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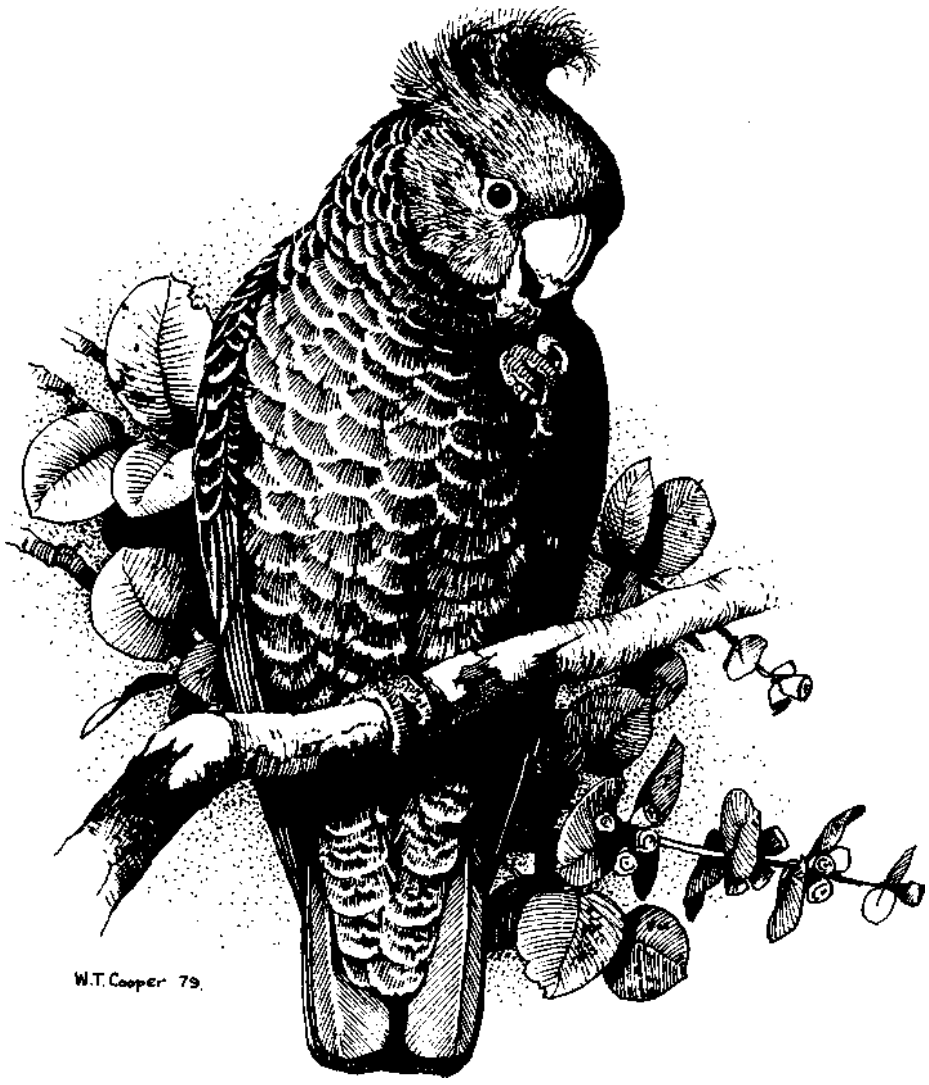

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BIRDING IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

Steve Wilson

(This is the edited text of a talk given to Canberra Ornithologists Group by Steve Wilson on 13 April 1994.)

In the late 1950s the government of Sir Robert Menzies decided it was uneconomic and inefficient to have the Federal Parliament in Canberra and most of its departments in Melbourne. This decision had many results, the main one being that the central administrations of most of these departments were transferred here and became the first real momentum in the growth of Canberra. Prior to that decision the population of Canberra was *c.* 40,000 and by the time the Wilson family arrived in September 1959 it was *c.* 45,000.

What was the state of ornithology in the ACT at that time? A number of professional zoologists, many with an interest in birds, worked for the CSIRO Wildlife Survey Section (now the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology), but there were no active amateurs other than Betty Temple Watts who was then working on the illustrations for *Birds in the Australian High Country* (Frith 1969). As a guide, Betty Temple Watts was using an unpublished list of birds compiled by the instigator of the project, Robert Carrick, with the assistance of John Calaby and Warren Hitchcock, all of whom worked at the Wildlife Survey Section.

Early lists of the birds of the ACT

Individuals had worked on the birds of the area before this and published various articles, but there was no club catering for ornithology in Canberra until the formation in 1964 of the ACT branch of the RAOU.

The first listing of birds in the district was that of the naturalist Charles Barrett who made two visits to the Tuggeranong Homestead (now surrounded by the suburbs of Richardson, Isabella Plains and Calwell) and listed 50 species (Barrett 1922). From 1913 to 1928, D.P. Jones, who was head teacher at Duntroon Public School, compiled a list of 122 species (Jones 1929). Jones made reference to birds of the mountain gullies and seems to have covered the ACT fairly well considering the restricted nature of the roads at the time.

In July 1943, Gregory Mathews, one of the most famous names in Australian ornithology, published a booklet which took the list of ACT birds to 158 (Mathews 1943). (Mathews actually listed 156 species but omitted two previously noted by Jones.) The next effort was by Don Lamm and David White. Lamm is an American who spent two periods in Canberra, each of about four years, while attached to the American Embassy., and did a lot of bird watching in the area. White was a local student who is now Professor of Microbiology at the University of Melbourne. Their

list took the total to 175 species (Lamm and White 1950). At that time Lamm also did a regular survey of the birds of the Murrumbidgee River between Uriarra Crossing and the Cotter River Road (Lamm and Calaby 1950). A further two species were added by J.N. McKelvie (1957).

That was the state of the published knowledge of the birds of the ACT when the Wilsons arrived in 1959. Shortly after our arrival, other bird watchers arrived and quickly became active. Bill Belton arrived at the American Embassy early in 1960 and we met shortly afterwards quite by accident. Don Lamm returned a few weeks later for his second posting at the embassy and we were introduced by Bill Belton.

Early bird banding in the ACT

In September 1960, at the urging of my sons Brendan and Denis (who were too young to hold such permits), I applied for and was issued with the necessary permits to trap, band and release birds. These were issued by the CSIRO Wildlife Survey Section, which administered the Australian Bird Banding Scheme, and the Agriculture Branch, Department of the Interior, which was responsible for fauna legislation in the ACT.

At the time little was known in Australia of the technique of using mist-nets to capture birds for banding. It is worthy of comment that the only published information was an article by an American, Seth Low (1957), which proved quiet useless for Australian conditions. However, by trial and error we rapidly learnt how and where to use mist nets.

On 26 March 1961, Brendan, Denis and I started to band birds on the eastern side of the Brindabella Range at Lees Creek and nearby on an old forest track near where Lees Creek follows Walks Road just before the road starts to rise out of the valley and cross the Bulls Head Range, an eastern buttress of the Brindabella Range. Don Lamm, who had commenced a visual survey of the birds of New Chums Road in January 1961, suggested we should use mist nets to capture birds for banding at the same time as he carried out his visual survey.

Our first attempt on 9 April 1961 involved putting a line of nets along a fairly straight stretch of road, walking up the hill about 200 m above the nets, and then walking, with great difficulty because of logging residues and the slope, towards the line of nets. The intention was to beat birds ahead of us and into the nets, but we were totally unsuccessful. The nets were left standing while we had some breakfast a little further up the road. On our return, we found the shaded nets contained many Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis* and White-naped Honeyeaters *Melithreptus lunatus,* while those which were more exposed had nothing. So we immediately learnt to erect nets only in shaded sites.

Additions to the list of birds in the 1960s

With the arrival of other ornithologists in the early 1960s, birds were frequently being added to the local list. Betty Temple Watts had the patience of a saint and calmly accepted the need to re-arrange nearly every plate for the book. An example was the first record of the Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor* in the ACT. In May 1960, Denis Wilson saw a flock of about 40 in a tree near Rocky Knob in Narrabundah and on 22 May Betty and Warren visited the spot to see if they could verify the sighting. The flock was in the same tree and a dead bird (now in the Australian Wildlife Collection) was lying on the ground.

In 1963, Don Lamm, Bill Belton and I published additions to the bird list for the ACT which increased it by 45 species, bringing the total to 222 which indicated the upsurge in local interest in birds (Lamm et al. 1963). Many other species were foreseen with the future filling of Lake Burley Griffin.

The visual survey of birds at New Chums Road finished in December 1963 to allow Don Lamm time to write up the results prior to his retirement to Tucson, Arizona, USA, where he still lives (Lamm and Wilson 1966).

Brendan Wilson left for college in Sydney, followed a little later by his brother Denis. After the Americans and the Wilson boys left, many other people helped with the banding at New Chums Road. Some took out bird banding permits and started work at other places in the Brindabella Range. Replacement helpers came from boys from various secondary schools and many grew up with the New Chums Road banding project. Eight of them went on to work professionally in natural history. In later days of the project university undergraduates contributed much of the effort.

Difficulties with identification

To return to the beginning, a point worth making is that for identification purposes we had to rely on *What Bird is That?* (Caley 1958). For years it was the second best selling book in Australia after the Bible, but as a field guide it was of little use. All the illustrations were tiny and in many cases male birds only were shown. Descriptions were not included and the species were arranged by habitat, all of which made it difficult to use. Also available was *An Australian Bird Book* (Leach 1950), but we preferred to use Cayley. The best book of all was *Birds of Western Australia* (Serventy and Whitten 1962) but it was of little use to us as few of the Brindabella Range species occur in Western Australia.

The following examples illustrate the difficulties we had in our efforts to accurately identify, sex and age birds. When we started our work we were unable to identify male, female or juvenile White-browed Scrub-wrens *Sericornis frontalis* and this was not resolved until the end of the first breeding season. We were also mystified by a whistler-type bird with grey flight feathers and all the rest rufous. With the aid of banding we were able to quickly establish this to be the juvenile plumage of both sexes

of the Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* which changes quickly to a female-like plumage with the male getting its adult plumage at about three years of age. Another difficulty was with the robins. The Rose Robin *Petroica rosea is* a migrant with most birds being caught between September and April. On 1 April 1962 we netted a female robin which we recorded as a Rose Robin. On 23 June that bird was retrapped and we noticed the wing markings were a rich buff instead of a dull cream and the outer tail feathers did not have white markings - it was then we realised it was a Pink Robin *P. rodinogaster* not a Rose Robin. At the time the Pink Robin was known from Tasmania, and in Victoria from the Otway Ranges. the forests of south Gippsland and the lower valley of the Snowy River. The occurrence of a Pink Robin at New Chums Road was a huge extension of the range of the species.

There are five species of red/pink robins and all five have now been banded at New Chums Road and Lees Creek Road in the Brindabella Range, and also in the National Botanic Gardens (in the years before they were opened to the public) and at .Lake Road by Lake George.

Some results from bird banding

Banding was undertaken at eight sites in the Brindabella Range. Of these, four proved to be unsatisfactory and banding was discontinued. The sites which continued to be used were:

Blundells Creek Road (35°21'S., 148°50'E.)
73 visits from 5.10.63 to 10.3.76.
Bushrangers Creek Road (35°24'S.. 148°49'E.)
85 visits from 4.10.64 to 5.3.79.
Lees Creek Road (35°22'S., 148°50E.)
106 visits from 26.3.63 to 24.1.79.
New Chums Road (35°24'S.. 148°50'E.)
295 visits from 9.4.61 to 2.5.82.

In all, 582 banding visits were made to the eight sites and at 21 years, the study at New Chums Road is the longest continuously run project of its type in the Southern Hemisphere - a huge effort by any standard. The longevity records of individuals and, more importantly, the annual survival rates of various species which have been calculated from the banding and retrapping data are among the most interesting and important results obtained from the work in the Brindabella Range. For species for which adequate data were collected it has been shown that the average annual survival rate of adults is generally greater than it is for the equivalent Northern Hemisphere species (Rowley and Russell 1991, Yom-Tov et al. 1992). Similarly the longevity of individuals appears to be greater than in Northern Hemisphere birds.

Following is a list of some of the longevity records obtained from bird banding in the Brindabella Range. All show the time elapsed in years and months from the date of banding to the date of last retrapping. Most have been previously published in Tidemann et al. (1988).

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*	7y 1m
Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*	12y 10m
Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*	l0y 11m
Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*	8y 0m
Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*	7y 0m
Pilotbird *Pycnoptilus floccosus*	6y 3m
White-browed Scrub-wren *Sericornis frontalis*	14y 5m
Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*	13y 5m
Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*	15y 7m
White-throated Treecreeper *Climacteris leucophaea*	11y 6m
Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythrops*	8y 3m
Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*	12y 5m
White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*	l0y 0m
Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*	9y 11m
Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*	l0y 6m
Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*	7y 1m

All the above were caught as free-flying birds of unknown age and it is not known how much longer the birds survived after they were last caught. Therefore the above are minimum figures. All were caught a number of times between the time they were banded and last recaptured. It should be noted that the average life expectancy of birds is of course much less than the extreme examples of longevity, but it is of interest to see how long some individuals can survive in the wild. It must be remembered that these are small birds which vary in size from about 7 grams (Brown and Striated Thornbills) to 110 grams (White's Thrush).

The dangers and values of bird banding

When I spoke to COG I was asked several questions regarding the dangers posed to birds by banding. There is some danger, but this is kept to a minimum through the stringent controls placed on this activity by the Australian Bird Banding Scheme and the state and territory fauna departments. Permission to trap, band and release birds are granted only to people who can demonstrate their ability to use the techniques involved without harming the birds they handle. Some species need to be handled with particular care; Brown Thornbills for example are subject to shock and must be removed from the net and released as quickly as possible. An interesting thing about Brown Thornbills is that when they are handled they often begin a virtually continuous sub-song, audible for about 50 cm, which mimics the calls of other species present in the forest, but particularly it mimics the chatter of a flock of Crimson Rosellas *Platycercus elegans,* a common species in the ranges.

Bird banding has made an important contribution to understanding the life-histories of many of our birds. This has been achieved by concentrating banding efforts into projects that produce results which add to this knowledge. It should never be used solely for the pleasure of catching and seeing live birds in the hand. If results are not forthcoming, then the banding should cease. An example of this was in 1970 when we stopped banding migrating honeyeaters at Point Hut and other places along the Murrumbidgee River. The aim of the project was to discover the origins and destinations of these birds. Despite having banded 15,784 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and White-naped Honeyeaters only one had been recovered at a significant distance away from the banding place (a White-naped Honeyeater banded at Point Hut which was retrapped by a bander at Fairy Meadow near Wollongong. NSW). In addition, a Yellow-faced Honeyeater banded at Grafton, NSW, was retrapped at Point Hut. It was felt that to continue the banding was a waste of bands and the meagre quantity of information being obtained did not justify the disturbance caused to the birds. It should be noted that in 1973, after the project had stopped. a Yellow-faced Honeyeater banded at Point Hut in 1970 was killed by a cat at Kurrajong, NSW. Details of this project are contained in Purchase (1985).

Even the best projects are of little value if the data are not analysed and published (Wilson 1965). We have always attempted to do this and a general summary of the results to 1979 of the work in the Brindabella Range was published in *Corella* (Tidemann et al. 1988). Other published results include Lamm and Wilson (1966), Horey and Wilson (1971). Stokes (1975) and Wilson (1994). The task of analysing and publishing these data is continuing.

The creation of Canberra's first swamp

To go back to the early days of our life in Canberra in 1959. For a few days our home, 2 Scott Street, Narrabundah. was the southernmost occupied home in Canberra. Red Hill was open paddocks, while Lyneham, Downer and Hackett were still being constructed. The satellite towns were well in the future. The Molonglo River and its flood plain caused Canberra to be referred to as "Two sets of suburbs in search of a city". Commonwealth Bridge was a two-lane wooden structure which could not cope with the traffic when the frequent floods put the three low-level crossings out of action.

Excavation of the bed of Lake Burley Griffin was a huge undertaking and took a long time. Commonwealth Avenue bridge and Kings Avenue bridge were constructed across the dry bed of the lake before Scrivener Dam was closed. That event took place on 20 September 1963 with a ceremony presided over by Gordon Freeth who was Minister for the Interior (in the absence of Sir Robert Menzies who was ill). At the time the river flow was good but in the early months of 1964 there was little rain which meant for the first time ever. Canberra had a real swamp which extended between Sullivans Creek, the water police headquarters on the shore at

Yarralumla, and up past Commonwealth Avenue bridge. Grasses and thistles grew rankly along the shores of this temporary swamp and the area attracted a number of species not previously seen here, so that when *Birds of the Australian High Country* was published in 1969. it covered 253 species.

The lake bed was a prohibited place, but because of the many interesting species of birds turning up there. I was granted a permit to mist-net and band birds there. Towards April 1964 it was often cold work but the only way to catch swamp birds was to place the nets at a right angle to the edge of the swamp at about 50 m intervals, then beat through the weeds pushing the birds into the nets and this worked very well. However, it was not without hazards and on one cold morning a well-known local ornithologist, who had volunteered to walk along the edge of the water, missed his footing and disappeared in the water until only his right arm, which held his binoculars, and his head were visible. The resulting language which issued from a person, who under normal circumstances spoke impeccably, was a revelation!

Species caught or seen while the lake was filling included the Great Egret *Egretta alba,* Little Egret *E. garzetta,* Intermediate Egret *E. intermedia.* Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia,* Yellow-billed Spoonbill *P. flavipes,* Buff-banded Rail *Rallus philippensis,* Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla,* Australian Crake *P. fluminea,* Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis,* Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii,* Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus,* and Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus.* Several species of ducks also frequented the area. Although some of these species are now commonplace in Canberra. they were rarely seen before the lake started to fill.

Mist-netting often had its humorous occasions. One such occasion involved Brian Wilson who, all dressed-up to go out, hadn't realised I had set a net in the front garden. Brian set off across the lawn on the run and straight into the net. He must have seen it at the last moment as he had his arms raised when he hit the net. Every button on his suit, waistcoat and sleeves, was tangled in the net and he yelled "Get me out of this thing" as he was powerless to do so himself. Other things which went through, or were caught in mist nets were a horse and rider, cows, sheep, kangaroos, wallabies and wombats. The strangest catch of all was at Lake George where we found a live Redfin in a net (these were dying in the lake as the water level dropped). The explanation for this unexpected catch was 1 m away and also in the net - a Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae.*

In those early days we had interesting experiences in taking prominent people out banding. We showed Roger Tory Peterson, the author of several Northern Hemisphere field guides, over 100 new species in one day - something that had never happened to him before. In 1963, the Wilson family were asked to take the Duke of Edinburgh out and later, while he was at school in Australia, a similar trip was arranged for Prince Charles.

Publications as a source of information

Many of the early papers listing the birds of the ACT were published in *The Emu* as they pre-date the existence of *Canberra Bird Notes,* and most of the papers arising from the bird banding undertaken in the Brindabella Range have been published in *Corella,* or its predecessor *The Australian Bird Bander,* as these are the most appropriate journals. If readers have plodded this far, I would commend them to undertake a little research and read the papers I have cited which cover the early development of the list of birds recorded in the ACT and also the results of banding in the Brindabella Range and elsewhere in the ACT.

Names have been avoided in this paper except for a few notable exceptions. The number of people with whom I have been involved in early bird watching and bird banding in the ACT is large and I cannot remember them all. Therefore, rather than omit some accidentally, I have not mentioned any, but all have my heartfelt thanks.

The work at New Chums Road was the highlight of my life. Over a period of 21 years the 295 visits to that one site involved driving about 18,000 kilometres although no one person was present on every occasion. On bird banding days we rose three hours before first light 12 months of the year on the basis that it took an hour to get ready, pack and pick up the crew, one hour to drive in the dark to New Chums Road, via Uriarra, Lees Creek and Warks Roads, then an hour to put up the nets. Then we had time for a second breakfast as we waited for the first birds to move. There is nothing finer than to sit on the side of the road with one's chosen companions and watch the sun rise over the Tidbinbilla Range to the east, miles and miles away from every other human being. One owns the world!

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SIGHTING OF DIAMOND FIRETAILS AT "CALLUM BRAE", ACT.

Kenneth Er and Thiang H. Wong

"Callum Brae", *c.* 1.5 km SE of Mt Mugga Mugga, contains the largest remnant of Yellow Box woodland *(Eucalyptus melliodora - E. blakelyi* association) in the ACT. The eastern side of the remnant along Jerrabomberra Avenue is mainly farmland with scattered eucalypts. This merges into Yellow Box woodland which extends across the site to the western part which consists of patchy eucalypt regrowth along Mugga Lane.

The Diamond Firetail *Emblema guttata is* distributed throughout much of south east mainland Australia from *c.* 23°S. in southern Queensland to the Mt. Lofty ranges in South Australia (Blakers et al, 1984). In recent years, it has become increasingly rare in the northern part of its range (Lord 1956) and has also been reported to be declining in numbers in Victoria (O'Gorman 1981).

In the ACT, the Diamond Firetail is an uncommon breeding resident (Taylor and Day 1993). Its numbers are declining because its habitat is being cleared for grazing and urban development. Currently it is restricted to pockets of undisturbed woodland with patchy shrub cover or eucalypt regrowth (Taylor and COG 1992). During the collection of data for the atlas of the birds of the ACT, Diamond Firetails were not recorded in grid Ll5 which includes "Callum Brae" (Taylor and COG 1992).

Between 0900 and 1000 hrs on 15 May 1994, we were counting birds found within transects set up at "Callum Brae" as part of a research project. The weather was fine without any prevailing winds. On one of the transects, located just off the patchy eucalypt regrowth on the western side of the remnant (Australian Map Grid FA948842), we observed a pair of small birds (about 11 to 12 cm in size) with distinct red rumps flying across our path. They landed on open ground, about 10 m from us. At first we thought they were Red-browed Firetails *Emblema temporalis.* However, they began to whistle (an ascending "twoo-hee") quite loudly which was quite unlike the high-pitched and often soft call of the Red-browed Firetail. We looked at them through our binoculars and could clearly see they had grey heads, white throats and distinct white spots on their black flanks. This confirmed that the birds were Diamond Firetails. We continued observing them forage amongst the grasses for the next five minutes before they eventually flew off.

This sighting appears to be the first published record of Diamond Firetails at "Callum Brae". Unfortunately, this remnant of Yellow Box woodland is due to be cleared for urban development (Jenny McMasters, lessee of "Callum Brae", pers. corn.) and will contribute to further loss of potential breeding habitat for the Diamond Firetail.

"Callum Brae" is leased by the McMasters and is not accessible without prior permission. If access is required please contact Kenneth Er (telephone 267 4739 H, 249 3729 W).

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ODD OB

AN ALMOST TOTALLY WHITE SILVER GULL

Isobel Crawford

On 22 June 1993, while lunching at Merimbula Beach, we were visited by a flock of voracious Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* intent on separating us from our food. The odd part of this apparently common event was that one of the gulls had totally white plumage except for the left wing which had a flush of brown on the underwing coverts and one brownish primary feather. The eye-ring, feet, legs, and bill were all the lovely clear orange-red typical of an adult Silver Gull.

Isobel Crawford, PO Box 31, O'CONNOR AT 2601

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OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

The views expressed in "Out and About" do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

It is good to see most bird watchers are now aware of the importance of preserving habitat as a way of ensuring that birds will continue to be around to "tick" in the future. Two interesting projects which have come to my attention recently are aimed at increasing the habitat available to the Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* and the Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*. The Bird Observers Club of Australia is organising a campaign called the Casuarina Connection aimed at persuading people both to retain existing casuarinas and also plant more to provide food for Glossy Black-Cockatoos. Young casuarinas are attractive to stock and rabbits with the result that their regeneration everywhere has been seriously inhibited. Further details can be obtained from the Bird Observers Club of Australia, PO Box 185, Nunawading. Vic 3131. The second project is a joint project undertaken by the Cumberland Bird Observers Club and the New South Wales Field Ornithologists Club to plant trees in the Capertee Valley and provide habitat for Regent Honeyeaters. If you are interested in this project Bruce Lindenmayer and Jenny Bounds are organising a trip to Capertree Valley on the weekend 22-23 October (see the September issue of *Gang gang* for more details). Perhaps there is somebody out there in COG who can organise a similar project to reinstate some of our native grassland. There are some areas which could do with reinstatement at the entrance to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. It is possible other organisations such as the Field Naturalists, Society for Growing Australian Plants and Greening Australia may be interested in a joint project, if there is somebody willing to act as an organiser.

While on the subject of preserving habitat I am disappointed that it now appears the navy's ammunitions depot at Newington in inner Sydney will not be relocated to Jervis Bay. As a conservationist I favoured the proposal to move it to Jervis Bay. To me it was a good way of preserving some wilderness on the coast rather than having it "developed" either for houses or the recreation industry. These days even national parks are being degraded by the large number of visitors to them. It would be beneficial to have a tract of our coastal environment set aside as wilderness with no visitors.

The ammunition depot at Newington has preserved some of the finest salt marshes in the Sydney area and also one of the few remaining remnants of shale woodland. The area, which contains the territory of a pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster,* is frequented by a variety of waders, including stilts and Marsh

Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* and four species of nesting parrot. How long will they survive when the navy moves away? The needs of the 2000 Olympiad and the money to be made will no doubt again triumph over the needs of wildlife.

The thought of having a nice tract of coastal habitat locked away is to me a pleasant one. Although I may not be able to visit it, it will be preserved in a way that will allow future generations to use it as a measuring stick to assess the changes to other areas.

I often wonder why the armed forces don't give more publicity to their valuable conservation role in preserving some of the best wilderness areas in Australia.

For those of my readers interested in preserving rare native plants there is now an organisation called the Australian Network for Plant Conservation (GPO Box 1777, Canberra City, ACT 2601) dedicated to ensuring that plants are preserved for future generations. They propagate species to be grown in gardens with the intention of re-establishing them in the wild.

Another new organisation which may be of interest is the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association (PO Box 142, Unanderra, NSW 2526) which is involved in studies on many species including albatrosses, Kelp Gull, Crested Tern, Fairy Penguin, Sooty Oystercatcher. shearwaters, White-faced Storm-Petrel and Australian Pelican, as well as non-seabirds such as cuttlefish frogs and native fish. If you are interested in helping in any of these studies they would like to hear from you.

The number of Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* is rapidly increasing. The effect they have on other hole-nesting species is a subject that is well discussed. But has anybody thought of other effects they may have? I have recently been watching them feeding and have observed a number of disputes with the local Australian Magpie-larks *Grallina cyanoleuca*. It appears that their feeding behaviour is similar. Does this mean that as the number of mynas increase, the number of magpie-larks will decrease? Has anybody else noted any interactions between mynas and other species?

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RARITIES PANEL NEWS

A fairly short list this time. The sighting of the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys rufogularis* was the first sighting for some years, like the previous ones it was in winter. Is the drought forcing inland birds to move further? If so, this spring-summer could be quite interesting - especially in the Gunning-Gunderoo gap leading down to Mulligan's Flat. Another bird which appears in winter is the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*.

At last there are some records of the Little Corella away from Canberra itself. Are the Narrabundah birds still around?

A Spotted Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* was first reported visiting an aviary close to Orchard Place, Melba. On 8 July a Spotted Turtle-Dove (the same bird?) was seen in Orchard Place and continued to frequent the area, roosting in a *Hakea saligna* close to a house for eight weeks before disappearing.

RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST NO. 40

Pied Cormorant
2; 15 May 94; J. Price; Lake Ginninderra.

Little Corella
2; 23 Mar 94; T. Booth; 2 k S Burbong Bridge.

Superb Parrot
1; 29 Sep 93; I. McMahon; David Street, O'Connor/Turner.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
1; 30 Aug 92; M. and C. Dow; Cobb Crescent, Ainslie.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
1; 21 Jun 94; M. Larkin; Carlile Street, Evatt.

Escapees:

Pale-headed Rosella
1; 13 Nov 93; D. Purchase; Orchard Place, Melba.

Spotted Turtle-Dove
1; 8 Jul to 3 Sep 94; D. Purchase; Orchard Place, Melba.

Records noted by the Rarities Panel:

Emu

2; 3 Apr 94; A. Scott; Laurel Camp Road. Pierce's Creek pine forest.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle

l; 26 Jun 94; B. Allan; Lake Ginninderra peninsula.

Rainbow Lorikeet

2-3; 27 May to 4 Jun 94; P. Roberts; Apple Crescent. Fadden.

ODD OB

SPOTTED PARDALOTES NESTING IN A WALL

Alan Scrymgeour

Spotted Pardalotes *Pardalotus punctatus* are known to use holes in walls for nesting (Schodde & Tidemann 1986, *Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds).* Other than a pair which nested in a child's sand-castle in Forrest. ACT (Ordish 1986. *Canberra Bird Notes 11:* 127-128) the use of man-made structures as nest sites by Spotted Pardalotes does not appear to have been previously recorded in *Canberra Bird Notes.* The following observation, therefore, is of interest.

Last year my wife and I had occasion to go to the Jamison Centre, Macquarie, ACT. It was late afternoon and in the lone gum tree at the back entrance to Coles supermarket we heard the wonderful sound of a pair of Spotted Pardalotes feeding in the topmost branches. We stopped to watch and listen to the feeding and chattering, which continued for some time. Both birds then darted out of the foliage and flew at speed to the large brick wall of the dock area of the supermarket. There they entered the wall through a disused bolt hole. I hurried over to the wall where I could clearly hear the sounds of young birds being fed inside.

Alan Scrymgeour, 2 Holroyd Street, WATSON ACT 2602

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CORRECTION

The Editor was a little slack in the preparation of the last issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* (volume 19, number 2). There were two errors:

Page 26. The English name of the birds in line 8 of Isobel Crawford's article should be Striated Thornbills not Striated Pardalotes - the scientific name is correct.

Page 32. The following should be added to the bottom of the page: "walk along sections of the coastline and report the details of any beach-washed birds they find, or the fact that no birds were found. This scheme has two advantages: first,"

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ODD OB

AN UNUSUAL NEST OF A BUFF-RUMPED THORNBILL

Isobel Crawford

Two adult Buff-rumped Thornbills *Acanthiza reguloides* were seen and heard on 24 August 1989, feeding two nestlings. The nest was in a grass tussock at the top of a bank about 1.5 m high under a *Cassinia aculeata (?)* shrub beside the cycle path, 100 m north of Dryandra Street, O'Connor. Although Buff-rumped Thornbills have sometimes been recorded building nests on the ground under clumps of grass (e.g. Wilson, S.J. *In,* Frith, H.J. (1976) "Birds in the Australian High Country" 2nd edition. Angus and Robertson: Sydney) other nests I have seen of this species have been under loose bark on the side of a vertical dead trunk, usually of a wattle.

The nest was very vulnerable to ground predators, such as cats and foxes, and I was not surprised that the nest had been destroyed within two days.

Isobel Crawford, PO Box 31, O'CONNOR ACT 2601

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(Continued flow inside front cover)

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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 occurring 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 c/o David Purchase. 5 Orchard Place, Melba, ACT 2615 (Tel 258 2252).

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