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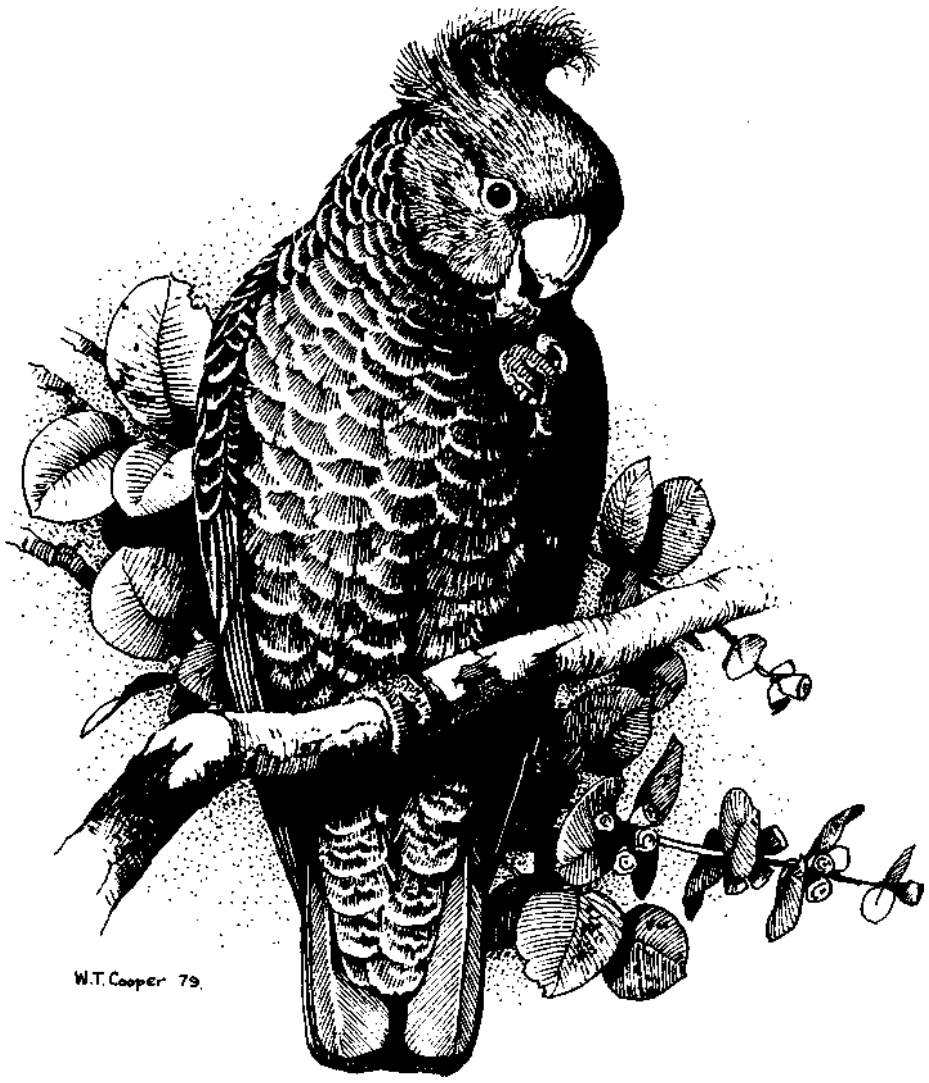

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(Continued inside back cover)

THE IDENTIFICATION OF NESTLING CUCKOOS IN THE CANBERRA REGION

Michael and Lesley Brooker

Seven cuckoo species occur in the Canberra region. Of these, the Pallid *Cuculus pallidus.* Brush *C. variolosus,* Fan-tailed *C. pyrrhophanus,* Horsfield's *Chrysococcyx basalis* and Shining *Ch. lucidus* and possibly also the Black-eared Cuckoo *Ch. osculans* breed in the area, while the Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea is* a non-breeding visitor.

So many brood parasites must inevitably lead to some confusion in the identity of nestlings, as well documented descriptions of very young cuckoos are few. The following guide to identification stems from observations made by us in Perth, WA on four of the species.

Cuckoos nestlings are easily distinguished from all passerine nestlings by their (a) rounded nostrils and (b) zygodactylous toes (2 forward, 2 back) (Figure 1). In addition, cuckoo nestlings are usually found alone in the nest, as all the cuckoo species described here evict host nestlings and/or eggs within two or three days of hatching.

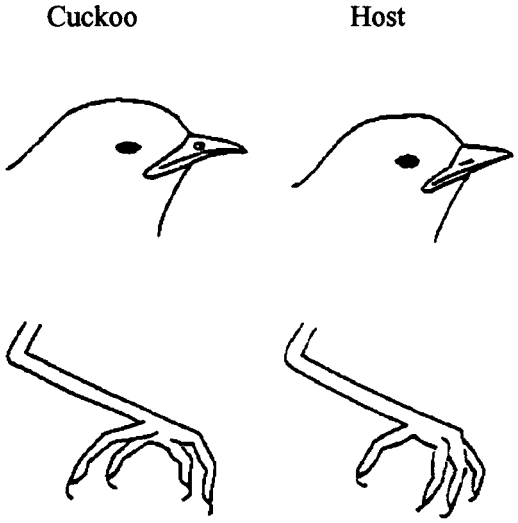

Figure 1. Comparison of cuckoo and host nestlings showing differences in nostrils and feet.

Identification as to species is not so easy. The distinguishing characters we find most useful are listed below. More comprehensive descriptions of nestling Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos are given in Brooker and Brooker (1986, 1989). In general, it is important to note: (i) weight; (ii) colour of rictal flanges (at base of bill); (iii) general skin colour; (iv) colour of pins; and (v) colour of feathers. If possible the nest should be visited at 5-6 day intervals to check identification as the nestling develops (cuckoos generally spend between two and three weeks in the nest).

Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo

Naked nestling (1-6 days): 1-10 g; no down; rictal flanges white/cream; skin flesh pink on shoulders and belly, grey on head and lower back, the grey spreading and darkening with age.

Porcupine stage (6-11 days): 10-18 g; rictal flanges cream/pale yellow; pins on throat uniformly grey with whitish tips.

Fledgling (11-20 days): 18-24 g; rictal flanges pale yellow; feathers of head, back and wings greyish brown with green sheen; light edging to wing coverts and secondaries; feathers on throat immaculate pale grey; may be some barring on flanks; rufous on tail not always apparent while in the nest.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo

Naked Nestling (1-6 days): 1-10 *g;* rictal flanges bright yellow; skin apricot on shoulders and belly, greenish grey on head and lower back, the grey spreading and darkening to purplish grey with age. The New Zealand subspecies *Ch. 1. lucidus* has long white trichoptiles (coarse, hair-like down) on the head and body (Gill 1982) and we have noted short (1 mm) white "hairs" on the heads of some, but not all, nestlings in Western Australia.

Porcupine stage (6-11 days): 10-18 g; rictal flanges bright yellow; a small patch of yellowish pins among the otherwise grey pins of the throat.

Fledgling (11-20 days): 18-24 g; rictal flanges yellow; feathers of head, back and wings greyish brown with green sheen; ear coverts and upper throat mottled cream and grey with a grey band between throat and breast; some barring on flanks.

Black-eared Cuckoo

Naked Nestling (1-6 days): 2-12 g; no down; rictal flanges white/cream; skin coal black, including belly.

Porcupine stage (6-11 days): 12-22 g rictal flanges cream/pale yellow.

Fledgling (11-?20 days): 22-?30 g; rictal flanges pale yellow; feathers of head, back and wings greyish brown with very slight green sheen; feathers on belly cream; outer tail feathers tipped with beige (data from one nestling only).

Fantailed Cuckoo

Naked nestling (1-6 days): 2.5-14 g; no down; rictal flanges cream/pale yellow; skin flesh pink on shoulders and belly. grey on head and lower back spreading and darkening with age; disproportionately large head; oil gland at the base of the tail conspicuously large (Figure 2) measuring 1-2.5 mm. (This oil gland is hardly discernible in the three *Chrysococcyx* species above).

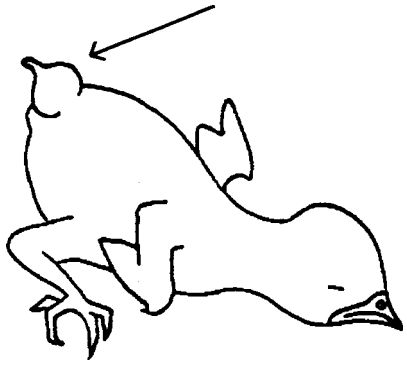

Figure 2. Fan-tailed Cuckoo nestling showing large oil gland at base of tail.

Porcupine stage (6-11 days): 14-24 g; rictal flanges pale yellow; pins on head, back and wings dark grey/black, tipped with yellow on the front of the wing and on breast and flanks.

Fledgling (11-20 days) 24-?35 g; rictal flanges yellow; buccal cavity orange/ yellow; feathers of head, back and wings mottled light and dark brown; feathers of throat, breast and belly mottled brown, beige and cream; tail tipped with beige.

Brush Cuckoo

Naked nestling; about 2 g at hatching; "of dark flesh colour and entirely devoid of down" (Hindwood 1930). The photograph accompanying Hindwood's account indicates that the oil gland at the base of the tail may be as conspicuously large as in the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, although this needs confirmation.

Pallid Cuckoo

Naked nestling: about 4 g at hatching.

Fledgling: "Upper surface sandy-buff, the feathers centred with black arrowhead markings; wings and tail feathers dark brown fringed or tipped with white; fore-head and throat dark brown or blackish; remainder of the under-surface white streaked with dark brown." (Mathews 1918)

It is clear from the incomplete descriptions of the last two species that an exciting opportunity awaits the next person finding a Brush or Pallid Cuckoo in the nest. In particular, criteria for distinguishing between nestling Brush and Fan-tailed Cuckoos and a description of a nestling Shining Bronze-Cuckoo from eastern Australia would be most useful.

Acknowledgements

We are most grateful to Ian Rowley and Graeme Smith who assisted us with their comments.

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BIRDS OF NORTH ARALUEN, NEW SOUTH WALES

Richard Gregory-Smith

A study of the birds of North Araluen was undertaken over four years during which time regular observations were made and summarised monthly. Mist-netting was carried out throughout the period and birds were banded with bands supplied by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes. A report on the status of the species in the area has been compiled.

Topography and Vegetation

The study was centred around the author's property at North Araluen (35° 38'S., 149° 48'E) in south-east New South Wales. North Araluen is approximately 35 kilometres west of Bateman Bay on the lower slopes of the coastal escarpment of the Great Dividing Range, and about 3km east of the eastern border of Canberra Ornithologists Group's expanded "area of concern". It is an area that housed 10,000 people during gold rush days but now has a population of not more than ten. The elevation is between 200-300 metres.

The property comprises eight hectares of grazing land which is 20 per cent overgrown with Black Wattle *Acacia decurrens.* Stands and single specimens of Blue Box *Eucalyptus bauerana, E. kartzoffiana,* Rough-barked Apple *Angophora floribunda* and Kurrajong *Brachychiton populneum* are scattered through the property with the occasional Broad-leaved Hickory *Ac. falciformis,* and bushes of Australian Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa.* Cutting through the property are several deep gullies where temperate rainforest occurs - here are found Sweet Pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum,* Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha,* Forest Red Gum *E. tereticornis,* River She-Oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana,* with an understorey of Common Cassinia *Cassinia aculeata* and some feral fruit trees.

Methods

The study was carried out over two periods: from December 1984 through to May 1986; and from July 1989 through to March 1991. The property was visited on two or three weekends each month and the monthly maxima of the number seen of each species was recorded. On most weekends mist nets were erected and bush birds were banded with the objects of studying bird movements, demography, and morphology. Details of the birds banded, together with their weights and measurements, were forwarded to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes.

Observations were stored on computer using LOTUS 123 and dBASE III as appropriate (Gregory-Smith 1991). LOTUS was found the more suitable for recording monthly counts, while dBASE accommodated banding data.

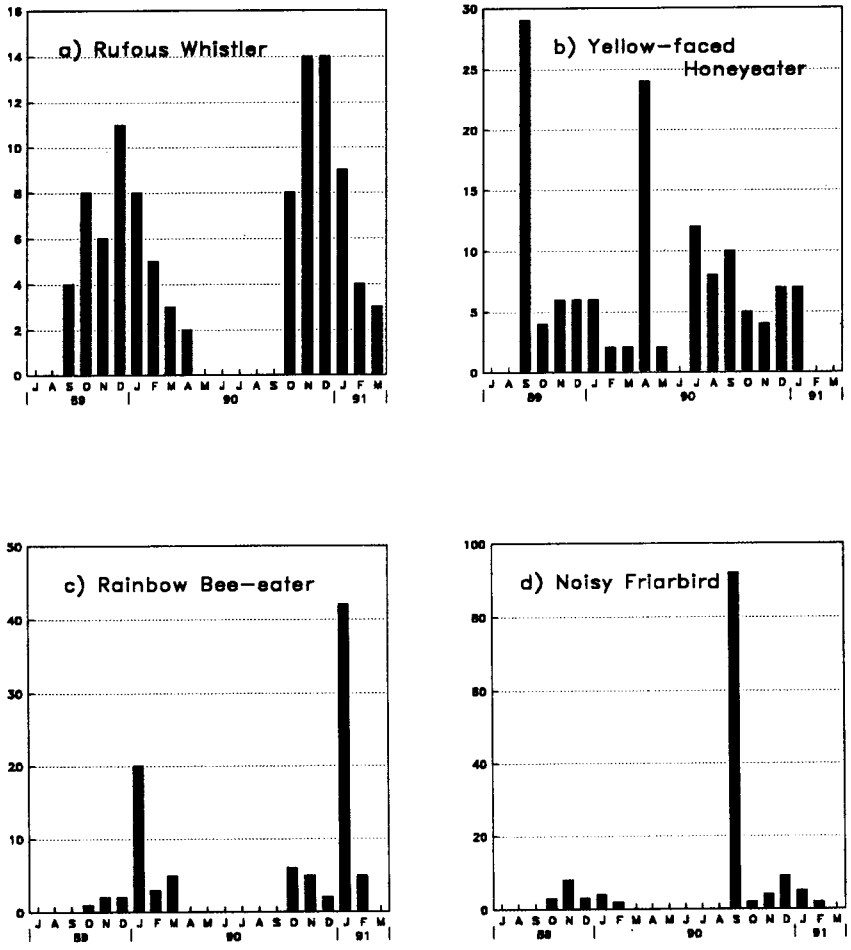

Figure 1. Graphs illustrating the occurrence of latitudinal migrants: a) Rufous Whistler; b) Yellow-faced Honeyeater; c) Rainbow Bee-eater; and c) Noisy Friarbird.

Results

Over the two periods, 110 species were recorded (see appendix) of which 12 were confirmed to have bred, although it is reasonable to assume that many other species also breed in the area. Twenty-six species were considered to be migrants. Three hundred and eighty-one birds were trapped and banded, of which 53 were subsequently retrapped at the place of banding.

In 1989, a list of 115 birds recorded from the Araluen Valley was published in the 1987 Annual Record of the Eurobodalla Natural History Society (Whiter 1989). This list had been compiled over a period of nine years by Fergus Hood and includes 29 species which are not on my list. Hood did not provide information on the status of the birds on his list.

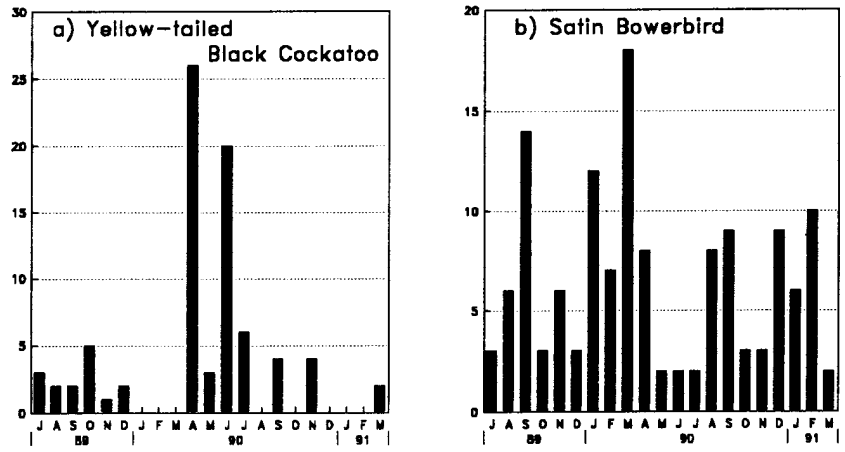

Figure 2. Graphs illustrating the occurrence of nomads: a) Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo; and b) Satin Bowerbird.

Drawing on the results obtained from my study, a status report on the birds of North Araluen has been compiled (see appendix). The scientific names of the birds mentioned in this paper are listed in the appendix.

It should be noted that the details of abundance refer only to my property, where, for example, the Common Starling is fortunately rare while the Superb Lyrebird is common.

Bird Movements

The 26 species considered to be migrants were either:

Seasonal latitudinal migrants;
Seasonal altitudinal migrants;
Nomads following food sources; or
Species responding to climatic conditions e.g. drought.

Most latitudinal migrants arrived from the north in September/October and, after breeding, departed in March/April. Typical latitudinal migrants included the Rufous Whistler, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Rainbow Bee-eater, and Noisy Friarbird. Graphs have been prepared to illustrate the occurrence on the property of these species (Figure 1).

The Rufous Whistler (Figure la) shows a typical pattern of a latitudinal migrant with numbers peaking at the end of the breeding season and tapering off with autumn departures. The largest numbers of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (Figure lb) were recorded in September and April when birds moved through the property, although a large influx was recorded in July 1990. Some Yellow-faced Honeyeaters

over-wintered. The numbers of Rainbow Bee-eaters (Figure 1c) increased abruptly in January of each year when the birds flocked and were seen flying to and from overnight roosts. The pattern of the Noisy Friarbird (Figure 1 d) is distorted by the observation of a large transient flock which passed through the property in September 1990.

The Pied Currawong is known to undertake altitudinal movements (Pizzey 1980), and I believe that the Rose Robin also undertakes altitudinal movements, at least to the North Araluen area. Altitudinal movement in the Pied Currawong was obscured to some extent by movements of birds that followed seasonally available food. The Rose Robin appeared only in the winter months, from, I presume, its breeding areas at a higher elevation.

Graphs have also been prepared showing the occurrence on the property of two species undertaking nomadic movements (Figure 2). Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (Figure 2a) feed in North Araluen, principally on grubs extracted from trunks and branches of wattles, and are present mainly in the cooler months. The numbers of Satin Bowerbirds (Figure 2b) increase when orchard fruits ripen, e.g. oranges in August/September, and plums, peaches and figs in the summer months.

Extreme climatic conditions can influence bird movements. The severe drought which ended in 1984 resulted in many species moving from the inland to areas nearer to the coast. Straw-necked Ibises, Hooded Robins, and Crested Shrike-Tits have not been seen in the area since 1985.

Morning bird calls

As a marginal study, I recorded the time of day when the first calls of ten species were heard during the winter of 1990 (Table 1). The Eastern Yellow Robin was normally the first to be heard, followed usually before dawn by the Laughing Kookaburra, and soon after dawn by the Australian Magpie and Common Blackbird.

Table 1. Order in which calls were first heard.

Species	24 Jun	21 Jul	22 Jul	12 Aug
Eastern Yellow Robin	1	2	1	1
Laughing Kookaburra	2	1	3	3
Red Wattlebird	3	6		
Superb Lyrebird	4	7		6
Australian Magpie	5	4	4	2
Crimson Rosella	6	5	3	
Pied Currawong	7		6	5
Common Blackbird		3	2	4
Grey Shrike-Thrush			5	7

Longevity

In addition to providing information on the residential status of species, retraps of banded birds provided interesting data on longevity. An adult Eastern Yellow Robin was banded in March 1986, and has been retrapped four times in the same location. the last occasion in September 1990, 54 months after being banded. This would make its age at least 5.5 years - assuming that it was no younger than 12 months when it was banded. Another example is an adult Striated Thornbill. which was banded in December 1985 and recaptured 63 months later in February 1991.

This study will continue on my return from Malaysia. Further banding, and retrapping of the birds already banded, will be undertaken in order to learn more of the longevity and movements of the North Araluen bird population.

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APPENDIX. Status of the birds of north Araluen.

The numbers in parenthesis after the status of some species is the probable number that would be seen when visiting the property at the appropriate time of year.

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*
Uncommon nomad. Present August to January. Breeds in October. (1)

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*
Rare. One flew over in November 1989.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*
Rare. One record in 1990.

Pacific Heron *Ardea pacifica*
Rare. Two records.

Whitefaced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*
Uncommon nomad. (1)

Strawnecked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*
Rare. Flock of 20 in 1985.

Pacific **Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa*
Uncommon.

Maned Duck *Chenonetta jubata*
Uncommon.
Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*
Uncommon.
Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*
Common resident. (1)
Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*
Common resident. (2)
Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*
Rare. Recorded in 1984 and 1990.
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Rare. One record in 1984.
Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*
Rare. One record in 1991.
Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*
Uncommon.
Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*
Rare. One record in 1989.
Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*
Common resident. Breeds November to January. (2)
Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*
Uncommon.
Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*
Uncommon nomad. (1)
Wonga Pigeon *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*
Common resident. (4)
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*
Common nomad. Present throughout the year. (5)
Ganggang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*
Common nomad. Present September to May. (2)
Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*
Uncommon nomad. (2)
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*
Common resident. (10)
Australian King-Parrot *Alisterus scapularis*
Common resident. (5)
Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*
Common resident. *(7)*
Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*
Rare. One record in 1984.
Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*
Common migrant. Present October to January. (2)

Brush Cuckoo *Cuculus variolosus*
Common migrant. Present October to January. (2)
Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cuculus pyrrhophanus*
Common resident, supplemented by summer migrants. Breeds November to January. (2)
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*
Rare migrant. One record in 1984.
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*
Uncommon migrant. Present August to November. Breeds August.
Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*
Uncommon migrant. Present December. (1)
Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*
Rare. Two records.
Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae*
Common resident. (1)
Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*
Rare. One record in 1984.
Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*
Rare. One record in 1990.
Australian Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus*
Common resident. (2)
White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*
Rare. Two February records.
Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azurea*
Rare. Two records.
Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*
Common resident. (4)
Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*
Common migrant. Present August to January. (2)
Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*
Common migrant. Present October to March. Breeds November. (2)
Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*
Common resident. Breeds February to March. (2)
Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*
Common migrant. Present September to April. One June record. (4)
Tree Martin *Cecropis nigricans*
Uncommon migrant. Present October to December.
Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
Uncommon resident.
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*
Common migrant. Present September to May. (1)
Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*
Common migrant. Present December to February. (1)

White-winged Triller *Lalage sueurii*
Uncommon migrant. Present September to January. (1)
White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*
Rare resident. One banded January 1991.
Blackbird *Turdus merula*
Common resident. (2)
Rose Robin *Petroica rosea*
Uncommon altitudinal migrant. Present in winter. **(1)**
Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*
Common resident and nomad. (2)
Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*
Not recorded since 1985.
Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*
Common resident. (4)
Jacky Winter *Microeca leucophaea*
Common resident and nomadic winter visitor. (2)
Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus*
Rare. Two recorded in 1985.
Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*
Common resident and nomad. (1)
Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*
Common migrant. Present September to April. (2)
Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*
Common resident. (2)
Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*
Uncommon migrant. Present November to December. (1)
Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*
Uncommon migrant. Present November to February. (1)
Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*
Uncommon migrant. Present October to April. (1)
Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta*
Common resident. (2)
Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*
Common migrant. Present November to March. (1)
Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*
Common resident. Breeds November to December. (3)
Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Common resident and nomad. Breeds December to January. (2)
Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus*
Common resident. Breeds December. (2)
Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*
Uncommon migrant.

Rufous Songlark *Cinclorhamphus mathewsi*
Rare nomad.
Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*
Common resident. (8)
White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis*
Common resident. (2)
Speckled Warbler *Sericornis sagittatus*
Rare nomad.
White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea*
Rare migrant. One record 1984.
Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*
Common resident. (4)
Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides*
Common nomad. (4)
Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*
Common resident. (10)
Yellow Thornbill *Acanthiza nana*
Common resident. (1)
Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*
Common resident. *(5)*
Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*
Uncommon nomad. (3)
White-throated Treecreeper *Climacteris leucophaea*
Common resident. (2)
Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata*
Common migrant. Present August to June. Some overwinter. (2)
Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*
Common migrant. Present September to February. (2)
Lewin's Honeyeater *Meliphaga lewinii*
Common resident. (2)
Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*
Common migrant. Present July to May. (3)
White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostomus leucotis*
Uncommon nomad. (1)
White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*
Rare migrant.
New **Holland Honeyeater** *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*
Uncommon nomad. Not recorded since 1989.
Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*
Common nomad. (2)
Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*
Common nomad. Present November to January. (1)

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*
Common resident. Breeds December to January. (1)

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*
Common resident.

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*
Common resident. Influx of Tasmanian birds in winter. (4)

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Rare nomad. Not recorded since 1989.

Red-browed Firetail *Emblema temporalis*
Common resident and nomad. Flocks in winter. (2)

Diamond Firetail *Emblema guttata*
Uncommon resident. (1)

Double-barred Finch *Poephila bichenovii*
Uncommon nomad. Flocks in winter. (1)

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Rare. One record in November 1990.

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*
Common migrant. Present September to March. Occasionally overwinters. (1)

Satin Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*
Common resident and nomad. (2)

White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*
Common resident. (10)

Australian Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*
Uncommon visitor.

Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*
Common migrant. Present September to March. (2)

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*
Common resident. Breeds January. (1)

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*
Common resident. (3)

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*
Common resident and nomad. (3)

Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*
Common resident. (1)

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*
Common nomad. (3)

Little Raven *Corvus mellori*
Uncommon nomad. Large flocks occasionally seen January to March. (30)

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ODD OB

TAWNY FROGMOUTH IN SUBURBIA

Bruce Lindenmayer

My curiosity was aroused around 9 a.m. on Saturday 10 August 1991, and my attention drawn to a mature 15 m Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* outside the balcony of my flat in Queanbeyan, by alarm calls from a pair of White-plumed Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus penicillatus* and a pair of Eastern Spinebills *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris.* My curiosity turned to delight to see a Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides,* perched on a thin branch in the middle of the tree. The bird remained completely stationary throughout that day (despite a prolonged photographic session), but was gone the next morning. It was not seen again until the following Saturday, and returned on Sunday 18 August 1991, providing me with an exciting finale to the COG outing which I led that day to Mt Jerrabomberra.

The bird returned on Monday 2 September. On each occasion it sat on the same branch, in the same position and facing in the same direction. However, on the final occasion it seemed to become agitated during the afternoon when I looked at it from the window in my office (about 10 m from its perch) and it moved twice to other positions in the tree.

The fact that the bird should have chosen this location is surprising as the tree is in the middle of a carpark. The carpark is surrounded on three sides by tall buildings and about 30 m from a line of almost 50 eucalypts of various species along the boundary of the property. All of these eucalypts are about the same age and height as the one in which the bird roosted. The roosting site is also close to an extensive area of open grassland and savannah woodland just across the ACT border.

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OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

In the press recently, there has been a publicity campaign to announce that the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will issue licences only to those duck shooters who can pass a simple duck identification test. This is to be applauded as a step in the right direction. However, when are the authorities going to ban lead shot? For as long as lead shot is used we will be slaughtering not only those ducks that are shot, but also dabbling species that feed in the area and ingest lead shot that has fallen to the bottom of the wetlands. I commented on this subject in the previous "Out and About".

In the last issue of "Out and About" I mentioned one of the ways that amateurs can help ornithology is to publish their own experiences of introduced species affecting native species in Canberra, for example by displacing them from nesting holes. Another way the amateur can help is by publishing observations of nesting birds of prey. You should note whether the nests are constructed by the birds, whether nests of other species are re-furbished and utilised, the number of fledglings, the height of the nest above ground, the type of tree, whether the birds regularly bring green foliage to the nest, and the type of food the birds bring to the young. For an example, see the excellent article by Hazel and Allan Wright on nesting Brown Falcons which was in the last issue of *Canberra Bird Notes.*

Recently there have been a number of reports of both Little Corellas and Long-billed Corellas in the south Canberra area centred around Narrabundah, Red Hill and the Canberra Nature Park. It is probable these birds are being released rather than flying to Canberra under their own power - especially the Long-billed Corellas. In some other parts of New South Wales the Long-billed Corella is establishing populations in the wild from released and escaped birds. It is possible that these two species can do the same in Canberra as the Indian Myna has done in the recent past. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to repeat the plea made by the Rarities Panel in the last issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* (and in this one! Eds) and urge members to report all sightings of the two species in Canberra, especially where the birds are regularly seen in the same area over an extended period. Breeding records would be particularly useful.

Enid Blyton (1897 - 1968) wrote over 700 books for children, but how many people know that in 1936 she edited *"Birds of the Wayside and Woodland"?* This single-volume book of 352 pages, 300 coloured illustrations, 8 photographic reproductions, and 49 text figures was based upon the three-volume work *"Birds of the British Isles*

and their Eggs" by T.A. Howard. The value of Enid Blyton's contribution to bird watching through her work on this book is best described by Maurice Burton in the preface to the 1952 edition:

> "To compress into so small a space the vast amount of information with sympathy and understanding, and in such a way as to preserve Coward's style, called for a tremendous labour. In doing so, however, Miss Blyton made available a single volume of ready reference which could be carried in the pocket, whereas Coward's three volumes required a haversack."

The book measures 16 cm x 11.5 cm x 2.5 cm and contains descriptions and other details of 435 species and subspecies. It also contains three chapters which discuss various aspects of the biology and observation of birds. Although it did not illustrate every bird recorded from the British Isles it was nonetheless a major achievement for its day, both in writing and in book design.

Finally, some poetry. Recently. while browsing through *"The Penguin Book of Comic and Curious Verse"* (Penguin Books 1956), I came across the following few lines (by Anon) which may take the fancy of those members interested in waterbirds:

The common cormorant or shag
Lays eggs inside a paper bag.
The reason you will see no doubt
It is to keep the lightning out.
But what these unobservant birds
Have never noticed is that herds
Of wandering bears may come with buns
And steal the bags to hold the crumbs.

This reminded me of the following rhyme that was doing the rounds of Canberra many years ago when the need to reduce cholesterol levels was first widely publicised and "polyunsaturated" became the most frequently used word by anyone discussing their diet. It was reputed to have been written by a schoolchild:

Our parrot wears a plastic mac.
The reason here is stated.
He wears it as he wants to be,
.....polyunsaturated.

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SPECIAL REVIEW

A look at current Australian field guides with special reference to:

A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia (Revised Edition) by Graham Pizzey and illustrated by Roy Doyle (1991). Published by Collins Angus & Robertson: Sydney. Pp 460. S24.95.

After binoculars (and one hopes these days, a hat and sun cream) a good field guide is a bird watcher's main tool of trade. I can remember my delight in the early 1970s when the first volume of the two-volume *"A Field Guide to Australian Birds"* by Peter Slater appeared, and my impatience in waiting for the second volume. Minus their dust covers, the Slater volumes fitted neatly into the case for my 7 x 50 binoculars. The two volumes travelled far, and enhanced my enjoyment of birds. I had previously owned one of the early editions of Neville Caley's ancient and classic *"What Bird is That?"*, but found its tiny and often faint illustrations, and its anachronistic names, rather more quaint than useful.

It was therefore quite an event in 1980 when Graham Pizzey's single volume *"A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia"* was published. Here at last, we had an up-to-date field guide with the passerines and non-passerines all under one cover (like many inexperienced bird watchers I had difficulties in deciding which of the two volumes of Slater I should open as I was not always sure whether the bird I was trying to identify was a passerine or a non-passerine). Nicest of all, were Pizzey's pointers allowing the inexperienced birdwatcher to focus immediately on the important distinguishing field marks in the plates of illustrations by Roy Doyle. I also found Pizzey's detailed descriptions, particularly of bird calls, very good.

John Penhallurick reviewed Pizzey's new field guide in *The Canberra Times in* late 1980. John found the book sturdy, with a generally fuller text than the Slater volumes, although he was critical of the taxonomic arrangement, the separate location of the plates, text and distribution maps. John also took issue with Pizzey's English bird names which differed from the list of Recommended English Names published by the RAOU in 1978.

As a relatively inexperienced ornithologist, my problems with Pizzey also related to his often unfamiliar English names, and to the fact that 32 out of 88 plates of illustrations were in black and white. Whilst non-colour plates are not always a handicap (e.g. with raptors overhead, or seabirds in flight) few birds appear exclusively black and white. For example, the yellow eyes of members of the currawong family are important field marks, as is the sheen of the plumage of several species. Not too serious perhaps, but showing the colourful wood-swallows in a black and

white plate was, in my view, a serious shortcoming - particularly the White-browed Wood-swallow which has chestnut or cinnamon coloured underparts. This was quite off-putting, when I was trying to identify my first sightings.

Since the mid 1980s, we have had the new slim single volume *"The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds"* and Simpson and Day's *"Field Guide to the Birds of Australia"*. Both of these have large, clear and predominantly all colour plates, together with the bird descriptions and distribution maps on the page adjacent to the colour plate. However, the down-side of this convenient arrangement is that the descriptions, which have to be squeezed into the space available, are necessarily much briefer, and frankly, in some cases, inadequate.

So much for history. What's new? Well, as is indicated at the top of this review, Collins Angus & Robertson have published a "revised edition" of Pizzey's field guide. Whilst I have not read the book from cover to cover, I have looked at it long and hard for substantive changes. In particular, I looked to see what had been done about the English names, and whether any new colour plates had been included to replace the earlier black and white ones. I also looked to see whether there had been any revision of the text for three species, the Night Parrot, Orange-bellied Parrot, and Regent Honeyeater, for which there has been significant changes in knowledge of their range, occurrence, and conservation status since 1980. No changes had been made to these texts, therefore I consider they no longer reflect current knowledge as would befit a "revised edition". As one example, Pizzey describes the status of the Regent Honeyeater in south east New South Wales through to central Victoria as "...locally common and resident in parts..." and "...generally highly nomadic and irregular...". Following detailed studies in the 1980s, the RAOU in their 1990 publication *"Threatened Birds of Australia"*, classed the
Regent Honeyeater as endangered and estimated the total population at less than 1000.

Coming back to Pizzey's bird names, it is curious that a book published as a revised edition in 1991 should reproduce the statement from the first edition that the "RAOU's *Recommended English Names for Australian Birds* (Supplement to *Emu 77* May 1978) was published after this book was in press".

Frankly, the new Pizzey is not different in any substantial respect to the first edition, except for the back cover which updates the CVs of the author and illustrator, and replaces the Flame Robin illustration with the publisher's logo and a bar code!

But to be fair, if the new Pizzey isn't really "new", how then does it compare with its competitors? The following is a personal ranking, based upon using the three modem field guides for bird identification, mainly in the Canberra region. I have not included Cayley's *"What Bird is That?" as* it cannot be classed as a modem field guide.

For a bird watcher confronting a strange bird, the first requirement is an accurate illustration, showing the bird as it would appear typically in the field. I rate Simpson & Day's illustrations slightly ahead of Slater's and appreciably ahead of Pizzey's. Pizzey's use of pointers for field marks is valuable, but not sufficiently to outweigh the other shortcomings. I rate Simpson & Day's illustrations of two hard-to-recognise groups (thornbills and birds of prey) as quite outstanding.

In respect to the descriptive text. there can be no doubt that Pizzey's descriptions are much more informative, giving up to a page on some species. He alone lists alternative English names for most species. Often, however, these do not include the accepted names. Pizzey has sections with some detail on field marks and similar species, voice and song, nests and eggs, and on habitat, range and status. Slater covers much of the same material, but in a little less detail. Simpson & Day's descriptions are extremely variable, ranging from 3 to 30 lines. Simpson & Day compensate to some extent for this lack of detail with an interesting "Handbook" at the back of the field guide section. This is a short summary of the scientific knowledge of Australian bird arranged in family groupings. It provides general information about birds and their habitats, as well as useful hints for bird watchers, but it is not directed specifically to field identification of individual species.

Overall, I consider Pizzey to have the best treatment, even if it is more time consuming to look in three places to find the information you need to identify a bird in the field.

I would like to take as an example the hypothetical case of a bird watcher in woodland in the ACT, being attracted by the hauntingly beautiful but rather ventriloquial calls of one, or perhaps two species of summer migrants. The birds, although elusive are finally seen. Based on appearance only, their pictures would be found on page 217 of Simpson & Day and pages 261 and 263 of Slater and (with greater effort) on plate 72 of Pizzey. Referring to the descriptive text, the voice in Simpson & Day would be described (not very helpfully) as : "clear rising, falling" and "downward". Slater's more expansive descriptions are: "beautiful falling cadence with unfinished quality" and "lovely descending melody, evocative of falling leaf, followed by more explosive "phee-ee-ew"'. Pizzey, on the other hand, has a very elegant description: "One of the sweetest and most oft-repeated but elfin and elusive Australian bird songs; a falling silvery thread of sound that seems to finish before the end..." and "Beautiful, oft repeated falling leaf song in a minor key, with upward

recovery towards the end, then tails off; silvery thread of song". Pizzey gives more information on range and habitat than the other two, which would have indicated that both bird species would have been found in woodland in the ACT region, and in the warmer months. Pizzey's description of the typical field marks is more detailed than Slater's, and much more so than Simpson & Day's.

If you had done your detective work properly, you would have identified two species, which using Pizzey you would call "White-tailed Warbler" and "White-throated Warbler". Using Slater, the former would be called "Western Warbler". You might be surprised to find that none of these names appear on your COG data sheet, which uses (as does Simpson & Day) the accepted RAOU names of "Western Gerygone" and "White-throated Gerygone". If you wanted to cross-check the scientific names, you would look in vain for an index of these in Slater.

Correct English names are important. Of the 205 names listed on the COG data sheet. Pizzey's guide has 42 names which differ from the accepted ones in some respect, Slater 11, and Simpson & Day none. Some of the deviations are trivial; others such as the Western Gerygone are not. and the result could be confusing to the beginner. The English names on the COG data sheet follow the RAOU listing, except for one minor error. I will leave it to readers to do their own spade work to figure out which name on the data sheet is wrong.

It is inevitable that over time, taxonomic studies will result in changes to the names of birds. Whether we like the changes or not (I still have problems coming to terms with "thick-knee") ornithological groups and authors should take a lead in using, and promoting the use of accepted names, especially in publications. In field guides, if there is an alternative name that is widely accepted, this should be listed prominently in the text (Pizzey does this), or even given in brackets after the accepted name as does Simpson & Day in a few cases.

I use all three books. I find Slater the most convenient to carry in the field, but refer continually to the other two, to confirm appearance or for more background information.

We are fortunate in having three field guides of high quality, all of which are on the market at less than $30. The new Pizzey at $24.95 costs $5 less than the other two, and incidentally, 5 cents less than the first edition that John Penhallurick reviewed in 1980! Clearly, all three have their strengths and weaknesses. I hope subsequent editions will make improvements.

Bruce Lindenmayer

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RARITIES PANEL NEWS

First of all a reminder to members to report all sightings of Little Corellas *Cacatua sanguinea* and Long-billed Corellas *C. tenuirostris* in the Canberra area. As was said in the last Rarities Panel News, both species appear to be spreading throughout our area and we need to know where and when they are seen if we are to document this spread.

The observation of a Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti* in Badja State Forest (M. Fyfe) is the first record of this species from our expanded area of concern. Are there any others along the eastern edge of the area? If you are in the Badja State Forest or its vicinity, please check all fairy-wrens.

The Scarlet Honeyeater *Myzomela sanguinolenta* sightings are of interest. Did the observations made on 27 October include two sightings of the same bird? The observation at the National Botanic Gardens (P. Veerman) was made between 12 noon and 2.30 p.m., whereas the observation at Kambah (B. Wheeler) was made between 4.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. It is possible for a Scarlet Honeyeater to fly that distance in that time, but how likely is it? There now seems to be one or two records of this species each year - is it becoming more common, or is it just that there are more skilled observers?

The sightings of a Port Lincoln Ringneck *Barnardius barnardi* (B. Jones) in the Mt. Ainslie/Campbell continue from year-to-year. Is it the same bird, are there more than one which are breeding, or does somebody in the area keep them and occasionally release them?

The Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea* sighting (J. Bounds) in the National Botanic Gardens is an interesting one. There have been occasional winter records over several years now. Are they regular winter migrants or are they young birds of the year dispersing from the ranges?

The interesting waterbirds records this time include Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres,* Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica,* and Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* (M. Lenz and M. Fyfe).

Finally, did anyone see any Common Koels *Eudynamys scolopacea,* this year? If you did, could you please let us have report forms for the sightings. It seems strange that they have disappeared.

RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST NO 31

Category 3

Brown Quail
1; 5 Oct 91; G. & R. Elliott; Lake Ginninderra

Ruddy Turnstone
2; 22 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst

Lesser Golden Plover
1; 29 Jul 90; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
28; 22 Jan 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
3; 22 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst

Greenshank
1; 29 Jul 90; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
1; 15 Dec 90; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
1; 22 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
1; 19 Nov 91; M. Fyfe; south end Lake George

Glossy Ibis
8; **4** Nov 91; M. Fyfe; Wollogorang Lagoon, near Breadalbane
1; 19 Nov 91; M. Fyfe; south end Lake George

Intermediate Egret
1; 24 Nov 91; J. Bissett; Kelly's Swamp

Spotted Harrier
1; 28 Jan 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Grey Goshawk
1; 20 Jun 89; A. Rowell; Dairy Flat Bridge

Whistling Kite
1; 28 Jul 91; H. Wright; The Horseshoe Homestead
2; 17 Sep 91; M. Fyfe; Wollogorang Lagoon, near Breadalbane
1; 13 Oct 91; M. Lenz; south end Lake George

Little Lorikeet
4; 2 & 5 Nov 90; M. Lenz; Campbell Park

White-bellied. Cuckoo-shrike
1 (dark phase); 7 Aug 88; J. Barr; Campbell Park
1 (dark phase); 3 Oct 91; M. Lenz; Sullivans Creek

Variegated Fairy-wren
1; 18 & 19 Oct 91; M. Fyfe; Badja State Forest

Scarlet Honeyeater
1; 27 Aug 91; M. Fyfe; Weetangera
2; 27 Oct 91; P. Veerman; National Botanic Gardens
1; 27 Oct 91; B. Wheeler; Kambah Pool

Category 2

Olive Whistler
1; 28 Jul 91; J. Bounds; National Botanic Gardens
2; 19 & 20 Oct 91; M. Fyfe; Badja State Forest

Possible Escapees

Little Corella
7; 8 Sep 91; P. Wicksteed; Bellmount Forest near Gunning
11; 29 Sep 91; J. Bissett; Castle Hill

Escapees

Port Lincoln Ringneck
1; 19 Sep 91; B. Jones; Mt Ainslie

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Projects Subcommittee:
Malcolm Fyfe (Secretary - Ph. 254 3310), Grahame Clark, Chris Davey, Michael Lenz, David Purchase.

Rarities Panel:
Bryan FitzGerald (Secretary - Ph. 248 5140), Barry Baker, Graeme Chapman, Grahame Clark, Mark Clayton, Jack Holland, Bruce Male.

Annual Subscriptions for 1991 are: Student (18 years of age and younger) $8.50; Individual $17.00; Family $20.00; Institutions $20.00. All receive one copy of *Canberra Bird Notes*.

HELP WANTED

From time to time we need people to assist with the entering of records from our various projects into the COG Database. If you have a personal computer that runs on a DOS operating system and would like to assist please contact Malcolm Fyfe Ph. 254 3310. We will provide the necessary input program and data sheets.

Many thanks,
Projects Subcommittee

FOR SALE

BIRD SONGS OF CANBERRA **Price $10**

This cassette contains recordings of the songs and calls of 73 birds that are commonly heard in Canberra gardens and parks. The majority have been recorded in Canberra or the surrounding area. Seasonal variation in songs have been included where appropriate.

Available from COG, PO Box 301, CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608 or monthly meetings.

Canberra Bird Notes is published quarterly by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Contributions are welcome. These should fit into one of the following categories: major articles (up to about 3000 words); short notes and "Odd Obs" (up to about 300 words); reviews of books and articles (up to about 500 words); and where to watch birds (up to about 800 words). The articles and notes should cover matters of the distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding area (i.e. New South Wales coast north to Jervis Bay, and west to the Riverina). Contributions can be sent to the editors do David Purchase, 5 Orchard Place, Melba, ACT 2615 (Tel 258 2252).

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