitoring project over more than four decades.

Regular surveys at a high-quality Travelling Stock Reserve north of Canberra near Gundaroo (Nelanglo) inform NSW Local Land Services' management of the TSR.

All bird data collected by COG are stored in databases, which can be retrieved for various purposes.

Gang-gang Newsletter

One of our best resources continues to be our newsletter Gang-gang. As has been the practice since July 2018, Gang-gang has been available on the COG website as a colour pdf that can be downloaded and printed if you wish.

We thank Sue Lashko for her great job in coordinating Gang-gang and thanks to Gail Neumann, who does the layout.

The COG website

Website information is regularly updated by members and thanks go to Sue Lashko, Jack Holland, David McDonald, Alison Mackerras, Martin Butterfield and Julian Robinson for this work. The whole Group is indebted to Julian Robinson for his ongoing amazing diligence and efforts in managing and maintaining the COG Website.

Records Management

COG database is kept up to date by the Records Management Team and the Rarities Panel. I would like to acknowledge the contributions provided by Nicki Taws as Records Officer, and Tony Harding, Helen Mason and many others for data entry.

Rarities Panel

The Panel continues to review reports of unusual species, and publish endorsements in Canberra Bird Notes. Thanks for the efforts of Grahame Clark, Richard Allen, Dick Schodde, Jenny Bounds and Nicki Taws who are the moderators of our COG rarities records, and Barbara Allan who coordinates the Rarities Panel's work.

Outings

We were very fortunate to be able to run a full field trip programme until lockdown on 12 August 2021. As well as a variety of day trips within the ACT, and to Wee Jasper and Scott Nature Reserve, Mulloon, longer trips also proved to be popular. Shoalhaven Heads in February, Wanganella at Easter (with Plains-wanderer on site) and Mallacoota for the ANZAC long weekend took us to quite different landscapes. Anthony Overs continued to lead beginners' outings to the Australian National Botanic Gardens. These proved so popular that additional dates had to be added to the programme.

After a two-month cessation of outings during the lockdown, and the unfortunate cancellation of 11 trips including the ever-popular Green Cape stay and the Eden pelagic, the programme recommenced on October 16 and will continue until mid-December. Hopefully, the cancelled outings can be rescheduled in 2022.

The field trip programme would not be possible without the loyal band of 15 leaders who volunteer year after year, and one new teenage leader this year. A particular thank-you also to Sandra Henderson who coordinates the Wednesday walks.

Genuine thanks go to Sue Lashko on behalf of all members for all her efforts in making our outings program a great success under difficult circumstances. This

is a vital part of COG's activities and the fact that the planned outings for the year are mostly fully attended is testimony to their popularity.

Canberra Bird Notes

Michael Lenz and Kevin Windle continue their great work as Editors of the Canberra Bird Notes and I thank them 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.

Monthly meetings

During 2021-2022 Jack Holland again arranged an interesting year of both local and interstate speakers. Due to the COVID-19 lockdowns COG was again forced to hold virtual meetings from September 2021 to February 2022, inclusive. However, from March 2022 we were able to re-commence face-to-face meetings. I would again like to thank Jack for his efforts in bringing to the members engaging and informative presentations this year. Before COVID-19 hit we held meetings early in the year and Sandra Henderson took on the responsibility of providing the raffle prizes and selling the tickets. All of these add to the enjoyment of the occasions and provide an opportunity for members to socialise. Thanks to Sandra. The committee is planning to get back to face-to-face general meetings and committee meetings as soon in the new year as possible.

CanberraBirds email /chatline

At the end of the year, COG's CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list had 384 subscribers, 28 more than at 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. The list manager has commended subscribers for the way they use the list: positively, productively, and politely. The list software, Mailman, continues to function smoothly.

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. I warmly thank the members of COG who donated during the year. Two grants were made during 2022-23: \$5,000 to McLean Cobden (ANU) to support research into the population genetic structure of the Superb Parrot in the greater Canberra area, and \$1,000 to the Murray Wildlife team to support research into the Australian Painted-Snipe, making the Fund a "Key Donor" for this initiative.

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 habitats.

Conclusion

On behalf of all those on the Committee and those COG Cogs who support the whole organisation I would like to thank the membership for its continued support so that we can continue our work to study, conserve and educate about Canberra's amazing birds.

Neil Hermes
President
1 November 2022