Birds of the ACT

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TWO CENTURIES OF CHANGE

Steve Wilson OAM



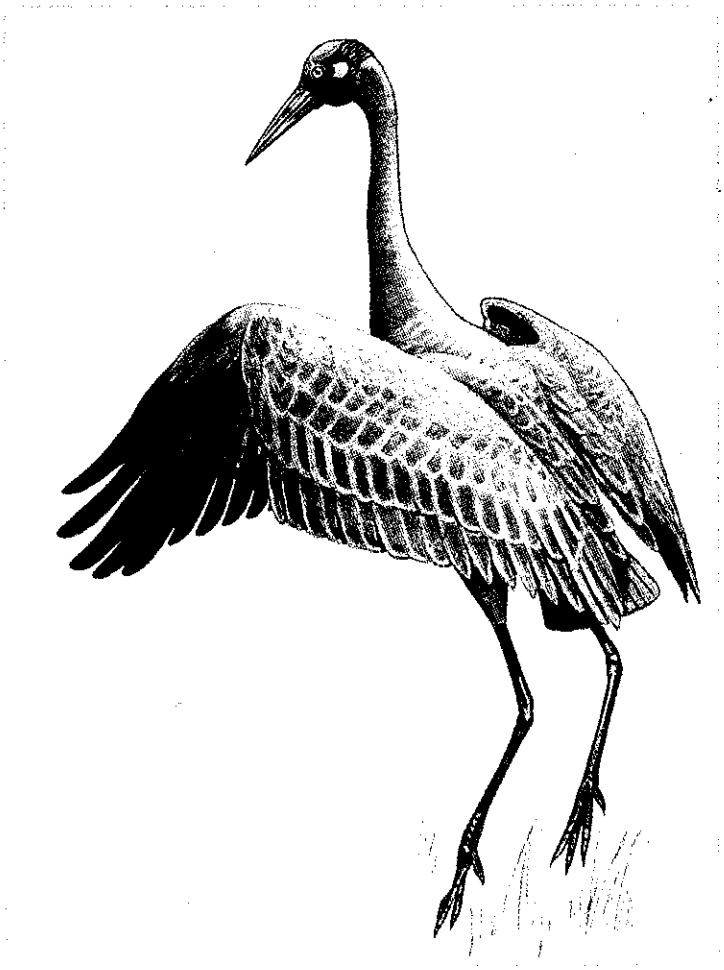
Canberra Ornithologists Group

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Editor: Muriel Brookfield
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DEDICATION

To the other half of me,
Nonie Wilson

Foreword

This book is a testament to the enterprise and scholarship of the author, Mr Steve Wilson and to the support given by his wife Nonie.

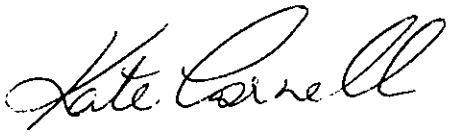
The book is about the study of birds in the Australian Capital Territory (and as it was previously known, the Federal Captial Territory) and records the history of each species observed in the ACT and reported in the ornithological literature. The *Introduction* traces the development of ornithology (and the list of ACT birds) in the Australian Capital Territory, while the *Systematic List* provides details of each species.

The list of Canberra Birds has not been updated since 1963, and this work is a significant addition to the literature. It will be an important ornithological reference, both in the ACT and nationally, for many years into the future. The status of each bird is commented on over the years, especially as it is today. Anyone interested in the Canberra and ACT environment will find this book a comprehensive, interesting and highly informative source of knowledge about the birds of our city-state.

The importance of conservation is emphasised, in particular with respect to nesting sites of many species such as cockatoos and parrots, pardelotes, treecreepers, tree martin and some falcons. These birds require nest holes in trees. Hollows in trees suitable for nesting do not develop until the tree is in the age-range of 80 to 150 years, so the preservation of old trees is vitally important for the preservation of these species.

A total of 280 bird species have been observed in the ACT. The ACT Government, in common with other Australian jurisdictions, has in place measures to ensure the conservation of our biodiversity and to protect those elements that are threatened by changes in our environment. Canberrans greatly value birds as one of the wonderful natural features of the city and its bushland surrounds, whatever the season. It is important for all Canberrans to care for their environment and make the ACT a safe haven for as many birds (and other animals and plants) as possible.

I commend Steve and Nonie for their work, and the Canberra Ornithologists Group for their enterprise in publishing this seminal work.



Kate Carnell MLA
Chief Minister

Preface

This is an interpretative book and answers many of our questions on the distribution of bird species in our area. The landscape and bird population of the southern tablelands have undergone great changes in the last two hundred years. The story told here is of the growth of our knowledge of the bird species in the area that is now the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). We have a dynamic legacy.

The central part of the book presents basic data that will always be of value. The records have been searched, and the first publication in the literature of each bird species is reported here. There are over 300 species mentioned, some of them now extinct. The present status of each species, its recorded history and its habitat are put together in the Systematic List.

To avoid confusion, current English names, scientific names and the taxonomic order follow Christidis and Boles (1994). Their species list is referred to as the Australian list.

Modern names have been used for all places referred to in the text, as many places have changed names over the years. For example, 16 names have been traced for the area covered by the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, showing the need to standardise titles.

Because of its altitude and inland location, Canberra has four very well-defined seasons; and this is reflected in the species of birds present at different times of the year. The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) records show that some species are present throughout the year, while others are seasonal migrants of diverse types.

Autumn brings to the tablelands area the spectacular honeyeater migration along the Murrumbidgee River. This is followed by the arrival in Canberra of several other species, among them currawongs and cockatoos, which have bred in the ranges during the summer. They are best regarded as altitudinal migrants. From autumn to mid-winter vagrant feeding flocks of several smaller species, including various thornbills, roam the area.

In spring we see the sequential return of summer breeding migrants, many of them from the north. Different species in differing numbers pass through the suburbs, where some stay to breed. Suffice it to say that bird watching in Canberra is of interest at all seasons, as one is never sure of what may be encountered.

The purpose of this book is to assist the reader to appreciate the way bird populations have changed since the days of the first European settlers, and the way the list of birds of the ACT has developed.

Also it is hoped to encourage observers to report all their records to COG because, as is clearly shown, bird populations are never static and must be monitored. We need to work towards their conservation and that of their habitat.

A broad range of species is in decline because their habitat of open woodland is still being cleared. This is occurring over a large area of eastern and south-eastern Australia, chiefly on the inland side of the Great Dividing Range (see Chapter 3).

On the other hand, some larger bird species have adapted to human activity. These are mainly conspicuous birds such as the Galah, Crested Pigeon and the Australian Magpie. Details are given in the Systematic List.

Acknowledgments

To do this job my wife and I acquired a computer which was set up for us by Claire and Andrew Major and Bridget and Norm Poulos who have also assisted with problems as they arose. Brian, Brendan, Denis and Peter Wilson have also helped with technical aspects and the combined assistance of the group is greatly appreciated.

Grahame Clark, Malcolm Fyfe and David Purchase helped with information, criticism and advice. Mark Clayton provided significant references. All this has been of major importance and is gratefully acknowledged.

Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) has undertaken the production of this book which is much appreciated.

Over the years since the foundation of the ACT Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU) in 1964 which later became COG, the members have been publishing their sightings from the field and from their gardens and we have had Annual Bird Reports based on those data. All this has proved a mine of information during the course of this work. The ACT Atlas (Taylor and COG 1992) which was the result of several years of combined efforts of members has also been invaluable and has been drawn on extensively. So my thanks go to COG and the many observers and authors whose material has provided much of the basis of this effort.

Muriel Brookfield edited the text meticulously thereby improving its quality very considerably. Her tireless work, helpful suggestions and pleasant personality are greatly appreciated. Ann Howarth is thanked for her able technical assistance, and Kevin Wilson for the production of the map.

Finally my thanks go to my wife of 60 years, Nonie, who patiently typed the material from my poor handwriting and then, with me, proof-read the whole document many times.

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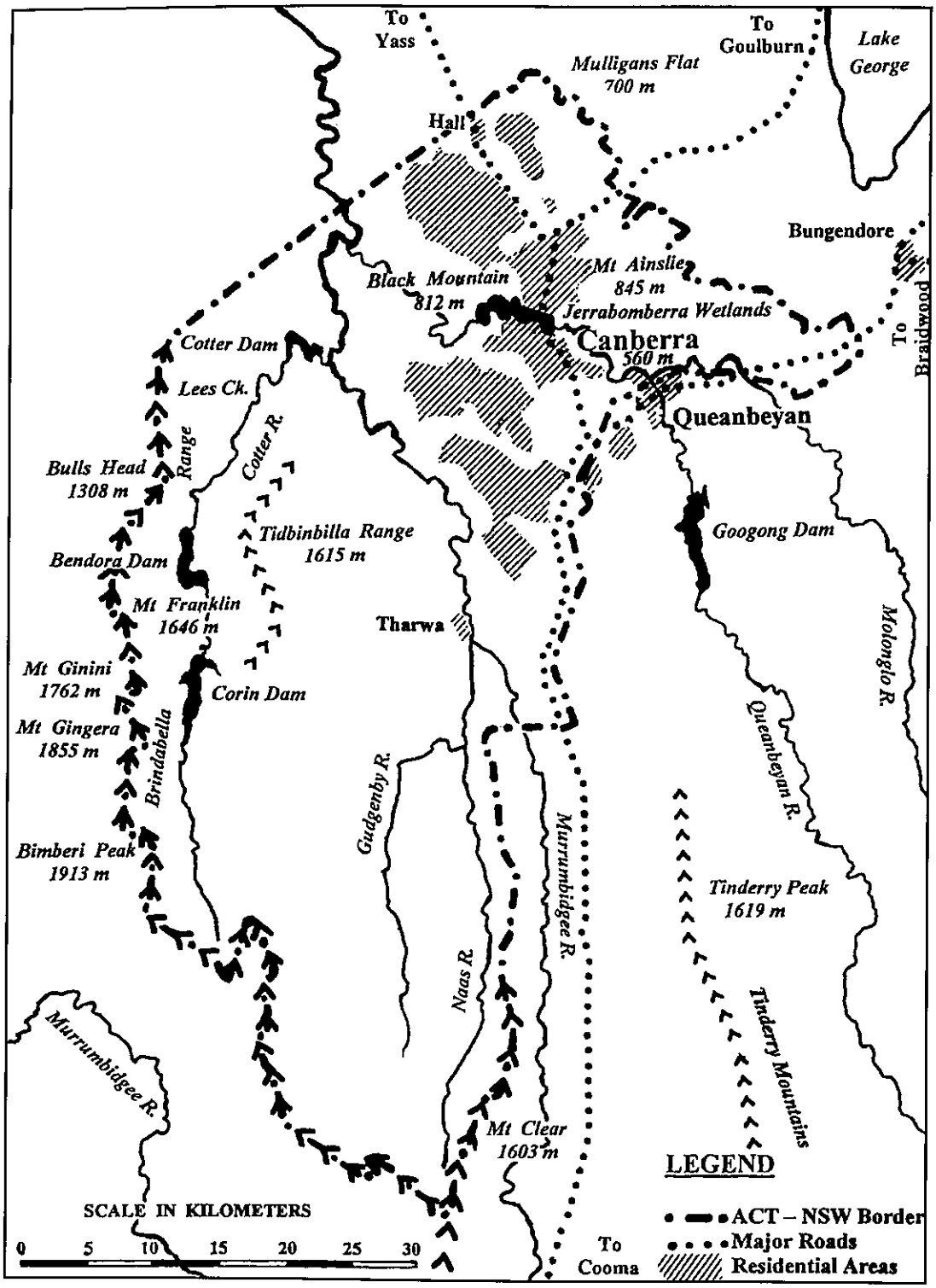
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ACT showing geographical features relevant to the text

THE HISTORY OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF BIRDS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Introduction

In an item in *Canberra Bird Notes* entitled 'The Role of Canberra Ornithologists Group' (Wilson 1997), the point was made that there is a need to compile and publish a definitive list of the birds of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). That was the beginning of this project.

There has never been a comprehensive listing of our birds that included a review of the historical records. Previous short lists were last updated by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). Since then various publications, mentioned in this text, have studied aspects of birdlife in the ACT: others have been concerned with the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) area of interest, which is larger and extends into surrounding New South Wales. None of these sources has reviewed the Systematic List.

The area dealt with here is the tablelands and ranges section of the ACT, which centres on the city of Canberra. The literature has been searched for the first and subsequent authentic records of all birds in this area. The Jervis Bay component of the ACT has quite a different avifauna, and is not covered.

The history of the recorded birds of the ACT naturally divides itself into three periods: the historical era before the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in 1913; the period of the early ornithologists which extends to about 1960; and the modern era from 1960 onwards.

In the Systematic List each species is dealt with according to what is known of it in each of these three periods, ending with a summary of the present status of the bird.

Before the European settlers

The earliest known record of birds in this part of the southern tablelands is that of two bustards (wild turkeys) in a rock painting in the Rendezvous Creek rockshelter in Namadgi National Park. There is no date available.

By 1800, large birds like the bustard, brolga and emu were widespread on the tablelands. They had been hunted over centuries by the Aboriginal people, sometimes using fire to flush them (Flood 1996), but were plentiful.

The importance of birds to the local tribes, the Ngunawal, Ngarigo and Walgalu, is reflected in the names of some of their social groups, Eaglehawk and Crow; and of some totems, the emu, hawk and lyrebird.

After European settlement, the bird population of the area was to change dramatically. Today, nearly two centuries later, there is a very different distribution.

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The historical era 1800-1913

Early 1800s: knowledge of Australian birds at that time

It is an interesting fact that, in the early nineteenth century, before European settlement had penetrated this inland region, some Australian birds were already well-known and documented overseas. The early explorers had done a great job of taking back skins and drawings of the exotic-looking birds of the east coast. Cockatoos and parrots were already familiar to Londoners.

In 1808 John Williams Lewin published *Birds of New Holland* in London. He then published the first illustrated book of birds in Australia, in Sydney in 1813. *Birds of New South Wales* had 18 coloured plates. The second (and posthumous) edition in 1822 contained 26 plates. It was another 150 years before anything remotely similar was produced for our local high country.

The Ginninderra settlers

A decade after Lewin's book, the settlers reached Ginninderra, the forerunner to Canberra. From then on, there were many references to the birds of the area in personal journals, letters and books, and in newspapers published in Goulburn and Queanbeyan. But there were none in the ornithological literature.

Many of the personal comments have been gathered and published, particularly by Lyall Gillespie, referred to below. Our knowledge of the birds of the area and of the changing landscape during this period is derived chiefly but not solely from the writings of three authors. References to birds were incidental to their main story so what is included here is far from a complete list. Nevertheless their writings provide us with some idea of the birds of the area and also the prevailing attitudes towards them. Several of their comments about birds are mentioned under the appropriate species headings in the Systematic List.

Brief biographical notes of these three important authors follow, and their writings are also referred to under 'The Changing Landscape' later in this chapter.

Early authors who covered the period to 1913

John Gale 1830-1929

Gale was born in Cornwall, England and was apprenticed to the printing trade. He first visited Queanbeyan and the area that was later to become the ACT in 1855 and took up permanent residence in Queanbeyan in 1860. There he founded and edited the *Golden Age* newspaper that later became known as the *Queanbeyan Age*. His persistent advocacy for this area to be the site of the national capital earned him the title of 'The Father of Canberra'.

His book was written in his later years (Gale 1927) and although there is doubt about the accuracy of some of his writings, the book contains a great deal of information that would have been lost, had he not recorded it

Samuel Shumack 1850-1940

Shumack was born in County Cork, Ireland and came to Australia with his family in 1856. He began observing birds at an early age, while out with his flock and his dog. With his father he took up a selection called Springvale at Weetangera in 1865 which he continued to farm until the land was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1915. He was interested in the people and history of the district and was gifted with a retentive memory. He was persuaded to write his recollections of Canberra, and these fill a large manuscript volume of 488 pages.

This work was ultimately donated to the National Library of Australia by the Shumack family. It was edited by his sons John and Samuel with the help of Laurie Fitzhardinge of the Australian National University (ANU) and first appeared in 1967 with a reprint later (Shumack 1977).

Lyall Gillespie 1919-

Gillespie was born at Hall in the ACT and is a well-known local historian. Before his retirement he was Canberra's City Manager. He is the great grandson of John and Mary Ann Gillespie who arrived in Australia in 1841. After working in the district for a number of years, they selected their own land near Ginninderra in 1853. Gillespie is a life member of the Canberra and District Historical Society and the author of a number of books and articles on aspects of the history of the Canberra district (Gillespie 1991; 1992).

Early twentieth century 1913–1960

Authors, early ornithologists and other sources

After the founding of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in 1913, the population of Canberra remained very small. In 1927 Parliament House was opened, but brought little growth to the city. Though Parliament met in Canberra, most of the larger Departments remained in Melbourne, so the population increased only slowly in the years that followed. This had two effects: firstly the habitat of the city-suburban area changed little – the big changes were yet to come; and secondly, there were few resident ornithologists or bird observers here. Nevertheless, during that time eight papers appeared, some of them in the *Emu*, all of which are quite important in our ornithological record. Each of these added more birds to the ACT list.

The ***Emu***, founded in 1901, was the first Australian ornithological publication. In its early days it was mainly a journal for amateur authors. Bird lists of many localities were published, helping greatly with our knowledge of the distribution of the various species at the time. Today the *Emu* is more professional.

Charles Barrett was the first to publish a paper in the literature about the birds of the FCT (Barrett 1922). This was not a formal list of birds seen, but rather an essay covering his bird observations on two visits to Tuggeranong Homestead. He listed 50 species. To quote Barrett: 'These are but glimpses of the bird life around Tuggeranong, gleanings of brief rambles. With more time for observing, one might have named, perhaps, a hundred birds for the district'. His conclusions are of interest and somewhat prophetic. 'Canberra's future bird lovers will have a fair choice of places for their field days. Bird life should remain plentiful on the plains and among the hills long after the city has been built and peopled'.

D.P. Jones was Head Teacher at the Duntroon Public School which was situated on Fairbairn Avenue near Majura Road. He compiled a bird list between June 1913 and 1928, and added another 71 species to Barrett's 50. This was then submitted to the journal, the *Emu* in Melbourne, by Dr. J.A. Leach, author of *An Australian Bird Book*, and published under the name of D.P.Jones (Jones 1929). His was a listing of species seen, with few comments about location of sightings. The Australian Bustard was the only species for which a date was given.

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A series of interesting articles later put forward ideas as to the origin of the Mathews bird list, reaching the conclusion that it was mainly the efforts of six named observers (Hermes 1982 a, b, and c). A search of the Mathews papers in the National Library of Australia failed to find anything relating to the preparation of his list.

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The first regular survey of a particular area within the ACT was carried out between Uriarra Crossing and the Cotter River Road along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. This was done by Don Lamm, who walked that route 37 times between September 1947 and September 1949, at times accompanied by **John Calaby** (Lamm and Calaby 1950). They provided an excellent picture of the birdlife, and were the first to give details of the now well-known autumn honeyeater migration. New species encountered were dealt with in detail in an earlier paper, written with David White, then at secondary school (Lamm and White 1950). They also reviewed the previously published papers, except that of Daley, of which Lamm was probably unaware.

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On his second tour of duty he carried out surveys at Lake George, and at New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges.

J.N. McKelvie observed birds for two and a half years throughout the ACT, mentioning Mt. Franklin, Mt. Tidbinbilla, Uriarra, Tharwa, Naas and Gudgenby (McKelvie 1957). He commented on earlier papers, remarked that he did not see certain birds, and added one new species.

G.M. Dunnet in the final paper of this era, detailed work carried out at Gungaderra in the northern area of the ACT towards Hall, on the avian predation of young rabbits (Dunnet 1957). He mentioned three species, one of which was new to the ACT bird list.

The modern era from 1960

Publications and the foundation of COG

In 1963 Don Lamm, ever eager to publish the results of observations, initiated a paper which commented on 74 species and added 45 to the list (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). The paper gathered together the work of several people, and added many species known to be resident in the western ranges. This was an area of difficult terrain never adequately worked in earlier days.

By 1964 there was sufficient interest in Canberra among ornithologists to form an ornithological society. A meeting was called; and was held in the author's living room. It was decided at that gathering in June 1964, to form the **ACT Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU).** The Canberra Branch started with about 20 members, among them the well-known ornithologists Warren Hitchcock, Stephen Marchant, Graeme Chapman, Ian Grant and Richard Schodde. Warren Hitchcock of the Australian Bird Banding Scheme was the first President.

Annual Bird Reports were published in typed form, thanks chiefly to the drive of Stephen Marchant. When the society's publication ***Canberra Bird Notes*** commenced in July 1968, the Annual Bird Reports appeared therein. Many first reports of birds in the ACT, and several important papers have appeared in *Canberra Bird Notes* since its inception. All editors followed the principle that it was a vehicle for the publication of news of birds of the ACT where such items were of local rather than of national importance.

In 1970 the Union's Articles of Association were changed to abolish branches and the name **Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG)** was adopted at a meeting on 15 April 1970. From that time membership has grown greatly, and is today about 450.

The Bird Banding Project

Another fundamental data-gathering project was begun in the 1960s, and continued for just over two decades. This was part of the Australian Bird Banding Scheme. Data was collected regularly at New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges over a period of 21 years, from 1961 to 1982 (Appendix 1). Several members of COG participated.

From year to year, there were large fluctuations in numbers of individual species caught in the nets and banded. This occurred although the banding effort remained constant. These variations appeared to be entirely natural and unrelated to rainfall, temperature or any other perceived factor. There is no reason to believe that the same order of variation does not occur throughout the ACT, especially among the small birds.

The project has given us invaluable base data, and an extremely good view of the life history of the species which occur there (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Birds in the Australian high country (Frith 1969), illustrated by Betty Temple Watts, was also an ambitious project. The original concept for the book was to describe all the birds of the ACT. To widen the appeal of the book, it was expanded during editing to cover the region of the high country extending from Goulburn NSW through the ACT and the Snowy Mountains, virtually to Melbourne. While the area of cover was enlarged, the species dealt with all occur in the ACT with few exceptions.

Under each species a paragraph 'Distribution' deals with the status in the local area at that time. In the case of rarer birds, several important ACT occurrences are mentioned. Throughout the various printings and revisions of the book, the focus has always been on the local area, and it still functions well as an ACT field guide.

A series of articles in *Canberra Bird Notes* from Vol.2 No.2 1972 to Vol.4 No.7 1979 gave comments on the local status of all birds known to occur in the general area. These notes presented an important considered overview of the situation, and a very good idea of the status of the birds of the ACT emerged.

In 1966, the then ACT Branch of the RAOU had produced ***A field list of the birds of Canberra and district.***

This showed the periods during which each species was known to be present in the ACT and district, and indicated the breeding season for each. Coded information for 'locality' and 'habitat' were also given. COG published a second edition in 1971, a third in 1985 and a fourth in 1993. The earlier editions gave 'month' and 'year' details of many rare bird records, but the basis of some of these cannot now be traced. This is remarked on under the various species notes. The field lists were important booklets and provided an immense amount of 'potted' information. The fourth edition was expanded to contain much extra data; but it excluded records more than 25 years old, species with only one or two records, and escapees.

Data for the ***Birds of the ACT - an Atlas*** (Taylor and COG 1992) was collected for three years between 1 September 1986 and 31 August 1989. Thanks chiefly to the personal drive of McComas Taylor, every area of the ACT was covered well by a large band of enthusiastic workers numbering some 250. The result was that bird species previously reported in small numbers were listed in hundreds during that time. It was a major enterprise, and over the period quoted gave us a picture of the birds of the ACT that is unequalled.

To quote Taylor: 'This volume and the data on which it is based will serve as a yardstick against which historical and future changes may be measured. It can also play an important role in the development of long term conservation strategies by drawing attention to species, habitats and locations of special significance'.

The National Parks Association of the ACT Inc. next published the ***Field guide to the birds of the ACT*** by McComas Taylor and Nicholas Day (1993). A little over 200 species were discussed and illustrated, while another 92 were listed as rarities. Birds occurring at Lake George and at Lake Bathurst in nearby NSW were included. This 90-page publication is well illustrated. The text is naturally short and to the point, and text and drawings on opposite pages work well together. It is a valuable pocket-sized field guide.

Since the publication of the ACT Atlas, COG has expanded its database. Members are invited to submit their field observations, which are checked and then entered into the computer. There is at present an upsurge in reporting, as COG is engaged in field surveys for the new Atlas of Australian Birds. This is a four-year continent-wide project, begun in 1998.

The lists of birds of the ACT

The present list of birds of the ACT stands at 280 species. It is interesting to follow its development in 10 year periods starting with the first publication of a list in the literature, that of Barrett (1922). The spectacular surges in the additions to our knowledge of local bird species are shown in Table 1.

These data have also been used to create histograms. Figure 1 shows the number of first records published in each 10-year period since the 1920s. That decade starts with a high figure as Barrett (1922) and Jones (1929) were both published during this period. No papers were published in the 1930s, but there was significant material added in the 1940s and 1950s.

The rapid growth of the population and development of Canberra in the 1960s had several consequences for our knowledge of birds. There was a surge of first reports of species during this time.

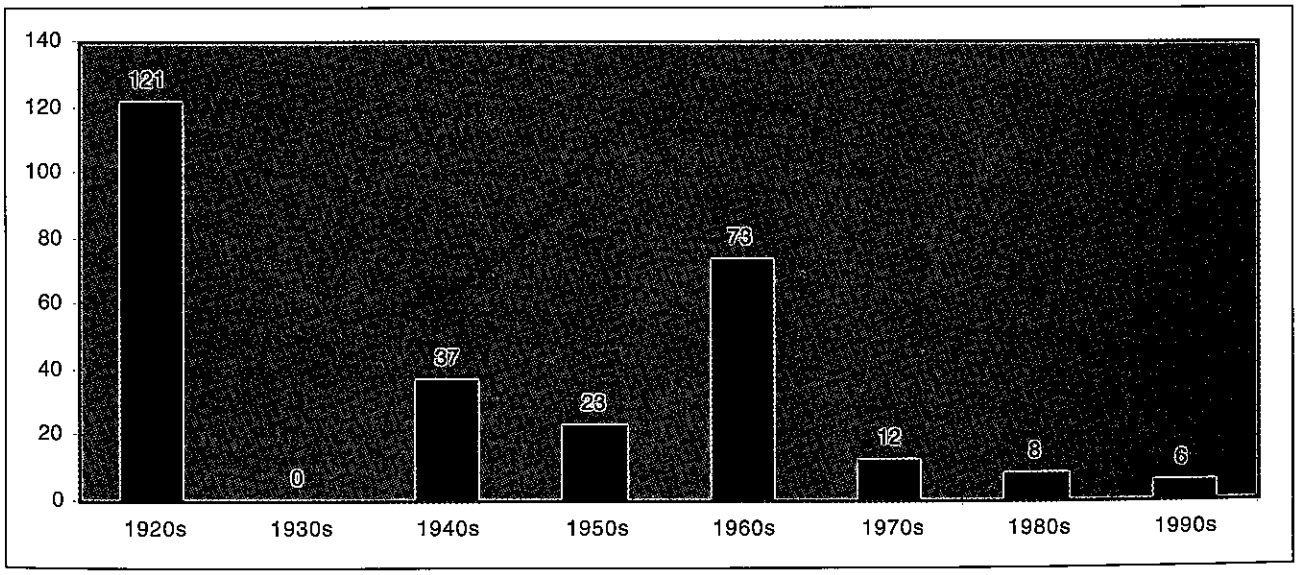


Figure 1: New species reported per decade

TABLE 1: The evolution of the ACT Bird List

Decade	Source	Publication	Progressive Total	New Species Added
1920s	1922 Barrett, Charles	*Emu*	50	
	1929 Jones, D.P	*Emu*	121	121
1940s	1943 Mathews, G.M.	*C'wealth Forestry Bureau Booklet*	156	
	1946 Daley, C.	*Victorian Field Naturalist*	158	37
1950s	1950 Lamm, D.W., and White, D.	*Emu*	179	
	1950 Dunnet, G.M.	*CSIRO Wildlife Research*	180	
	1957 McKelvie, J.N.	*Emu*	181	23
1960s	1963 Lamm, Wilson and Belton	*Emu*	226	
	1965 Schodde, R.	*Emu*	227	
	ACT Branch RAOU followed by Canberra Ornithologists Group	1960s *Annual Bird Reports* followed by *Canberra Bird Notes*	254	73
1970s	1970s Annual Bird Reports	*Canberra Bird Notes*	266	12
1980s	1980s Annual Bird Reports	*Canberra Bird Notes*	274	8
1990s	1990s Annual Bird Reports	*Canberra Bird Notes*	280	6

Causes included:

- arrival of many ornithologists among the increased population;
- filling of Lake Burley Griffin, and its attraction of water loving birds;
- foundation of the ACT Branch of the RAOU;
- and commencement of Annual Bird Reports.

Many of the species reported for the first time during this period had obviously always been present, especially those associated with open woodlands and forests.

The following decades saw decreasing numbers of new species reported, which was exactly what was to be expected. Figure 1 indicates that this trend is likely to continue for some time to come.

The cumulative total of new species reported in these 10-year periods is shown in Figure 2. This emphasises the large initial step in the 1920s and the big jump in first reports in the 1960s.

In addition to the 280 species of the ACT bird list, reports have appeared in the literature of a further 38 species, none of which occurs naturally near or in the ACT. These are listed by categories at the end of this chapter, in Table 2.

Reporting rates - variations

The research involved in compiling the historical list of birds of the ACT disclosed many variations in reporting rates over the years. There were many reasons.

Before 1913 there were no reports whatever in the ornithological literature, and the interest in birds and native animals was mostly for meat, skins or plumage. This was illustrated by the *Canberra Times* of 9 July 1998 which published a photograph taken in 1869 showing three men with skins draped from their belts, holding shot guns, and with an adult male Superb Lyrebird at their feet. Probably it was shot for its plumage, but one assumes that the body would not have been wasted. The word 'conservation' had little or no meaning in those days when settlers had to work extremely hard to eke out a living.

From the foundation of the ACT until about 1960, as detailed earlier, only a few observers published their sightings. One of the surprises of researching the earlier literature is that many common or relatively common species were not reported. There may have been some lack of effort, but the bird books of the time were not particularly helpful for our region. The difficulty of access to the ranges was doubtless a major factor.

Species like the White-browed Scrubwren, which may be the most numerous bird in the ACT, the Striated Thornbill, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater and Golden-headed Cisticola were not reported until the 1960s. In those days there were hikers and skiing enthusiasts who travelled regularly in the ranges using the limited roads and forestry tracks, and no doubt some of them were familiar with birds and had the ability to identify them. But there was no local place to report them. Another problem was that the *Emu* had few subscribers and the Bird Observers Club regarded itself as a Victorian-oriented body. The result was that few ornithological papers referring to the ACT were published.

From 1960 onwards the level of observation and publication increased tremendously. Several other regular non-ACT-based publications apart from the *Emu* became established, such as *The Australian Bird Watcher, Corella, The Bird Observer* and other national and regional publications. Papers relating to the birds of the ACT have appeared in most of these, and are quoted under the appropriate species headings.

Nevertheless there is a tendency to report only the unusual; and some competent ornithologists who work in the field regularly do not report their day-to-day observations. During the period of the ACT Atlas survey, reporting rates reached a very high peak, but afterwards declined sharply. The work being done for the new edition of the Atlas of Australian Birds is now stimulating much higher rates of recording, including some from little-known areas.

The optimum situation would be one where COG members submitted reports of all birds seen in all the various habitats throughout the year, so that a continuous picture of the local birds could be built up and maintained. The point here is that changes in species and numbers are constantly occurring, and require monitoring.

Despite fluctuations in species numbers and variations in reporting rates, it is considered that we now have a reasonably accurate picture of the local birds at this time. Continued monitoring is essential if we are to detect any change in pattern, or any threat to biodiversity and habitat.

The changing landscape

1800-1913

The bird distribution and the tableland landscape have together undergone great changes since European settlement. Theirs is a dynamic relationship that needs to be understood.

Large areas of what had previously been native grassland were cleared in the 1800s for grazing, agriculture and timber. The following quotes serve to show firsthand views of the terrain in the early days. 'The

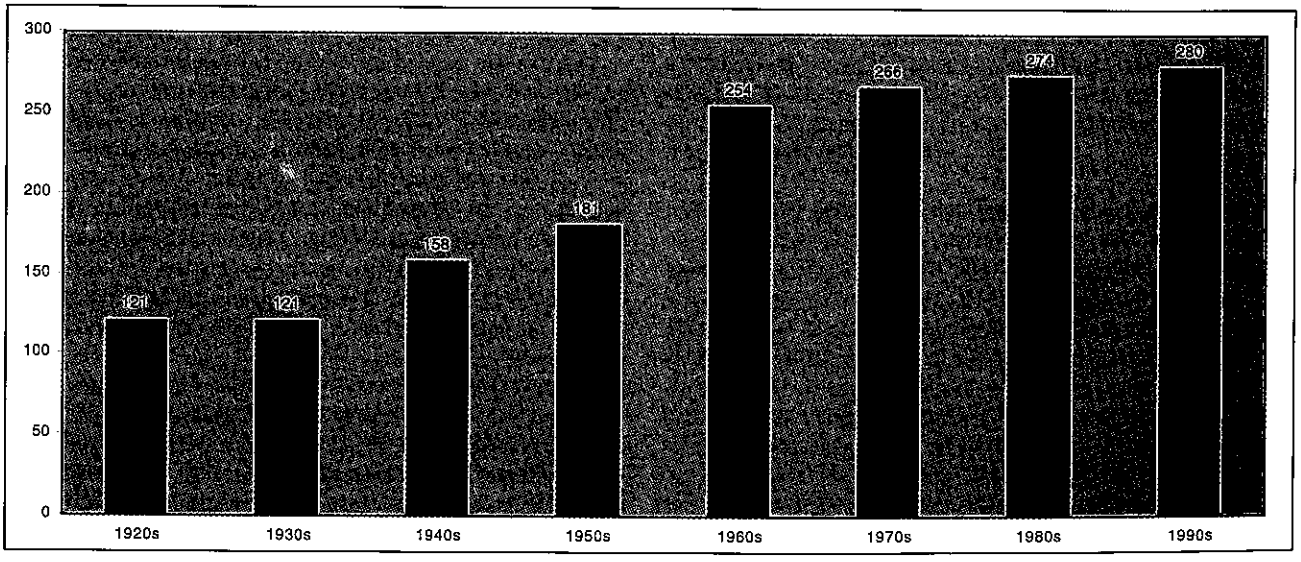


Figure 2: Cumulative total of species reported per decade

undulating country of the Ginninderra district was mainly open forest at the time of the first European settlement. Early surveyors' plans and maps indicate that the hills were well timbered, the main species of tree being gum, apple, stringybark and yellow box. The flatter areas were generally only lightly timbered, while there were some open plains' (Gillespie 1992).

'The nine hundred miles of territory acquired by the Australian Commonwealth within New South Wales, for a Federal Capital State formed part of a stretch of magnificent country populated by an aboriginal tribe, because of its abundance of natural food supply. Its perennial streams, large and small, teemed with fish; the surface of their deep pools swarmed with duck, teal and widgeon; over its plains roamed the emu and the bustard (the plains turkey of the later European settlers) and the tallegalla (the shy brush turkey of the same later oncomers); its forest with a habitat of the bronzewing and other pigeons, the curlew and other food supplying birds' (Gale 1927).

'By 1850 the environment was beginning to show the effect of settlement. Areas which had been previously timbered had been cleared for cultivation, large trees had been felled for posts and slabs, and bark had been removed from others for roofing material. Heavy stocking in some areas, especially during drought years has led to changes in vegetation' (Gillespie 1991).

'The effect of settlers' interference with the environment around Canberra became very noticeable in the 1880s but they paid no heed and continued to destroy the native flora and fauna and to introduce undesirable species of birds, animals and plants' (Gillespie 1991).

The attitude of people in the period dealt with here, 1823 to 1913, was very different to that of most people today. It should be pointed out however, that the farm labourers and small selectors in the early years had a very poor standard of living, so the shooting of birds and animals for food was not surprising.

Extermination of bird species

In the area of the future ACT, the historical period saw the local extermination of the Emu, the Brolga and the Australian Bustard, all large conspicuous birds likely to be commented on; but it is probable that less obvious species also went. The nature of the tablelands country was altered very considerably by clearing, and the birds gradually lost their habitat and previous status.

1913-1960

Prior to 1913 this part of the tablelands was a rural area with a small, farm-based population, and little in the way of local facilities.

As we have seen, the creation of the FCT and then the ACT did not initially affect the local landscape to any great extent. But when the city started to grow, the planting of trees and shrubs along the streets and in gardens began slowly to create new habitats. The older suburbs provided small green oases on the grassy plains. They were very different to the original savannah woodlands, and favoured different bird species. Some plantings, such as pines and pine belts, favoured very few.

It was not until the modern period that a more bird-friendly city was created. Then, after a while, spread of the urban area and increased population and traffic began to threaten some of the recently established species. In addition, several species in adjacent woodlands were marginalised, and some disappeared. This will be made evident in the Systematic List.

1960 onwards

The period from about 1960 onwards was ushered in by a decision of the Menzies Government to transfer the central administrations of Commonwealth Departments from Melbourne to Canberra, resulting in the first rapid increase in the local population. At that time, many professional and amateur ornithologists arrived. A great deal of fieldwork resulted, including mist netting. Roads in the Brindabella Ranges were improved, especially that to Bendora Dam, and this permitted easier access to that general area.

During the period to 1963 so far dealt with, ornithologists were well aware that despite numerous farm dams, the ACT did not provide suitable habitat for a wide range of water-frequenting birds, as there was a lack of natural swamps in the tablelands area. After heavy rain the Molonglo River would flood, and close the three low-level crossings. Much of the present area of Lake Burley Griffin, including most of the Golf Course and the old Racecourse, would be covered for a time. A few waterbirds would be seen as the flood subsided.

Probably the most important factor involving birds was the final construction of **Lake Burley Griffin** in 1963. Millions of tonnes of alluvial soil were removed from the area. Walls were built so that when the lake filled, the edges in the main basins would be deep enough to ensure that no mosquitoes would breed

there. This unfortunately meant that these areas would also be unsuitable for many species of water birds, especially waders.

The gates of Scrivener Dam were officially closed late in 1963; but a dry summer followed and a large swamp developed, reaching from the Dam to about Commonwealth Bridge. This immediately attracted an amazing number of swamp-loving species, some of them new to the ACT list. Heavy rain the following April caused the lake to fill for the first time, and the swamp birds dispersed.

Soon afterwards, the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works were brought into use, and this, with Lake Burley Griffin and Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, gave Canberra the first permanent wetland habitat. This almost immediately proved attractive for many bird species not previously present. The construction of other suburban permanent waters since has added considerably to the wetlands area, and interesting sightings have been made at all these water bodies.

When Lake Burley Griffin filled, there were shallow edges at the western and eastern ends, and at Kellys Swamp. This was previously a shallow depression holding water briefly after rain. It then became more permanent, especially when a small natural channel connecting it to Jerrabomberra Creek was deepened. This allowed the swamp to fill to the level of the lake.

These wetlands are a very good habitat when full, as they are quite shallow and improve during most summers when the lake level falls slightly. This creates mud edges around the swamp, which attract Black-fronted Dotterels, Red-kneed Dotterels, Latham's Snipe and other species. They can easily be seen from the hides near Dairy Flat Road, especially from the hide furthest along the left path.

Most of the waders reported from Lake George and Lake Bathurst, have now been recorded in the ACT. However, they occur here in much smaller numbers than on the larger nearby NSW lakes, because the area of the ACT wetlands is relatively small.

The impact of the Australian National Botanic Gardens

Turning briefly to the flora of our area, interest in our native flora among gardeners was negligible before the foundation of the Society for Growing Australian Plants in the 1950s. This was to change markedly, and the availability of favourable bird habitat with it.

Walter Burley Griffin's plan for Canberra envisaged an arboretum and a botanical reserve. This eventually led to the establishment of the **Australian National Botanic Gardens** on the eastern slopes of Black Mountain. Work was commenced in the 1950s, and continued in the 1960s on a shoestring budget. Water supply was poor, mulching was not used, and the number of staff was small. Nevertheless some banksia and grevillea species thrived, and attracted birds.

Banding studies showed that Yellow-faced, White-naped, Fuscous, Crescent, and New Holland Honeyeaters, and Eastern Spinebills and other nectar-feeding birds were numerous in the Gardens in winter. This was several years before the area was opened to the public in October 1970.

The plants that attracted these birds were not generally known or grown by gardeners in Canberra before that time; but gradually native plants and native gardens became popular. Nectar-feeding birds could then be found throughout the suburbs during the cooler months. The new habitat drew to the city a bird population that would never have been seen on the original grassy plains.

The effect of a native garden

The development of housing and gardens on what were formerly grasslands, and the effect of this on the avifauna of the area, is best illustrated by an example. Daily records have been kept since 1976 at a residence in Melba. Before the house was built, the area concerned was grassland. This had been used for grazing since European settlement, and only four trees (three of exotic species) existed within a radius of c.150 metres. The house was occupied in 1973, and a garden planted, mainly with native plant species. In 1976, 30 bird species were recorded, with an average of 4.2 species seen per day. By 1998, 55 bird species per annum were seen, and the daily bird average was 14.6 species. The aggregate list of bird species seen in and from the garden reached 106.

Over the years, Melba has been changed from dry open grassland to a well-watered suburb, with mature gardens and parklands. Birds seen in the early years but not seen now, or seldom occurring, include the Black-shouldered Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Red-rumped Parrot, Flame Robin, Skylark, Richard's Pipit and European Goldfinch, all of which are birds of the open country around Canberra (D. Purchase pers. com.).

The planting of trees and shrubs in new suburbs continues to create some excellent habitat for quite a range of bird species in present-day Canberra, but it is

important to note that many other species cannot exist in suburbia.

Some influences on the local occurrence of birds

What we have learned

Bird populations in the ACT are subject to variations in numbers and species caused by many factors. Some birds are sedentary or relatively so, some are altitudinal migrants, descending from the ranges to the tablelands in winter; but it is usually only part of the population that does this. Some remain at higher elevations in winter.

Canberra has regular seasonal migrations where some species move north to avoid winter, and probably because of a shortage of suitable food. This accounts for the spectacular massed migration of honey-eaters in the autumn, when on certain days, thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of birds fly away from the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. The Yellow-faced Honeyeaters lead the way, followed two to three weeks later by the White-naped Honeyeaters. Other species of honeyeaters are swept up in the excitement of the migration and are present in small numbers. These include the Eastern Spinebill, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, and an occasional Yellow-tufted Honeyeater.

There are some other bird species found in summer in coastal regions which normally migrate north in winter; but a few of these fly west and turn up in our area now and again. Canberra also lies a little to the east and south of the normal distribution of a number of inland and other species that are nevertheless seen here occasionally. There are many variations on these themes, and they are mentioned in the Systematic List.

Drought is another influence affecting our bird populations. When rain fails in the inland, waterbirds especially are likely to occur in the ACT in greater numbers. The reverse is also true: when the inland receives good rain, waterfowl numbers in particular are reduced here. Various songbirds are also affected by drought inland, and can be recorded locally during such periods.

The ACT has mountain and forest barriers to the west and south. Coming inland from the coast, there is the coastal escarpment and the Great Dividing Range which provide barriers to some birds. By contrast, from the north there is no natural obstacle to bird movement, and the land merely rises slowly towards our area. It is probable that several western and northern species find this an easy route; and it may be significant that sightings of a number of unusual species occur more often in the northern part of the ACT such as Mulligans Flat and the northern suburbs. This is dealt with in the various species accounts in the Systematic List.

Water-loving species of birds are mostly very mobile, and the permanent lakes in New South Wales, Lake Bathurst including The Morass, and Lake George, provide a reservoir of birds which can quickly colonise new waters. It is not surprising that this occurred with the creation of ACT wetlands. The NSW lakes normally have far higher numbers of all species than have been sighted in the ACT. The Waterbird Survey results in the COG Annual Bird Reports give full details.

In some cases these lakes have breeding populations, for example the Silver Gull, which has quite large nesting numbers on the islands of Lake Bathurst when the water level is high enough. When the ACT lakes and dams filled it did not take long for that species to appear in large numbers, though successful breeding has not yet been recorded here.

With waders in particular, the nearby NSW lakes provide suitable habitat for a wide variety of species that are sometimes reported in hundreds. In the ACT these waders only occur occasionally, in very small numbers. There is little doubt that the proximity of the NSW lakes has affected the species and numbers turning up in the ACT.

Rare and vagrant species

A problem occurred when assembling this book, (as it has with the Rarities Panel of COG, see Appendix 2), in dealing with records of rare, vagrant and introduced birds.

TABLE 2: Species recorded but not regarded as being on the ACT Bird List

Probably reported in error	8
Australian species - escapees or released	12
Foreign species - escapees or released	12
Records of doubtful validity	2
Records not properly documented and therefore not accepted	2
Accidental occurrences beyond normal range (two sea birds)	2
Total	38

In this work, every species which has been reported in the literature as occurring in the ACT is dealt with, and an assessment of its status given. Obviously some birds are escapees or have been released, as they do not occur naturally anywhere near here. Others are native to other countries. The number of these records is quite large (Table 2). The count has probably been increased by vandals breaking open cages and releasing birds.

The problem is more difficult when it comes to dealing with those species that occur here naturally at times but are reported singly, whereas they are normally seen in flocks. This applies especially to birds that are often kept in cages, such as parrots and finches. Notes are given in the following Systematic List, under each species, about the assumed nature of these records.



Emus, Margaret Preston
By permission of the National Library of Australia

Systematic list

EMU

Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae*

When European explorers first reached the area of the future ACT, they found the Emu to be common and widespread on the grasslands of the tablelands. Emus were looked upon as food and killed accordingly (Martin 1978; Gillespie 1992). By the late 1860s they were uncommon at Ginninderra, the precursor of Canberra. The last report in the 1800s was of two seen on the Canberra Plain and reported in the *Queanbeyan Age* of 11 March 1869 (Gillespie 1992). Well before the end of the century, the emu could be regarded as extinct.

A history of the species in this general area was given by Taylor (1984a). He reported that ten birds were introduced to the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in 1964: they were originally caged but later allowed to breed in the open. Also to quote Taylor, 'In spite of official attempts to contain the Emu it is possible that birds from the Reserve may become established in the wild in the future'.

The first modern record was of one reported feeding along the Corin Dam Road, four kilometres from Tidbinbilla Road (McKean 1977). Since then there have been many reports of Emus outside the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, mostly within a few kilometres. Further afield two were seen at Laurel Camp Road, Pierces Creek pine forest on 26 November 1992 (COG 1997) and two again on the same road on 3 April 1994 (COG 1998).

There is evidence of breeding outside Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, for example at Birrigai Homestead, Tidbinbilla Road, 'intermittently since the early 1980s' (Taylor and COG 1992). One adult and three juveniles were reported on 24 February 1985 in the Mt. Gingera – Mt. Ginini area (Rarities Panel News - List No. 20 n.d.). Dependent young were reported on 29 October 1993 at Murrays Corner, Paddys River (COG 1998). All modern reports have been in the western ranges as far east as Paddys River. From the conservation viewpoint there does not appear to be any threat to the Emu in the type of habitat it now occupies.

Uncommon breeding resident in a very limited area.

NOTE

The headings used for genera and family groupings of birds follow those in the COG Annual Bird Reports in *Canberra Bird Notes*. Current English and scientific names follow Christidis and Boles (1994), and their species list is referred to as the Australian list.

All species reported from the ACT are mentioned and these comprise the ACT bird list.

[The names of those not regarded as qualifying are shown in square brackets]

Species status is shown in italics.

MOUND BUILDERS

[Australian Brush-turkey *Alectura lathami*]

There has been a single reference to this species, that of Gale (1927). He used the English name Tallegalla, and inferred that it occurred at 'such elevations as Black Mountain, Tidbinbilla and others of higher altitude'. He gave a detailed description of its habitat and nesting routine. Its early distribution was Cape York to Illawarra (RAOU 1926). The modern distribution ends north of Sydney (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

John Gould used the name *Talegalla lathami* in *The Birds of Astralia,* but gave Wattled Tallegalla as the English name for the Australian Brush-turkey.

The local forests are unsuitable for this fruit-eating rain forest species (Wilson 1999). No other report in or near the ACT has been traced so this record is not regarded as valid.

QUAILS AND PHEASANTS

Stubble Quail *Coturnix pectoralis*

One man shot 'twenty brace of quail' in 1868 (Gillespie 1992), and for years it was a favoured sporting target. Such numbers of this and the Brown Quail do not seem to be present today. Improvement of pastures on farms may have affected numbers.

Jones (1929) reported this species as did Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'occasional - country'.

In the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992) and since, it has been recorded in most types of country habitat except dense forests. Typical recent locations are Mulligans Flat, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, Uriarra Road, dry grasslands near Lakes Ginninderra and Tuggeranong, and high grasslands near the Yankee Hat area in the south of the Territory.

This species appears to be noted mainly by call in the breeding season; it is difficult to observe in its preferred dry grassland. The result is that it is probably underreported. Numbers build up greatly in suitable areas, for example after heavy rain, and it is quite nomadic (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Breeding has been recorded occasionally in the ACT but again, because of the secretive nature of this bird, it is probably underreported. There is an abundance of suitable habitat for this species in the ACT.

Uncommon breeding species locally but it is sometimes quite nomadic.

Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora*

First reported by Jones (1929) then by Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'occasional - country'.

While the Stubble Quail and the Brown Quail are sometimes found in the same areas, for example the Lake Ginninderra peninsula and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, the Brown Quail generally favours damper areas. It is less frequently reported than the Stubble Quail, and its recorded distribution in the ACT is more limited than that of its relative.

Despite its secretive habits the Brown Quail is fairly regularly reported locally, generally in small numbers, though larger flocks occasionally occur. As with the Stubble Quail, because most records are from calls in the breeding season, it is likely to be underreported. It has been recorded as breeding in the ACT occasionally, but few nests are found. There is an abundance of suitable habitat, particularly near the lakes and dams.

Rare breeding visitor.

[King Quail *Coturnix chinensis*]

Over a long period in recent years there have been three reports of individual birds, all of which must be regarded as escapees as the species does not occur near the ACT.

[Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*]

The possibility of a small wild population in the suburbs and in the valley of the Gudgenby River was raised earlier (Marchant 1966), and the chances of it becoming established were discussed. There have been six records of this species, all recent ones from the suburbs. It has not become established, and all sightings are regarded as escapees.

[Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*]

Two males of this species were reported in different parts of Narrabundah (Dabb 1995). While both were seen several times, the species is not established here, and these were obviously escapees.

GEESE

[Domestic Goose *Anser anser*]

Small populations have been reported at Lake Ginninderra (Taylor, Davey and Gibson1986) and at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (COG 1997). There is no record of breeding and these groups have disappeared. This bird is not on the Australian list.

SWAN AND DUCKS

Plumed Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna eytoni*

The first record of this species was of nine birds which joined the captive study flock at Gungahlin (CSIRO), from 6 to 14 April 1966 (Wilson 1966). The ACT is outside the distribution shown by Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984). This species is very mobile; individuals and small flocks have been seen at Tidbinbilla, Gungahlin (CSIRO) and other places recently.

Rare vagrant in this area.

Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*

Two birds were noted at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 2 July 1966 (Wilson 1968). Since then there have been records from such places as Lanyon and Uriarra, but chiefly from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works. The deep water suits this diving species, and individuals and small groups have remained for some months at times.

Rare vagrant in the ACT.

Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*

Jones (1929) was the first to list this species followed by Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'rare - rivers'.

Since the construction of Lake Burley Griffin and other lakes and dams, this species has been present, sometimes in large numbers, throughout the year; but at other times there have been no reports. Several papers have resulted. Sightings were reported between 17 April and 2 August 1975, the highest number being 12 birds (Ross 1975). The same author reported the results of a two-year study from January 1977 to December 1978 during which the Musk Duck was always seen. The emphasis of this study was the display of the male (Ross 1979).

The decline of the Musk Duck between January 1979 and January 1982 was reported by Davey (1982). He also dealt with the decreasing numbers of the species on Lake Burley Griffin and Lake Ginninderra during the period 1979-80 to 1987 (a seven year period).

The highest number recorded was 44 on each lake, while the minimum numbers were one on Lake Burley Griffin and four on Lake Ginninderra (Davey 1989). Since 1990 the species has been seen in very small numbers on various lakes and dams, and the decline in numbers reported has not been reversed. The reasons are uncertain. Breeding has been recorded in the ACT.

Uncommon breeding resident.

Freckled Duck *Stictonetta naevosa*

Five birds of this species were recorded at Yarralumla Bay on 1 April 1965, the first for the ACT (Wilson 1965). Twenty were reported on 30 July 1965 (Anon. 1969a), the highest number recorded to date. In some years it is seen quite frequently; for example, there were seven sightings in 1992 but none in 1993-94 or 1994-95 (COG 1998). Breeding has not been recorded. It is classified as rare in Australia (Garnett 1992).

Uncommon irruptive visitor.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

This species was present in the 1860s as shown by the following quote: 'About 1867 a sensation was caused when Mr. Campbell [Duntroon] inserted an advertisement in The *Queanbeyan Age* which read "whereas on such-and-such a date one of my black swans was shot on the river . . . I hereby offer a reward of one hundred pounds for information that will lead to the conviction, etc. of the miscreant so offending" '(Shumack 1977). One wonders whether Mr Campbell was applying English traditions regarding trespass and ownership of wildlife resources occurring on his property.

Jones (1929) reported the Black Swan as did Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'occasional - rivers'.

When Lake Burley Griffin filled and other water features were developed, the Black Swan gradually became more common. It is now always present in the ACT; the species has adapted well to local water areas.

There are regular breeding records from various wetlands.

Common breeding resident where there is suitable habitat.

[Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*]

The *Atlas of Australian Birds* (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984) recorded this from Tidbinbilla on the basis of a semi-captive breeding population at that Nature Reserve. On the other hand, the ACT Atlas (Taylor and COG 1992) did not record this species. Two birds were seen at Uriarra Homestead on 15 May 1976 (Shankey 1977) and again, probably at the same place, on 15 January 1978 (Cox 1978). Without doubt these originated at Tidbinbilla, but the species has not become established outside the Reserve.

Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*

In 1859 the Australian Shelduck was reported in large numbers on Ginninderra Creek (Shumack 1977). This species was reported by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'occasional - rivers'.

Again, as with other water loving species, the development of the Canberra water features has increased the abundance of this bird locally. It has been reported from suburban lakes and dams, and at places like Mulligans Flat and Bendora Dam. It can generally be found on Jerrabomberra Creek and other ACT wetlands. Breeding has been reported locally.

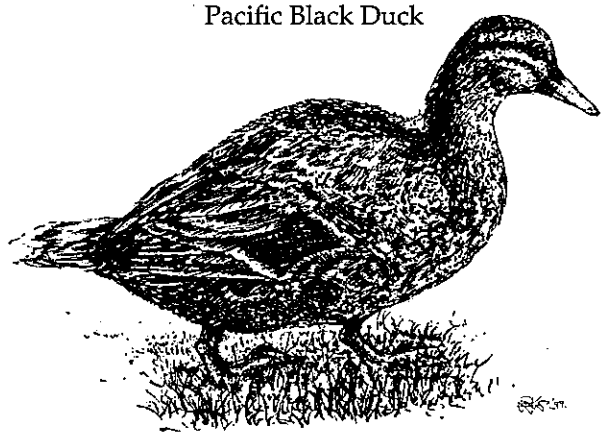
Breeding resident in small numbers.

Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*

This was the most numerous of the various local ducks on Ginninderra Creek in 1859 according to Shumack (1977). The Australian Wood Duck was included in the lists of Jones (1929), Mathews (1943), Lamm and White (1950) and Lamm and Calaby (1950). Mathews regarded it as 'occasional - rivers', but Lamm and White commented that it 'rivals the Black Duck . . . for the commonest duck in the area'. As the species breeds widely in the ACT, often away from water, and grazes near farm dams, Lamm and White's assessment is probably the more accurate. With the establishment of urban wetlands the species numbers have undoubtedly increased and it is regularly reported.

Common breeding resident which has benefited from the construction of farm dams and lakes.

Pacific Black Duck



Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

First reported from Lake Burley Griffin on 26 December 1967 (Anon. 1969a), it is probable that the local population arose from domestic escapees or releases and also that it is not pure stock. It has been reported as breeding, and can interbreed with the Pacific Black Duck: there is grave danger of this occurring. It is ignored by some individuals in their bird reports. The question of the Mallard was well handled by Schodde and Tidemann (1986).

Small local populations of what may well be more correctly assessed as domestic ducks.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

This species was referred to as common on the deep pools of the rivers and creeks at the time of the first settlement (Gale 1927). It was regarded as numerous in 1859 (Shumack 1977).

Reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - rivers', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who saw it on each of their 37 surveys along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

This species is another which has benefited from human activity in the construction of farm dams and lakes. It breeds regularly in the ACT, often away from water and rivals the Australian Wood Duck as the most abundant duck here.

Common breeding resident which has probably increased in numbers in recent years.

Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*

The habitat in the ACT probably did not suit this species in earlier days and the first published report was of four from what is now the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 5 July 1964 (Wilson 1965). Since the increase in area of the ACT wetlands, it is frequently seen on the larger bodies of permanent water. It has been recorded from Uriarra, Mulligans Flat and Kowen where suitable wetlands exist, and also from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works, Lake Burley Griffin and other urban lakes. Local numbers vary considerably depending on rainfall and other factors.

Fairly common breeding visitor.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*

This is probably the teal referred to as swarming over the deep pools of the rivers and creeks about the time of the first settlement (Gale 1927).

Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) both recorded this species; the latter classed it as 'occasional - rivers'.

With the completion of the various urban wetlands, it is now regularly recorded from the shallow areas and from the larger farm dams which dot the pastoral area. Numbers fluctuate greatly as they do all over its Australian distribution.

Breeding has been reported frequently.

Common breeding resident in suitable habitat.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*

This species was reported by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943), who gave its status as 'occasional - rivers'.

By comparison with the Grey Teal, this bird is reported much less frequently. It has been seen on farm dams and on shallow urban waters over much of the tableland area of the ACT, including Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Breeding has been recorded in the ACT.

Uncommon breeding resident.

Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*

Jones (1929) reported 'two seen' during his 1913-28 survey, while Mathews (1943) classified it as 'rare - rivers'. There was little suitable habitat then.

This largely inland species is very nomadic. It is present here on an occasional basis; 100 were reported by Lenz (1982) on the east basin of Lake Burley Griffin in September 1980. The Pink-eared Duck feeds largely in shallow waters. Most records have come from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park.

Breeding does not occur in the ACT.

Common non-breeding visitor to suitable habitat.

Hardhead *Aythya australis*

As this is a diving species favouring deeper water than many other ducks, it is not surprising that the first record was that of Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). It is now seen fairly regularly at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works; and occasionally on any deep permanent water such as at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Uriarra, Lake Tuggeranong and suitable large farm dams. Breeding has been reported locally (Taylor and COG 1992), but it is infrequent.

Uncommon breeding visitor.

[Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*]

This bird was listed by Taylor and COG (1992) under the heading of 'Escapees and releases'. There have been occasional records, probably of hybrid domestic birds, but there have been no ACT breeding records and the birds seem to have disappeared locally. This species is not on the Australian list.

GREBES

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

There have been farm dams in the ACT since early settlement days, so it was natural that Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) reported this species, the latter giving it as 'occasional - rivers'.

This is the most widespread and common of the three local grebes and it breeds wherever there is suitable permanent water, often on farm dams.

Common breeding resident.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliocephalus poliocephalus*

This species prefers fairly large bodies of water and Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) were the first to record it, with sightings of small numbers dating back to 1961. It has been sighted on many local water bodies, occasionally in hundreds. This grebe is less widespread than the Australasian Grebe and is concentrated in suitable places such as Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works and Lake Ginninderra, where large flocks are often seen.

Breeding has been recorded on rare occasions in the ACT.

Common species, breeding infrequently in the ACT.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

The rarest of the grebes locally and one which frequents the larger water bodies. It was first reported by Wilson (1965) as Lake Burley Griffin filled. Its numbers vary greatly from year to year; for example, there were no records in 1994-95.

There have been occasional reports of breeding in the ACT.

Uncommon resident breeding infrequently in the ACT.

SHEARWATERS

[Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*]

The inclusion of this species depends on a single specimen 'found in a distressed state on the forecourt of a Service Station in Braddon and could possibly have been transported from the coast by man. However it could also have flown as these birds (particularly young ones) have been found inland'. (Rarities Panel News 1989b). The following Annual Bird Report commented that 'it most likely arrived as a stowaway in a coastal holiday maker's car and did not arrive inland of its own accord' (Veerman et al. 1989).

STORM-PETRELS

[White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*]

A specimen of this species was found 'on Dairy Flat Road (near Kellys Swamp, Fyshwick)' on 21 September 1985,'Found on side of road' (Veerman et al. 1989). This became a specimen at Gungahlin (CSIRO) collection No. 40050. Nothing is known of how this bird got to the ACT.

DARTER, CORMORANTS AND PELICAN

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

This diving species was first reported by Wilson (1965), when five birds were seen on the Molonglo River in May 1965. It has been reported occasionally from farm dams and the major lakes. The Molonglo River above Lake Burley Griffin and the mouth of Jerrabomberra Creek seem favoured locations. Breeding has been reported on the Molonglo River.

The Darter is usually seen in small numbers, the highest noted being 19 on 3 August 1991 in the Grevillea Park area of the East Basin (COG 1996). From COG reports it appears that it is not always present in the ACT, but no regular seasonal pattern is apparent. Taylor and COG (1992) mentioned that there is 'anecdotal evidence of a long term decline in the local population', but this would be difficult to assess with such a small group of birds in fluctuating numbers.

Breeding resident species in varying numbers.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

This species was reported by Mathews (1943) whose assessment was 'occasional - rivers'. It was also seen by Lamm and Calaby (1950) and Lamm and White (1950). They found it to be common, and as it is frequently found on farm dams, even small ones, as well as creeks and rivers, this is probably the better verdict.

It is by far the most common of the local cormorants and a flock of 50 was sighted on Lake Ginninderra on 23 April 1994 (COG 1998). It can be found on any permanent water in the ACT, but despite numbers pre-

sent, there are few breeding records. Taylor and COG (1992) traced only one record, with none during the ACT Atlas survey. It seems likely that breeding may have been overlooked.

Common resident species with fairly constant numbers, breeding occasionally.

[Black-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscescens*]

The waters of southern Australia are the home of this species reported in the ACT by Jones (1929), who failed to report either the Little Pied Cormorant or the Pied Cormorant. Obviously this particular observation was an error and should be disregarded.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*

The least common of the locally occurring cormorants, it was first recorded by Brown and Gibson (1966). There were five reports in 1965-66, the maximum being three birds. Since then there have been many records, mostly of one or two birds, but at times it does not occur over a period of years. There have been no breeding records.

Rare visitor.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

Mathews (1943) reported this as 'occasional - rivers', and Lamm and White (1950) also recorded it.

In the early days of Lake Burley Griffin, it was referred to as occasional on the lake (Wilson 1965). Since then, with the construction of other urban wetlands, it has become much more common in suitable habitat. It is often seen perched on branches over water. A breeding colony has existed along the Molonglo River upstream from the lake, and there are other similar records.

Common breeding resident in suitable habitat.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

This species was recorded by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - rivers', and Lamm and White (1950), who commented that it was not as common as the Little Pied Cormorant. It was also seen by Lamm and Calaby (1950) during their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys.

With the filling of the lake it was noted as 'always common on Lake Burley Griffin' (Wilson 1965). It is found on urban lakes and wetlands throughout the ACT. Breeding has been recorded on the Molonglo River above the lake, the largest colony reported being 40 nests.

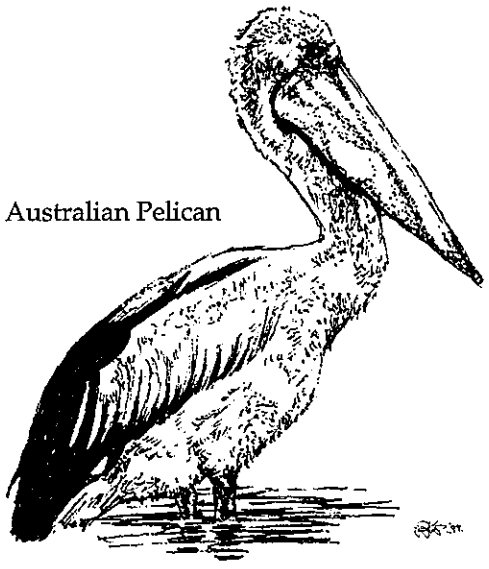
Common resident, breeding in suitable habitat.

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*

Before the development of the present wetlands, the rivers and farm dams were not really suitable habitat for the Australian Pelican. It was reported by Jones (1929), and Mathews (1943) whose verdict was 'very rare - rivers'.

Soon after the filling of Lake Burley Griffin, Wilson (1965) reported 'single birds occasional on Lake Burley Griffin'. It is probable that the deepening of the little channel from Kellys swamp to the Jerrabomberra Creek which made the swamp permanent water except in dry summers, has created an attractive roost for this species. It is seen on all wetlands, but favours the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, where up to 55 birds have been noted. Breeding has not been reported.

Visitor, common in suitable locations.



Australian Pelican

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERNS

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*

The White-faced Heron is associated with farm dams and rivers. It was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - rivers', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950), who recorded it on most of their surveys of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

Establishment of the urban lakes and other wetlands has provided further suitable habitat, probably resulting in increased local numbers. It breeds in the ACT in eucalypts, often a considerable distance from water. The species has been seen over much of our area except the very dense high forests (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common in suitable habitat and breeding widely.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

This species was not reported until 10 November 1968 when one was seen on Jerrabomberra Creek (Anon. 1968b). This reflects the fact that it does not breed near the ACT. Over the years there have been occasional reports, mostly from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, and one was observed at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works on 7 July 1991 (COG 1996). An indication of its rarity is that in the Annual Bird Reports of 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 there were only two reports, one of three birds. Most sightings have been between October and March.

Rare non-breeding visitor.

White-necked Heron *Ardea pacifica*

A feature of this species is that it is 'abundant on inland pools while the water is drying up in spring and summer' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Local habitat would have been suitable, and this heron was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - rivers', Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional', while McKelvie (1957) commented 'not seen'.

Most of the reports are from lower altitudes, but Taylor and COG (1992) had one sighting from Cotter Flats high above the Corin Dam; and it has been sighted at the Mt. Clear Camping Ground, Boboyan Forest and Glendale Crossing (COG 1998). It is not often reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, but its irruptive nature is indicated by sightings from that area between 3 December 1978 and 7 February 1979, the numbers present varying between one and eleven (McNaughton 1979).

Breeding here is rare but McNaughton (1969) reported 'One recently fledged in small swamp near [Dairy] road on 16 November 1968'. It was also reported breeding at Mulligans Flat by several observers over a period commencing on 18 September 1995.

Uncommon visitor, breeding occasionally.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

The Great Egret was reported provisionally by Lamm and Calaby (1950) and confirmed by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). It appears on suitable shallow water over the tablelands area of the ACT; but there is also a record from Cotter Flats high above Corin Dam. There are a few records most years.

Non-breeding, rather uncommon visitor.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia*

Mathews (1943) reported this species as 'rare - rivers', but he did not report the more common Great Egret. Lamm and White (1950) regarded the latter as the more likely identification.

If Mathews is disregarded on that basis, the first report was that of Wilson (1965) who recorded one on Lake Burley Griffin in June 1965. Frith (1969) regarded it as 'uncommon in southern Australia'. COG records indicate that one or two birds turn up in most years and may remain for several weeks.

Rare non-breeding visitor.

Cattle Egret *Ardea ibis*

This relatively new addition to the Australian avifauna was first seen in the ACT on 10 October 1964 (Wilson 1965). Flocks of up to 50 birds have been reported and have been seen over much of the northern half of the ACT. They seem to disappear between November and March and are rare in winter. The species occurs most frequently in the general area of the river flats near Dairy Road.

Uncommon non-breeding visitor, sometimes in fairly large flocks.

Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*

This species may be found wherever there are trees near water and also on flooded grasslands. It was reported by Jones (1929) and by Mathews (1943) 'rare - rivers'.

Over more recent years it has been seen fairly regularly, most often roosting in willows by lakes, rivers, creeks and dams. It has appeared at all seasons, though most sightings seem to be of juvenile and immature birds during the post-breeding season. Its daytime roosting and nocturnal feeding may well cause underreporting.

Uncommon non-breeding visitor, usually in small numbers but occasionally in flocks of 20 or more.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Very dense reed beds are the habitat of this cryptic bird, so there was little suitable living space around Canberra until the reed beds of Lake Burley Griffin matured. Once suitable habitat is present it is amazing how quickly birds find it.

This species was first reported from what is now the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 6 January 1968 (Anon. 1969a). Most records are from Lake Burley Griffin but the Little Bittern has also occurred at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Gungahlin (CSIRO). Breeding has been recorded occasionally and there is little doubt that the species, though present, is not always seen. All reports have been between November and March confirming that it is a migrant in this area.

Rare breeding migrant.

Australasian Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus*

Its inclusion here depends on two records, those of Mathews (1943) and Daley (1946). The Mathews list has been discussed earlier and the authenticity of his records can never be confirmed. He included 'Bittern, rare - rivers', and gave the scientific name shown above so there is no doubt that he was referring to the Australasian Bittern. It should be noted that the juvenile Nankeen Night Heron can be and has been confused with the adult Australasian Bittern. The call of the latter is diagnostic.

An article appeared in The *Canberra Times* in 1943 using only the English names of the Mathews list and this was discussed in *Canberra Bird Notes* (Veerman 1986). As the *Canberra Times* article used English names only and Mathews used 'Bittern', Veerman put a question mark before it indicating 'the species identity cannot be determined'. He was probably unaware of the main publication (Mathews 1943). In discussing the paper of Daley (1946), Lepschi mentioned in detail the species which the paper added to the ACT list, and following Veerman (1986), dismissed the Mathews record as it 'could refer to either species' (Lepschi 1988).

However, Mathews (1943) used 'Bittern, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*' and therefore that remains the first published record. Lepschi drew attention to the article by Daley (1946), which was a great service to those interested in our ornithological history. He then went on to validate Daley's record of the Australasian Bittern by call. These two records remain the only ones of this bird in the ACT. The species is categorised as insufficiently known by Garnett (1992).

Rare non-breeding visitor.

IBISES AND SPOONBILLS

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

The preferred habitat of this species is 'shallow lake margins and flooded places' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It was not surprising that the first record was of four birds on 25 March 1964 at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (Wilson 1965). Since then there have been many reports as suitable habitat was created. These have been mostly over the hotter months, with the greatest number being from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park. There have been occurrences at Mulligans Flat and Gungahlin (CSIRO). The Glossy Ibis often appears in flocks, and these remain for some weeks. For example, the species was present at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park from October 1982 to March 1983 in numbers varying from two to about 25 (Ross 1984). On the other hand it was not seen during the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992).

Rare non-breeding visitor.

Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*

Human activity has created suitable food sources for this species and it has become much more common since settlement. Significantly Jones (1929) did not see it in his 15 year survey, but Mathews (1943) 'common - rivers', and Lamm and White (1950) 'uncommon', both reported it. McKelvie (1957) commented 'not seen'.



Australian White Ibis

Numbers increased with the expansion of Canberra to the point where 400 were reported at the Belconnen rubbish tip (COG 1998); and similar numbers have occurred at the Mugga Lane tip. Additionally it is widely reported in small numbers throughout urban and tableland areas, but numbers vary considerably. Breeding has not been reported in the ACT, but there are several fairly recent records from nearby NSW. One could guess that it will occur here in the not too distant future.

Common non-breeding visitor in varying numbers.

Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*

This is another species which has increased in numbers locally, especially with the development of watered playing fields, golf courses and school grounds. In earlier times it was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - rivers', and Lamm and White (1950) 'fairly common'.

It associates at times with other ibis species. It favours larger dams and wet grasslands, and while flocks of 200 have occurred (COG 1998), it is not usually as numerous as the Australian White Ibis. Breeding has not been reported.

Fairly common non-breeding visitor in varying numbers.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*

This shallow water feeder was not recorded until Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) reported one, four times over a ten day period, on the site of the future Lake Burley Griffin. Once the lake filled, sightings became more frequent, though this species has been absent at times for long periods. It appears to be irruptive by nature, small flocks of up to four birds appearing and remaining over a period of months: for example, there were 16 records of one to four birds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park from late October 1994 to late March 1995 (COG 1998). Most records are during the warmer months.

Irruptive, uncommon summer visitor in small numbers.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill *Platalea flavipes*

The Yellow-billed Spoonbill often feeds in small bodies of water. Jones (1929) commented 'three seen at intervals', and Mathews (1943) gave its status as 'rare - rivers'.

Sightings became more common after the filling of Lake Burley Griffin, often of single birds. Breeding has not been recorded. Many of the records are from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, but other sightings have been from places such as Gungahlin (CSIRO) and Lake Tuggeranong. Records are scattered over the year.

Uncommon non-breeding visitor in small numbers.

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

There have been two records of this species, known previously as the Jabiru, both at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park. The first was sighted on 17 May 1981 (Lenz 1982) and the next was on 1 and 2 June1981 (Braysher 1982) when photography was attempted. It is possible that this was the same bird, though it appears unlikely that such a conspicuous object could be there between the dates quoted, yet not reported. We are not far from the normal southern limit of its distribution (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984) and further occasional sightings are possible.

Rare vagrant.

KITES, GOSHAWKS, EAGLES, HARRIERS AND FALCONS

[Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*]

There have been two unconfirmed reports of this species in the ACT. The Status note commented on 'An unconfirmed record of an apparent immature bird was made for Lake Burley Griffin on 13/2/66' (Anon. 1973). The source is not now known and it did not appear in any of the Annual Bird Reports of that time. Another report in the Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 21 n.d. recorded an Osprey at Black Mountain Peninsula on 29 March 1988, but the following was published later: 'The Rarities Panel has reviewed a previously accepted March record and now considers its validity not fully established' (Veerman et al. 1989). There are no confirmed reports in the ACT but it could occur here in the future.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus axillaris*

This species feeds mainly on mice, other small mammals and grasshoppers (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Locally it hunts over open grassland and woodland, chiefly east of the Murrumbidgee River. Suitable terrain has long been present and it was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', while Lamm and White (1950) were aware of its fluctuating numbers, varying from occasional to common.

This bird is seen fairly regularly and its numbers probably relate to the abundance of suitable food. It is observed occasionally from private gardens but is not resident in urban areas.

Breeding has been noted in most years.

Uncommon breeding species in varying numbers.

Letter-winged Kite *Elanus scriptus*

The boom and bust behaviour of this species has been well-documented (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). During these irruptions from its inland breeding areas it has made a few appearances in the ACT. The first report (Anon. 1969a) was of one bird at Deakin on 23 December 1967. In 1977 small numbers were seen, one in Narrabundah on 1-2 March 1977 and three at Duffy, 31 March to 5 April 1977 (Clark 1977). There have been no later records.

Does not breed locally and is a rare occasional visitor.

[Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura*]

There has been only one report of this species, 'Three 26th Dec.[1967], Scrivener Dam, soaring at great height . . .' (Anon. 1969a). A little later this was commented on as follows - 'the few sight records referred to the Square-tailed Kite . . : are most probably immature forms of the Fork-tailed Kite' [Black Kite] (Anon. 1973). *The Atlas of Australian Birds* comments, 'Typically the Square-tailed Kite is seen alone . . . There was no report of more than two Square-tailed Kites together during the Field Atlas, except at the nest' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

It is regarded as rare in Australia (Garnett 1992). It is not impossible for this species to occur here but the only record does not appear to be valid.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

The Black Kite is a common bird inland and is something of a scavenger. Artificial and natural water sources are important to it and when water is scarce in areas where large flocks occur, it irrupts beyond its normal distribution and can appear here in small numbers. The first report was of three birds at Red Hill on 7 August 1959 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). Since then there have been many other sightings, mostly of single birds, often with several years between occurrences.

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*

This is probably the easiest raptor to recognise because of its frequently-heard distinctive call. The first report was that of Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', followed by Lamm and White (1950) 'fairly common in appropriate terrain'. Lamm and Calaby (1950) saw it on most of their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys and also reported breeding. It has been reported regularly over the years from a large variety of places on the tablelands of the ACT.

Many reports of nesting have come from the Uriarra Crossing area but it has also occurred at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park. This species is always associated with water such as lakes, swamps and farm dams

Conspicuous uncommon breeding resident, usually present in small numbers.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

The coast, inland rivers and lakes are home to this species, which is generally more abundant on the coast than inland. The first reports were two of a single bird over Lake Burley Griffin on 5 November 1967 (Anon. 1969a). Strangely the next published record was on 15 September 1975 (Wilson 1975a), nearly eight years later. Since then there have been many reports mostly from the lakes and rivers of the tablelands area of the ACT, occurring several times in some years but not at all during others. There is no obvious pattern to their appearance and no successful breeding records from the ACT.

Non-breeding occasional visitor.

Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis*

'The Spotted Harrier lives singly . . .[and] gathers where food is abundant' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It is a species of the open plains and wooded grassland, and is usually seen hunting with slow wing beats, just above the grass. The first report was of a bird at Dickson (CSIRO) on 11 February 1958 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). All records since have been from the tableland area, for example Uriarra Crossing, Cotter Dam, Point Hut and Tharwa Road, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park and Gungahlin (CSIRO). Sightings are irregular and there were no records between January 1991 and March 1993; but sometimes there are several in the one year.

Rare non-breeding irregular visitor to our area.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*

Grasslands, wetlands and streams at all altitudes are the habitat of the Swamp Harrier which was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', while Lamm and White (1950) commented 'no records . . . in recent years'.

During the ACT Atlas survey it was seen much more frequently than the Spotted Harrier (Taylor and COG 1992), but this is not borne out by long term COG records. It is seen irregularly, sometimes once or twice a year but not at all in others. There is one breeding record (Anon. 1973).

Uncommon breeding resident.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*

This species of forest and woodlands goshawk was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943), Lamm and White (1950) 'common', Lamm and Calaby (1950) and Dunnet (1957).

During the ACT Atlas survey it was reported virtually throughout the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992). It breeds locally, and is often noted from private gardens when it hunts at times from its normal habitat in adjacent nature parks. It is reported mostly in the warmer weather but there are occasional winter records.

There are regular sightings in all areas of the ACT, but the species is thought to be in decline locally (COG 1998).

Breeding migrant in small numbers with some irregular movement.

Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*

The Grey Goshawk breeds in fairly dense forests and was recorded by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'rather rare', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who saw it on four occasions during their surveys of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

The white morph has been reported from time to time, but is rare. This species has been seen one, two or three times in most years, sometimes in the urban areas, but also at the top of Mount Gingera and various other country places.

Rare non-breeding occasional visitor.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*

This forest and woodland bird has been helped by the growth of Canberra with related increases in numbers of its prey (House Sparrow and Common Starlings among others). The first report was that of Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', while Lamm and White (1950) commented 'no records'. Over recent years it has been regularly reported from much of the ACT in small numbers except in winter. Away from Canberra it is less common than the Brown Goshawk. It is often seen about urban edges from where breeding has been reported. Its nesting and behaviour have been studied here (Metcalf 1981; 1982), (Metcalf and Metcalf 1986; 1989).

Uncommon breeding migrant with most individuals leaving in winter.

[Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus*]

There has been an unconfirmed record of this species from Carotel Park, O'Connor on 13 December 1969, but this is a very rare bird and we are far south of its Australian distribution (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). While a full report of the sighting was published the observer regarded it as 'an extremely doubtful record' (Slater 1970).

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*

This species was referred to by Gale (1927) as occurring in this area in the 1800s, but he did not give a date. Gillespie (1992) commented that it was shot whenever opportunity offered and that 'one observer reported having seen about 60 eagles at the carcass of one sheep'. The same author commented that in 1892 the Pastures Protection Board was still paying bonuses for the destruction of a significant number of birds in the Ginninderra district. Eagles [Wedge-tailed Eagles] of seven to eight foot wingspan, stretched out on fences along roads, were a common sight.

This conspicuous local bird was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'fairly common in suitable terrain', Lamm and Calaby (1950) and Dunnet (1957).

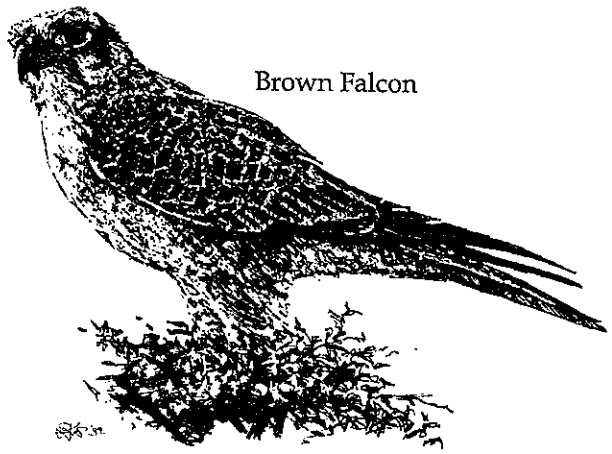
Since then it has been reported in small numbers all over the ACT with the highest density in the far south, and a few records from the western ranges (Taylor and COG 1992). It is seen occasionally over developed areas near nature parks. Breeding has been recorded, but long-term nesting sites near urban development have been abandoned with the spread of Canberra. It appears to be sedentary with young birds dispersing.

Starker Leopold and Wolfe (1970) studied the food and nesting habits of the Wedge-tailed Eagle in the ACT and nearby, and showed that rabbits were the chief food, while lambs were only 8.9% of the fresh material at the nests. Availability of food may be a problem for this species in the future with the decline in the numbers of rabbits. The density of the population of resident adult eagles was established at about one pair per 31 square kilometres by the study quoted.

Breeding resident, widely distributed and occupying very large territories.

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*

The only early report was that of Dunnet (1957).



Brown Falcon

Since then the Little Eagle has often been seen, particularly in the northern half of the ACT and along the river corridors of the tablelands area (Taylor and COG 1992). It is frequently reported over a few private gardens near urban outskirts. It does not occur in the high wet forests of the western ranges.

Breeding has been recorded fairly regularly.

Breeding resident in small numbers in all but the higher, wetter forests.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*

This species is often seen perched on a high vantage-point from which it takes its prey. The Brown Falcon was reported by Barrett (1922), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is reported in the ACT particularly from grasslands and woodlands but not from the denser forests. It is seldom seen in urban areas but has been recorded over private gardens near nature parks.

Breeding has been reported and adults appear to be sedentary. There is an obvious dispersal of young birds, which are often seen perched along roads.

Resident breeding species in small numbers with juveniles moving away.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*

This fast flying falcon was reported by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', and Lamm and White (1950) who also found it to be occasional.

Since those days it has probably increased in numbers with the growth of urban areas and correspondingly enlarged numbers of introduced birds. Such places provide excellent habitat and food. It has been the subject of two major papers, the first covering its breeding biology (Metcalf 1989). The second dealt with the monthly recording pattern of the species in the Garden Bird Survey over a period of seven years (Veerman 1991b). This showed that numbers reached a high peak in February, with the lowest in June and July when few were present. Other COG records confirm this pattern.

Uncommon migrant. Many birds leave the ACT after breeding.

Grey Falcon *Falco hypoleucos*

This inland bird was not recorded during the ACT Atlas survey but appears in this area very occasionally. The first report was of one at Belconnen on 16 January 1967 (Wilson 1968), and another was reported from the Ginninderra to Gundaroo road on 27 January 1969 (Wilson 1970). A third was that of Dow (1988) on 26 October 1971, but this was not endorsed by the Rarities Panel.

This species is classified as rare in Australia (Garnett 1992).

Rare vagrant in the ACT.

Black Falcon *Falco subniger*

There were no published reports of this species until 13 March 1966. There were three sightings in that year, two in 1967 and one in 1968 (Dow 1988), a pattern largely followed since. There have been up to four reports in some years, yet at other times there has been a period of a few years between its appearances.

This is an inland species favouring eucalypt woodland. ACT sightings have been from urban areas and from Tidbinbilla, Uriarra Crossing, Paddys River and Gungahlin (CSIRO). It does not occur in the ranges.

Rare non-breeding visitor in small numbers.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Records of this species began early and it was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional – country', while Lamm and White (1950) commented 'no records in recent years'.

Several breeding territories were identified during the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992). Long term records indicate a small permanent population, probably limited by the availability of suitable breeding sites. It is more common in summer than in winter, and there are occasional records from urban areas.

Uncommon breeding resident. It is probable that some birds migrate.

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

This is probably our most common raptor and was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is reported at all seasons but is much more common in summer, as some birds probably migrate. It occurs mainly in grazing land but also at higher altitudes where open habitat exists. The denser forests are unsuitable for this bird.

Breeding is regularly reported, often from nature parks near built up areas. Nests have been observed on buildings (Digan 1982), but this kestrel more normally breeds in tree hollows.

Fairly common resident breeding species, probably with some migration.

BROLGA

Brolga *Grus rubicunda*

This was a common bird in the mid-1800s and Shumack (1977) refers to it as a bad pest; also to a farmer firing at a flock of about 80 between St. Johns Church and the Molonglo River in the late 1860s. At that time it was 'much more widely distributed in the South-East Region' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but it became extinct here before the end of the 19th century.

Mathews (1943) reported it as 'very rare - country': he was the only one to record it in that era.

There have been only two seen in recent years, the first 'near Government House in August or September' [1965] (Wilson 1966), while the other was a flying bird near Reid on 10 November 1978 (Gregory-Smith 1979).

Numbers appear to be increasing in Victoria in response to conservation efforts, so it is possible that further sightings could occur here as we are well within its historic range. However, since there have been only two sightings in this area in the 20th century, the last in 1978, the Brolga must be regarded as extinct in the ACT.

RAILS, CRAKES, SWAMPHENS AND COOT

Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis*

Mathews (1943) was the first to report this species and the only one of the early authors to do so.

It is a secretive inhabitant of rank, damp vegetation, and has been seen several times at Sullivans Creek, the Tuggeranong ponds, Village Creek, Commonwealth Park, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park and Gungahlin (CSIRO). All records were during the warmer months.

It is not reported every year but like other fairly rare species, it is seen several times in some seasons.

There are reports of occasional successful breeding.

Uncommon breeding summer migrant.

Lewin's Rail *Rallus pectoralis*

This species prefers dense cover, and is difficult to observe. It was reported by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - rivers'.

Its presence was confirmed by a Gungahlin (CSIR0) specimen collected near Hall on 19 March 1955 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). Reports here are quite irregular but Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984) suggest 'no large scale seasonal movement'. Records here have all been in the warmer months.

Records over recent years include breeding at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in 1988 and from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park in February 1991.

Rare, breeding summer visitor.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

Baillon's Crake is usually seen on mud around reed beds and was first reported along the Molonglo River on 12 February 1962 by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). While Lake Burley Griffin was filling, 29 of this species were banded between 9 January and 23 February 1964 (Wilson - unpublished banding data), a figure which seems to indicate that the species has been underreported since then. There have been irregular sightings over the years of up to four birds, from virtually all wetlands margins. Breeding has not been reported.

Rare, warm weather visitor.

Australian Spotted Crake *Porzana fluminea*

This is another rather furtive species, first recorded while Lake Burley Griffin was filling. Eight were banded during January and February 1964 (Wilson - unpublished banding data) and first reported by Wilson (1965). It has been fairly regularly seen since then and a maximum of 12+ was recorded on 20 January 1984 while Kellys Swamp was drying during a hot summer (Ross 1985). Most of the local records have come from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park but others have been from similar wetlands.

There has been one breeding record in December 1990 (Taylor and COG 1992). Others may well have gone unseen.

Rare breeding species recorded mostly in warmer weather, but possibly a resident.

Spotless Crake *Porzana tabuensis*

Probably the least common of our locally occurring crakes and rails. Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) were the first to report sightings in 1952 and 1957. It has been seen in recent years at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, Village Creek, Point Hut, Gungahlin (CSIRO) and similar wetlands of the tablelands area. Most reports are of single birds but occasionally there are small flocks. Sightings are quite irregular, sometimes with several reports over a period of weeks, possibly of the same bird or birds. It is not unusual for a year or two to pass without appearances. It is possible that this is a breeding resident.

Rare species, reported mostly in the warmer months, but occasionally in winter. May be a breeding resident..

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Shallow water and reeds are essential for this species which Lamm and White (1950) reported as 'uncommon along the Molonglo'. McKelvie (1957) found it 'regular along Molonglo River near the power station', where suitable habitat existed at that time because of a small dam on the river.

With new wetlands being constructed over the years, it has been regularly reported. It is often observed feeding in the open around lakes and on grass near reeds. Immature birds are frequently seen.

Common breeding resident in suitable terrain throughout the tablelands area.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*

Another species for which reeds on the edge of shallow water are necessary. Jones (1929) reported it as did Mathews (1943) 'occasional - rivers', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Some large dams, for example at Uriarra Homestead, are suitable; and this species has benefited from the establishment of the various urban wetlands. Breeding has been reported, usually made obvious by young chicks accompanying adults.

Common breeding resident where suitable habitat exists, chiefly on the tablelands area.

Black-tailed Native-hen *Gallinula ventralis*

Irruptions of large numbers are a feature of the life history of this inland bird. On one such occasion, two were seen on 5 January and one on 12 January 1969, in the area of the present Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (Wilson 1970). Two were seen at the same location on 25 May 1969 (McNaughton 1973b).

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Unlike its relatives, this species often feeds by diving in deep water. Mathews (1943) recorded it as 'occasional - rivers'.

It was rare until the construction of the various urban wetlands. Since 1964 it has become a common resident, sometimes present in very large numbers. It occurs particularly over the northern half of the ACT, sometimes using the larger farm dams. Breeding has been recorded a few times, but in suitable seasons most birds appear to move elsewhere to nest (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common species on suitable water and nearby, breeding here very occasionally.

BUSTARD

Australian Bustard *Ardeotis australis*

Frederick Davis gave an account of his family's journey from Sydney to Lanyon in 1842 when 'wild turkeys' [Australian Bustards] and other species were shot, as they were regarded as delicacies for the dinner table (Gillespie 1991). Gale (1927) wrote that on 26 December 1855 he rode through a flock of 'some scores in number'; the context places this occurrence near the present Barton area. Shooting of Australian Bustards was also recorded at Ginninderra and Duntroon in 1868 by Gillespie (1991).

Jones (1929) reported 'one only seen (21/6/20)' while Mathews (1943) commented 'very rare - country', probably referring to the Jones record, which was the last published sighting of the species here.

Extinct in the ACT and no longer occurs nearby.

BUTTON-QUAILS

Little Button-quail *Turnix velox*

It is rather surprising that this rare species was recorded by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country'.

The next records were of two on 29 January and four on 4 February 1969 at Belconnen (Wilson 1970). The only other report is of one at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve during October 1988 (Rarities Panel News 1989a).

Rare non-breeding summer migrant.

Red-chested Button-quail *Turnix pyrrhothorax*

Another rare species reported by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country'.

The next sighting was from Gungahlin (CSIRO) on 28 September 1968, when a single bird was captured (Anon. 1968c). About that time there were reports on 29 January 1969 from Belconnen, and on 24 January and 4 February 1969 from Lyneham, the latter being a juvenile bird. There have been no further published sightings.

Rare irruptive visitor, the only records being between September and February.

Painted Button-quail *Turnix varia*

A bird of 'eucalypt forest, woodland and heath where there is a lot of leaf and twig litter' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). First reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963); a bird was collected near St. Edmund's College, Griffith on 14 October 1960 (CSIRO 230). Taylor and COG (1992) had odd sightings from the higher ranges in dry eucalypt forest, but the majority of records have been at lower altitudes from such places as Mt. Stromlo, Uriarra Road, Mulligans Flat, Mt. Majura, Mt. Pleasant and Black Mountain. It seems to be present in all months.

There have been occasional breeding records over the years.

Rare breeding resident in small numbers.

PLAINS-WANDERER

Plains-wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus*

There is only one accepted record of this species in the ACT, 'K. Keith of CSIRO who was already familiar with the species in the field has one sight record from near Gungahlin [CSIRO] on May 10 1954' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). Bennett (1983) quotes 'a report of a single bird near Hall ACT in 1964 (Smith in lit.)' but this was not submitted to COG for review and therefore cannot be accepted.

Bennett (1983) discussed the historic and present distribution of the Plains-wanderer. The ACT is included in his historical distribution of the species, which however has contracted alarmingly. It requires unimproved pastures with sparse short grass. Garnett (1992) classifies this bird as vulnerable.

Extinct in the ACT. Its distribution in NSW has been greatly reduced in the 20th century: it is therefore most unlikely to occur here again.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES

Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*

This cryptic, secretive species was seen by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - rivers', somewhat surprisingly in view of the lack of suitable marshland habitat at the time.

Since the 1960s there has been a great increase locally in the shallow wetlands inhabited by this species. There have been occasional reports from mountain swamps and regular sightings from tableland wetlands. Many reports are from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, where up to 20 have been seen (Taylor and COG 1992).

Migrant, and a regular but uncommon non-breeding visitor.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Like most of the other waders now recorded in the ACT, lack of suitable habitat meant that there were no early records of this species. McNaughton (1973a) reported one in late December 1972. The only other ACT records are four sightings of single birds around Lake Burley Griffin between 19 November and 2 December 1979, which may have all been the one bird (Mason 1980), (Pfanner 1980) and (Lenz 1981).

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*

During the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984) this species was not seen far inland, so an ACT report is most unusual. A single bird was seen and photographed by J. McNaughton on 9 January 1977, presumably from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park where he did a regular survey for many years (Clark 1977).

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

During the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), there were many reports of this species from inland areas, particularly from the eastern half of Australia. The first local report was of one at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 9 November 1980, and then one bird was present from 7 to 14 December, with two there on 8 December 1980 (Lenz 1982). Six COG members saw and identified the bird on 7 December 1980 (Drake 1981). On 16 December 1990 three members saw a single bird at Lake Tuggeranong (Rarities Panel News 1993a). There was a further record of two birds on the dam at Mulligans Flat on 17 October 1994 (Rarities Panel News 1995). Two earlier records in the first edition of the ACT Branch RAOU Field List (1966), for which the location was not stated, proved to be from outside the ACT (Dow 1988).

Rare non-breeding migrant in our area.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

In the warmer weather this species is widely distributed and the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984) showed occasional occurrences all over the mainland. Our first report was of a single bird at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 8 October 1967. Since then there have been many sightings between August and May, most from the same area, with the highest being '11 records of 28 birds' 18 December 1977 to 22 January 1978 (Clark and Lenz 1978). Other reports have been from the Tuggeranong silt traps and Mulligans Flat. Reports in the ACT are not regular and a year or two may pass without a sighting.

Uncommon non-breeding migrant.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

With this species, 'More birds are reported inland than on the coast', and it is 'more frequently reported from northern Australia than southern' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Brown and Gibson (1966) provided the first sightings 'one on 21 and one on 27 Nov.' [1965]. There have been a number since then, with apparently nine sightings of one bird at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park between 22 January and 28 February 1994 (COG 1998). Two seems to be the highest number reported at one time. Appearances in the ACT are widely spaced, and this sandpiper was not seen during the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992).

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

During the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), the Common Sandpiper was reported frequently from the inland on 'lakes, streams, pools and dams'. This is reflected in the ACT situation. The first record was of one bird at Acacia Inlet, Lake Burley Griffin on 11 January 1966 (Wilson 1966). Since then more than 20 reports have been made from all over the tablelands area, for example Lake Tuggeranong, Pine Island, Uriarra Crossing, Casuarina Sands, Black Mountain Peninsula and Lake Ginninderra. As with other waders, sightings have been very irregular.

Rare non-breeding migrant in the ACT.

[Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*]

'One bird was reported from Kellys Swamp area on 28 November 1977 and two birds possibly of this species were reported from the same area on 8 December 1977'. These records were not accepted by COG as they were not confirmed by written descriptions. (Anon. 1979).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

This is mainly a coastal species, but during the Australian Atlas survey there were several inland records (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The one local sighting was possibly a bird on passage to southern coasts. It was seen at Yarralumla Bay on 25 September 1991 (Rarities Panel News 1992).

Rare non-breeding migrant, unlikely to be seen often.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

While this is the most abundant of the migratory waders and there were many inland sightings during the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), there have been only three individual birds seen in the ACT. The first was seen and photographed on 17 October 1971 (Anon. 1972b) and the next appeared on 1 September 1979, unusually early for this species (Lenz 1981). The third was seen on 20 October 1985 (Taylor, Lenz and Lepschi 1987).

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

This is one of the rarest of our migrant waders. During the Australian Atlas survey, it was seen inland more

often than by the sea (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Our first report was that of McNaughton (1972), one bird at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 17 September 1972. There was a further possible report of a bird on 28 November 1977, but this remains unconfirmed (Anon. 1979).

Rare non-breeding migrant in our area.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*

'The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper occupies fresh water more often than the sea coast' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), and is also one of the more numerous of our northern migrants. Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented that they 'are occasional spring and summer visitors to the site of Lake Burley Griffin'. Since then it has been seen at a variety of wetlands on the tablelands, with a maximum of 'about 40' on 21 September 1972 (Anon. 1972d). Sightings occur between August and April, a longer season than most related species and reports are also more regular.

Common non-breeding migrant.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

The Australian Atlas survey 'suggests it to be widespread across the continent in spring' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The first report in the ACT was of eight birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 21 September 1972. Between October 1971 and October 1972 inclusive, it was reported on seven occasions, all in September and October, with a maximum of 10 on 10 October 1971 (McNaughton 1973b). Between then and 29 October 1982, there were a further seven published records: but in the Annual Bird Reports between then and 30 June 1995, there have been no further reports from the ACT, which seems strange.

Uncommon non-breeding migrant.

[Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*]

This is a rare species, the few reports being mostly coastal according to the Australian Atlas survey (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Locally one was reported on 2 February 1969, and there was a possible record of two the next day (Anon. 1969b).

In 1979 the Status Notes commented 'CBN . . . provided a record of this species and another classified as probable . . . Later inspection of photographs taken at the time casts doubt as to the identification, so these are best left as possible records' (Anon. 1979). There have been no further sightings from the ACT.

PAINTED SNIPE

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

The species is difficult to observe, as it inhabits shallow water with tall plants. Locally 'four birds were caught and banded at Lake Burley Griffin in January 1964 when the lake was filling' (Frith 1969). There were further sightings of one or two birds on five occasions between September and December 1972 (McNaughton 1973b), then next of two on 18 December 1977 (McNaughton 1978). All of these 1970s sightings were from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park. The only other record was one seen on 7 January 1978 at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works (Clark and Lenz 1978). This species was not reported during the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992) and there have been no further sightings up to and including the 1994-95 Annual Bird Report. The Australian subspecies of this bird is classified as 'insufficiently known' by Garnett (1992).

Rare non-breeding summer visitor.

STONE-CURLEW

Bush Stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*

Gale (1927) refers to 'the curlew and other food supplying birds' being present in the early days of settlement. That attitude to birds was common at that time.

It would appear that this species was never very widespread in the area of the ACT. Jones (1929) listed it as did Mathews (1943) 'very rare - country'.

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented 'a few birds were seen regularly in the north-west part of the ACT in 1949-50'. One was recorded in Balmain Crescent, Acton on 6 November 1965 (Wilson 1965), one at Weetangera Lane on 9 July 1967 (Anon. 1969a) and two at O'Connor on 7 August 1970 (Wilson 1970). Thiswas the last published note.

The Bush Stone-curlew was not seen during the intensive work of the ACT Atlas survey. This ground

nesting species is at the mercy of feral cats and foxes, both of which are common here.

Extinct in the ACT.

STILTS AND AVOCET

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Prior to the creation of the present system of wetlands about Canberra, there was little habitat for this species, but it was reported by Mathews (1943) 'very rare - rivers'.

The next comment was that of Wilson (1965) 'occasional at Lake Burley Griffin...but not during the winter', followed by Brown and Gibson (1966) 'only singly or in pairs during Sept. to Nov.'. Since then there have been many other records, some quite regular, such as in 1982-83. During this time, the species was seen in every month, with a maximum of about 15 in September (Ross 1984). Most records have been from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, but one was reported at Uriarra Homestead on 1 May 1991 (COG 1993). There was a report of three birds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park between July and September 1986 (Veerman et al. 1988). Apart from the 1991 record quoted, there were no other sightings between 1986 and the Annual Bird Report 1994-95, which seems difficult to explain.

Uncommon non-breeding irregular visitor.

Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*

The systematic notes (Anon. 1969a) reported single birds from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 2 December 1967, 14 and 28 January and 7 February 1968. The next record was of two birds in the same area on 21-23 January 1984 (Ross 1985). A single bird was present at Uriarra Homestead on 20 August 1988 (COG 1990). There have been no further sightings.

Rare non-breeding visitor.

PLOVERS, LAPWINGS AND DOTTERELS

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

The first to report this species in the ACT were Brown and Gibson (1966) who saw one on 13 November 1965 at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park. Four birds were seen at the same place on 4 November 1970 (Anon. 1971). There were two further sightings of one bird on 23-24 September 1972, also in the same area (McNaughton 1973b). At the same location, a bird in eclipse plumage was seen on 21 and 25 October 1979 (Editor 1980a) and again on 4 and 11 November 1979 (Editor 1980b). There have been no further reports.

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*

'Saltpans, dried out saltmarsh where there are bare patches and . . . muddy or sandy river edges' are the habitat of this Australian breeding bird (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Unlike other related species, open bare areas are preferred, and the ACT provides little of that. As with many other waders, this species was not seen until some suitable habitat existed. Two were seen on 16 December 1965 at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (Brown and Gibson 1966). The next sightings were two records in January and again in mid-March (1978) from the same area (Clark and Lenz 1978). One was seen at Lake Tuggeranong on 22 October 1989 (COG 1992). Taylor and COG (1992) reported 'a single sighting from Point Hut silt trap in late October 1989'.

Rare, non-breeding visitor.

Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*

A New Zealand breeding species which migrates to Australia and is seen from mid-summer to early winter. This bird 'lives on ocean beaches and estuarine mudflats' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but has been reported frequently in numbers at Lake Bathurst. One was seen at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works on 15 March 1971 (D'Andria 1971). This was followed by five records between 1988 and 1995. There has been some confusion between this and the Black-fronted Dotterel and one record has been withdrawn.

Rare non-breeding visitor.

Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseyornis melanops*

A permanent resident locally on dams and sand banks along creeks and rivers. This species was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950), who recorded it on most of their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys.

It has been reported regularly in the Annual Bird Reports and is the most common of this group of species.

Uncommon breeding resident in suitable habitat.

Red-kneed Dotterel *Erythrogonys cinctus*

The Red-kneed Dotterel 'lives around shallow vegetated lakes' and 'feeds both in water and on muddy shores' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It is usually in small loose flocks; six were seen at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 20 January 1968 and remained until 23 March 1968. The maximum was eight birds (Anon. 1969a). Since then the majority of sightings have been from that nature park, but during the intensive work of the ACT Atlas survey it was discovered on several of the larger farm dams (Taylor and COG 1992).

Records are concentrated in the early months of the year, probably after breeding, but a few are seen both earlier and later. Lack of suitable habitat appears to restrict its numbers. Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984) found no pattern of movement.

Uncommon, non-breeding summer visitor to restricted habitats.

Banded Lapwing *Vanellus tricolor*

It would appear that this species has never been particularly numerous in the ACT. 'It frequents dry marginal and unimproved pasture... Its legs are too short to negotiate dense grass that is more than lawn height and in wet grass the plumage becomes wet, bedraggled and matted...' (Frith 1969). Obviously improved pasture is unsuitable for it. Jones (1929) recorded it as did Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', while Lamm and White (1950) found it regularly in specific areas.

There were reports of small numbers from several sites around Canberra between 1965 and 1985 and Taylor, Davey and Gibson(1986) recorded it from Smiths Road via Tharwa, Evatt and the Canberra Airport, where it had been seen for many years. (Taylor and COG 1992) reported that 'it appears they are . . . declining in the local area'. Foxes and feral cats are the usual cause, as this species breeds and spends much of its time on the ground.

There have been no recent sightings. The species is presumed to be extinct in the ACT.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*

This is one of the species referred to by Gillespie (1991) as being shot during the early days of European settlement, as it was regarded as a delicacy for the dinner table.

It was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Taylor and COG (1992) found it wherever there was suitable grassland, except at the highest elevations. From all recent Annual Bird Reports it appears to be well distributed in the ACT, forming flocks outside the breeding season.

Common breeding resident in all suitable grasslands, including urban sporting fields.

PRATINCOLE

[Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*]

The inclusion of this species in this listing depends on an unconfirmed record from McKellar on 9 November 1983 (Taylor and Davey 1985). No other details are known and this record has not been accepted by COG.

GULLS AND TERNS

Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*

Due to the lack of suitable habitat, this was something of an oddity in the early days of the ACT. It was reported by Jones (1929) 'occasionally seen during rough weather', and by Mathews (1943) 'very rare - rivers'.

With a large colony of breeding birds at Lake Bathurst, it was not surprising that this gull took advantage of the filling of Lake Burley Griffin. By 1965 it was 'always on Lake Burley Griffin in small num-

bers' (Wilson 1965). With the growth of urban Canberra, its water features and two large rubbish disposal areas, numbers rapidly increased, though from season to season its abundance varies considerably. So far, successful breeding has not been reported, though it would appear to be quite likely. It may be seen almost anywhere except in the forests of the ranges.

Common non-breeding resident.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*

An inland breeding species, the Gull-billed Tern has appeared here on a few occasions. Six observers saw a single bird at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park over four days, 17-21 September 1972 (Anon. 1972c). The second sighting was on 29 October 1979 at the same place (Lenz 1981). Frith (1984) commented that 'there have been other records in 1981 and 1982', but these were not reported to COG and cannot be regarded as valid.

Rare non-breeding visitor to our area.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

This species appears to be more numerous on the coast than inland, but there have been a few ACT records, the first of which was at Yarralumla Bay, Lake Burley Griffin on 1 June 1969 (Anon. 1969c). It was again seen on 29 October 1979 at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (Lenz 1981) and the next was at the same place on 8 July 1981 (Gregory-Smith 1981). Another report of one bird, again at the same place by the same observer on 8 September 1981 may well be an error (Taylor 1983), the only difference being the month. Veerman et al. (1988) recorded one at Lake Burley Griffin on 19 October 1986. The most recent was a bird at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 9 August 1998 (Anon. 1998). This is in the hands of the Rarities Panel at the time of writing.

Rare non-breeding visitor. All records are between June and October.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Chiefly an inland species and an inhabitant of 'swamps and lagoons, fresh or salt, intermittent or permanent. Colonies quickly form when floods fill swamps in summer' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). One bird of this species was first recorded while Lake Burley Griffin was filling in January 1964, and another single bird was seen on 11 October 1964 (Wilson 1965). Since then there have been quite a number of irregular reports, mostly of small flocks from Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park, Lake Burley Griffin, Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra. They are usually seen in flight, dipping to feed from the surface of the water. The maximum reported was a flock of 28 at Lake Burley Griffin on 9 October 1994.

Rare non-breeding visitor.

PIGEONS AND DOVES

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

There is some difficulty in distinguishing between homing pigeons living at local premises, and others living and breeding in the wild in the ACT. Probably for this reason the bird is underreported and was not recorded by any of the early observers; though Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented 'feral communities of this species were first noted about Canberra about 1930'.

An interesting item was the report of a bird banded at Lyneham on 7 September 1966 and recovered at Eden, NSW on 9 June 1968, '133 miles SSE' (Anon. 1968a). The bird is present in the wild in urban areas, some farms and the township of Tharwa.

Breeding has been reported about major buildings.

Common breeding resident.

White-headed Pigeon *Columba leucomela*

The Australian Atlas has only one record of this bird south of 35 degrees S., one at Tuross Falls, NSW. It was regarded as nomadic, and its food reported to be fruits, including that of exotic plants. It became rare last century and has begun to increase again (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The distribution shown by Simpson and Day (1996) shows a dotted area extending east in Victoria from the border with NSW to about the Dandenong Ranges, reflecting several recent published sightings in south-eastern Victoria.

There have been three sightings from Waramanga, one on 24 April 1998, two on 17 May and two on 19 May 1998 (Rarities Panel News 1998b), probably indicating that they had found a good food source. At the time of writing, this is the most recent addition to the list of birds of the ACT.

Rare vagrant in our area.

[Spotted Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*]

'In Australia numerous escapees and releases, still continuing, have given rise to the feral population' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). This appears to reflect the ACT situation except that the species has not become established. Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented on a few records, and occasional sightings have continued over the years from various urban sites. This introduced species is seen from time to time, but there is no established population, all birds being regarded as having been released or escaped.

[Barbary Dove *Streptopelia risoria*]

This species is not on the Australian list but has been reported here by Taylor and Davey (1985) and Veerman et al. (1989). Both sightings are regarded as escaped cage birds. This species is not established in the wild here or elsewhere in Australia.

Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*

The 'bronzewing' was referred to as a food supplying bird, common at the time of early settlement (Gale 1927).

Open grassland is unsuitable for this species, but it is found in small numbers throughout tableland woodlands and dry ridges of mountain forests. It appears occasionally in private gardens, especially those near wooded nature parks. Jones (1929) was the first to report it, followed by Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Since then it has been regularly reported from open, rather dry eucalypt forests with occasional acacias; it seems to favour acacia seed as food. The Common Bronzewing is often seen at Campbell Park and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. It is thinly distributed over virtually all of the ACT except heights above 1000 metres (Taylor and COG 1992), but has not been reported in numbers in recent years.

Widely distributed uncommon breeding species.

Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*

In the ACT the Brush Bronzewing inhabits the wet gullies of the Brindabella Ranges and similar terrain. It was first identified from Warks Road in February 1964 (Schodde 1965). It is present in small numbers, but is not reported with any regularity. Sightings have covered most months of the year. The Taylor and COG (1992) comment appears apt: 'Brush Bronzewings almost certainly breed in the ranges but neither nests nor young have been recorded in the ACT'.

Rare resident in restricted habitat; probably breeds here.

Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes*

This species has expanded its range in recent times as is shown by the historical maps in Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984). It seems that there have been several irruptions into the ACT, and Lamm and White (1950) chronicled a flock of about 20 birds present in 1937 but which disappeared prior to 1939.

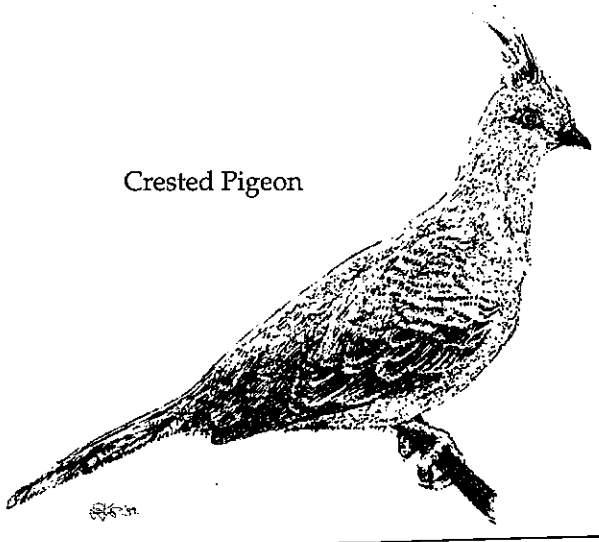
There were reports in the north of the ACT in October 1965 and March 1966 (Wilson 1966), while four were seen in 1967, rising to 12 in 1968 (Anon. 1968a). In the following years there were a few reports eventually followed by an explosion of numbers, vividly shown by the histograms in COG (1997) and a graph covering 11 years in COG (1998). The expansion here has been paralleled by an extension of its range on the south coast of NSW (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

Triple breeding in a suburban garden was reported by Davidson (1997).

Common breeding species well distributed about Canberra and its environs.

Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*

We are marginal so far as the distribution of this species is concerned, but there have been several reports over the years, commencing with Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.



Crested Pigeon

Since then there have been many reports, chiefly of single birds in various urban areas, while others have occurred on the tablelands away from the city. Typical are records from Rarities Panel News (1997) as follows:

1 on 20 May 1995 at Mt. Majura.

1 on 31 March 1996 at Kambah.

1 on 21 April 1996 at Illoura horse paddocks.

There have been no ACT breeding records.

It is likely that we have a mixture of released and escaped cage birds, plus occasional wild birds. Therefore it is regarded as a rare visitor to our area.

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata*

The occurrence of this species here was described in detail by Clark and Hahne (1990). They identified three wild populations which have existed in the ACT, and suggested that we may be near the species limit because of low winter temperatures. The first report was by Lamm and White (1950), when one was observed at the Murrumbidgee River on 21 March 1948, and seen regularly until August 1948.

This is typical of some country appearances of this bird; but there have been many urban sightings that can only be regarded as released or escaped cage birds. It would seem that small groups of the species establish themselves for quite considerable periods (Clark and Hahne 1990).

Rare non-breeding resident in the ACT.

Bar-shouldered Dove *Geopelia humeralis*

We are south of the normal range of this species, the inclusion of which relates to a solitary record on 29 June 1992 'approx. 4 km from Mt. Clear towards Horse Gully Hut' (Rarities Panel News 1992).

Rare non-breeding visitor.

Wonga Pigeon *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*

An indication that the forests of the ranges of the ACT were not fully explored by the early ornithologists, is the fact that this bird was first reported 'on 28 October 1951 near the Cotter Picnic Ground' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963).

The call carries well in the atmosphere of the ranges and the bird is heard more frequently than seen. It is more common in the taller wet forests and is widely distributed throughout the mountains.

'Breeding has been recorded in spring, but there are indications that more than one brood may be raised, with the breeding extending into autumn' (Anon. 1974).

Common widespread species in the ranges, in relatively small numbers. Breeding resident.

Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*

We are south of the normal range of this species but Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984) commented that 'southern sightings of the species are made at all times of the year'. This explains the single record of an immature female found injured at Page on 3 May 1987 (Rarities Panel News No. 11 n.d.) and Veerman et al. (1988).

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

COCKATOOS

[Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii*]

We are well south of the distribution of this species listed by Mathews (1943) as 'common - city'. This is obviously an error, and he may have mistaken the Glossy Black-Cockatoo for it, but there is now no way of knowing. He did not record the latter species. This record is best disregarded.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami*

The Glossy Black-Cockatoo 'feeds almost exclusively on casuarina fruit' but 'its dependence on one type of food makes it vulnerable' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The first to record this species was Daley (1946).

Six were seen in a dead tree on the Tharwa to Tidbinbilla road on 17 March 1974 (Scrivenor 1974). Since then there have been many reports of birds, usually associated with the casuarinas on Mt. Ainslie or Mt. Majura. These birds usually remain for a few days or weeks. Sightings are irregular, with several in some years and none in others. There have been occasional

urban records. The eastern subspecies that occurs here is regarded as rare by Garnett (1992).

Planting of casuarinas in nature parks around the city may be an excellent long-term conservation measure.

Uncommon non-breeding visitor.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*

This species extracts wood-boring larvae from eucalypts and acacias.It also uses the seeds of introduced pines in timber plantations, as well as the seeds of native trees (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984; Taylor and COG 1992). Food probably influences sightings, which in the ACT have occasionally been from pine forests near the city, but mainly from the ranges to the west and south.

It was first reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional records of 8 to 10 birds', and McKelvie (1957) 'seen on two or three occasions'.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos are sometimes reported flying over urban areas, but most of the fairly frequent records have been from the damper mountains and the pine forests. At times large flocks occur, for example 130+ in October 1987 at Woods Reserve off the Corin Dam road (Veerman et al. 1989).

Common breeding resident in its preferred habitats.

Gang-gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*

The COG emblem was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and McKelvie (1957) 'common'. It is still regularly seen.

In the warmer months it is widely distributed throughout the higher altitudes where it breeds. There have also been breeding records from urban areas. Mainly, it is an altitudinal migrant and in cool weather becomes quite common, particularly around food sources in the older built up areas. It thrives on the hard seed cases of the tall, thin Roman Cypress. Gang-gangs also take various berries from local gardens, and from places where such plants have become garden escapes, for example in several of our nature parks.

Common breeding resident. Many of them are altitudinal migrants.

Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*

This is a species which appears to have benefited greatly from the spread of human activity. 'Before 1901 the Australian Atlases contained records from only five 1 degree blocks south of 20 degrees in the Eastern Queensland and South-East Regions' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). An excerpt from a letter dated 2 September 1875 appears to describe Galahs at Duntroon (Wilson 1975b).

The list of Jones (1929) covering the period 1913 to 1928 included after the Galah entry, the comment 'a flock of four seen once', something of a surprise to the modern bird watcher. Mathews (1943) regarded it as 'common - city'. Daley (1946) also saw it; then Lamm and White (1950) commented 'in the case of such a conspicuous species, it must be assumed that Galahs have increased considerably in recent years'.

The Galah is now regularly reported as a breeding species from all places except the wetter forests of the ranges. Galahs use the same nest hole repeatedly and therefore old trees are essential for it (as for many other species). Despite the Galah being common, we need to ensure that old trees on the ACT tablelands are preserved as breeding sites.

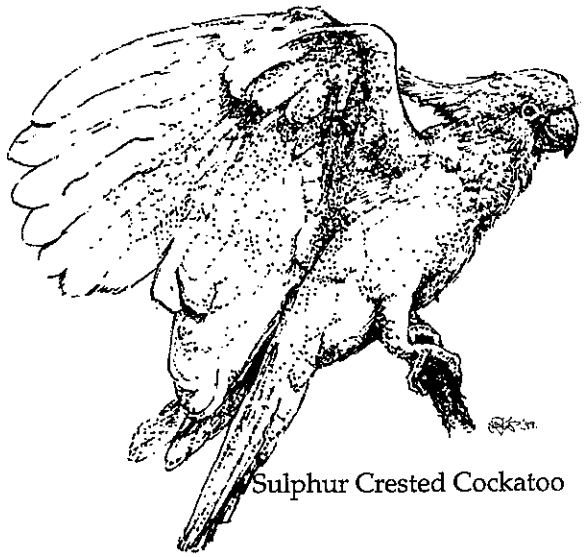
Except in the higher ranges, this is a common breeding species.

Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris*

Over the years there have been more than 20 sightings of this species. The first was that of Schlager (1984), who saw one with Sulphur-crested Cockatoos at Kambah on 4 April 1984. Veerman et al. (1988) reported two on 27 December 1986 at Watson, two on 13-14 January 1987 at Hall, one on 28 March 1987 at Richardson and one on 7 September 1987 at Lanyon. This is the greatest number occurring in any one Annual Bird Report. 'A decline beginning last century greatly reduced its range and numbers. The species has recently begun to recover but its present distribution is small compared to last century' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). 'Adults sedentary, young dispersive. Feral populations resident near Sydney, n. coast NSW, Brisbane etc.' (Pizzey 1997).

There have been so many local occurrences that the possibility exists that young birds have arrived here of their own accord. Many single birds have been endorsed as escapees by the Rarities Panel. A permanent population has not become established.

The local birds are mainly escapees. There is a probability that we have occasional rare visitors.



Sulphur Crested Cockatoo

Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea*

Perman (1973) was the first to report this species, at Yarralumla on 17 June 1973. Since then we have had rural occurrences from Uriarra Crossing, Mulligans Flat and Castle Hill; and many from urban areas centring around Holt and Narrabundah in particular.

An excellent account of these birds in the general Narrabundah - Mugga Lane Zoo area is given by Dabb (1996). It appears that free-flying Little Corellas were present at the former Mugga Lane Zoo in 1988, and that breeding in the area was indicated though not proved. Flocks of about 30 were seen.

At Mulligans Flat, 24 appeared on 24 February 1994 (Rarities Panel News 1997). A flock of up to 23 was noted between 24 and 28 February 1998 (Rarities Panel News 1998b).

Probably permanently established and breeds in the area; an uncommon species. Its origin is uncertain and may have started from escaped cage birds.

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri*

'Occasionally small groups are reported from well outside the normal range' (Forshaw 1981). This may account for local records first reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) at Uriarra Crossing on 26 November 1960, and in Canberra on 25 May 1961. Both were of single birds accompanied by Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

Wilson (1965) reported 'two near Gungahlin May 7 1965. There have been several recent sightings too frequent for escapees'. Later there was a report of two on the west side of Black Mountain with the added comment 'probably a small population has originated from escapees' (Wilson 1966). The following year there were three reports from urban areas (Wilson 1968). The only other record was of one bird on 20 October 1986 (Veerman et al. 1988). Anon. (1974) discussed these sightings concluding 'rare vagrant . . . The possibility that all sightings were aviary escapees cannot be discounted'.

As there were a number of reports from Uriarra Crossing and around Canberra between 1960 and 1966, and only one since, it seems likely that this species is a rare vagrant in the area.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*

In the nineteenth century many of these were shot as pests, especially when they raided fruit trees (Shumack 1977).

It was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', Daley (1946), Lamm and Calaby (1950) and McKelvie (1957) 'very common'.

This species breeds throughout the ranges of the ACT, while some birds nest in old trees within the built-up area of Canberra. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos of the ranges are altitudinal migrants appearing in numbers in urban areas over winter (Taylor and COG 1992). They form large feeding and roosting flocks during the non-breeding season. As a large proportion of the population breeds in holes and trees in the mountains, conservation is not a problem.

Common breeding resident and altitudinal migrant.

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*

Records commence with Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

Over recent years there have been many records, often of single birds, many coloured, which have been noted as escapees: but occasionally small flocks are seen. Some seem to be wild birds, for example three at Red Rock Gorge on 4 December 1989 (Rarities Panel News 1989a).

Some local birds are rare vagrants: but many are released or escaped cage birds.

LORIKEETS

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Lamm and White (1950) gave the first record from Red Hill and another from the City area, both undated.

Six birds were released at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in 1970 and shortly afterwards two Rainbow Lorikeets appeared at Hackett on 1 April. By 31 March 1971, seven were seen there together, and it appeared that two broods had been raised (Peters 1971). Over succeeding years records of the species increased, with many being regarded by the Rarities Panel as 'possible escapees'. The records of 'pet' species for 1987-88 were analysed by Veerman (1991a), who found that Rainbow Lorikeets far exceeded the combined totals for all other such species, with 46 records of 111 individuals. No doubt there were multiple sightings in both figures, but obviously these cannot be escapees only. Records have come frequently from Aranda, and the 1991-92 Annual Bird Report commented on 'a continuation of regular reports from two sites in Aranda which started in 1986-87' (COG 1997).

This species is difficult to assess. Escapees no doubt occur, but there are also wild birds and occasional breeding. These should be regarded as rare visitors. It appears that a permanent local population has not yet been established.

Scaly-breasted Lorikeet *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus*

A single bird was recorded on 5 January 1984 at Kaleen 'flying high and very well (many eucalypts in flower nearby)' (Taylor and Davey 1985). A flock of six was seen at Point Hut Crossing on 12 April 1987 (Taylor and COG 1992). There have been three other records, one in 1992 and two individuals in 1993, marked as escapees by the Rarities Panel. One or two may well be escapees, but a flock of six is more likely to be wild birds.

Rare non-breeding vagrant. Some birds are probably escapees.

Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*

We are towards the edge of the distribution of this species, first recorded by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - city'.

Eight were seen in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 31 October 1971 and 'details of plumage and calls were recorded' (Anon. 1972a). There have been four other sightings over the years; some may have been escaped cage birds.

Rare visitor.

Little Lorikeet *Glossopsitta pusilla*

'The Little Lorikeet is nomadic, moving about to maintain contact with flowering trees . . . principally . . . eucalypts' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). This would account for its sporadic appearances in the ACT. Its history began with Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950), with irregular sightings since then.

Most records are of one or two birds, but sometimes small flocks are seen. It has been reported from virtually all altitudes of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992). Because of its affinity with flowering eucalypts, the majority of records are from rural or mountainous areas, with occasional urban appearances, especially from the vicinity of nature parks.

Rare non-breeding visitor to our area.

[Purple-crowned Lorikeet *Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*]

The ACT is a considerable distance beyond the normal distribution of this species (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Two birds were seen in Turner on 11 June 1968 and were noted by the Rarities Panel as 'possible escapees' (Veerman et al. 1989). It is unlikely that these were wild birds.

PARROTS

Australian King-Parrot *Alisterus scapularis*

As Canberra has grown, so too it appears have the numbers of this species, possibly because of the availability of food from local gardens in winter. Jones (1929) commented 'odd ones come from the mountain gullies', Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and White (1950) reported 'no records'.

By the mid 1960s the pattern we see today was beginning to emerge: 'occasional in the ranges, but only visited Canberra in winter' (Wilson 1965). The ACT Atlas map of warm weather records shows a concentration of sightings about older urban areas and in the ranges immediately to the west of the city. There

is also a scatter of small numbers over most of the mountainous area.

The corresponding cool weather map indicates that a few remain in their summer habitat, with a concentration of records in the older suburbs. Yarralumla is the Hot Spot (Taylor and COG 1992), a fact well known to Canberra bird watchers. This species is known to roost in very large numbers in the pine forests immediately west of the city during the cooler months.

Breeding has been reported, and there is also much circumstantial evidence available.

Common breeding resident, but mostly an altitudinal migrant. Many cool weather records from the older urban areas, chiefly south of Lake Burley Griffin.

[Red-winged Parrot *Aprosmictus erythropterus*]

This northern species has been recorded in Chapman, a male on 17 March 1980 (Lenz 1981), the only ACT record. This was obviously an escapee.

Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii*

Mathews (1943) was the only early ornithologist to report this species and found it to be 'rare - country'.

Single birds were recorded at Hall on 5 November and 10-11 December 1966 (Wilson 1968). Since then there have been quite a large number of sightings which were analysed by Davey (1997). In a survey of the northern area of the ACT and the COG area of interest further north, he found that there are many records of escapees; but that the migratory Superb Parrot was seen occasionally within the borders of the ACT. A recent record was of a flock with a maximum of 20 between 1 November and 16 December 1997 (Rarities Panel News 1998b).

The birds breed and feed within a small area and all nesting reports were from the hollows of Blakely's Red Gum. The Yellow Box is also important in its ecology. This parrot is a very vulnerable species, and preservation of its old nesting trees is of great importance. Unfortunately, a lot of Canberra's firewood is drawn from the area of its rather limited distribution. There are old breeding records from the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992), but the development of the northern suburbs has eliminated suitable habitat. The Superb Parrot is classified as vulnerable by Garnett (1992) and also in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998).

Rare visitor. Breeding has been recorded in earlier days.

[Princess Parrot *Polytelis alexandrae*]

A single bird of this inland species was seen in the Aranda bushland on 5 October 1992 (Rarities Panel News 1992). This was obviously an escapee.

Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*

This species was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', as well as Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The Status list described it as 'common in all wooded areas' (Anon. 1974). Nowadays it occurs in all urban places with established gardens. The ACT Atlas recorded it throughout the ACT, and described it as a very common breeding resident (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding has been recorded frequently, and because much of this occurs in the undisturbed forests of the ranges, conservation is not a problem.

Common breeding resident.

Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*

This colourful open country species was recorded by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

As it feeds chiefly on grass seeds, it occurs in abundance throughout the tablelands and extends to grasslands at higher altitudes, but is not found in the forests of the ranges. An important study of the use of nest holes in trees, by both the Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and two introduced species, in Oakey Hill Nature Park, was made by Pell and Tidemann (1994).

Breeding has been recorded frequently, but as the Eastern Rosella uses deep holes in old trees, the need for preservation of such trees cannot be over-emphasised.

Common breeding resident in all grassland areas of the ACT.

[Pale-headed Rosella *Platycercus adscitus*]

The ACT is far to the south of the distribution of this species, but there have been several local records. Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) described the sighting of one or two birds between June and October 1961. Another was reported at Phillip on 14 December 1987 (Veerman et al. 1989) and the last was at Melba on 13

November 1993 (Rarities Panel News 1994b). These records were all of escaped cage birds and were too widely spaced for a wild population to arise.

[Australian Ringneck *Barnardius zonarius*]

We are not far from the eastern distribution of the Mallee morph of this species (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but the majority of records, and there are many, are of the Port Lincoln morph which occurs further west.

The first report was of one at Campbell on 27 June 1967 (Wilson 1968). Then followed two interesting records. Two of the Port Lincoln morph were seen on the slopes of Mt. Majura on 1 September 1974 (Balfour 1975). They were noted in Hackett in October 1974 and in December 1974 there were two adults and three young being fed by them (Grant 1976). There was a later comment 'very uncommon breeding resident. Originally escapees, now a small breeding population' (Taylor 1984b). Other than the quotes above, the basis for this comment is not known.

All recent records have been endorsed as escapees by the Rarities Panel. Despite one proved breeding record, the small group did not survive locally, and the species is not regarded as part of the ACT bird list.

[Red-capped Parrot *Purpureicephalus spurius*]

This Western Australian species has been recorded on three occasions. One was seen in the first week of September 1983 in O'Connor (Taylor and Davey 1985), the next was at Forrest from 22-30 September 1985 (Ordish 1986), and the third at the Australian National University (ANU) on 10 February 1987 (Veerman et al. 1988). These were obviously all escaped cage birds.

[Blue Bonnet *Northiella haematogaster*]

The distribution of this species extends to a point fairly close to the ACT (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). On 11 November and 6 December 1966, single birds were seen and photographed in Campbell and the information 'probably northern form from photographic evidence' was supplied (Wilson 1968). Another bird appeared, also in Campbell, on 2 September 1967 (Dow 1988), while a further report was of two birds on 14 April 1980 at Higgins (Lenz 1981). All are considered to be escapees.

Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*

Flocks of this Tasmanian breeding species move to the mainland in autumn, returning to Tasmania about September (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Some have occurred occasionally in the ACT during the cooler period. The first report was by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) of a flock of about 40 during May 1960, and a dead bird (Gungahlin CSIRO 248) was found under their roost tree.

There were a few records during the 1980s. According to Brouwer and Garnett (1990) they breed in Blue Gums. When flowering is reduced, so is the birds' breeding. Clearing of land for agriculture, sawlog production and woodchips has greatly reduced the abundance of Blue Gums. Brouwer and Garnett state that the species is dependent on winter flowering eucalypts on the mainland, and that the best stands of these have been cleared. The parrots may rely on remnant patches of mature eucalypts within extensive areas of agricultural land.

Three records occurred during the period of the ACT Atlas survey. At the time of writing, the last reports were of one bird at Lotus Bay, Lake Burley Griffin on 19 June 1988 (Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 19 n.d.), and another that was killed when it flew into a window at the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 7 May 1997. This bird was presented to the collection at Gungahlin (CSIRO). The Swift Parrot is regarded as vulnerable by Garnett (1992) and also in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998).

Rare migrant visitor to the ACT, with sightings decreasing in recent years.

Red-rumped Parrot *Psephotus haematonotus*

Grassland with old trees containing nest holes is the preferred habitat of this species, which Jones (1929) was the first to report, followed by Mathews (1943) 'common - city', then Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It occurs wherever there is suitable habitat, chiefly on the tablelands area. The short grass of playing fields, golf courses and school grounds invites them in urban areas, particularly if there are old eucalypts nearby; but they avoid the more densely built up areas. Breeding occurs wherever they can find suitable hollows.

Common breeding resident on the tablelands particularly. Preservation of old trees is critical for this species.

Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*

According to Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984), the ACT is near the edge of the distribution of this species. Its occurrence earlier was noted by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

'Four green birds [were seen] on the outskirts of Canberra on 21 and 22 October 1966' (Wilson 1968). In more recent days there have been many records, often of single birds, most of which have been endorsed as escapees by the Rarities Panel.

There are valid records of wild birds here, but the Budgerigar is rare in the ACT. Such a nomadic species could occur here again.

Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*

Weetangera, then in open country, was the place of one of the most reliable sightings of a bird of this species on 3 May 1965 (Wilson 1965). There was a report by Dow (1988) of two at Ginninderra, at that time also well beyond the urban boundaries, on 6 June 1965, seen by the same competent observer. The next was from the Federal Golf Club on 23 October 1969, 'identified as Blue-winged or Elegant' and one on 4 February 1968 at Weetangera Lane, 'identified as probably a Blue-winged'. The two quotes are from Anon. (1969a). There have been no later records.

Rare vagrant in our area.

[Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans*]

There is one questionable record of this western bird and details are given under the species above. It is not on the ACT bird list.

Turquoise Parrot *Neophema pulchella*

The edge of eucalypt forest where it meets grassland is the favourite habitat for this ground foraging species. It was first recorded on 23-24 January 1988 at Swamp Creek Road, below Two Sticks Road in the Brindabella Ranges (Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 19 n.d.; Veerman et al. 1989). Two individuals were seen at Campbell Park on 9-10 October 1993 (Rarities Panel News 1994a). Another occurrence was one at Mt. Ainslie on 3 November 1994 (Rarities Panel News 1995). There were also sightings at Mulligans Flat, one bird on 16 October and two on 5 November 1994 (Rarities Panel News 1997).

This species suffered a reduction of range and abundance between 1880 and 1920; then there was a noticeable increase in the 1940s. It is now re-established over much of its former range and seems secure (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). In our area records seem to reflect its resurgence, as all sightings have been since 1988.

Rare vagrant.

[Peachfaced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*]

This and related overseas species have been reported about 20 times since the first occasion in July 1982 (Taylor 1984b). No breeding population has become established and none of the species are on the Australian list. These were obviously all escaped or released cage birds.

[Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*]

Since first reported by Hahne (1984), there have been several records of this Asian species. It is in the same category as the Peachfaced Lovebird above.

CUCKOOS

Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*

The spring calls of this species are distinctive. It was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', and Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional'.

This cuckoo arrives annually, in late winter and spring, and numbers appear to vary considerably from year to year. It does not reach the higher ranges but is widespread on the tablelands. Records start in August, building to a peak in November, with few sightings in December and January. There are a number of reports, mostly of immatures, in February and March (Taylor and COG 1992). Breeding has been recorded quite frequently.

Common warm weather breeding migrant. There are odd winter records.

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) reported this species at Gibraltar Creek on 2 December 1962, and a further

bird from the Bombing Range, north-east of Canberra, on 9 December 1962. The ACT Atlas survey showed that the birds appeared firstly on the tablelands, then gradually moved to the forests of the ranges. Nowhere is it common (Taylor and COG 1992). This is the least common of the small cuckoos which occur in the ACT, and is usually recognised by its distinctive call.

Breeding has been recorded.

Uncommon breeding migrant in the ACT.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*

Another species with a distinctive call; it is probably heard more often than seen. Jones (1929) reported it as did Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It occurs in numbers each year and appears to be migratory, though some birds stay over winter now and again (Gourlay 1974). The migrants appear to return as early as the end of July in the urban area, but arrive considerably later in the ranges, where they are found up to the highest levels. In the ranges their numbers are at their peak in summer. Others remain on the tablelands over the warmer weather (COG 1997).

Breeding has been recorded.

Common breeding migrant. Some birds occasionally remain over winter.

Black-eared Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx osculans*

The dry inland is the main habitat of this species, and Canberra is near the edge of its range. The first to be recorded in the ACT was during 1946 (Lamm and White 1950).

Since then there have been reports of single birds from Black Mountain in September and October 1968 (Wilson 1970), at Spence from 1-6 December 1986 (Veerman et al. 1988), at Hall Cemetery on 19 November 1988 (Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 21 n.d.) and at O'Malley on 26 February 1989 (Rarities Panel News 1989a).

Breeding has not been recorded locally.

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*

Among the early ornithologists Jones (1929) was the only one to mention this species.

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented that it 'occurs fairly commonly in open forest in spring and summer', and since then it has been reported annually. Sightings begin in late July, peaking in November. They decrease in the autumn, though there have been reports in all months (Gourlay 1974). This species is generally absent from the forests of the ranges (Taylor and COG 1992), but over the years three were banded at New Chums Road (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988), two in 1971 and one in 1979.

Common breeding migrant mainly on the tablelands. A few birds occur in winter in some years.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

Mathews (1943) was the first to mention this cuckoo. Lamm and White (1950) considered the report to be an error, as Mathews did not record Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) recorded both species. The Shining Bronze-Cuckoo returns in late July or August. By October it is common in the high forests of the ranges, its chief breeding area. Numbers decline rapidly in the autumn, but odd birds have been seen in all months in mild winters. At New Chums Road 23 birds were banded (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). Two were retrapped, one the following year, and another two years later at the same place.

Common breeding migrant species. Odd birds are recorded in some winters.

Common Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea*

The ACT is just beyond the southern edge of its normal distribution (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but occasionally in the warm weather one bird or sometimes two turn up here. One bird was seen in 1946 and reported by Lamm and White (1950).

Strangely, this remained the only record until one was seen from 1-8 January 1981 at Lyons and apparently in other suburbs (Editor 1981). There was a report of a male in Narrabundah from early December 1985 to 28 February 1986, and a female was seen occasionally (Ross 1986). Since then this species has been

reported nearly every summer, but it has never been numerous.

Rare non-breeding migrant in the ACT. Records have been more frequent since 1986.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

The distribution of this species extends down the south coast of NSW, but we are near the inland edge of its range (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). A bird seen at Tidbinbilla on 8 September 1960 was the first record (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). The few records to 1981, one of which was a juvenile bird, were discussed by Nix (1983). There was a report of a single bird at Canberra Airport on 14 October 1985 (Taylor, Lenz and Lepschi 1987), then no further records until one was observed at Gilmore on 5 January 1995. Another bird was reported from Mt. Painter on 18 December 1997 (Rarities Panel News 1999).

Rare vagrant in our area, with the possibility of one breeding record.

OWLS

Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*

Tidbinbilla was the site of the first record of this species and the call was recorded (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). This species occupies very large territories and pairs are 5-20 km apart (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

The ACT Atlas survey found it to be thinly distributed in the Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges, and also in the upper Naas Valley (Taylor and COG 1992). There were three sightings of a bird at Warks Road between 8 and 22 January 1966; twice it was holding a Greater Glider (Wilson 1966). Records of birds at Tidbinbilla were analysed by Fletcher and Reckord (1989). There have been a number of reports over the years including some of juvenile birds.

Conservation of this species is a problem as 'the main threat to the owl is that modern forestry practice results in the cumulative loss of old growth forest containing hollows large enough for the owl and its prey to use for nesting' (Brouwer and Garnett 1990). Fortunately its habitat in the ACT is not subject to disturbance as it is elsewhere. The Powerful Owl is regarded as rare by Garnett (1992).

Rare breeding resident.

Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*

One bird was noted by Lamm and White in open forest along the Kings Highway on 13 February 1949 (Lamm and White 1950). This was identified by the authors as the first ACT record.

It seems that a single bird is sighted every few years, sometimes in urban areas, but also at Tidbinbilla, Hospital Hill in the south of the ACT, at Mt. Arawang near Kambah and at Shepherds Lookout. The birds occasionally remain for a few weeks.

Breeding has not been recorded.

Rare non-breeding vagrant locally.

Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae*

The most numerous of the local owls, the Southern Boobook was noted by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'common - city'.

It was described as the 'commonest owl, often heard in Canberra' by Wilson (1965). This bird is regularly reported from the older urban areas with mature trees, usually drawing attention by its continual nocturnal calling. The ACT Atlas survey showed it to be well distributed in all areas except grassland, and breeding has been recorded (Taylor and COG 1992). Annual Bird Reports confirm this with a natural emphasis towards urban records.

Widespread common breeding species in virtually all of the ACT.

Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*

The only record of this species is Gungahlin (CSIRO 285). The owl was killed by a car at the site of Lake Burley Griffin on 11 March 1960.

'It is possible that some records of the Barn Owl pertain to the Masked Owl' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). It is difficult to improve on that comment, and the above remains the only record of this species in the ACT. The southern subspecies is regarded as rare by Garnett (1992).

Rare non-breeding vagrant in the ACT.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

This was recorded by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - city'.

The next was a rather typical record 'one dead in March' [1966] (Brown and Gibson 1966). The situation was summed up well by Taylor and COG (1992): 'after mouse plagues, Barn Owls suddenly irrupt throughout the lower parts of the ACT and may remain common for a month or two. As availability of mice declines, starving...Barn Owls are...found dead beside country roads'. COG records over the years appear to confirm that opinion, reports being from all parts of the tablelands and quite irregular. There is no report of breeding.

Rare irruptive non-breeding visitor.

FROGMOUTH AND NIGHTJARS

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*

An inconspicuous nocturnal species which was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is sedentary and two adults were banded in woodland behind Russell Offices on 21 November 1970. A chick was banded at exactly the same site on 21 November 1976 and an adult, probably a male, was recaptured. Its band showed that it was one of the birds banded at that nest site six years earlier (Stokes 1977). It is frequently reported from urban areas, from open woodland and occasionally from the higher forests.

Roosting and nesting sites near built up areas become known, and there is probably a bias in reporting these. This species seems to be thinly spread over large parts of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992) and breeds over much of its range. It may be more abundant than reported because of the difficulty of finding roosting birds in forest and woodland areas.

Uncommon breeding resident.

White-throated Nightjar *Eurostopodus mystacalis*

Specimen 142 was a bird hit by a car near Gungahlin (CSIRO) on 5 February 1959 and this was the first ACT record (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). Another was reported near the north end of Northbourne Avenue in February 1965 (Wilson 1965), another near the Red Hill School on 15 February 1966 and one, possibly the same bird, near Canberra Grammar School on 17 February 1966 (Wilson 1966). Since then there have been about ten records, sometimes with several years between sightings. This species is a migrant, and is more common in the coastal eucalypt forests, and rare west of the Divide (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). A nest with a single egg was reported and photographed west of Mt. Tidbinbilla in Namadgi National Park on 11 November 1992 (Olsen and Hayes 1994).

Rare breeding migrant or vagrant. All records have been during the warmer months.

Australian Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus*

This nocturnal bird is difficult to locate and may be underreported. Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) were the first to put it on record, with three birds seen but dates not given. It appears from COG records to inhabit all types of woodland, including the rather wet forests of the ranges.

Nine were banded at New Chums Road over the years, and two of these were retrapped later (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). One banded on 10 August 1980 was retrapped on 12 December 1981 within 100 metres of the place of banding, which seems to confirm the sedentary nature of the species. All the birds referred to were taken in mist nets and released before sunrise.

Breeding is difficult to observe as nests in tree holes are used; but it was confirmed by Taylor and COG (1992).

Uncommon breeding resident, widely but sparsely distributed in all wooded areas.

SWIFTS

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

On days of threatening storms in summer, this species is often seen in large numbers. It was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very rare', Lamm and White (1950) 'substantial numbers in March, 1948', and McKelvie (1957) 'one flock seen'.

White-throated Needletails may be seen anywhere in the ACT between December and March, but can disappear very rapidly. They are capable of flying huge distances daily.

They breed in Asia.

Common summer migrant which may occur repeatedly in a season.

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*

Fork-tailed Swifts sometimes accompany White-throated Needletails, but in much smaller numbers. Sometimes a few birds are seen alone. Lamm and White (1950) reported 'substantial movements in March 1948' and, with other ornithologists, saw a flock in March 1949.

This species was also noted by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). Records cover only the months December to March. Most observations are urban, but this may be artificial, reflecting the greater chance of sightings. In some years there have been no reports.

It tends to occur more inland than the Needletail, and also breeds in Asia.

Rare summer migrant in the ACT.

KINGFISHERS, BEE-EATER AND ROLLER

Azure Kingfisher *Alcedo azurea*

A bird of creeks and rivers, this species was first recorded by Wilson (1966) 'two on the Molonglo above Lake Burley Griffin, 22-23 November' [1965]. Two were again seen on 9 March 1969 at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park (McNaughton 1969), and another in the same area on 30 July 1972 (Anon. 1974). The next was seen at Sullivans Creek, ANU on 3 November 1984 (Taylor, Davey and Gibson 1986) and others in the same place on 31 October 1986 (Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 6 n.d.) and on 3 September 1988 (COG 1990).

Rare non-breeding migrant.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*

A conspicuous species which was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It has always been frequently reported in COG records, and breeding is often noted. The ACT Atlas survey showed it to be most common in the high central forests of Namadgi National Park, and least common in those areas with few trees. The Laughing Kookaburra is quite numerous over the whole of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992). However, the Garden Bird Survey graph of reports for the period 1984 to 1995 shows a steady decline over the final eight years. Possibly competition for nest holes in urban areas and nearby nature parks may be the cause.

Common breeding resident in the ACT.

Red-backed Kingfisher *Todiramphus pyrrhopygia*

This inland species appears here occasionally, the first being at Tharwa Bridge on 22 November 1953 (McKelvie 1957).

The next was at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on 22 December 1968 (Wilson 1970). Others have been seen near Lotus Bay, at O'Connor, Rivett, Hughes and Tharwa, with the last record being from Acacia Inlet on 5 October 1989 (Rarities Panel News 1990).

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*

The penetrating call of this species draws attention. The bird was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is sparsely distributed but widespread in the ACT, with only occasional sightings in the higher ranges (Taylor and COG 1992). It is mostly seen from late September to March, with odd records outside that period.

This kingfisher breeds in woodlands in the lower areas of its range, using hidden nest holes. Felling of old trees in open woodlands is disastrous for this species.

Widespread, but uncommon breeding migrant.

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*

The Rainbow Bee-eater is found near creeks and rivers except in the densely forested ranges, and was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is regularly recorded from late September to early April and is sometimes seen and heard as flocks pass over urban areas on migration.

The Rainbow Bee-eater nests in sandy banks and alluvial soil along streams, but the nests are so deep

that inspection is impossible. Successful breeding is reasonably inferred.

Common breeding migrant in the ACT.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

This conspicuous migrant was recorded by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

In the second report of the ACT Branch of the RAOU it was mentioned as a 'regular visitor in small numbers. First arrived on 20 October and last record 25 April' [1966] (Wilson 1966); this sums up the situation over the years. Generally it is found in open woodlands on the tablelands, avoiding the wetter forests of the high country. In autumn adults and young are frequently noted in urban areas.

Breeding has been reported from high hollows in old trees and these are essential for its welfare.

Widespread in suitable country in small numbers. An uncommon breeding migrant.

LYREBIRD

Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*

The Franklin family moved from Brindabella Station to a property near Goulburn in the late 1880s. Franklin reported meeting trappers with 'scores of lyretails on the way to market'. Also 'they were admired as enterprising. I don't recall any protest or expression of regret for the vandalism. The gullies were still alive with these creatures. They played across the road [in the Brindabella Ranges] and disappeared among the undergrowth' (Franklin 1979). Gale (1927) also mentioned its presence in the early settlement days, without giving a date.

Reported by Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', and Lamm and White (1950) whose comment was 'not uncommon'.

Logging for timber was carried out in the Brindabella Ranges until about the late 1950s, and the only access was forestry tracks and the fairly primitive road to Mt. Franklin and beyond. With the growth of Canberra, further water and dams were required. The road to Bendora Dam was constructed and the rest of the road improved to allow the passing of two heavy trucks.

Poor access had made observation of the lyrebird and other forest species very difficult for the early ornithologists. From the early 1960s, records show that the Superb Lyrebird is widespread in the ranges, favouring damp gullies with thick shrubbery and a good layer of leaf litter. Such habitat occurs generally on the eastern (cooler) slopes. In the winter months, the breeding season, birds can be heard and occasionally seen. The status of this species has not visibly changed in recent years, and as its stronghold is within the Namadgi National Park its future seems assured.

Common breeding bird throughout the wetter forests of the ranges.

TREECREEPERS

White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaeus*

The loud continual call of this species attracts attention. It was listed by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', Lamm and Calaby (1950), and McKelvie (1957) 'common - country'.

Reports since indicate that it is widely distributed, but least common in urban areas because of its liking for mature native trees. It is abundant throughout forests of all types, especially in the higher country of the ranges. One bird banded at New Chums Road was retrapped there 11 years and 6 months later (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Breeding has been reported, generally in a hole high in a eucalypt.

Common breeding resident in forests at all altitudes.

Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythrops*

This is a sedentary species, often recognised by its slightly descending call, and found in the higher forests of the ACT. It was first reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963), a bird which was collected in the Brindabella Ranges on 16 April 1961 (Gungahlin CSIRO No. 186). The next report was from Wilson (1965) 'regular in small numbers in the ranges', and by that time banding had been in progress in the

Brindabellas for several years. The oldest bird reported was eight years and three months (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). Over the years it has been reported regularly, but it is never abundant.

Uncommon breeding resident, mostly in the forests west of the Murrumbidgee River.

Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus*

The habitat of this species contrasts with that of the other local treecreepers, as it is found throughout the dry woodlands of the tablelands. It is conspicuous and was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is regularly reported and breeding is recorded also. It forages around fallen timber and nests in hollows and spouts of dead trees. The removal of logs for firewood and the 'cleaning up' of grazing land is detrimental to it. The Brown Treecreeper has disappeared from some places where it was previously found. The spread of housing has also involved destruction of habitat, and this bird is not generally found in populated areas. The species is regarded as vulnerable in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998).

Uncommon breeding species in dry woodlands. On the tablelands it is being pushed further out by development.

FAIRY-WREN

Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*

This is the only member of the genus occurring in the ACT and was seen by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The Superb Fairy-wren needs dense cover for nesting and more open ground for foraging, and occurs in numbers throughout the ACT. It is less common in urban areas away from nature parks, but is particularly common in the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Its ability to penetrate the wetter forests is illustrated by banding data from New Chums Road. Only one was taken in the first ten years of the study, then 28 during the next eight years. One bird was retrapped there four years and one month after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Common breeding species throughout much of the ACT.

PARDALOTES AND ALLIES

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*

Jones (1929) was the first to report this species, then Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', and McKelvie (1957) 'common, city'.

The maps in the ACT Atlas (Taylor and COG 1992) show the change in distribution between the seasons with a concentration in the ranges in summer. This species is a partial altitudinal migrant, and possibly some individuals go beyond the ACT borders in winter. At that time it is a common bird on the tablelands, particularly in the older populated areas with mature trees. Not all birds leave the ranges in winter.

Most breeding is at the higher altitudes, but it also occurs in built up areas (COG 1998).

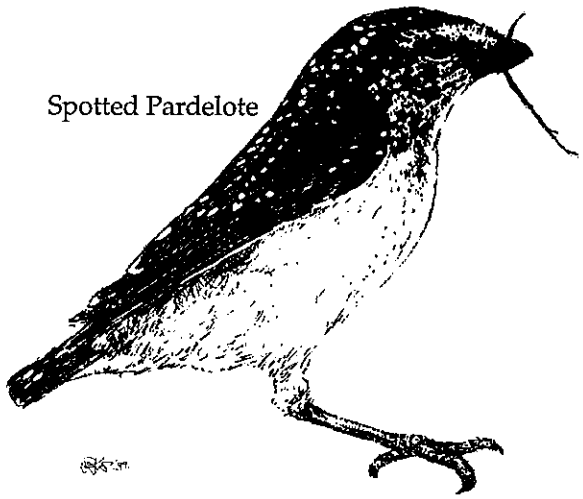
Common in the ACT. Many altitudinal migrants. Most breeding takes place in the ranges.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*

The Striated Pardalote is easily recognised by call and was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', Lamm and Calaby (1950) and McKelvie (1957).

The ACT Atlas (Taylor and COG 1992) show this species to be abundant on the tablelands including urban areas in the cooler months. The population is widespread in the warmer period, the greatest numbers being in the higher country, as some of the population are altitudinal migrants.

The situation is complicated, since Tasmanian breeding birds occur in the ACT in winter, as well as



Spotted Pardelote

the inland morph. It is a migrant (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Flocks have been heard flying overhead in pre-dawn hours in autumn (Wilson unpublished data).

Breeding has been recorded locally. The species uses small holes in trees, often quite high, and also breeds in horizontal holes in banks along roads and creeks.

Common, breeds locally. An altitudinal migrant, with some migration through the area.

Pilotbird *Pycnoptilus floccosus*

A species of the mountains with a strident call, but is difficult to see as it feeds on the ground or close to it, in dense cover. Belton (1961) was the first to record it. Bird banding activity soon showed it to be present in small numbers at New Chums Road, where 92 were banded over the years; and 31 were retrapped at least one year later. This indicates that the species is sedentary. The oldest bird was recovered 6 years and 3 months after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Pilotbirds are concentrated in the Brindabella Ranges and the middle section of the Cotter Valley, with small numbers in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and other damp forests areas(Taylor and COG 1992). The bird is reported regularly by those visiting its habitat and is recognised more by call than by sight.

Breeding has been reported but is difficult to observe.

Uncommon breeding resident, in rather limited habitat in the western ranges.

White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis*

The scolding contact call of this species is heard wherever there is suitable dense growth in forests, along watercourses and in nature parks. Lamm and White (1950) and Lamm and Calaby (1950) first reported it. It is surprising that earlier observers failed to see it, as it is one of the most abundant birds in the ACT.

It has been well studied. Banding data from New Chums Road were analysed by Wilson (1994) and showed that the annual survival rate was 65%, while the oldest bird was 14 years, four months and three days old from the date of banding. 1783 birds were banded and 1725 retrapped, some many times. Adults are sedentary once they take up territory. Juveniles disperse widely, the longest recorded movement being 31 km.

Nests with eggs or young were reported from mid-July to mid-February in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (Magrath 1997).

Common breeding resident in the ACT wherever there is suitable cover.

Chestnut-rumped Heathwren *Hylacola pyrrhopygia*

Heathland is the preferred habitat of this species but occasionally it wanders into the ACT. Black Mountain, not far from the mouth of Sullivans Creek, was the place of the first sighting on 7 October 1973 (Chuk 1974). The next was in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 10 June 1975 (Clark 1975). Following that was a sighting at Rolleys Flat in the upper Cotter River area on 23 February 1990. There have been other records from Mt. Rob Roy (twice), Mt. Majura (twice) and west of Sutton Road. There have been no reports of breeding.

Uncommon non-breeding vagrant.

Speckled Warbler *Chthonicola sagittata*

The first to report this species was Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', then Lamm and Calaby who recorded it on many of their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys.

It prefers undisturbed, dry open woodland and may be found in the same place for years on end. A few wander and have been sighted in urban gardens, particularly near nature parks.

The Speckled Warbler breeds in the woodlands, but does not occur in the wetter forests.

Uncommon sedentary breeding resident in suitable terrain.

Weebill *Smicrornis brevirostris*

Lamm and White (1950) reported breeding of this species in January 1949, the first ACT record.

This bird is found wherever there are eucalypts on the tablelands. It has a distinctive habit of hovering to take lerps from the leaves. The Striated Thornbill also does this but less frequently. It is occasionally seen at higher elevations and this seems typical of its wan-

dering habit; but it does not breed there. It is most abundant in private gardens in the cooler months when it is often observed in mixed species feeding flocks.

Common breeding species wherever eucalypts occur on the tablelands of the ACT, and in private gardens.

Brown Gerygone *Gerygone mouki*

This coastal rainforest species is obviously capable of long movements. It was first observed in the rainforest gully in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 4 July 1980 when four or five birds were present (Wilson 1980) and (Clayton 1980). That group remained for a considerable time and at least one was present until 8 November 1980. Breeding was suspected (Lenz 1982). Another single bird was seen in a gully on Mt. Ainslie on 29 August 1983 (Taylor and Davey 1985).

The Australian National Botanic Gardens was the scene of the remaining sightings, three on 25 May 1986 (Taylor, Lenz and Lepschi 1987), three to five birds 17 May to 21 September 1994 (Rarities Panel News 1994c) and four on 30 May 1995 (Rarities Panel News 1997). It is quite remarkable that a small bird like the Brown Gerygone can fly over long distances and discover a man-made vegetated gully similar to its preferred habitat.

Rare visitor. Breeding, though suspected, has not been proved.

Western Gerygone *Gerygone fusca*

The first report of this species was on 23 September 1962 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963), with other sightings about the same time. Nesting was recorded (Wilson 1965). It is present from September to April with occasional sightings in the cooler months.

The Western Gerygone is found in drier woodland with a shrubby understorey, favoured places being Mulligans Flat, the eastern slopes of Mt. Majura, Campbell Park and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (Taylor and COG 1992). It is regularly reported during the warmer months in small numbers, and is occasionally recorded in local gardens.

Uncommon breeding migrant in fairly restricted habitat in the ACT.

White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea*

The musical descending call identifies this species, though that of the Western Gerygone may be confused with it. Barrett (1922) reported it and also Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) identified it as a migrant and commented 'we have seen it fairly commonly'. It has been regularly reported since then, mostly between September and April with occasional birds remaining over winter. It appears to prefer fairly well-watered woodlands including older private gardens. A few records from the higher forests are considered to be passage migrants (Taylor and COG 1992).

It breeds locally and nests are reported frequently.

Common breeding migrant on the tablelands, including older developed areas.

Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*

The Brown Thornbill was recorded by Barrett (1922), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950). Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) commented that 'it is now a very common resident throughout the ACT', a view confirmed by Taylor and COG (1992).

This species was studied during the banding activity at New Chums Road. 1543 were banded and the average annual survival rate was 59%. The birds were considered sedentary, with the dispersal of juveniles. The oldest bird was retrapped 13 years, seven months and five days after banding (Wilson 1995).

This thornbill occurs throughout the ACT at all seasons and is found everywhere except in open grassland. It is seen in gardens near nature parks, especially during the cool months, when it joins feeding flocks of mixed species.

Common breeding bird found at all altitudes throughout the year.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza uropygialis*

First reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963), the inclusion of this species depends on the sighting of four birds over three days, 14-16 February 1961 between Campbell and Mt. Pleasant. Full details were provided later (Wilson 1976). It has not been reported

since but the ACT is not far from the normal distribution of this species (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

Rare vagrant in our area.

Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides*

Recorded first by Lamm and White (1950) who described it as fairly common.

Since the early 1960s it has been seen regularly, and breeding has been reported. It prefers dry country with tall grass and shrubs in woodland, and avoids the wetter forests of the western ranges and open grassland. It is common in the dry high country of the south (Taylor and COG 1992). It often joins feeding flocks of mixed species during the cooler months, and sometimes moves into private gardens from nature parks.

Common breeding resident in dry areas of the ACT.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*

Certainly the most easily recognised of the thornbill group because of its vivid yellow rump and distinctive call. This species was noted by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Since then it has been regularly reported from all parts of the ACT, with the exception of the wetter forests to the west. It is sedentary in the breeding season but at other times wanders in flocks over large territories (Taylor and COG 1992). In the cooler weather, feeding flocks of mixed species seem to congregate around the Yellow-rumped Thornbill until it commences breeding in mid winter. It is frequently seen in older private gardens.

Common breeding resident except in the high, wet forests.

Yellow Thornbill *Acanthiza nana*

The least common of the thornbill group, this was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is found in limited habitat of river oaks, native cherries and acacias along the rivers, and in open woodland (Taylor and COG 1992). The Yellow Thornbill occurs throughout the year in its preferred locations. It is never abundant; and is found only on the tablelands, and sparsely, in some of the dry southern forests, but not in the wetter areas of the ranges.

Breeding has been reported.

Uncommon breeding resident in a somewhat restricted habitat.

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*

This species occurs throughout the ACT wherever there are eucalypts. It was reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963), whose first record was at Lees Creek in the Brindabella Ranges on 14 April 1962.

It was studied intensively by bird banding at New Chums Road. 650 were banded over the 21 years with an annual average survival rate of 68%. Flocks or family parties of this species were considered sedentary within a fairly large territory; 272 birds were retrapped. The oldest bird retrapped was 15 years, 7 months and 23 days after banding (Wilson 1995).

The species generally feeds high in eucalypts but at times comes down to shrub level. This was reflected in the seasonal catches and retraps. 150 were caught in summer, 267 in autumn, 241 in winter and 264 in spring when much of the catch consisted of juveniles. Many of these dispersed from the area (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). The Striated Thornbill is seen throughout the tablelands.

Breeding has been recorded frequently.

Common breeding resident found at all altitudes in all months of the year.

Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala leucopsis*

First reported by Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', then by Lamm and White (1950), who commented on the Mathews opinion and added 'the authors have found the bird to be common in recent years'. Lamm and Calaby (1950) saw it on many of their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys.

The Australian Atlas found it to be common over a large inland area (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

'Southern Whitefaces are found where woodland intergrades with grassland and in dry rocky paddocks with scattered shrubs and dead timber'. 'Standing dead timber is essential for the Southern Whitefaces' survival as they nest in hollow trunks and branches'. Both quotes are from Taylor and COG (1992). Thus 'cleaning up' of paddocks is greatly shrinking its

habitat in the ACT. It has also been pushed out by housing development.

Uncommon breeding resident, probably with a declining local population.

HONEYEATERS

Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata*

The growing of native plants in private gardens has probably increased the local numbers of this species, which was first noted by Jones (1929), then Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', and Lamm and White (1950) 'fairly common'.

In 1965-66 the finding was 'regular in Canberra; fairly common in the ranges in summer' (Wilson 1966). While its status in the mountains remains the same, with many birds leaving in the cool weather, it has become very numerous in the built up areas. Nesting is frequently reported and many birds remain over winter wherever there are suitable flowering plants to provide nectar.

Common breeding resident. Part of the population is migratory, especially in the ranges.

Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*

The suburb of Forrest was the place of the first sighting of this bird in early January 1965 (Wilson 1965). There were further reports of one on 19 October 1965 and two on 28 April 1966, but the locations were not given (Wilson 1966). Single birds were reported in O'Connor on 28 September and 13 October 1966 (Wilson 1968). Three were seen in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 25 October 1967 and single birds were reported from Gudgenby and the Cotter River picnic area on two occasions (Anon. 1969a).

Five were seen on 27 October 1968 at the Yarralumla Nursery and there were five sightings from the Australian National Botanic Gardens during 1973. One bird was banded (Dow 1988). There were three unconfirmed reports later (Taylor and Davey 1985), but since then this species has not been recorded. This is a bird of coastal districts (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), and it is difficult to explain the frequency of the above records and the absence of recent sightings.

Rare vagrant in our area.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys rufogularis*

The first report was by Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', while Lamm and White (1950) commented that 'it does not appear to be present in the ACT now'.

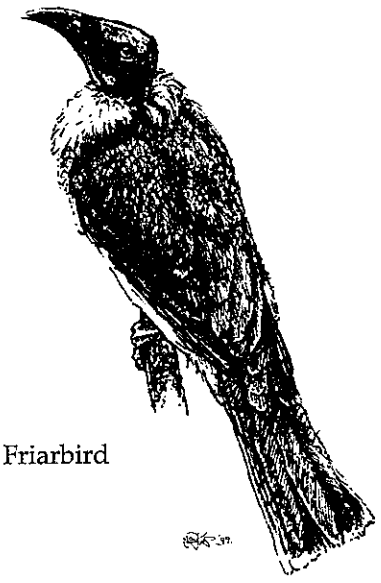
The dry inland is the habitat of this species, but it wanders as far as the ACT occasionally, so the above quotes are apt. One was reported at O'Connor on 31 October 1967 (Wilson 1970) and the next was a record of three in a native garden in Scullin between 11 July and 1 August 1978 (Lenz 1980). Then came a record in Melba, a single bird on 12-13 May 1981 (Lenz 1982), followed by one in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 29 December 1982 (Taylor and Davey 1985). There followed a series of records, from 16 km south of Tharwa, Kambah (three times) and Evatt. The last report was of another at Evatt on 26 July 1994 (COG 1998). There seems to be no particular pattern to the sightings in the ACT.

Rare vagrant from the inland.

Striped Honeyeater *Plectorhyncha lanceolata*

There is only one report of this bird, at Charnwood on 28 October 1995 (Rarities Panel News 1997). 'There are irruptions from time to time near the edges of the bird's range' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It occurs fairly close to the ACT to the north and to the west.

Rare vagrant.



Noisy Friarbird

Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*

Shumack (1977) used the name 'leather head' for this bird, and referred to it as a pest to the bush orchardist in the 1860s.

It seems that the Noisy Friarbird has always been a common migrant. The birds were seen by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It was not until much later that its migratory nature was referred to: 'first arrival September 26 1964; fairly common in open forest till April' (Wilson 1965). It is now regularly reported during its season; and a few birds have remained over the cooler months in some years. The species is most often seen on the tablelands, including urban locations, and as far south as the lower Naas River, with rare appearances in the higher ranges (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding occurs regularly.

Common breeding migrant chiefly on the tableland. A few occur during the cooler months.

Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis*

According to Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984) the Little Friarbird lives in eucalypt forests and farmland, and the ACT is on the edge of its distribution. The first report was an indefinite one: 'the Little Friarbird has . . . been seen twice' (Anon. 1968b) but the place and date were not given. A juvenile was reported on 15 January 1969 at Downer (Anon. 1969a). Over the years there have been many sightings, and some birds may have been recorded more than once.

A lot of these reports have come from Mulligans Flat and urban areas north of Lake Burley Griffin; but there are rare records from the far south of the ACT. For example, a juvenile was reported from Boboyan Trig. on 30 May 1981 and from Hospital Hill in late May 1989, both places being within Namadgi National Park (Rarities Panel News 1989a; Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding has been recorded at Mulligans Flat.

In the past this has been referred to as rare, but records in the 1990s have been so numerous that it is regarded as an uncommon breeding migrant.

Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*

This is a conspicuous bird and probably most of those occurring here are reported. Jones (1929) was the first to note it followed by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city'.

A measure of its local decline is the following: 'one at Pine Island October 10 1964; regular at the Rifle Range in December and January; two flocks of 20 each on Mt. Pleasant, February 27 1965 and several records in late April and early May' (Wilson 1964). There have been fewer reports over the years, but one was of successful breeding. The 1995-96 situation in the ACT and elsewhere was dealt with in detail by Bounds, Brookfield and Delahoy (1996).

This species is classified as endangered and has declined greatly in numbers in recent years throughout its distribution (Garnett 1992). It is also classified as endangered in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998).

The numbers of this species have apparently been reducing over many years despite conservation efforts. It is now a rare visitor to the ACT.

Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis*

The sole report of this species in the ACT was that of Mathews (1943) whose comment was 'rare - country'. It occurs not far to the north and to the west of the ACT and is regarded as sedentary (Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984).

Rare vagrant.

Bell Miner *Manorina melanophrys*

There was an undated report of calls of this species from the eastern slope of Black Mountain, but it was not regarded as valid (Wilson 1966). The first accepted record was a single bird present from 17-20 January 1994 at the ANU (Rarities Panel News 1994c). Four were reported in January 1996 near Warinna Inlet (Wilson 1996). Later the Rarities Panel published a list of sightings indicating that this small flock was present from 30 December 1995 to 6 April 1996 (Rarities Panel News 1997). Two birds were reported from the Sculpture Garden of the National Gallery of Australia from 16 June to 1 August 1998 (Rarities Panel News 1999).

This species is sedentary and occurs near the coast (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). One flock is known to have occupied an area near Narooma from at least 1963 to 1998 (Wilson unpublished data), which makes these Canberra records all the more surprising.

Rare vagrant.

Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*

A species of open eucalypt forests and woodlands, this bird was first reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Daley (1946).

In the early ACT RAOU Branch reports, resident populations were identified on several nearby country roads (Wilson 1965; 1966). Flocks are sedentary and are common on the tablelands, generally favouring eucalypts. They avoid the built-up areas except in the vicinity of nature parks. They also avoid the higher forests except in the upper Naas River area (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding has been reported occasionally.

Common breeding resident.

[Yellow-throated Miner *Manorina flavigula*]

Eggs were collected in 1957 and were identified in 1965 as being of this species (Wilson 1966). Details were given later by Wilson (1976). It has not been reported since and the circumstances described in the second reference are probably too indefinite for its inclusion in the list of ACT birds.

Lewin's Honeyeater *Meliphaga lewinii*

We are west of the normal distribution of this wet forest, coastal species (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984) but nevertheless it turns up here on occasions and was reported by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city'.

There was a long period before the next report of two on 21 August 1990 at Gungahlin Hill Nature Park (Rarities Panel News 1991a) which was followed by another pair at the same place on 28-29 July 1992 (Rarities Panel News 1992). The next sightings were in the rainforest gully, Australian National Botanic Gardens, one on 17 February 1993 and two on 27 June 1993 (Rarities Panel News 1993b).

Rare visitor to the ACT, mainly in winter.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*

Jones (1929) was the first to record this species followed by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', while Lamm and White (1950) were the first to report 'very extensive migratory movements along the river valley in early April'. Lamm and Calaby (1950) reported it on most of their surveys along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, indicating that it was both a migrant and a summer resident.

The 1960s experiences with the autumn migration were detailed by Wilson (1998a). Other papers on the migration are by Davey, Prendergast and Taylor (1984), who reviewed the literature, and Davey (1986) and Purchase (1985) who looked at the results of banding the migrants. There are many factors still unknown about the migration, for example, where do the birds originate (numbers in transit probably exceed the total population of the Brindabella Ranges) and where do they spend the winter?

Autumn migration is in huge numbers, while the spring return is more a drift of individuals and small flocks. They breed at all altitudes but chiefly in the higher ranges. Some birds remain over winter on the tablelands wherever they find suitable food. Winter numbers have increased here over the last 40 years, especially in private gardens.

Common breeding migrant. Some birds are present in winter, apparently where sufficient food is available.

Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus virescens*

We are just outside the normal range of this species but there have been a few sightings, the first of which was at Angle Crossing on 26 September 1964 (Wilson 1965).

This occurrence, and one in August 1962 are mentioned by Frith (1969). During the power-line survey on Black Mountain, a sighting in February 1975 was referred to (Bell 1980). Breeding has not been recorded.

Rare vagrant from further west.

White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostomus leucotis*

Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city' was the first to note this species, followed by Lamm and White (1950) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

After four years of banding at New Chums Road, the comment made was : 'regular in the ranges but more common in the summer; common about Canberra in winter' (Wilson 1965). In summer it is numerous at higher altitudes, many remaining over winter while others are altitudinal migrants and are seen about Canberra (Taylor and COG 1992).

At New Chums Road 271 were banded over the years, but only 41 were retrapped, with the oldest bird four years of age from the date of banding. This appears to indicate that the species does not hold territory from one season to the next. Birds were captured in every month of the year, but much more frequently in the warmer weather (Wilson unpublished banding data).

Breeding has been reported.

Breeding resident with some altitudinal migration taking place.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*

Gudgenby was the site of the first record of this species and it was also seen 'along the Murrumbidgee where it enters the ACT' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). Reports of this species from 1965 to 1986 were analysed by Taylor (1986) who found that most of the sightings at low altitude occurred in the cooler months, with reports from higher areas in the warmer times of year. Only three were banded at New Chums Road, in March, May and June respectively. The bird has been sighted there at all times of the year, but less frequently during summer.

A few are swept up in the excitement of the autumn migration of other species and were banded at Pine Island and Point Hut Crossing (Wilson unpublished banding data).

Breeding has not been reported in the ACT and it is doubtful if it occurs here. The nesting locality of the local birds is not known.

Rare visitor, chiefly in the cooler months. Probably breeds not far away outside the ACT.

Fuscous Honeyeater *Lichenostomus fuscus*

It was not until 1963 that this ACT breeding species was formally reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963). The Fuscous Honeyeater was banded in the Australian National Botanic Gardens, with official approval, from August to November 1964 and again in April and May 1965, long before the public opening of the Gardens (Wilson 1965).

This honeyeater occurs in the higher parts of the south and east of the Namadgi National Park in large numbers, and breeds there. Most move to the tablelands over the cooler months, while a few birds remain behind (Taylor and COG 1992). Numbers in Canberra vary considerably from year to year (COG 1998).

Common breeding species. Many of the birds are altitudinal migrants.

White-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus penicillatus*

'White-plumed Honeyeaters live in pairs or colonies of 10 to 20 individuals, typically centred on stands of large eucalypts near permanent water' (Taylor and COG 1992). The species is sedentary and breeding can extend for six months. The bird was noted by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

This species is regularly reported, especially from places where old eucalypts remain. Some breeding occurs in nature parks near developed areas. It does not occur in the higher forests.

Common breeding resident. Only minor movement, probably to and from breeding areas, otherwise sedentary.

Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*

'We have numerous records of this species throughout the ACT from all months of the year' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963): this was the first record. The same authors said that 'they seem to wander widely in suitable habitat and are unlikely to be seen in the same place on consecutive visits'.

This is a very mobile species and is not found in wet forests of the middle and lower catchments or in pine forests (Taylor and COG 1992). It appears to be a bird of eucalypt woodland and occurs at high altitudes, but not often in urban gardens except near nature parks. At New Chums Road, 21 were banded and only two retrapped, one three years, three months and seven days after banding. Of the total of 23, two were taken in summer, 18 in autumn, none in winter and three in spring (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Breeding has been recorded.

Uncommon breeding resident, most often seen at higher altitudes. Occurs in small numbers in suitable habitat throughout the tablelands.

White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*

Reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) were the first to remark how numerous this species is, 'this is a very common breeding bird in the western ranges and a very common migrant throughout the ACT'.

The warm weather breeding area is in the higher forests of the west and south where the White-naped Honeyeater is very common at this season; at the same time there are few on the tablelands. The cool weather distribution is a reversal of this pattern, with few at higher altitudes. Some birds remain on the tablelands after the main migration if suitable food is found (Taylor and COG 1992). Most of the population passes through the ACT.

The migration commences with the first cool change in late March, with a large proportion of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and small numbers of this species. Gradually the proportions of each change until by May, the migration is almost entirely of White-naped Honeyeaters. For references to the literature regarding the migration, see the Yellow-faced Honeyeater.

Common breeding migrant with some birds present over winter, especially in gardens where suitable food is found.

Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta*

The decline in local numbers can be gauged by the comments of Lamm and White (1950): 'A total of eight birds was observed in the river oaks . . . at various points along the Murrumbidgee on December 4 1948. One bird was incubating. Throughout December and January the number of birds increased, reaching a total of over twenty on February 6 1949. Birds were also seen in the city on several occasions'. The species was also mentioned by Lamm and Calaby (1950).

In the early 1960s it was seen each summer in the river oaks upstream from Uriarra Crossing on the east bank of the river (Wilson unpublished data). Another early report was that 'in 1962-63 it was seen for several weeks on the eastern slopes of Mt. Ainslie' (Frith 1969). A pair was seen at Casuarina Sands on 14 January 1971 (Dow 1988).

The only more recent sighting was of a single bird at Tharwa in October 1988 (Rarities Panel News 1991a). Its main food appears to be the fruit of a mistletoe which grows on the river oaks. This species is classified as rare in Australia (Garnett 1992) and as vulnerable in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998).

Rare migrant species, here for short periods over summer. Numbers seen in the ACT have declined alarmingly.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*

'We have observed this bird regularly throughout the year in the wet sclerophyll forest of the western ranges and have seen it in winter in Canberra and vicinity'. This was the original report of the species in the ACT (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963).

At New Chums Road 275 were banded and 87 retrapped. The breakdown of the numbers of banded and retrapped birds was 120 in summer, 73 in autumn, 68 in winter and 101 in spring (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988) which fits in with the idea of some altitudinal migration.

The oldest bird retrapped was 9 years and 11 months old from the time of banding, yet retrapping data indicate that only 17 were recaptured in the second year after banding, a figure much lower than for other species analysed. This appears to indicate that many birds do not return to the old nesting site, and that they are probably somewhat nomadic (Wilson unpublished banding data). Breeding is presumed in the ranges and many juveniles have been banded.

The Crescent Honeyeater appears to be widespread in the cooler months, concentrating on stands of native banksias and grevilleas. It is found all year in the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In the warmer months Crescent Honeyeaters are distributed in small numbers throughout the western and much of the southern area of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding has been recorded on the tablelands.

Uncommon breeding altitudinal migrant, possibly with some birds leaving the ACT. Others remain all year throughout much of the area.

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*

'The distribution of New Holland Honeyeaters is determined by the availability of nectar of the silver banksia and grevilleas' (Taylor and COG 1992). Jones (1929) reported it as did Mathews (1943) 'common - country', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who saw it on the majority of their surveys of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

The species is regularly seen and breeding reported. There is seasonal movement of an altitudinal nature as birds seek nectar. It is therefore more common in private gardens in winter. Others move to higher altitudes at that time to take advantage of flowering banksias (Taylor and COG 1992). This species occurs in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) throughout the year.

Uncommon breeding resident, often nomadic. Usually found near flowering banksias and grevilleas.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater *Phylidonyris melanops*

The records of this species were catalogued by Lepschi (1987a) and all are of single birds:

30-31 July 1965 (banded), O'Connor (Wilson 1966).

31 July 1965 Narrabundah.

6-7 September 1968 Narrabundah.

23 August 1971 Torrens.

20 October 1985 Chapman.

1 November 1986 Lake Ginninderra.

There have been no further reports. This is a coastal heathland species not normally found west of the Divide in NSW (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

Rare vagrant.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*

The Eastern Spinebill was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', Lamm and Calaby (1950) and McKelvie (1957).

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) found it widespread and 'it tends to congregate in numbers where suitable habitat and food supply is available, particularly in winter'.

Taylor and COG (1992) commented: 'most Eastern Spinebills are typical altitudinal migrants. They alternate between the high forests in summer and the mild lowlands in winter'. This is illustrated by the movements of one particular bird (Clark 1982):

20 June 1979 (banded) ANBG

20 October 1979 (retrapped) New Chums Road

21 May 1981 (retrapped) ANBG

13 September 1981 (retrapped) New Chums Road.

Breeding occurs in the ranges, and occasionally on the tablelands, also in private gardens.

Common altitudinal migrant, with some birds resident in the ranges and on the tablelands.

Black Honeyeater *Certhionyx niger*

'The...Black Honeyeater is sparsely but continuously distributed across the continent. The southern and eastern edges of its range fluctuate from year to year' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). This would appear to explain the sole sighting of this bird in the ACT, a male at Charnwood from 9-11 January 1991 (Rarities Panel News 1991a).

Rare vagrant.

Scarlet Honeyeater *Myzomela sanguinolenta*

In recent years this coastal species appears to be seen more frequently in the southern section of its range. There are corresponding sightings in the ACT. It was first reported by Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

An adult male was banded in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 14 September 1963 (Frith 1969). The records show 16 sightings since then, one at Kambah Pool on 27 October 1991 (Rarities Panel News 1991b) another at Red Rocks Gorge on 12 November 1991 (COG 1998), while the remainder were within the urban area. All occurred within the period 28 August to 25 December, making it appear that it is seen here during southern migration. Breeding has not been reported.

Rare non-breeding vagrant.

[Crimson Chat *Epthianura tricolor*]

While this bird has been reported quite close to the north of the ACT, the only local record is of eggs collected in 1957 and identified in 1965 as being of this species (Wilson 1966). Details of the event were given later by Wilson (1976). There have been no other reports from the ACT and the circumstances described in the second reference are probably too indefinite for its inclusion in the list of birds of the ACT.

White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons*

A species inhabiting damp places, the creation of wetlands in the ACT might have been expected to increase the numbers of this bird; but the opposite seems to have been the case. Jones (1929) was the first to report it, then Mathews (1943) 'common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional'.

By 1965 it was considered 'not common, but seen near water in small flocks in winter' (Wilson 1965). Breeding has been reported. Sightings of small numbers were fairly regular until the 1990s. One White-fronted Chat was reported at Emu Bank on 16 November 1992 (COG 1997); but none were reported in the ACT in 1993-94 or 1994-95 (COG 1998). That does not seem to present a true picture.

Rare breeding resident in the ACT, possibly in declining numbers.

ROBINS

Jacky Winter *Microeca fascinans*

COG reports indicate that numbers of this species have declined over the years. Barrett (1922) first recorded it, then Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950). McKelvie (1957) did not see it.

Today it would not be regarded as common anywhere in our area. This is a bird of relatively undisturbed woodland, often with eucalypt regrowth and native grasses. It is regarded as sedentary, probably with juveniles dispersing (Taylor and COG 1992). The Jacky Winter is recorded fairly frequently from Mulligans Flat, Castle Hill, Uriarra Homestead and Campbell Park, but is not always to be seen in these places. Preservation of its habitat is very important to its future in the ACT.

Uncommon breeding resident in a restricted range. May be declining in numbers.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*

The Scarlet Robin was seen by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Partial migrant', and Daley (1946). Lamm and Calaby (1950) regarded it as a migrant in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, arriving in early April and leaving in mid-October; this matches the known breeding pattern.

It favours open forests and woodlands, mostly at middle altitudes, during the breeding season. In autumn the robin descends to nearby open valleys and the immatures disperse (Taylor and COG 1992). Numerous reports in *Canberra Bird Notes* confirm this pattern, though there are a few exceptions. It is rare in the moist ranges, and only two were handled at New Chums Road, where all five species of redbreasted robins were banded.

Common breeding resident which becomes somewhat nomadic during the non-breeding season.

Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii*

This species was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Partial migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

This is a species of woodland and scrub of inland Australia (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but a total of five were banded over the years at New Chums Road in wet sclerophyll forest, indicating that it tends to wander after the breeding season. It has also been banded in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (Wilson unpublished data). Other records have been scattered over the dry areas of the ACT, including the high altitudes in the far south.

Breeding has been reported, but this robin is not considered to be a permanent resident in the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992).

Rare breeding visitor. Has been seen throughout much of the ACT.

Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*

This is another altitudinal migrant which was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Partial migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The habits of this species were shown in the early ACT RAOU Branch reports 'Common on the tablelands in winter and in the high country in summer. At least two pairs bred on Black Mt. in September 1964' (Wilson 1965); and 'family parties very numerous on Mt. Ginini on 19 February 1966' (Wilson 1966).

The Flame Robin moves to high country between October and April, occasionally after breeding on the tablelands. In heavily timbered country it prefers areas with an open understorey, preying on insects on the ground. In April, Flame Robins reappear in grassland, pasture and woodland (Taylor and COG 1992). COG records support these statements.

Flame Robins were banded each year at New Chums Road. An intense bushfire burnt out the majority of the net sites on 27 December 1972. In the 11 years before the fire, the average catch was 16 birds: for the three years after the fire, the average was 34.3. In the final seven years, the average fell to 11.86. This indicates their preference for open forest areas. See also Stokes (1975).

Common breeding altitudinal migrant.

Rose Robin *Petroica rosea*

Reports of this species are from private gardens during migration in spring and autumn. In the warmer months it breeds in moist east facing gullies of the Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges (Taylor and COG 1992). The first recorded sighting was in early September 1959 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). They also found it 'a fairly common summer resident in wet sclerophyll forests'. All published records fit the pattern described, except for one or two which have occurred in winter, in both the ranges and in populated areas.

Banding information from New Chums Road shows that 251 Rose Robins were banded and 67 recaptured, a total of 318. Of this total, 108 were in summer, 63 in autumn, 2 in winter and 145 in spring. 39 were retrapped in subsequent years, indicating a return to the banding place after migration. The oldest bird was a female banded on 8 October 1971 and retrapped on 22 February 1981, 9 years 4 months and 13 days later (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Uncommon breeding warm weather migrant, with odd birds being seen in winter.

Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster*

Tasmania, Victoria and accidental to South Australia were the official distribution of this species in earlier days (RAOU 1926). The second edition of the 'bird bible' of the day amplified this to 'Tasmania and southern Victoria . . . accidental to South Australia' (Cayley 1958).

The first report in the ACT was of birds banded at New Chums Road between April and July 1962 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). As the previous nearest known occurrence was in the Snowy River valley, this was a large extension of range for a bird with limited distribution. Over the years, 27 were banded at New Chums Road, all between February and October, and the question, still unanswered in the literature, was raised as to where these birds breed (Wilson 1983). The probability is that this is in the ranges to the east or south of the ACT; there have been verbal reports to that effect.

There have been many records of Pink Robins from the western ranges and from private gardens, with several from the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In some years several are seen, but in others there are none reported.

Rare non-breeding winter migrant.

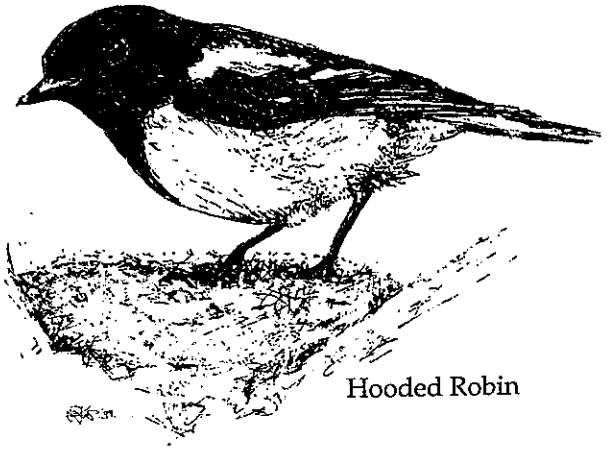
Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*

The Hooded Robin was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

'They are restricted to dry, untidy woodland with scattered yellow box or Blakely's red gum where the grass is long and unkempt. Fence posts, low shrubs and fallen timber provide observation points from which they locate prey on the ground' (Taylor and COG 1992). Our knowledge of the species and its requirements has been enhanced by the study carried out by Graham (1990; 1993). The expansion of Canberra has eliminated some territories, and the bird has disappeared from several of its old haunts.

The species is regarded as vulnerable in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998)

Uncommon breeding species in declining numbers. Preservation of suitable habitat is essential for its survival in the ACT.



Hooded Robin

Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*

The stronghold of this species is the moist forest of the western ranges, but it occurs in smaller numbers wherever there is dense vegetation in wet gullies and along watercourses (Taylor and COG 1992). Jones (1929) was the first to report it followed by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city. Partial migrant', then Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) 'found it to be very common throughout the ACT wherever suitable cover exists'. At New Chums Road 512 were banded, and there were 314 retraps, a total of 826. The seasonal total catches were summer 258, autumn 258, winter 113 and spring 197, while the oldest bird was recaptured 12 years and 10 days after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). The drop in the catch in winter suggests some mobility, whereas the species is normally regarded as sedentary (Taylor and COG 1992).

Several banding stations were operated in the Brindabella Ranges in the 1960s, and six Eastern Yellow Robins were banded at one site and retrapped at another. The most remarkable was an adult bird with the following history.

23 April 1961 (banded) Lees Creek

4 November 1961 (retrapped) Murrumbidgee Bridge (near Pumping Station)

6 October 1962 (retrapped) Lees Creek

1 May 1965 (retrapped) Lees Creek

(Wilson unpublished banding data).

The Lees Creek banding station was on Warks Road and nearby, at the beginning of the climb up the range.

Common breeding resident, mainly sedentary. Some individuals are nomadic, probably early in life.

BABBLERS

Grey-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus temporalis*

The Grey-crowned Babbler is sedentary. Groups maintain communal territories (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Locally this species was recorded by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional – country,' and Lamm and White (1950) 'observed only occasionally'.

It was reported that 'prior to 1950, several colonies existed between Red Hill and Tuggeranong but those have not been recently reported' (Frith 1969). Two were seen on Mt. Majura on 21 February 1966 (d'Andria 1968). Four were recorded at Ginninderra (now the suburb of Fraser) on 4 February 1967, and then followed several records from Ginninderra, three on 17 August 1967, three on 12 December 1967 and one on 1 November 1968 (Dow 1988). There have been no reports since.

Presumed extinct in the ACT. Reasons not known.

White-browed Babbler *Pomatostomus superciliosus*

Barrett (1922) saw this species, then Mathews wrote (1943) 'occasional - country', and Lamm and White (1950) commented 'reported only occasionally'.

There was one further report 'until at least 1950 a group existed near Mount Stromlo...perhaps the remnant of an earlier invasion' (Frith 1969). There have been no sightings since.

Presumed to be extinct in the ACT; reasons unknown.

WHIPBIRD AND QUAIL-THRUSH

Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus*

This is another species of the ranges which was not reported until the ornithological activity of the early 1960s. 'We found it to be fairly common in localised areas in the Brindabellas throughout the year' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963).

There has been one unusual record from Shepherds Lookout, Uriarra Crossing, on 28 August 1993 (COG 1998). Some mobility is indicated by this record from near the Murrumbidgee, but otherwise the stronghold of the species is 'the east facing gullies of the lower Cotter catchment' (Taylor and COG 1992). The impression is that the birds are sedentary. Other COG records confirm this.

Breeding has been recorded infrequently because of the bird's habitat.

Uncommon breeding resident in restricted habitat in the western ranges, with occasional birds moving as far as the Murrumbidgee River.

Spotted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma punctatum*

The first report was that of Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country'.

An early 1960s record was from the New Chums Road visual survey: 'pairs were seen twice (June, 1962 and 1963) at the boundary of the census area where growth is less dense' (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

This species is more frequently encountered on exposed ridges, and is widely distributed in small numbers throughout the dry forests of the ACT. It is found at high altitudes but avoids the damper areas of the forests where thick undergrowth exists (Taylor and COG 1992). Some mobility is indicated by a record from Black Mountain on 23 March 1991 (COG 1993).

Breeding has been reported.

Uncommon breeding resident in small numbers throughout the dry areas of the forests of the ACT.

SITTELLA

Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*

This species appears to be thinly spread in the ACT and was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) on a few of their Murrumbidgee River Corridor surveys.

'One can presume that...the Sittella is a pretty sedentary species. My guess is that there is one party of Sittellas...in an area of 25 ha' (Editor 1977). 'They are absent only from high alpine woodland and the wettest forests of the Cotter catchment' (Taylor and COG 1992). The species appears to be thinly spread wherever there is dry woodland. They move into some private gardens near suitable nature parks.

Breeding has been recorded.

Uncommon breeding resident occurring throughout the ACT, except for the highest country and the wet forests of the western ranges.

WHISTLERS AND SHRIKE-THRUSH

Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus*

This is an unobtrusive species which is easily overlooked. It was reported first by Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

An early 1960s report was 'one nest on Long Gully Road received eggs probably in mid-December' [1964] (Wilson 1965). The first report from the ranges commented: 'The Shrike-tit has been recorded throughout the year but in very small numbers, the maximum on any one census [at New Chums Road] being six' (Lamm and Wilson 1966). The ACT Atlas survey showed the species to be 'sparsely but widely distributed throughout the ranges'. While rare in dry open forests, Crested Shrike-tits are regularly reported at Mulligans Flat and Campbell Park (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding at Campbell Park was reported in December 1992 (Truswell and Truswell 1993).

Uncommon breeding resident, more often seen in the ranges, but widely distributed.

Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*

The first record of this species was on 29 October 1961 in the Brindabella Ranges where it 'is fairly common throughout the year and has been observed at up to 4000 ft. elevation. It has also been recorded as breeding in the Murrumbidgee Valley' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). 'It is not a particularly common bird, the highest number recorded on any one day being 10' [New Chums Road visual survey] (Lamm and Wilson 1966). While many remain in the ranges, especially at lower elevations and in sheltered places, there is some altitudinal migration. A few birds have occurred in the urban area.

At New Chums Road 78 were banded, and 30 retrapped at least one year later. The seasonal breakdown of the total handlings was summer 23, autumn 30, winter 20 and spring 35 (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). This accords with the altitudinal migrant pattern.

Uncommon breeding resident with some altitudinal migration.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*

The male of this species is one of our most conspicuous birds. The Golden Whistler was reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city. Partial migrant', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

By the early 1960s the situation was better understood. 'Mathews also lists this species as occasional. It is, in fact, a very common summer resident in the wet sclerophyll of the western ranges and is generally distributed in the ACT during the winter, mainly at lower elevations' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). At New Chums Road 'two or three were seen on every census throughout the winter months' (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

The banding story is different. There were none handled in June or July, but birds were taken in August. The totals over the years were 470 banded, and 171 retrapped. The seasonal distribution of the total netted was summer 289, autumn 55, winter 6 and spring 291. Obviously the altitudinal migration is virtually complete and the birds leave quite early. One bird was recovered 10 years and 11 months after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

COG records confirm that most birds are in the wet forests in the warmer months, but at low altitudes in the cool weather. This aspect is dealt with by Purchase and Wilson (1999).

Breeding has been recorded in the ranges. A small number of Golden Whistlers breed on the tablelands.

Common breeding resident; most birds are altitudinal migrants.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*

This is a conspicuous species with an easily recognised call. It was seen by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Partial migrant'. Lamm and Calaby (1950) listed it as a migrant.

On banding evidence, this species is far less common in the Brindabella Ranges than the Golden Whistler. A total of 470 Golden Whistlers were banded at New Chums Road, compared with only 29 Rufous Whistlers (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). COG records show that most birds are migrants. Numbers are not high from May to August, as the majority leave the area. A few remain over winter (Taylor and COG 1992).

Breeding has been reported about Canberra, and in the ranges (Wilson 1965).

Common breeding migrant. May occur anywhere in the ACT, but is more numerous in dry woodlands. A small percentage remains over winter.

Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*

Because of its call and size this is a conspicuous species. It was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

This species is classified as sedentary (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), but there is some altitudinal migration in the ACT. At New Chums Road, 71 were banded and 15 retrapped. The seasonal figures for the total handled were summer 35, autumn 7, winter 6 and spring 38, while the oldest bird was retrapped eight years after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Taylor and COG (1992) confirm that while some remain in the ranges, a part of the population migrates to lower altitudes, commencing in March and returning in August and September. The highest densities of the species are in the south-west, south-east and the extreme east of the ACT. It is absent from dry, open, bare paddocks but otherwise is very widespread in a variety of habitats. Some birds are found in the urban area in all months of the year (Taylor, Lenz and Lepschi 1987).

Breeding has been reported both in the ranges and about Canberra.

Common breeding resident throughout the ACT, most often seen in the ranges of the south. Often an altitudinal migrant.

FLYCATCHERS

Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*

The Tidbinbilla Range was the site of the first record of this species during May 1962, and an old nest was reported in August 1962 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). There have been no later reports of breeding although suitable habitat exists (Taylor and COG 1992). An immature bird was killed when it flew into a window at Curtin on 28 March 1967, and is now a specimen in the collection at Gungahlin (CSIRO).

This species is a migrant in most of Australia. It rarely occurs as far inland as the ACT, but there have been about 20 records, mostly from the northern half

of our area. The Black-faced Monarch has been seen at Mulligans Flat, Mt. Ainslie, Cook, Curtin and Page. The spread of dates extends from 29 September (Rarities Panel Endorsed List No. 5 n.d.) to the fourth week of May (Taylor, Davey and Gibson 1986), a very long season for an area such as this.

Rare visitor. One possible breeding record.

Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*

This was first reported by Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', but by 1963 Lamm, Wilson and Belton wrote 'we have found it to be a fairly common breeding species in open forest country'.

The Leaden Flycatcher is a warm weather migrant to the tablelands, arriving about October, breeding and leaving in March-April. It avoids the higher and wetter areas of the ACT. The highest abundance is in the Naas Valley and in the extreme east of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992).

It is regularly reported from woodland areas, and typical breeding records are from Mt. Ainslie, Kowen, Mugga Lane, 'Callum Brae', Newline Quarry and Kambah Pool.

Common breeding migrant, mainly in the dry forests of the tablelands.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*

First reported by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) 'observed occasionally, both as a migrant and as a breeder, in wet sclerophyll areas of the western ranges'. It is present mainly during the period October to March with some early arrivals in September, and stragglers remaining in April and May.

Unlike the preceding species, this is a bird of the wet forests, found chiefly in the upper Cotter River, and throughout the higher, damper areas (Taylor and COG 1992). On the tablelands it is usually noticed on migration, flying to or from higher places.

There is a breeding record from Campbell Park on 15 November 1992 (COG 1997).

Common breeding migrant mainly to the higher areas of wet forests. Often seen about Canberra gardens on passage.

Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta*

This is a conspicuous species and was recorded by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is an inhabitant of 'the open valleys and hills south of Angle Crossing, and the valleys of the lower Gudgenby and Naas Rivers. This flycatcher is also found in most woodlands of the tablelands (Taylor and COG 1992), and moves from nature parks to private gardens on occasion. It is never seen in flocks. 'Generally eucalypt forest is avoided' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

Breeding was recorded in the early 1960s in November (Wilson 1965), and fairly frequently since.

Uncommon breeding resident mostly of open woodland on the tablelands, generally avoiding closed forests.

Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*

This well-known bird was recorded by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950), and has been recorded regularly since.

It has adapted to the 'well-watered parks and gardens in suburban Canberra' (Taylor and COG 1992) and is found throughout the tablelands, avoiding the denser wet forests of the west and south-west. The Magpie-lark forms flocks and tends to wander in the non-breeding season.

Breeding is regularly reported.

Common breeding resident of the tablelands, including the urban area of Canberra.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*

Daley (1946) was the first to report this species, having seen it in his garden at Acton. Lamm and White (1950) also reported it 'in a park in the city'.

As has so frequently happened, a much better picture emerged in the early 1960s. 'We have found the bird frequently throughout the ACT during the migratory period and it is fairly common throughout the summer in the wet sclerophyll areas of the western ranges' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963).

The banding results from New Chums Road showed 298 banded and 65 retrapped. The seasonal

breakup of the handling total was 239 in summer, 44 in autumn, nil in winter and 80 in spring. The oldest bird was retrapped seven years after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

Numbers in the ACT build up from mid-October to December. They decline in March, with few seen after early April (Taylor and COG 1992). There was one very late record on 2 May 1992 (COG 1997).

COG records confirm the pattern of movement at both seasons, with sightings from the tablelands and from the wet forests of the ranges. They breed regularly in the forests.

Uncommon breeding migrant to the wet forest. Regularly reported from the tablelands during migration in spring and autumn.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

This species is most numerous in the high wet forests but occurs throughout the ACT in the warmer months wherever there is suitable cover (Taylor and COG 1992). Barrett (1922) saw it, as did Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'very common - city'.

In the first ACT RAOU Branch report, breeding was recorded 'commonly and widely'. 'Leaves the ranges almost completely from late May to mid-August. Near Canberra some in most areas during winter' (Wilson 1965). 'In NSW . . . further west it is a non-breeding winter visitor' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It is possible that this is where some ACT birds move to in winter.

At New Chums Road, 340 were banded and 47 retrapped, totalling 387. The seasonal totals were: summer 144; autumn 61; winter 5; and spring 177 (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988), confirming the pattern of movement. In winter the Grey Fantail remains fairly numerous in the northern half of the ACT, with smaller numbers in the south (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common breeding resident. Much of the population of the ranges migrates in winter, together with some from the tablelands.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*

This is one of our very conspicuous small birds, as it perches on vantage points, then feeds on insects in grasslands. Barrett (1922) recorded it as did Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It occurs in grasslands and woodlands and avoids forests. A few birds occur in open places at higher altitudes, and some over-winter there. Many more are altitudinal migrants.

The possibility of cooler weather migration from the ACT was put forward in 1975 (Anon. 1975), and was raised again in the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992). COG records show fewer sightings in the cooler months (COG 1998), but this has not yet been fully explained.

It breeds commonly in the ACT.

Common breeding resident; some altitudinal migration. The probability exists of some birds leaving the ACT in winter.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus*

This coastal species is not often recorded south of Sydney and rarely as far inland as the ACT (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). There have been three sightings in this area. The first was on 24 April 1980, at Aranda (Kennemore 1980), followed by one on Mt. Majura peak on 7 May 1989 (Rarities Panel News 1989c). The third was at Urambi Village, Kambah on 21 April 1990 (Rarities Panel News 1995).

Rare vagrant.

CUCKOO-SHRIKES AND TRILLER

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*

This species, referred to as the Blue Jay, was regarded as a pest to bush orchardists in the early days of settlement (Shumack 1977).

A conspicuous species, recorded by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Its status was first clearly defined as 'common in summer, scarce in winter. Small, apparently migratory flocks in April and May' (Wilson 1965). COG records show regular breeding reports and conform to the pattern of abundance of birds in the warmer months and very few in the cool weather (COG 1998).

Some birds reach the drier open forests at high altitudes; these are migratory. Cool weather distribution is confined to the tablelands and particularly to the Canberra urban area (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common breeding species. A large proportion of the population is migratory.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*

The White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike was first reported from Sullivans Creek before the construction of the Australian National University (Lamm and White 1950). McKelvie (1957) saw it near the Power Station on 26 April 1954, and on Capital Hill on 22 June 1956.

COG records over the years show that there are more sightings of the dark morph than of the white-bellied morph. Reports have occurred in all months of the year; all have been from the tablelands. Many are from urban places, but some are from Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Monaro Highway, Campbell Park, Australian National Botanic Gardens and Mt. Ainslie.

Rare vagrant to the tablelands, appearing at any time of the year.

Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*

This migrant species spends a rather short season in the ACT. The first report was 'one at Lees Creek on 21 January and probably two birds there on 5 March' [1966] (Wilson 1966). Records of the species are mostly from the wet forests of the western ranges. Others are from Kambah, Gungahlin (CSIRO), Mt. Ainslie and Chapman, where they have been observed on passage, generally in late October or November.

The bird is easily overlooked, as it feeds high in eucalypts, and the cicada-like call is not easily recognised. Normally there are only one or two records annually, but there were more during the intensive work of the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992). Breeding is presumed in the ranges but has not been confirmed.

Uncommon migrant, passing through the urban area and the tablelands en route to the wetter forests of the western ranges.

White-winged Triller *Lalage sueurii*

This is a woodland species with an easily recognised call and was observed by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who referred to it as a migrant.

The next contribution was: 'laying began in a loose colony near Black Mountain in December 1964. In other years males have apparently left early in the New Year' (Wilson 1965). This was followed by migration dates: 'first report 9 October [1965] and the last record 13 February' [1966] (Wilson 1966).

Trillers are never very common. They gather in loose breeding colonies at favoured sites such as Campbell Park, Majura Valley, Burbong and Williamsdale, while a few reach the valleys to the south (Taylor and COG 1992).

As this is a woodland species, preservation of its habitat is important. COG records show that among migrants it is late to return and one of the first to leave. It seems possible from the records that numbers are slowly declining. Urban development has done away with some habitat.

Uncommon breeding migrant in somewhat threatened habitat.

ORIOLE

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*

Of the migrants, this is one of the first to return. The call is frequently heard in woodlands on the tablelands, beginning in late August. Jones (1929) recorded it, as did Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city'.

'They are widely but sparsely distributed throughout woodland and open forest up to about 1000 metres...and they are more common in the bushland reserves' (Taylor and COG 1992). Their season is a long one here; the bird has been seen from the fourth week of August to the second week of June, an unusually late record (COG 1998). From the first three bird reports of the ACT RAOU Branch right through COG records, it appears that this species has never been really numerous.

Breeding is recorded fairly frequently.

Uncommon breeding migrant, present for a long period over the warmer months. Mostly confined to the tablelands.

WOODSWALLOWS, BUTCHERBIRDS, MAGPIE AND CURRAWONGS

Masked Woodswallow *Artamus personatus*

The species is recorded infrequently but was observed by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city'.

It is usually seen in company with the White-browed Woodswallow. Typical of this was the report 'ten with White-browed Woodswallows over Duntroon 10 October [1965] and for a few days afterwards' (Wilson 1966). 'This species inhabits open wooded country...and eats insects mainly caught in the air, and sometimes nectar' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). Most COG reports are of small numbers from the tablelands from such places as Lake Ginninderra peninsula, Castle Hill, Mt. Ainslie, Black Mountain, Gungahlin (CSIRO) and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

No records of breeding have been traced though local breeding is quite possible.

Rare non-breeding migrant to the tablelands of the ACT.

White-browed Woodswallow *Artamus superciliosus*

Jones (1929) was the first to report this species, followed by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country'.

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) detailed an influx 'which commenced on 13 November 1951 and remained until mid-January 1952...and a flock of approximately twelve birds at the Rifle Range [near Duntroon] in December 1962 and January 1963. At least three pairs successfully reared young'. Numbers present vary greatly from year to year. In some years there are no local reports.

Irruptions were mentioned by Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984), also that they rarely breed in the same place in successive years; that too is the ACT experience. They breed in loose colonies and inhabit woodlands, and are found on the tablelands whenever they occur in the ACT.

Uncommon breeding migrant in varying numbers. Does not occur every year.

[Black-faced Woodswallow *Artamus cinereus*]

McKelvie (1957) listed this as a new species for the ACT, but in giving the details, he mentioned that it was seen at Ginninderra Falls, with a previous sighting at Lake George. Ginninderra Falls lies outside the boundary of the ACT and beyond the area used in the ACT Atlas survey (Taylor and COG 1992). There are no records of this species from the ACT. See also Anon. (1976b). This species is not on the list of ACT birds.

Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*

This is the most common of the woodswallows in our area and was noted by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', Lamm and White (1950) 'very common, migratory species', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

As with so many species the picture began to clarify in the early days of the ACT RAOU Branch, 'present from September 9 1964 to early May 1965; laying started about November 1' (Wilson 1965). This is a species of open woodlands at all altitudes, especially where forests give way to grasslands. They are present in the breeding season wherever their preferred habitat exists.

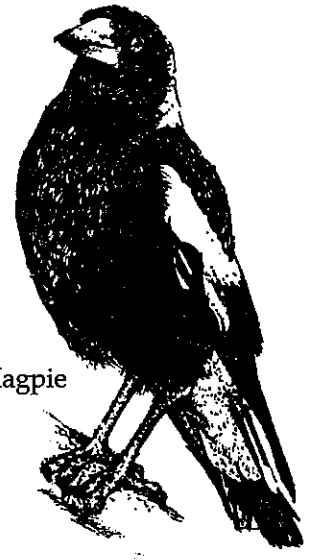
Most migrants arrive in August and September and leave in April and May, though individuals have been recorded in all months of the year. When present they are more densely distributed in the southern half of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992). 'The environment [at New Chums Road] is not suitable...but a few birds, including immatures, were recorded there each year during January and February' (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

Common breeding migrant present for a long period each year. Stragglers seen occasionally in the cooler months.

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*

This is a conspicuous species with an unmistakable call. It was recorded by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'rare - country'.

Four were banded over the years at New Chums Road, all in autumn or winter (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). The five sightings there during the visual survey were all between March and May (Lamm and Wilson 1966). The Grey Butcherbird is found in woodlands and forests at all altitudes (Taylor and COG 1992).



Australian Magpie

They are not often recorded in the urban area (Veerman et al. 1989). It was suggested that this may be 'because there are very few lizards, particularly the smaller skink varieties, in Canberra' (Roberts 1989).

Breeding has been recorded.

Widely distributed in small numbers in the ACT. Uncommon breeding resident.

Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis*

We are close to the southern limit of the range of this species (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The first local record was of one seen at Yowani Country Club (Wilson 1968). The species is seen occasionally, mostly in the warmer months, but it may not occur over several consecutive years (COG 1997; 1998). Most of the reports are from north of Lake Burley Griffin, especially from Mulligans Flat, but it has been reported at Tuggeranong (Anon. 1968b) and at Scullin (Rarities Panel News 1998a).

Breeding has not been recorded.

Rare visitor, mainly to the northern ACT.

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*

With the clearing of land for crops and grazing, this species has probably increased in numbers. Shumack (1977) commented that 'in 1865 a plague of magpies descended and wrought havoc with the crop'.

This is one of our most conspicuous species and was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', Daley (1946), Lamm and White (1950) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

It is widely distributed and common in all but the wet continuous forests, and even there they can take advantage of any small clearing. They are common in urban areas. Their breeding territory and success was studied in Holt, and showed that territories covered virtually the whole of the suburb. One area was occupied by 11 to 20 non-breeding birds; this appears to be part of their life history (Davey 1995).

Common breeding resident over much of the ACT except the wet forest. Includes all developed areas where trees occur.

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*

The Pied Currawong was reported by Jones (1929) and Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', but Lamm and Calaby (1950) did not see it during the years of their survey of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

An enquiry into this species was carried out in the early 1960s. It was found that 'practically all visitors have left by mid-September though a few pairs stay to breed in and around the city' (Marchant 1965).

The species tends to eat native and introduced fruit in winter. Breeding birds switch to an insect diet before the young hatch, and then capture more avian than insect prey while feeding their young. The reports in *Canberra Bird Notes* of birds taken by Pied Currawongs were analysed by Wood (1995). Observations near Wollongong showed that avian prey were anchored in trees and shrubs and dismembered to feed the young currawongs (Wood 1998).

With the growth of Canberra from about 1960, there has been a change in the local habits of the bird. The seasonal maps show a strong move from the ranges to the tablelands in winter, especially to the urban area (Taylor and COG 1992). It appears likely that numbers in the ACT have increased greatly since 1960. Marchant (1965) reported roosts of 2000 birds, while Taylor and COG (1992) found 3000 in Stromlo Forest.

Common breeding bird throughout the ACT. Some altitudinal migration.

Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*

This species is widespread in small numbers in forests and woodlands and is more frequently seen in subalpine woodlands. It was noted by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - city', and Daley (1946).

By 1965 the status was regarded as 'regular in small numbers throughout the area' (Wilson 1965). At New Chums Road during the visual survey 'it was recorded only five times, all between March and May' [1961-63] (Lamm and Wilson 1966). Breeding has been recorded at all altitudes and the species is regarded as sedentary, with the dispersal of juveniles. Some birds visit private gardens, probably from nearby nature parks (Taylor and COG 1992). They are observed in small numbers, though a flock of ten was reported on 15 April 1995 (COG 1998).

Common breeding resident. Never as numerous as the Pied Currawong.

RAVENS

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*

This prominent species was observed by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common'. Lamm and Calaby (1950) saw it on all of their surveys over the years. At New Chums Road during the visual survey 1961-63, it 'was not found breeding but birds were recorded flying overhead on virtually all censuses' (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

This species is an accomplished scavenger. It has been recorded soaking bread in a bird-bath, to retrieve it later; and to secrete food items under such things as bark on the ground, and to recover them later (Purchase and Purchase 1997). It is most numerous in grasslands and woodlands and holds permanent breeding territories.

The Australian Raven is found throughout the ACT, but less frequently in the continuous wet forests of the ranges.

Common breeding resident except in the wetter forests of the ranges.

Little Raven *Corvus mellori*

This species was described by Rowley (1967) and it is likely that it was wrongly recorded until that time. This may still be the case on occasion. It is best identified in the field by its call or by its flocking habit.

The first local report was 'there are occasional definite records from the ACT' (Wilson 1970). It is most numerous in the highest ranges in summer, where it feeds on bogong moths. Unlike its relative, this species forms large flocks outside the breeding season. Many leave the ACT during the cooler weather. It is not common in urban areas (Taylor and COG 1992).

Uncommon breeding resident; some altitudinal migration. Most birds are absent in winter.

[Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*]

This species, which does not occur near the ACT, was listed by Mathews (1943) and Lamm and White (1950). There appears no doubt that the correct identification of the species was the Little Raven, which was not described until much later (Rowley 1967). This matter was dealt with by Wilson (1998b). The Torresian Crow is not on the list of birds of the ACT.

CHOUGH AND APOSTLEBIRD

White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*

A conspicuous species of woodlands and dry open forests, this bird was listed by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

By the 1960s a clearer picture was emerging: 'the only regular species of the pine forests; also regular in open forests' (Wilson 1965). The species is widely distributed in the ACT, especially in the northern half, and is absent only from the wet forests of the western ranges. They wander into private gardens in the non-breeding season. Otherwise they are considered to be sedentary. Their large mud nests are conspicuous and communally built. Large flocks forage together in the cooler months (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common breeding resident, especially in the dry woodlands and forests of the ACT.

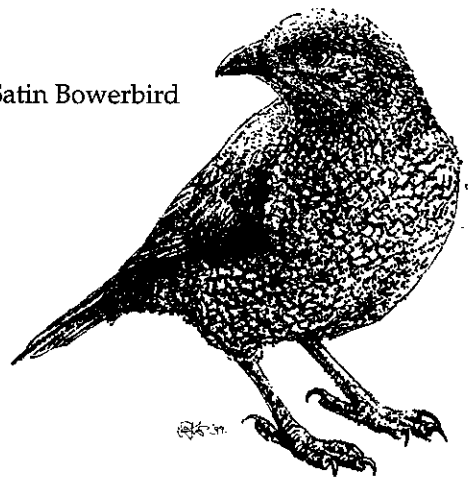
Apostlebird *Struthidea cinerea*

We are near the edge of the distribution of the Apostlebird (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). There is only one record from the ACT, that of Lamm and White (1950) who recorded that a flock of six was reported from Hall in the summer of 1948. The observer, a long time resident of the ACT, was interviewed in 1998 and despite the time lapse, was able to

remember the occasion vividly, including the exact location.

Rare vagrant in the ACT.

Satin Bowerbird



BOWERBIRDS

Satin Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*

Jones (1929) was the first to record this species, 'very plentiful at Condor Creek in the mountain gullies'. Obviously he did not see it east of the Murrumbidgee River. It was also noted by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - country', but where he saw it was not stated.

By the mid-1960s the following was published: 'regular in the ranges but fewer in the winter when flocks are found at the forest edge' (Wilson 1966). At New Chums Road 'one or two...were noted regularly from early September to mid-May, presumably joining the flocks seen at lower elevations during the winter months' (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

The stronghold of the species is the tall wet forests of the western ranges. For a long time this bowerbird has been known to move to the forest edge in winter. Increasing numbers have been reported from urban areas, initially at Weston Creek.

More lately these bowerbirds have been seen in other suburbs, for example Yarralumla, Pearce and Kambah. An early report of an urban sighting of this species was of four+ on 9 August 1980 'edge of Chapman - Rivett' (Lenz 1982). It seems that these appearances in the built-up areas have been increasing over the last 20 years or so. This phenomenon, and the building of bowers in the Chapman area, are dealt with by Holland (1999).

Uncommon breeding resident. Some altitudinal migration. Birds appear in the cooler months in the western urban areas of Canberra.

[Spotted Bowerbird *Chlamydera maculata*]

One bird of this species was seen in October 1965 in the streets of O'Connor and was accurately described by the observer (Wilson 1966). The sighting was verified with the observer in 1999. The species occurs well to the north and north-west of the ACT and a long way from Sydney and Brisbane, but Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984) recorded single sightings from each of those cities.

In the local case, it is not known how the bird arrived in O'Connor. The first half of 1965 was a drought period locally but good rains fell in August, September and October. The occurrence does not appear to be drought-related. In the circumstances, and with the agreement of the observer, the Spotted Bowerbird is not regarded as a species to be included in the ACT bird list.

LARKS

Singing Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*

The first report was 'one at Lyneham on Jan. 22 [1969]. Mostly recorded in summer...at Ginninderra' (Wilson 1970). At that time these areas were grasslands. The status of the species was discussed by Lepschi (1987b) who analysed 29 records. There were none in August, September or May. There was a high peak in December, when singing, breeding birds would have been obvious. The observation was made that the birds were not migrants but probably inconspicuous in the grasslands when not breeding. The same point is made by Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984)

Former favoured habitats of the bird in the Mitchell and Tuggeranong areas have been changed by development since the observations were made. There have been no published records of this species at Lake Tuggeranong since it filled. The probability is that there are birds in other little-visited grasslands in our area.

Breeding has been assumed.

The status of this species is difficult to assess. It seems to be a rare breeding resident or migrant to the ACT.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

The Skylark was introduced at Ginninderra in 1881 (Gillespie 1992). It has thrived in the ACT.

The bird was reported by Jones (1929), and by Lamm and White (1950), who mentioned a number of single records.

By the mid-1960s it was recorded as 'regular and fairly common in grasslands' (Wilson 1965). The Skylark is found on the tablelands in grasslands, especially but not exclusively, in the northern half of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992). Reports cover all months of the year, and the bird is considered sedentary. When not singing it is hard to locate.

Breeding has been reported but nests are very difficult to find.

Common breeding resident in suitable grasslands of the tablelands. An introduced species.

PIPIT

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

This grasslands species was seen by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The first record in ACT RAOU Branch days was 'breeding started in paddocks west of Black Mt. in the first half of October' [1964] (Wilson 1965). This species occurs and breeds in grasslands at all altitudes but leaves the higher areas in the cooler months. It is sedentary on the tablelands (Taylor and COG 1992) and occurs regularly in COG records.

Common breeding resident. Some altitudinal migration.

SPARROWS AND GRASS-FINCHES

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

This species reached Queanbeyan in 1886 (Gillespie 1991), and no doubt spread to the future ACT about that time.

It was reported by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), and Mathews (1943) 'very common - city'.

It is found throughout the urban areas and has colonised farmhouses in the ACT. It breeds for a long period each year and has been recorded as nesting in a tree hollow (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common breeding resident. An introduced species.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

There is only one published record of this species in the ACT, a pair seen at Dickson on 18 March 1969 (Anon 1969c). The following comment was made by that author. 'The close similarity of this species to the male House Sparrow undoubtedly accounts for a certain paucity of records. Look for the brown instead of grey crown'.

Rare non-breeding visitor. May be underreported. An introduced species.

Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*

The first to report this species was Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', followed by Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional in suitable habitat'. McKelvie (1957) listed it among species not seen.

Before Lake Burley Griffin filled, a flock of Zebra Finches appeared in the grasslands north of the Molonglo River and west of Kings Avenue Bridge. A total of 67 of these birds were banded, 34 including several juveniles on 16 May 1962, 21 on 2 June 1962 and 12 on 9 June 1962 (Wilson unpublished banding data). There were records of it in each of the three Annual Bird Reports of the ACT RAOU Branch.

Frith (1969) commented: 'In our area it is usually uncommon but its numbers vary tremendously according to the climate inland and, in times of drought, it appears in numbers and remains to breed although the population declines in successive years'. In the Status notes in 1976 it was classed as 'Breeding resident, but total populations wax and wane with climatic conditions...Breeding continues through the warmer months' (Anon. 1976a).

A check of COG records shows flocks of 10 in 1976, 20 in 1983, 20 in 1986, 20 in 1987 and 12 in 1994. Sprinkled between these are many reports of small numbers, all marked as escapees, as no doubt they were. None were reported during the intensive work on the ACT Atlas survey.

Uncommon irruptive species; flocks are sighted every few years. Many escapees or released birds are reported.

Double-barred Finch *Taeniopygia bichenovii*

The range of this species has increased enormously during the 20th century (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). In the late 1940s, when the appearance of this finch in the ACT was first reported by Lamm and White (1950), the ACT was regarded as the southern edge of its expanding range. It was also reported by Lamm and Calaby (1950) who regarded it as a migrant.

'It has become considerably more numerous in recent years' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). It is most numerous on the tablelands of the ACT, including the lower reaches of the southern rivers (Taylor and COG 1992). Localised breeding has been recorded regularly, and the species appears quite often in COG records.

Uncommon breeding resident of grasslands and open forests on the tablelands, usually in the vicinity of water.

Plum-headed Finch *Neochmia modesta*

Mathews (1943) reported this as 'rare - country', while Lamm and White (1950) commented that it 'does not appear to be present in the ACT now'.

The next report was 'A small flock which included immature birds was seen near Uriarra Crossing on January 24 1960 and by other ornithologists a few days later' (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). A single bird was seen in Hughes in October 1965 and the report endorsed 'probably an escapee' (Wilson 1966). These are the only ACT records. Canberra is just south of the distribution of the species as shown by Blakers, Davies and Reilly (1984).

Rare vagrant.

Red-browed Finch *Neochmia temporalis*

The most common of our native grass-finches, this species was first reported by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who found it on every one of their surveys along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

It usually occurs in places with dense low growth and it breeds regularly in the ACT, especially on the tablelands.

The species is generally regarded as rather sedentary, but at New Chums Road 104 were banded, mostly in seasons of above average rainfall, and only 10 individual birds were retrapped in the year following banding. In seven years of the 21 of that study, none were taken. It is not regarded as a resident species there and only three were handled in winter (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988).

This species tends to flock locally in autumn and winter (Taylor and COG 1992). Numbers appear to drop considerably in times of drought but build up rapidly when rains come (pers. ob.).

Common breeding resident, particularly in dense growth along rivers and creeks, and in damp places. Occasionally in the higher wet forests, but probably does not breed there.

Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata*

The first report of this species was that of Jones (1929), then Mathews (1943) 'rare - country', Lamm and White (1950) 'common in suitable habitat', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

This is a species of somewhat undisturbed woodlands with shrubs and eucalypt regrowth. On the tablelands, much of this woodland has been cleared for development. Pasture improvement has further reduced its habitat and consequently, local numbers (Taylor and COG 1992). Small numbers are usually recorded and larger flocks are seen in cooler weather.

Breeding is regularly reported in COG records.

Uncommon breeding resident confined to pockets of suitable habitat on the tablelands.

[Beautiful Firetail *Stagonopleura bella*]

Frith (1969) mentioned that 'the record in this district is a solitary one' and the Status notes commented that 'the single local record may have been a stray or aviary escapee' (Anon. 1976a). In a rarities review of all local records 1964-74 the species was not mentioned (Dow 1988). The source therefore seems to be the record in Frith (1969) which gave neither place nor date. This is not regarded as being a species of the ACT bird list.

[Nutmeg Mannikin *Lonchura punctulata*]

The first of three records of this species was that of Grant (1981) who saw five birds on the ANU campus on 21 March 1981. A single bird was seen with other finches at the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 15 March 1983 (Pierce 1984). The third report was of a single bird at Deakin on 22 February 1986 (Taylor, Lenz and Lepschi 1987).

The Australian population of this introduced bird has spread rapidly since about 1930, but it has increased in numbers more in the north than in the south. It does not occur near the ACT (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The species has not become established here and local sightings are regarded as escapees. The Nutmeg Mannikin does not qualify for inclusion in the ACT bird list.

[Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax*]

There have been seven reports of this species in COG records, commencing with a flock of six at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park on 4 August 1974 (Clark 1975). Six other reports all between 1986 and 1988 were of single birds, one from the same place and others from Point Hut, Lake Tuggeranong and Richardson. The distribution of this bird ends just south of Sydney (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984), and those reported above are regarded as escapees. The bird has not become established in the ACT, and does not qualify for the ACT bird list.

[Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora*]

This species does not occur in mainland Australia (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). A single bird was reported from Kambah during the first week of October 1986 but was obviously an escapee (Veerman et al. 1988). It is not included in the ACT bird list.

FINCHES

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) were the first to report this species which was seen near West Block, Commonwealth Avenue on 5 January 1961. How this introduced species arrived here is not known.

Its distribution is not continuous from its southern stronghold (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). It is known to have been present and breeding at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park for many years, and there are records from Manuka, Haig Park, Scrivener Dam, near Mt. Stromlo, Coppins Crossing, Glenloch cork plantation and Acton, among other places. It has not become a pest here and its numbers remain small. A population has existed in exotic trees in the grounds of Canberra Grammar School (Mason 1985).

Uncommon breeding resident which appears to be confined to the central area of the ACT. An introduced species.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

This species was regarded as harmless, and the comment made that 'it had been present in numbers but is now less common' [about 1881 at Ginninderra] (Gillespie 1992).

'The Goldfinch is confined to areas where exotic plants have largely replaced native vegetation... Seeds of composite weed species are its principal food' (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). This introduced bird was seen by Barrett (1922), Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The three reports of the ACT Branch of the RAOU referred to it as regular and common around Canberra, and reported breeding near Black Mountain. It occurs throughout suitable habitat on the tablelands and in the valleys of the south at higher elevation, but the wetter forests are avoided (Taylor and COG 1992).

Common breeding resident in suitable terrain in the ACT. An introduced species.

[Canary *Serinus canarius*]

There is only one record of this bird, at Ainslie during the second week of September 1982 (Taylor 1984b) and this was obviously an escapee. It is not on the Australian list, or on the list of birds of the ACT.

MISTLETOEBIRD

Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*

The Mistletoebird was reported by Mathews (1943) 'common – city', and by Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The next report was 'apparently migratory from 27 August 1964 to late autumn. One nest on Black Mt. received eggs on 11 December 1964' (Wilson 1965). The bird is common along the southern half of the Murrumbidgee River in the ACT and may be found in any eucalypt woodland or open forest where mistletoe is found.

The season in the ACT is a long one for a migrant, and odd birds have been noted over-wintering (Taylor

and COG 1992). COG records show that they occur in nature parks near urban areas. Four were banded over the years in the wet forests at New Chums Road, but it is rare in the ranges.

Uncommon breeding migrant seen mostly on the tablelands.

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosternus*

There are only three valid records of the White-backed Swallow in the ACT, the first being a breeding pair observed from 13-19 January 1971 (Hermes and Fleming 1971). In an Editor's note following the above article, 30 were reported at the Coppins Crossing - Uriarra Road intersection on 2 February 1971. The next record was of five birds flying with other species at Point Hut on 13 April 1980 (Nix 1980). Another record from O'Connor on 3 February 1984 was not properly documented and is therefore not regarded as valid (Taylor and Davey 1984). The species is usually found in the vicinity of creeks and rivers. The nests are excavated in the sandy banks.

Rare breeding visitor.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*

Dams, rivers, lakes and open areas near water are the preferred habitat of this species (Taylor and COG 1992). It was first reported by Barrett (1922), then Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

The Welcome Swallow is seen on the tablelands throughout the year, with peaks in October and April, possibly showing migration or passage through the area. Wet forests of the ranges are avoided but some spend the summer in high open country, migrating in the cool weather (Taylor and COG 1992). It is noted regularly in COG records, including breeding, and there may be some change over of the populations with the seasons.

Common breeding resident with altitudinal migration from the higher places. Some passage through the ACT, which is poorly understood.

Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*

First reported by Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Migrant', then by Lamm and Calaby (1950), while McKelvie (1957) listed it as not seen.

It is a migrant with a long season here, and odd birds remain in some winters. Open woodlands and old trees with small holes where they breed are the preferred habitat. They are found throughout suitable areas on the tablelands, especially along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. The Tree Martin avoids the wet forests of the ranges (Taylor and COG 1992). COG records show it regularly, with a few remaining in winter occasionally.

It nests in very old trees; consequently preservation of these is important for its future.

Common breeding migrant. A few birds over-winter in some years.

Fairy Martin *Hirundo ariel*

Barrett (1922) provided the original report, followed by Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'rare - city. Migrant', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963) found it common in the warmer months. It generally occurs close to water, which is essential for the large mud nests. With modern roads they have tended to nest in colonies under the larger culverts and small bridges, but still occasionally use cave overhangs and cliffs.

From COG records it seems that numbers have declined locally, with less breeding reports, but that does not appear to be the case generally (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). They are found during the season in suitable terrain on the tablelands and a few remain in winter in some years (Taylor and COG 1992).

Uncommon breeding migrant in smaller numbers than its relative. Also has a shorter season here.

BULBUL

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

There is only one valid record of this species in the ACT (Rarities Panel News 1993b) and a description was published (Wilson 1993). There was a further report later from Dickson but details have not been provided as yet. At present the above is regarded as the only record. It is possible that this species could become established here in the future.

Rare vagrant. An introduced species.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS

Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Jones (1929) was the first to report this species followed by Mathews (1943) 'occasional - city', Daley (1946) and Lamm and Calaby (1950) who referred to it as a migrant. At the time of those records it was confined to the odd reed bed on creeks, rivers and dams.

This bird quickly found the lush growth around the swamp that formed when the gates of Lake Burley Griffin were closed. In January - February 1964, 79 were banded (Wilson unpublished banding data).

This migrant species is easily seen and heard during the breeding season, but is virtually silent at other times and much more difficult to find. Most arrive in August - September and depart in March. A few individuals remain over winter in most seasons but are not always reported (Lenz 1982; Taylor and COG 1992). It is to be found wherever there are reed beds about the various water features of the tablelands and the urban area.

Common breeding summer migrant in suitable habitat on the tablelands. Odd birds remain over winter.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*

This cryptic species is difficult to observe and was probably overlooked by the early ornithologists. Its plaintive, quiet call may not always be noticed as it occupies much the same habitat as the Reed Warbler. The first report was from the dams at Uriarra Homestead on 23 March 1961 and from the Molonglo River, the site of the future lake, regularly between January and July 1962 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). While Lake Burley Griffin was filling early in 1964, 114 Little Grassbirds were banded and it was more common than the Clamorous Reed-Warbler. This leads to the thought that at present it tends to be under-reported. It can usually be observed wherever there is suitable cover near water on the tablelands.

Breeding has been recorded, but the nests are difficult to find.

Uncommon breeding resident. If, as suspected, it is not always seen and reported, it may be more numerous locally than is thought.

Rufous Songlark *Cincloramphus mathewsi*

The first report was that of Mathews (1943) 'common - city. Partial migrant', then Lamm and White (1950) 'occasional', Lamm and Calaby (1950), while McKelvie (1957) listed it among the species not seen.

A later report was of 'six at Duntroon 1 November [1965]. Nested near Federal Golf Course and west of Black Mt., one pair at each place. Clutches started about 27 November [1965]' (Wilson 1966). This species prefers open woodlands with native or other long grasses, generally on the tablelands, but some birds reach higher open areas. A few reach higher woodlands in the south-east and south.

Numbers of this migrant vary considerably from year to year. Their main season is from October to January, with lower numbers before and after that. Over-wintering birds are unusual but have been reported.

Uncommon breeding summer migrant with a relatively short season here. Odd birds recorded outside the main period.

Brown Songlark *Cincloramphus cruralis*

The Brown Songlark was observed by Jones (1929) 'only seen in spring and summer in wet seasons'. Mathews (1943) reported it as 'occasional - country'.

It prefers open grasslands on the tablelands where the grass is long. The season is a short one (Taylor and COG 1992). In most years only one or two are reported from the ACT in COG records.

Local breeding is unusual.

Rare breeding migrant in the grasslands of the tablelands.

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*

The habitat of this bird was described by Lamm, Wilson and Belton (1963): 'First recorded when a small colony was found on the site of Lake Burley Griffin on March 19 1962. This area had frequently been worked previously by competent ornithologists, but farming had been abandoned some months earlier and grass and weeds had grown long and rank. The birds were still present there in October 1962'. As the species rapidly colonises rank grasses, it is surprising that it had not been observed earlier, as suitable habitat has long existed.

It is now regularly seen at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Park where breeding has been reported; but is difficult to observe. Some suitable habitat has disappeared to make way for housing development.

The Golden Cisticola is found on the tablelands in small numbers wherever a considerable area of long grass remains; and is regarded as sedentary. It is also found in open country along southern creeks and rivers (Taylor and COG 1992).

Uncommon breeding resident of long grasslands.

SILVEREYE

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*

This species is common throughout much of the ACT and particularly about urban and larger farm gardens. First observed by Barrett (1922), then Jones (1929), Mathews (1943) 'very common - city', and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

At New Chums Road, 1214 were banded and 310 retrapped, and the seasonal break-up of the total was summer 766, autumn 245, winter 7 and spring 506. The oldest bird was recaptured 7 years and 11 months after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). Numbers of migrant birds build up in late summer and again in spring, and can be recognised in the hand by minor plumage differences.

There is a large breeding population in the ranges, most of which migrate, but they return to their natal areas as shown by 198 birds being retrapped in the year following banding (Wilson unpublished banding data).

The seasonal maps show wide distribution over the ACT in the warmer months, but with the highest concentration in the northern half. In the cooler weather, the emphasis is on the urban area with small numbers at higher altitudes (Taylor and COG 1992).

This does not fully portray the migrant situation; large flocks have been heard flying north-east in the hours before dawn (pers. ob.). In addition, birds recognisable as Tasmanian breeders by plumage are common in Canberra in winter; others migrate much farther (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984).

Common breeding resident, with much of the local population migrating. Other Silvereyes pass through, while many migrants spend the cooler months here.

THRUSHES

Bassian Thrush *Zoothera lunulata*

Jones (1929) mentioned this among returning migrants, but not in his main list. Lamm and White (1950) referred to only one record, from the Condor Creek area.

Banding records from New Chums Road show that 255 were banded over the years, and 81 were retrapped. The seasonal distribution of the joint total was: summer 132; autumn 31; winter 15; and spring 158 (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). This showed a definite altitudinal migration, confirmed by COG records, which show birds on the tablelands during the winter. There are regular sightings from the Australian National Botanic Gardens and Stromlo Pine Forest, among other places (Dabb 1992).

The oldest bird banded at New Chums Road was re-taken 7 years and 1 month after banding (Tidemann, Wilson and Marples 1988). Of the 255 banded only 31 were retrapped in the year following banding, a strong indication that they do not hold permanent territories. The relative figures are much higher for some of the true migrants (Wilson unpublished banding data).

This is a species of the moist forest of the west and south. It is easily overlooked as the call is heard only during the breeding season, and the bird is difficult to see on the forest floor.

Uncommon breeding resident of the wetter higher forests. Some birds are altitudinal migrants; during the winter these can be found in scrub thickets on the tablelands.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

This species has gradually increased its range over the years (Blakers, Davies and Reilly 1984). The first sighting in the ACT was on 26 August 1949 (Lamm, Wilson and Belton 1963). The population has increased and spread, but the bird is rare in the higher areas of the west and south. Three were banded at New Chums Road over the years, and one was retrapped four weeks later. All were handled in summer or autumn (Wilson unpublished banding data).

The Common Blackbird has been sighted over much of the ACT. Its stronghold is the private gardens of the developed areas. It is also reported frequently along the creeks and rivers of the ACT (Taylor and COG 1992).

In England this species is a partial migrant, and this instinct may still exist. There is the fascinating record of a juvenile bird banded in the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 1 January 1968, and shot at Castlemaine, Victoria on 28 September 1968. 'Distance and direction 310 miles WSW' (Anon. 1969e). This instinct may also account for sightings in the ranges in what appears to be unsuitable habitat.

Breeding is frequently reported, especially in private gardens.

Common breeding resident of the built up area of Canberra, and also along creeks and rivers. Seen only occasionally elsewhere. An introduced species.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Reported by Mathews (1943) without comment and by Lamm and White (1950): 'A small number of these birds was imported from New Zealand and liberated by Dr. R. J. Tillyard in the latter half of 1935. The bird was observed breeding at Red Hill in 1937 but was believed to have disappeared by 1939. There are however unsubstantiated records of its presence in the Westridge district of the city within the last several years'.

There have been no recent records of this introduced species and it is regarded as locally extinct.

STARLINGS

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Jones (1929) was the first to report the Common Starling, followed by Mathews (1943) and Lamm and Calaby (1950).

In the ACT it inhabits the built up areas and pastures and is very numerous in both. It is also found in woodlands on the tablelands, and in high open areas in the south, but does not penetrate the wet forests of the western ranges.

It breeds in tree hollows and other cavities and is therefore a competitor for these sites with a variety of native species (Pell and Tidemann 1994). Control methods are desirable for this pest species, and would be instituted if authorities really understood the conservation needs of native species.

Common breeding resident throughout much of the ACT. An introduced species.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

The first sighting of this bird was of two at Campbell on 26 May 1968. There were several other records in November 1968, including a report of two at Lyneham on 17 November 1968 (Anon. 1968b), followed by others in 1969 (Anon. 1969d).

A major article listed the deliberate release of the Common Myna in the ACT and mapped its spread (Gregory-Smith 1985). The following quote is of interest: 'it was not until 12 November 1968 that the first release of 12 Common Mynas was made in the suburb of Forrest. Mynas continued to be released in batches until September 1971 when a total of 110 birds had been distributed'. This appears authentic; and if so, the May 1968 sighting indicates that either they had arrived here prior to the releases mentioned, or that there had been an earlier release. The spread of this species to grasslands on the Cotter Road was mentioned by Wright and Wright (1991), and to Castle Hill (Rarities Panel News 1994a).

An analysis of numbers and distribution in Canberra was undertaken by Davey (1991), who found that the 110 introduced birds had increased to 1220 in 18 years. Pell and Tidemann (1994) gave the results of the survey at Oakey Hill near Lyons. Movement of birds between suburbs was detailed by Nicholls et al. (1996).

As with the Common Starling, control methods are necessary for this bird as it competes for nest holes with native species. Authorities need to understand this threat to our native avifauna and act accordingly.

Common breeding resident of the populated area. There is a tendency for it to spread to the country. An introduced species.

THE NEED FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION

'Throughout the woodland region, native vegetation has been removed from an area three times as large as Victoria and, up until 1995, has continued to be lost from Queensland and New South Wales at the rate of about 200000 ha (or 2% of all woodland remnants) every year - that is about 548 hectares of woodland cleared and about 8200 birds killed or displaced every day'.

Loss of habitat

The quotation is from Robinson and Traill (1996). It demonstrates the speed of loss of suitable habitat in the late twentieth century, not just for birds, but for native fauna generally.

The rate of change in the previous century does not compare with this, although it led to the extinction of several bird species in the southern highlands. We have seen in 'The Changing Landscape' how nineteenth century settlers cleared a great deal of woodland. By the time of the foundation of the FCT in 1913, the tablelands had become largely dry country grassland, with old eucalypts left mostly on the higher ground. These old trees did however supply important nesting places for birds. This landscape pattern continued until the rapid growth of Canberra in the '60s.

By 1959 the population was almost 50000, and the growing city was described as being in a dry suburban area in dry grassland (White 1998). The new suburbs were inhospitable for birds for the next few years. Lack of food – insects and nectar - was matched by the lack of necessary cover, since most birds need shrubs and trees for roosting, nesting and protection from predators.

The importance of nesting holes

The spread of Canberra involved the felling of more old eucalypts, most of which had several nest holes. While a fair number of old trees remain today, the native hole-nesting birds suffer much competition from introduced species, in particular the Common Starling and the Common Myna. The Systematic List names all of the ACT bird species, both large and small, that need nesting holes.

Eucalypts are relatively fast growing, but the development of holes suitable for nesting takes many years and continues for the life of the tree. A hole can occur following the death or breaking of a branch, but it may take at least 80 years for a suitably large hole to grow. Old eucalypts are most important to the larger birds, such as the Nankeen Kestrel, parrots, cockatoos, kookaburras and the Dollarbird.

Pines, logging and firewood

Very extensive pine forests have been planted in the foothills of the ranges. This has necessitated the removal of dry type native forests and a lot of good bird habitat. Pine forests are of no use to most bird species. Pine areas are inhabited by relatively few birds, compared with the number of species in the native forests they have replaced. Remnant vegetation, especially along creeks, and open patches of grass are very important for the birds that do occur. Some birds seen in pine forests are merely passing through.

A considerable amount of selective logging of forest trees was carried out in the Brindabella Ranges, but the older trees were always left to provide seed. They also had the greatest number of nesting holes for birds. There was never any clear felling in these ranges; and as a result, when logging ceased in the 1950s, there was a rapid regrowth of eucalypts. An excellent bird habitat now exists there.

Loss of habitat for firewood supplies is no new story. Canberra burns 80000 tonnes of commercially harvested firewood annually and Victoria burns 240000 cubic metres each year (Robinson 1993). Where does

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the Canberra firewood come from and what is the effect on the place of origin? Much of it comes from inland New South Wales where old trees are ring-barked and later felled; and this reduction in our most valuable woodlands is continuing. A switch to plantation grown timber is clearly necessary.

There are very many factors affecting conservation, and one is the tendency to 'clean up' paddocks containing dead timber, which is a vital habitat for a variety of small passerines. Its importance was stressed in a study of the Hooded Robin (Graham 1990): 'the Hooded Robin's distribution in the ACT is restricted to habitats away from suburban areas, that contain a mixture of woodland and grassland. In this habitat, dead and fallen trees provide an important source of perching and breeding sites. The expansion of urban areas and the removal of dead timber for firewood is likely to result in a reduction of Hooded Robin numbers in the ACT'. Graham's comment is equally apt for a number of other woodland-grassland species.

Dead and fallen timber habitat receives considerable attention in the literature. A recent study compared the number of birds and species, in similar blocks, with and without such timber (Laven and MacNally 1998). They found that 'the current evidence suggests that birds are preferentially associated with accumulations of fallen timber when available. . . Mean occurrence was about nine times greater in debris areas than in empty areas, while the corresponding ratio was about three for richness of species. . . Two of the more likely explanations are the provision of greater amounts of food and/or foraging opportunities and shelter'.

Parks and gardens

In many ways we are fortunate in the ACT in that a good proportion of the land is in designated nature parks, the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Namadgi National Park. We also have the various segments of the Canberra Nature Park close to many suburbs. Nevertheless vigilance is required, as there are possibilities of damage. Apart from the most obvious — degradation of the environment by people and pets, there is also the danger of fire. Over the years frequent fires have decreased the number of trees on Mount Ainslie, and in the summer of 1997-98 three fires, all suspected of being deliberately lit, occurred on Mount Taylor. Tree planting on Mount Taylor over recent years has altered the appearance of the eastern and northern sides in particular, and will provide good bird habitat. It needs protection.

Trees and shrubs grow rapidly in the ACT climate. From the 1960s onwards, with the increased water supply from new dams and the growing popularity of native shrubs, the Canberra landscape has been transformed. Gardens and street trees have quickly become established, providing an excellent habitat for many, though not all, bird species. Today, home bird-lists of over 100 species are not unusual, especially in suburbs close to nature parks.

The need for conservation

There is nevertheless urgent need for conservation of birds in the ACT, as there is in the whole of south-eastern Australia. Woodland species are in serious decline over much of the region. To give a Victorian example, Toolern Vale is 45 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and bird observers have been active there over many years. The disappearance of several species from the area, and the decline of others, was catalogued in an important paper (Robinson 1993). He named 57 species of 'land birds not yet listed as threatened but declining or locally extinct in districts of southern Australia'. That is in addition to 'forty-one species of land birds already threatened' which the author did not name.

It is most important that the situation of all avian species be reviewed at suitable intervals, as change is constantly occurring. Some species thrive while others decline in numbers. If the situation is understood, the appropriate authorities can be advised of conservation measures.

It is an axiom that one cannot merely conserve a bird species. If we conserve habitat as a whole, then we also conserve everything within it. We are slowly becoming more aware of this and of the necessity to sustain biodiversity.

The conservation of Mullligans Flat as a Nature Reserve is heartening, for it is the only sizeable remnant of Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum grassy woodland in the ACT (ACT Gazette 1998). This woodland is classified as an endangered community. It affords shelter and a corridor for birds and other fauna, and is a very important ecosystem. COG is monitoring the reserve, to assess the impact on it of the growth of the new town of Gunghalin close by.

The public attitude to conservation is becoming more informed, and hopefully will continue to be so.

Nevertheless, it is a matter for continual education to ensure that existing habitat will be preserved and not fragmented. We do not wish to add more extinct species to the following list.

Conclusion

The present study has shown that other species, such as the Speckled Warbler, Southern Whiteface, White-fronted Chat, Jacky Winter and Diamond Firetail appear to be declining in numbers locally.

We have to wonder what the bird population in the ACT will be a century from now.

Note. The chapter on 'Conservation Issues' in the ACT Atlas (Taylor and COG 1992) is well worth reading. It comments on several significant locations within the Territory, all of which need permanent conservation.

Bird species already extinct in the ACT

Since early settlement eight species of birds have become extinct in the ACT:

Emu (now reintroduced)

Brolga

Australian Bustard

Plains-wanderer

Bush Stone-curlew

Banded Lapwing

Grey-crowned Babbler

White-browed Babbler

Threatened bird species in the ACT

Birds Australia (formerly RAOU) included the following birds which occur in the ACT on its list of threatened species (Garnett 1992):

Peregrine Falcon

Superb Parrot

Swift Parrot

Regent Honeyeater

Locally we have to add:

Brown Treecreeper

Hooded Robin

Painted Honeyeater

The ACT Gazette (1998) has named the Regent Honeyeater as endangered. To date, five of the above species are classified as vulnerable.

APPENDIX 1

The Bird Banding Project

Banding results from the Brindabella Ranges

Birds were banded at New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges from April 1961 to May 1982 under the Australian Bird Banding Scheme. The site is at an altitude of approximately 1050 metres and is on the eastern slopes of the range below Bulls Head, running from Warks Road to the road to Bendora Dam. Several other sites were used regularly but for shorter periods.

During the project 292 banding trips were made to New Chums Road. About 20 nets were in use from dawn for about six hours on each visit. The results from 1961 to 1979 were recorded on computer and showed that 10540 birds were banded, of which 4597 were later retrapped. 52 species were involved.

Results from this period were summarised by Tidemann, Wilson and Marples (1988). The life histories of the White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill and the Striated Thornbill were analysed (Wilson 1994 and 1995).

The effect of a major wildfire on the bird population was dealt with by Baker, Dettmann and Wilson (1997). Other papers dealing with the life histories of various species are in preparation. Papers mentioned are referred to in the Systematic List. Other banding and retrapping results quoted are from unpublished banding data.

APPENDIX 2

The COG Rarities Panel

The COG Rarities Panel was formed in 1984 primarily to appraise unusual records for the Atlas of ACT birds. It was based on a similar panel set up to vet records of western New South Wales during the period of the first RAOU Atlas (1977-81). The need to vet records of rare birds was not new, and had been carried out after the RAOU Atlas on a more informal basis by the COG records officer.

The function of the Panel was then, and remains to this day, to provide an informed, discerning and impartial appraisal of the records presented to it, and to maintain a list of species whose sightings will not be published by COG unless they receive Rarities Panel endorsement. The Panel does not 'reject' records; it accepts or does not accept them. Failure to accept a record merely indicates that on the evidence available to the Panel, it has not been fully convinced of the accuracy of the record.

The first unusual record registered with the COG Rarities Panel was a Rainbow Lorikeet in the suburb of Weston. The Panel accepted this record, categorising it as an escaped bird. Interestingly, many of the birds reported in that first year have remained on the list of unusual birds. Others, such as the Crested Pigeon, have become common in Canberra.

The Panel originally categorised the birds of COG's *Field List* into three groups: category 3 birds were those for which an 'unusual bird' report was required; category 2 birds were those species for which reports were required only if birds were seen in unusual numbers, or unusual locations; no reports were required for category 1 birds. In 1993 the Panel moved to a revised single list of birds requiring a report, a practice repeated in its 1998 revision.

In reaching its decision on the records presented to it, the Panel considers the details provided against its collective knowledge of the species, especially its behaviour and habitat preferences. The birding experience of the observer is a minor consideration in borderline cases. Observers may be asked to clarify aspects of their reports in such cases. If Panel members lack expertise in a species, reports may be circulated outside the Panel for opinions. Reports of birds unusual in Australia as a whole are referred to the Birds Australia Records Appraisal Committee.

The value of the Panel's work can be seen not only in the enhancement of the quality of published COG records, but also in its monitoring of the status of ACT birds over time. The appropriate report forms are available at COG monthly meetings.

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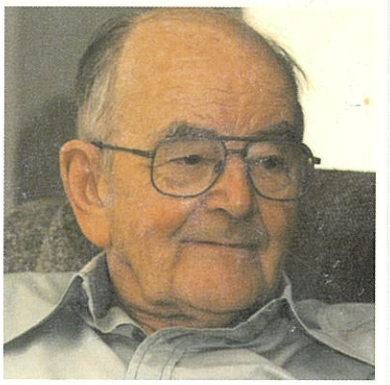
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STEVE WILSON

Since his retirement almost 30 years ago, Steve Wilson has been heavily involved in ACT ornithology (among his several other interests) and is nationally and internationally regarded for his considerable contributions to the knowledge of Australian birds over the years. Between 1961 and 1982 he conducted field work every weekend with young volunteers in banding surveys of birds in various sites in the ACT, principally the Brindabellas, the Australian National Botanic Gardens and Lake George. Eight of these volunteers (one with a PhD and six with BSc) have careers in the environment and ornithology. He is a life member of Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG). Last year Steve was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his contribution to ornithological research, bird banding, and the community.

This book is typical of Steve's enterprise and drive. It is only a recent project, taken up by him at age 86, when he saw the need for the book, and that if he wanted it written, the best way was to do it himself. To achieve this he had to buy a computer and learn to use it, having had no previous experience whatsoever with computers. He was assisted by his wife of 60 years, Nonie, who is still a highly competent typist. They achieved the resulting manuscript by both of them working at the computer, transcribing from Steve's written notes, Nonie typing, and Steve manipulating the mouse.

The book is about the study of birds in the Australian Capital Territory (and as it was previously known, the Federal Capital Territory) and records the history of each species observed in the ACT and reported in the ornithological literature. The *Introduction* traces the development of ornithology (and the list of ACT birds) in the Australian Capital Territory, while the *Systematic List* provides details of each species.

The list of Canberra Birds has not been updated since 1963, and this work is a significant addition to the literature. It will be an important ornithological reference, both in the ACT and nationally, for many years into the future. The status of each bird is commented on over the years, especially as it is today. Anyone interested in the Canberra and ACT environment will find this book a comprehensive, interesting and highly informative source of knowledge about the birds of our city-state.

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Brolga and Australian Bustard
by Betty Temple Watts
from *Birds in the Australian High Country*.
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