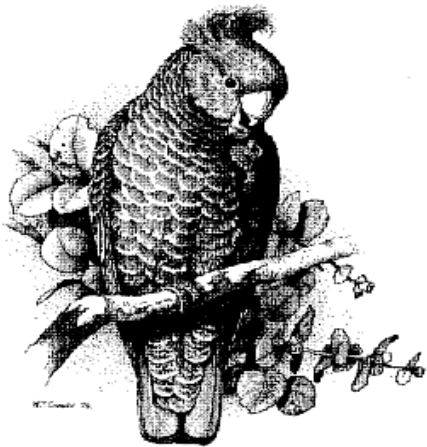




Gang-gang

December 2011

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JANUARY MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 11.01.12

Canberra Girls Grammar School corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin. The meetings are held in the Multi-media Theatre at the School. Enter off Gawler Crescent using the school road signposted as Gabriel Drive. If that car-park is full, enter using Chapel Drive.

As is traditional, for our January meeting we will be having a "Members Night", with the opportunity for COG members to contribute short presentations (about 10-15 minutes long) on a range of bird related topics.

So if you have a favourite birding moment for 2011, some special photos to share with members, a birding story to tell, or anything that you think might be of interest to other members, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H), or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

Members who have not presented to COG before are especially encouraged.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

Summer is here, and after a somewhat hesitant start it looks like it will be another good one (or a bad one for those who will suffer from disturbed sleeps) for **the Eastern/Pacific Koel**, which by now has been widely reported as calling. It may be expected to turn up in any urban area of the ACT where there is fruit available, with the already ripening flowering prunus a favourite. As summer progresses please watch out also for any signs of breeding as this has expanded rapidly from the first record in Ainslie only a couple of years ago, though the **Red Wattlebird** remains the only identified local host (the **Noisy Friarbird** and **Magpie-lark** are other possibilities). The **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, a species I neglected to alert members to watch out for last month, has also been reported a couple of times, though it appears that it will remain a noisy passage migrant rather than become a settler and breed locally, at least for this summer.

The later arriving migrants, the Sacred **Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Dollarbird**, are by now also well established, as is the **Leaden Flycatcher**, which from my observations and other reports is back in many of its usual spots after arriving later than it has in the past few years. There were also a few reports early in November of the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail** moving through on their way to the mountains. In the higher parts of the

COG's Christmas BBQ

Wednesday — 14 December — 6pm start

Black Mountain Peninsula - look for COG sign

Theme - Best Dressed Bird - prizes will be awarded

COG will provide sausages, beer, wine and soft drinks

Please bring a salad or a dessert to share, plus serving utensils

BYO table, chair, plates, cutlery, glass



ACT there seem to be more **Brush Cuckoos** than in past years; certainly they were much more conspicuous while blitzing in the upper Cotter wilderness this time.

All of these species should be busy breeding now, as are the **Rufous Songlark** and **White-winged Triller**, which are present in surprising numbers this year, particularly the former, given the reasonable conditions inland. Another surprise has been that mixed flocks of **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows** have continued to be reported in November, usually moving high overhead and only in a few instances coming down low enough to allow positive identification, including an estimate of the numbers of each and, even more rarely, alighting briefly in the trees etc. Clearly conditions aren't suitable for them to breed locally this year, but where they're coming from or heading to (mainly going NW but SW in at least one case) is unclear. I'm predicting that with the widespread rain over the last week of November there will be few if any further sightings.

The range of waterbirds observed, particularly at the Jerabomberra Wetlands and the Fyshwick Sewage Ponds, has also continued to surprise given there clearly isn't a severe drought inland. Reports of the **Painted Snipe** ceased early in November; whether they have moved on, or are quietly breeding, is unclear. Numbers of **Nankeen Night-Heron** (up to 13 seen together, including in juvenile plumage) and the **White-necked Heron**, seem to be higher than for a number of years. Three species of egret, **Great**, **Intermediate** and **Cattle**, as well as both **Yellow-billed** and **Royal Spoonbill**, have been seen during November. Less expected observations have been of a **Pacific Golden Plover** and an **Azure Kingfisher**, both last recorded in 2008 according to the *2009-2010 Annual Bird Report*. Good sightings but less of a surprise are a **Freckled Duck** and **Red-kneed Dotterels**. Judging from reports the **White-fronted Chat** also seems to have moved away a bit from its stronghold at Stromlo Forest Park over the past few months.



Nankeen Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

Photo by Roger Williams

Black-shouldered Kites have still been widely reported with the now even more remarkable record of at least 20 seen pre-roosting on the Hoskintown Plain. Young birds, with their distinct orange around the head, have been reported in a number of instances. There is some evidence that the mouse plague has moved on further east from Canberra; the **Black-shouldered Kite** was also widely recorded in the Braidwood area during our surveys there on 5 November. Eight or nine **Brown Falcons** have also been reported as seen together on the Hoskintown Plain on several occasions, with still a couple of **Barn Owls** there as well as **Nankeen Kestrels**, which from reports seem to have had a bumper breeding season locally. Other raptor sightings of note include several reports of the **Black Falcon**,

The better conditions seem to have led to an excellent breeding season with reports from Elizabeth Compston at Callum Brae indicating the extent of breeding there (including **Grey Butcherbirds** feeding young) almost outdoing that at Campbell Park, where the nest workshop is traditionally held (see report elsewhere in this issue). To me the undoubted highlight has been the chat line posting by Steve Wallace (with photos) of a pair of **Red-capped Robins**, both in immature male/female plumage, feeding young in a nest. Other good sightings include a **Common Bronzewing** on a nest, and a possible **Satin Bowerbird** nest, at the ANBG. Not reported breeding but expected to be close to finishing is the **Superb Parrot**, good numbers of which have continued to be reported from the usual spots to the N or NW of the ACT. Look out for these over the next month or so, particularly feeding on ripening wattle pods.

Overall there has been a surprisingly wide variety of birds recorded this spring, particularly given conditions inland don't appear to be unfavourable. However, to my knowledge only a further single **Brown Songlark** has been reported, and as yet no **Horsfield's Bushlark**. Particularly when in grasslands look out for, or listen for the calls of, these two species over the next month.

And to illustrate that things are never static, by the time I write this column again in two months time towards the end of January the **Rufous Songlark** and **White-winged Triller**, will have finished breeding and most will have already left the ACT and surrounding areas. As usual keep your eyes and ears open for what might suddenly appear in your local

area, and please record all significant observations of the above species (including when last seen), as well as all breeding activity, and ensure these are reported for inclusion in the COG database. — **Jack Holland**

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 13 November — Campbell Park, Nest workshop

With the early morning cloud cover vanishing quickly, over 20 members and guests joined Stuart Rae and me on the ninth nest workshop under sunny, warm and still conditions. The purpose of this workshop is to learn about the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. I was very interested to see what activity there would be in this almost normal year with average rainfall (though quite a slow one in respect of migrant arrivals) compared with the very wet last year and the drought years beforehand. From the reccies both of us had done the day before, it was clear that the bulk of the activity had returned to the gully/depression but on the northern half of this, including over the fence line that separates defence land from that of the ACT. Interestingly there was almost no activity around the horse crossing this year.

The highlight for me was finding a **Jacky Winter's** nest, a tiny blob suspended between the fork of a small dead horizontal branch quite high in the tree, a first for this workshop and a first for me. Nearby was a **Willie Wagtail** nest with eggs, on a surprisingly small branch and with a very rounded bottom, a **Dusky Woodswallow** on a nest hidden in some regrowth on an otherwise bare branch, and a typically dome-shaped **White-throated Gerygone** nest with eggs. Over the fence we found two typical **Noisy Friarbird** deep cup nests, one with a bird sitting and the other also likely with eggs or possibly at the very last stages of building. A bit further away we observed a pair of **Sacred Kingfishers**, one of which seemed to be delivering food, in lightning quick fashion, to young in a nest at the end of a spout, while the other looked on from a few metres away. Close to the end of the day, Stuart showed us a **Speckled Warbler** nest with eggs in it, very well hidden on the ground in amongst the dead grass and weeds, with the parents nervously ghosting around and not affording any views.

In keeping with the rather slow season a number of species were preparing to, or had just started to build. The highlight of these was a pair of **Leaden Flycatchers**, which allowed participants great views, especially of her orange throat, as they took turns to add to it. Another pair's nest was already substantially bigger than it was the day before. **White-winged Trillers** were also present, and in one case the beginnings of a nest could just be discerned. This was also the case for a pair of **Mistletoebirds** (another first nest for this workshop), whereas the male **Rufous Whistler** was seen (by a lucky few) to show his partner a good nesting spot, and then appeared to start the preparations for a nest.

As usual it is impossible to have perfect timing and we missed the activity in a few nests. Stuart showed us the opening of a **Spotted Pardalote** nest entrance in a slight bank which, as far as we could tell, was empty while only the day before parents were seen taking food into it, and the young could be heard. Likewise he found a **Varied Sittella** nest in its typical position in an upright dead fork; the young had fledged but the day before the fledglings were still



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria
Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2012 tours

9 — 25 January
New Zealand

4 — 11 February
Tasmanian bird & mammal tour

Mid May Gulf Country
Cairns, Georgetown, Karumba,
Gregory R, Cloncurry & Mt Isa

1 — 13 July Top End
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra

17 — 23 July
Alice Springs/MacDonnell
Ranges

6 — 25 September
Strzelecki Track, Outback

31 Oct — 7 Nov
New Caledonia

11 — 19 November
SW Western Australia

Check our website
www.philipmaher.co

being fed nearby. We found the **White-faced Heron's** nest, surprisingly close to the car park; sadly after the young had hatched and been photographed they had perished late in October. Finally, a different near miss; participants were waiting for **Weebills** to return to a nest high in gum foliage when we disturbed a swarm of bees on the trunk of a nearby small eucalypt, and we had to beat a hasty retreat as the swarm unravelled.

After morning tea we went to look for the **Australian Owlet-nightjar** in the tree where we had found it last year. As in our reccies, it didn't appear to be there, and it is unclear whether it was due to Eva's rubbing the tree with a stick (something Lisa Doucette informed COG last year was a myth), or whether we had simply missed it, but Kevin suddenly saw it quietly looking out from a side hole, so well camouflaged that it looked like a bit of the trunk. The moving dark eyes were the main key to spotting it and to me it looked much less marked than last year's (a younger bird?). After staying there for a while being admired and photographed, it suddenly exited backstage like a stage puppet.

In total, 40 species were found, a bit down from last year, but with about half of these showing confirmed breeding activity, including parrots and allies examining nest holes, up from last year. This included six types of nest, including the **Magpie-lark** feeding young very early in the day, the only mud nest we located.



Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*)
(*Podargus strigoides*)

Photo by Geoffrey Dabb

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Stuart Rae, in particular for his excellent nest finding skills; without him I doubt if we would have located half of the ones we saw. He also made us work to look for them, and none of us passed the test he set when we all walked under the tree containing the **Tawny Frogmouth** parents and young. For many this was the highlight of the morning, and much admiring was done and photographs taken of dad sitting with his two babies, and with mum a couple of metres higher. My thanks also go to Kevin Windle, Elizabeth Compston and Alison Mackerras for posting breeding information on the chat line or providing it directly to me. — **Jack Holland**

16 November — Wednesday Walk

Fourteen members and a visitor from Brisbane enjoyed a late spring stroll around the grounds of the University of Canberra. Conditions at first were not conducive to birdwatching, with the noise of the wind making bird calls difficult to hear. However, the threatened rain didn't eventuate and the wind dropped, enabling us to see 33 species, nine of which were breeding. We found **Brown Quail** close to where they had been seen previously, having taken refuge on the unmown island in a

sea of mown grassland. **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were inspecting nesting hollows, one already occupied by a **Common Starling**. A **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** was seen entering a nest in a low shrub, and we were later to inspect a recently used nest and examine the false cup nest on top. **Crested Pigeon** nests were discussed at length. It was suggested that one bird observed sitting on a substantial nest had re-used that of another species as the nest was far too robust to have been built by a pigeon. Another **Crested Pigeon** nest was constructed from *Casuarina* needles, looking quite flimsy in comparison with the first. **Red Wattlebird** and **Magpie-lark** nests both contained young, and **Australian Magpies** and **Australian Ravens** both had dependent young. The other nesting record was of **Striated Pardalote** – how did the bird fit through such a narrow slit in the wall?

The next Wednesday walk will be on the second Wednesday in December, not the usual third. — **Margaret Robertson**

Saturday - Sunday 19-20 November - Goulburn area - overnight campout

Under hot, dry conditions with a rising NW wind, seven COG members and guests joined me and Goulburn Field Naturalist Society (GFNS) members in this annual joint outing. Our first stop was to inspect progress with the wetlands project at the old brick pits just south of the city on the southern bank of the Mulwarree River. These are located in COG grid cell Z1, within the NE corner of COG's area of interest. Funds had been received since we last visited in October 2010, and work had begun. Though it was delayed by flooding in January, this had benefitted the birds and much breeding was reported to have occurred as the levels slowly dropped. Water levels were now much lower, exposing

areas of mud and ribbon weed, and allowing site works to commence, including the building of a number of rock wall barriers and a shallow causeway/dam.

We slowly circled the site in an anti-clockwise fashion, stopping at various vantage points where it is proposed to build hides, etc. In this time 25 species were recorded, including a **Black-shouldered Kite** hovering, an **Eastern Great Egret**, a pair of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** flying silently past, and a pair of **Black-fronted Dotterels**. At least one **Eastern Koel** called persistently; we were told they had arrived in Goulburn much earlier than they seemed to do this year in Canberra, with many residents very tired of them and ready to spifflicate them. However, the undoubted find was four medium sized waders, midway between the dotterels and the also present **Masked Lapwing**. They flushed quickly and were only seen by the front of the group, but after studying the books Tricia managed to flush them again and be pretty certain of her identification as **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, no doubt drawn in by the available mud and shallow water. This is a first sighting since the project's inception, showing the objective of providing different water levels in the wetlands to make the habitat more attractive for waders etc is already starting to be successful. A lowlight, however, was two **Spotted Doves** calling; a few were said to have been in Goulburn for a while.

We then set off in convoy to Arthursleigh, about 1 hour's drive to the E/NE of the city, to a spot on the banks of the Wollondilly River, where it is fringed with very large river oaks. Before setting up camp we walked upstream for about a kilometre to the GFNS bird hide which overlooks a very broad reach of the river. This proved to be a very good move, as the wind had dropped, and with river levels much higher than in 2010, we were able to relax and watch a number of waterbird species drift into view. A surprise to me was a pair of very "stay put" **Black Swans**, as it didn't look quite like the right habitat, but they were still there the next morning when conditions were much less favourable. Also seen was a platypus which surfaced for well over a minute, though still not all participants managed to find it.

Apart from a night spent sleeping under the stars, the highlight of the trip was several hours the next morning of "armchair" bird watching sitting on a very large log on the bank next to the camp site looking across the river and letting the birds come to us. This more than justified the stay overnight and included a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, **Dusky Woodswallows** hawking from the dead trees on the opposite bank, a group of **White-winged Choughs** with their empty mud nest nearby, **Mistletoebirds** (including a male), and brief views of a **Sacred Kingfisher** and a male **White-winged Triller**.

Despite the much better viewing conditions than last year, birds were still often hard to locate and many records were largely aural. Four species of cuckoo were calling, three of them giving alternative calls associated with females of the species. The **Brush Cuckoo** seemed to be calling the loudest and most often (luckily not too much at night), with the "fear, fear, fear" call predominating. However, at one stage both calls could be heard very close by and we could see quite a bit of chasing of each other and mobbing by other species before one alighted on a dead branch high above us, allowing pretty good views. The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** also called often and the **Pallid Cuckoo** occasionally, but neither was actually seen. The **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was also calling, sometimes doing its characteristic switch. **Rufous Whistlers** and **White-throated Treecreepers** were calling almost non-stop, but were rarely seen. **Olive-backed Orioles** seemed to be calling everywhere during the afternoon, but were hardly heard in the morning. **White-throated Gerygones** called from time to time, but again very few participants actually saw them. **Rufous Songlarks** were calling from both banks, but were only occasionally seen doing their nuptial flights. Finally a **Southern Boobook** called nearby just as were settling in for the night, again justifying the overnight camp-out.

Despite all the activity there was very little sign of breeding activity, which was limited to three **Noisy Friarbird** nests (one still building and two quite close together feeding young) and some **Pacific Black Duck** ducklings. We watched two close together pairs of **Leaden Flycatchers** hoping they would reveal their nests, but it appeared they were still pair bonding.

Fifty five species were recorded from the 1 km stretch of the river, well up from the 44 last year and including 18 species not seen then. Participants thoroughly enjoyed camping at this hard to access spot. There was an interesting debate over which way the river actually flowed, with the visitors eventually prevailing. Luckily the rain held off until we were back on the bitumen. Thanks again go to our hosts Rodney and Bill for their help in organising the program, and especially to Mark who stayed with us overnight and thus made the opportunity for camping possible. We are planning another joint activity with the GFNS for the same time next year, and I will be keen to view further progress with the wetlands project. — **Jack Holland**

Future Field Trips

Participants must sign a COG Field Trip Registration form at the start of each trip before proceeding on the trip. Signing the form is acknowledgement that participation is at each person's own risk and they are responsible for determining the suitability of the trip to their own circumstances.

Sunday 4 December – Kama Nature Reserve - Morning

The area has been visited regularly since 2006 as part of the COG Woodland survey of the threatened Yellow Box/Red Gum community. The reserve is a new addition to Canberra Nature Park that is well worth a visit. Sturdy boots, water and sun hat will be required.

Meet at 8 am off William Hovell Drive - see Yellow Pages, Map 14, A8. Parking can be a problem. If heading north along William Hovell Drive, park at the Kama sign and walk across the road to the meeting spot. If heading south along William Hovell Drive then turn sharp right just before the underpass and into the designated carpark. This is where we will meet as we will enter the Reserve via the underpass.

Booking is not required. If confused please call the trip leader Chris Davey (Tel 02 62546324).

Saturday/Sunday 10/11 December – Deniliquin Plains Wanderer Weekend

This trip is full

Wednesday 14 December – Kama Nature Reserve - Morning

Meet 9am William Hovell Drive as for COG 4 December trip. Martin Butterfield

Wednesday 19 January – Burra - Ian Anderson's property - Long "Morning"

Meeting place and other details of trip will be advised on COG Chat-line and to the COG Wednesday Walkers email list. Martin Butterfield

Sunday 22 January 2012 – Blundells Ck and Warks Roads - All Day

This is COG's annual outing to an outstanding part of Namadji National Park. Meet Bruce Lindenmayer at the big dam near Uriarra Homestead at the intersection of Uriarra and Cotter Roads at 8.30 am. This is NOT the intersection of the same two roads near Duffy. From Canberra, take either road for a further 15 km or so until you reach the meeting point near the dam.

The outing will involve car pooling and a 3 km downhill walk on a gravel road. Please wear good walking boots, hat and sunscreen and bring lunch and water.

The Uriarra Homestead Dam always offers a range of waterbirds, and in the national park we should see various **robins, Rufous Fantail, Eastern Whipbird, Satin Flycatcher** and if lucky, **Red-browed Treecreeper** and **Wonga Pigeon**.

As in the past, it is possible that flooded roads or fire issues may prevent access to the national park, in which case we will explore several great birding spots around Uriarra Crossing and Uriarra Road.

Due to limited parking space in Blundells Ck Road it will be necessary to restrict participation to about 18 people.

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please contact the leader Bruce Lindenmayer on 6288 5957 or 0417 418 759 to confirm your booking.

Sunday 29 January – Settlers Track - Southern Namadgi NP – All Day

This will be an all-day trip to a delightful part of Namadgi NP, following a favourite route that is now a made track in the Grassy Creek area at the southern extremity of the National Park. Details of the Settlers Track are online at

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/204264/Settlers_Walkwebversion_final.pdf or
<http://www.tinyurl.com/settlertrack> .

We will meet in the Kambah Village car park, corner of Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent, Kambah, at 8.00 am, for car-pooling. Please bring lunch and water. We will be walking and birding along the 9 km track which is generally flat with gentle slopes. The trip will be cancelled if the fire risk is high.

Please direct enquiries to the trip leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or email [david\[at\]dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:david[at]dnmcdonald.id.au) .

Thursday 2 February 2012 – Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) – Morning

Meet at 8.30 am near the bus shelter in ANBG parking lot. This is the first of three trial Thursday walks which will be led by Michael Robbins and/or Jenny Bounds.

The aim is to see if enough people are interested in establishing a monthly walk on the first Thursday of each month and, if there are enough, then what sort of walks these people want to arrange. We'll plan to bird until a bit after 11 am. Michael plans to hang around for another hour with anyone who wants to have a tea/coffee/iced chocolate at the cafe in the ANBG, and discuss future Thursday walks, or just chat.

Booking is not required. Michael Robbins

Sunday 5 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands – Morning

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, meet in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick, at 7.30am. During this morning outing, we will visit both Kelly's Swamp and the Sewerage Works. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope.

Booking is not required. Sue Lashko

Friday 10 to Sunday 12 February, Wee Jasper valley

This will be a repeat of successful weekend visits to the Wee Jasper valley conducted by COG some years ago. We will stay in the somewhat rustic shearers' quarters of 'Wee Jasper' Station, a working sheep station. Details of the property are online at <http://www.weejasperstation.com.au/ShearersQuarters.html>. You will need to bring your own food, drinks and bedding.

Note: if you dislike mice this field trip may not be for you!

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please contact the leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or email [david\[at\]dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:david[at]dnmcdonald.id.au) to register or for further information. Details, including the costs of the accommodation, will be available from David upon request.

Sunday 19 February, Morning East Basin/Molonglo Reach – Electric/powerd boat cruise

This cruise will be on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River Reach, where late summer or early autumn is the peak time for nesting, with three species of cormorant and darters known to breed there. The area is also rich in other water birds, and a variety of land birds can be seen on the banks.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We propose to travel in the MV "Darter" which can carry 16 people, and though it has a motor is very quiet at slow speeds. If numbers exceed this, the electric boat "E.L. Cygnet", which takes a maximum of 10 passengers, may also be used. The boats allow both a quiet approach as well as access to areas normally difficult to get to. The point of departure will be the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the Landmark Apartments.

This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way).

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 AH or by E-mail on jack.holland@environment.gov.au).

2012 COG Field Trips

Participants must sign a COG Trip Registration Form before starting a trip. Signing acknowledges trips involve risks that could lead to injury, illness, death and/or loss or damage of ones property. Participants must make certain; they are capable of undertaking trip and adequately equipped, provide emergency contact details, and the trip leader is aware of any limitation that could affect the participant's performance.

Jan	18	WW (Weds Walk) - Burra, Ian Andreson's property	Martin Butterfield
	22	Brindabella Ranges, Blundell Creek/Warks Roads (All day)	Bruce Lindenmayer
	29	Settlers Track, Southern Namadgi NP (All day)	David McDonald
Feb	2	TW (Thurs Walk - a three month trial)	Michael Robbins
	5	Jerrabomberra Wetlands (World Wetlands Day - morning)	Sue Lashko
	10-12	Wee Jasper (Fri/Sat o/n shearers' quarters)+ Illawarra Birders	D McDonald/M Robbins
	19	Molonglo Reach Boat Trip (morning)	Jack Holland
Mar	10-11(12)	Ben Boyd NP (Canberra day 3 day campout)	K Walter & J Goldie
	24	Tharwa Sandwash (Sat morning)	Matthew Frawley
Apr	1	Woodland or Myna Survey site, BASNA people to join in	Leader required
	6-9	Yathong NR (Easter 4 day camp-out)	Noel Luff
	15	National Arboretum (morning)	Chris Davey
	22	K2C surveys (All day)	Nicki Taws
	29	??? (All day)	Julie McGuinness
May	5	ANBG - Beginners (Sat morning)	Anthony Overs
	13	Gungahlin Hill (morning)	Chris Davey
	27	Winter(almost) Birds Bus Trip (All day)	J Holland/J Bounds
Jun	9-10 (11)	Shore/Rainforest/Barren Grounds - with Illawarra Birders	Michael Robbins
	16	Superb Lyrebird Survey - Tidbinbilla NR (Sat morning)	Chris Davey
	24	ANBG - (morning)	Leader required
Jul	1	Glendale Crossing (morning)	Sue Lashko
	15	Superb Lyrebirds - Tidbinbilla NR (morning)	David McDonald
	21-22	??Eden Pelagics?? (All Day, Sat and/or Sun)	?Anthony Overs
Aug	5	Googong Dam	Leader required
	11	Lake Ginninderra - Beginners (Sat morning)	Anthony Overs
	19	Burra (morning plus - bring lunch)	Ian Anderson
Sep	9	Mulligans Flat	Leader required
	16	Woods Reserve	Lia Battison
	22	Woodland behind Namadgi Visitors Centre (Sat morning)	Matthew Fawley
Oct	1 (29-30)	Margaret Ning's & Geoff Roberston's place near Nimmitabel	Margaret McJannett
	6-7 (8)	??Croajingalong National Park?? (F&C long wkend)	?Harvey Perkins
	14	K2C surveys (All day)	Nicki Taws
	21	TSR & property near Gundaroo	M Lenz/P Wicksteed
	27-28	Bird Blitz	Barbara Allan
Nov	3	Tallaganda/Yanununbeyan NPs	Martin Butterfield
	11	Campbell Park, nest workshop (morning)	J. Holland & A Overs
	17	Tuggeranong Hill (Sat morning)	Matthew Frawley
Dec	9	High Brindabellas (All day)	David McDonald

News from the Committee

- The conservation team has sent off a number of letters/submissions:
 - letters to Birdlife Australia and IUCN about the downgrading of **Superb Parrot** in the *IUCN Action Plan 2010*; the downgrading is a done deal, but we have raised issues of the process as well as the political consequences; eg reduced funding for tree regeneration/restoration, less protection for trees with hollows. Meetings to follow this up with Birdlife Aust are ongoing.
 - response to a consultation draft of EPBC Act Environmental Offsets policy
 - comments on the NES Plan for Molonglo Valley provided to the Conservation Council; the Commonwealth has given the green light to urban development in the valley with some protections for box-gum woodland and listed threatened specie; eg buffer for Kama Nature Reserve
 - A meeting of the conservation team will be convened soon to review the responsibilities list for the next year.
 - The woodlands habitat analysis report is completed. The final draft is with the statistician for checking, and will be printed once this occurs.
 - Progress is being made on updating the COG logo, and website redevelopment.
 - The Committee is investigating options for 2012 COG insurance, since our previous cover as a BOCA affiliate is no longer assured.
 - Additional information about **Spotted Doves** has been provided to the ACT Government, as it develops its pest animal management strategy.
-

COG'S SEVENTH BIRD BLITZ — 29-30 OCTOBER 2011

Many thanks to the COG members who participated in our annual bird count on the last weekend in October. Datasheets are still coming in, so the following results are preliminary. Apologies to those whose initial attempts to input data to COG's database electronically were thwarted by a bug in the system which has now been ironed out. To 30 November, 210 hard-copy datasheets have been received and, at last count, 33 electronic. They have been received from the following persons and do not list all participants in each group: Allen, Anderson, Antram, Barr, Beatty, Blemings, Boekel, Brannan, Brookfield, Buckley, Butterfield, Comer, Compston, Curnow, Davey, Fennell, Frawley, Fyfe, Gardiner, Graham, Green, Hahne, Handke, Harris, Harvey, Henderson, Holland, Hopwood, Kamprad, Kral, Landon, Lashko, Leggoe, Lenz, Lindenmayer, Mackay, McCaskill, McDonald, Neumann, Ormay, Perkins, Pinder, Randall, Rees, S.Robertson, Rosalky, A.Smith, Taws, Thomas, Veerman, Walcott, Waldron, Wangerer, and Widdowson.

If you have submitted your data and are not listed, please contact me at blitz@canberrabirds.org.au. If you haven't submitted, please mail your records asap to COG, PO Box 301, Civic Square 2608 or contact me.

Thus far 156 bird species have been recorded, with 51 breeding. The major highlights were the first records for the blitz of the **Australian Painted Snipe** and the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, taking to 198 the total of bird species ever recorded in these counts. And, while they were not "firsts" for the blitz, it was pleasing to receive records of **Painted Button-quail**, **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, **Black-tailed Native-hen**, **Pilotbird**, **Musk Duck** and **White-fronted Chat**.

A full report will be prepared in due course for *Canberra Bird Notes*, while the "lucky draw" and other prizes will be determined and distributed at COG's members night on 11 January. — **Barbara Allan, Blitz coordinator**



Coates Wildlife Tours

Specialists in Nature Tours since 1986

- Informative naturalist/birding leaders
- Small groups (6 - 14 participants)
- Private charters available
- Fully accommodated & camping tours

New Zealand South Island Wildlife & Wilderness

15 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 4th February 2012
See three national parks, the Catlins, the Otago Peninsula & Stewart Island.

Sri Lanka Wildlife, History & Culture

16 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 11th March 2012
See the exotic flora & fauna of this enchanting island.

Coral Coast Wildlife Tour

10 Day Accommodated Tour - Departs 12th April 2012
Take in the highlights of the unspoiled coast between Perth & Exmouth.

Flinders Range & Lake Eyre Basin Expedition

15 Day Camping Tour - Departs 22nd May 2012
Visit some of Australia's most spectacular outback locations.

Kimberley Discovery

16 Day Camping Tour - Departs 2nd June 2012 & 26th June 2012
Explore the wildlife & gorges of this unspoiled wilderness area.

Tanami Expedition

13 Day Camping Tour - Departs 15th June 2012
Join us to see the birds at Newhaven Station and explore Lake Gregory.

Contact us for our full 2012 tour program, featuring the world's most desireable natural history destinations.

Free call: 1800 676 016 Web: www.coateswildlifetours.com.au Email: coates@iinet.net.au

GSA Coates Tours Licence no 9a1135/96

ANU Bird Survey Program-2012

The Australian National University is preparing for its seasonal 5-year cyclic bird surveys, and it is hoped that COG members can provide the expertise required.

Four seasonal surveys will be carried out during 2012–13 (January, April, July, October), with the first planned for Saturday 21st January 2012. This data will build on the Lower Sullivans Creek Catchment Ecological Survey and Life in the Suburbs project. Our proposed survey area will include sites in the ANU, ANBG, CSIRO, Black Mountain Peninsula, Civic West and parts of Turner. There are a total of 31 UMUs across the study area, with 3 sites in each of them.

As with past surveys, we will focus on community learning. Most of the volunteers will be students with little experience in bird monitoring, so we will be pairing up COG experienced birdwatchers with students, to ensure a good learning process and quality data.

Surveys will be run from 8:00-11am. We will be using the 2-hectare, 20-min search method and datasheets from COG. We will require at least 16 COG members, who will monitor 1-2 students. Each team will complete 2 UMUs, with the whole process taking approximately 2.5-3 hours.

In return for COG's efforts, we shall provide a thank you brunch to all volunteers.

Please contact the Biodiversity Officer Tim (tim.yiu@anu.edu.au) for registration and further details.

Recent clippings from the British Press

Aircraft warned to watch out for missing vulture

When the World of Wings bird of prey centre in Scotland lost a vulture, authorities issued a warning to aircraft to be vigilant. The bird, a seven-year-old female Rueppell's Griffon Vulture named Gandalf is able to soar to 36,000 feet.

Gandalf was flying in a display when she was caught in a gust of wind. Her handlers could only watch helplessly as their star attraction soared higher into the sky.

Fortunately she was spotted a few days later and rescuers from the centre were able to coax her down from the telegraph pole at a disused brickworks where she had taken up residence.

Egg smuggler given 30-month gaol term

A man was gaoled for 30 months after he attempted to export peregrine falcon eggs to a buyer in Dubai. He was caught after a cleaner saw him dashing in and out of the shower in the Air Emirates' business class lounge at Birmingham International Airport. Despite the frequent visits, the cleaner noticed the shower was dry and alerted counter-terrorism police fearing the man had a more sinister purpose.

When arrested, the man was in possession of 14 peregrine falcon eggs bound in socks and strapped to his body to keep them warm. The eggs were estimated to be worth up to £70,000 on the black market in Dubai.

British authorities confiscated the eggs and 11 were successfully hatched. The chicks were released into the wild.

Birds are big money spinners

Mull's sea eagle numbers soar: It started 26 years ago with a single chick and has now grown into a fully-fledged (pun intended) tourist attraction that brings in more than £20 million to Mull's fragile island economy.

The **White-tailed Eagle** became extinct in Scotland in 1918. Since the breeding programme was introduced in 1985, 122 chicks have fledged from Mull. Currently there are 10 breeding pairs.

Island authorities estimate the presence of the birds contributes at least £2 million to the island's economy every year because of the increased number of tourists they attract.

Kites bring £20 million boost to Dumfries and Galloway: A **Red Kite** project has boosted the local economy by more than £20 million since it was set up in 2003. Visitors to the Galloway Kite Trail have spent at least that amount in the region.

The project has also supported the equivalent of 13 full-time jobs a year. The trail, which circles Loch Ken near Castle Douglas, promotes a set of destinations for visitors.

The trail was set up after the reintroduction of Red Kites into Galloway after 130 years. The birds were hunted to extinction in Scotland in the 19th century but have now made a comeback with more than 270 in the local population.

The million mile bird

An **Arctic Tern**, first ringed as a chick on the Farne Islands off Northumberland in 1980, continues to return to the islands' tern colony to breed.

During the bird's annual migration from the north of England to the Antarctic over the last 30 years it is estimated to have covered more than 600,000 miles, more than the distance to the moon and back.

John Walton who is now the National Trust property manager for the islands ringed the chick on 28 June 1980. When he heard the news of its return he was "out like a shot" to see how it had fared.

Gamekeeper fined for poisoning birds

A gamekeeper on a Highland estate was found with enough poison to kill the country's entries Golden Eagle and Red Kite population several times over. He was fined £3,300.

Photo Ops 6 — Bird Photography in the new age



Feeding a just-fledged youngster

Photo by Margaret Leggoe

Photographing birds in the days of film was a rare and highly specialised skill practised by a comparatively few highly focused enthusiasts. To be successful, not only did you need the necessary talent but also a great deal of dedication and time, not to mention the significant resources required for purchasing quantities of film and film processing and the relatively expensive gear.

Today it's a new ballgame and with the coming of digital anyone with the time and enthusiasm can practise to their heart's content by taking tens of thousands of shots at no financial cost. In the process you can be sure of picking up a few early lucky shots and eventually the skill to guarantee a stream of avian photos that would have been the envy of film photographers only a decade ago.

It's not just a matter of being able to take more shots; it's easier to learn in other ways too. You get instant feedback and lots of it – no more waiting for film to be processed to see whether your experimental technique was a good one. Gear is cheaper, lighter and better. There are internet forums to share results, discuss and get feedback. Other forums give a stream of location information so you are never short of something to photograph and practise on.

It is truly a different world and understandably not one that necessarily pleases those who learnt their skills the hard way. Of course there's no stopping progress and whether it pleases us or not the fact is that bird photography is on its way to becoming a team sport.

I was reminded of this recently by the appearance of a particular set of **Nankeen Kestrels** (*Falco cenchroides*) as stars of the bird photography world – it seemed that everywhere you looked these Callum Brae kestrels ap-



Bringing food to its mate sitting on the eggs

Photo by Julian Robinson



Disappointed chicks as parent flies past without food.

Photo by Julian Robinson

peared, photographed in every conceivable pose and activity as they set up their nest and eventually bred. There were two nests in the reserve, one in the well-established site that has been used almost every year for at least five years and the other that I had not known about before, not far from the gate in Narrabundah Lane.

Margaret Leggoe put in the hours and established an enviable collection of wonderful photographs. Geoffrey Dabb posted at least one on the Chatline. Others on *Flickr* turned up at odd times and between us all, both nests were followed and – this being my point – published and publicised in some detail. Such extensive and semi-coordinated coverage is a totally new aspect of avian photography that will inevitably become more common, for better and worse.

The good old days have definitely gone and birds' privacy is forever lost.

The pair shown here were observed and photographed mating (a lot) and defending their hollow against various competitors and would-be nestling predators. They eventually bred three chicks of which two have survived and are now well and truly fledged, though still dependent. The other pair bred an impressive five healthy offspring and I believe have now dispersed.

On which note, this brings Photo Ops to an end for the year and in fact for all time. Happy Christmas to all!

— **Julian Robinson**



Waiting for food

One had fledged that day, the other would the following day.

Photo by Julian Robinson



The runt of the brood that fell or was prematurely ejected from the nest hollow and then spent several days roaming the grass and fallen branches

Photo by Ozoutback1 on Flickr

Photos from the Chatline



Golden-headed cisticola (*Cisticola exilis*)
at the Fyshwick sewage ponds
Photo by Margaret Leggoe



Darter (*Anhinga novaehollandiae*)
Photo by Roger Williams



Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*)
Photo by Robin Eckerman



Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*)
Photo by Roger Williams

MUDBRICK COTTAGE

Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!!

It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs.

It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine
(02) 6258 3531, or
barbdebruine@hotmail.com
or see

<http://www.stayz.com.au/25595>.

PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

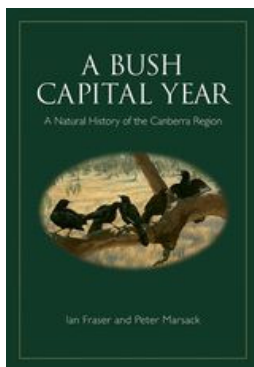
South Rosedale

Arupingi is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale.

Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck, while for the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction.

Contact: Greg or Sallie Ramsay
6286 1564 or
gramsay@grapevine.com.au

COG SALES

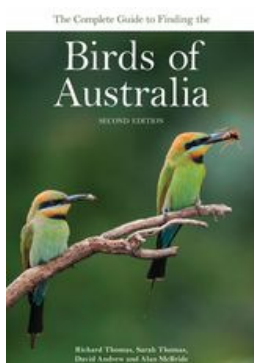


A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region Ian Fraser , Peter Marsack

A Bush Capital Year introduces the fauna, flora, habitats and reserves of the Australian Capital Territory and includes the most recent research available. It also emphasises often unappreciated or even unrecognised urban wildlife. For each month of the year there are 10 stories which discuss either a species or a group of species, such as mosses and mountain grasshoppers. While never anthropomorphic, many of the stories are written from the organism's point of view, while others are from that of an observer. Beautiful paintings complement the text and allow better visualisation of the stories and the subjects. Members price \$32

What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife? David Lindenmayer

Based on thirteen years of intensive research, the book breaks the discussion into chapters on key environmental and vegetation assets and then discusses how to make these assets better for biodiversity. The work encompasses information on vertebrates and invertebrates on farms and their relationships with significant vegetation and environmental assets: woodland remnants, plantings, paddocks, rocky outcrops and waterways. A chapter is dedicated to each asset and how it can be managed. Members price \$27

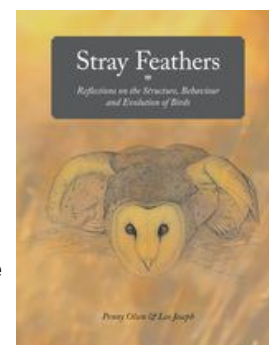


The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia 2nd Ed Richard Thomas , Sarah Thomas , David Andrew , Alan McBride

First published in 1994, this was the first ever book of its type in Australia – a complete guide to locating every resident bird species. This fully revised second edition describes the best-known sites for all of Australia's endemic birds, plus regular migrants such as seabirds and shorebirds. It covers all states and territories, and is the first guide to include all of Australia's island and external territories. A comprehensive Bird Finder Guide details site information on all Australian bird species, and the authors provide valuable travel advice. Member's price \$32 – expected for the April meeting.

Stray Feathers: Reflections on the Structure, Behaviour and Evolution of Birds Penny Olsen , Leo Joseph

Stray Feathers showcases some of the remarkable adaptations of Australian birds. A brief introduction describes how evolution shapes form and function, followed by a series of vignettes illustrating the wondrous variety of forms and functions shaped by evolution. For example, did you know that barn owls can hunt in absolute darkness and that cuckoos commence incubation before their egg is laid? Members price \$39 – expected for the June meeting



Also titles from CSIRO Publishing's *Australian Natural History* series (\$29.00 each for members): *Kookaburra*, *Australian Magpie*, and many more.



WONGA Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.

patricia.walker@bigpond.com
phone 02 6251 3136

www.visitnsw.com.au (follow the links to accommodation and Wonga)

**COG welcomes the following
new member:**

C Bunn, Watson

NEXT NEWSLETTER

February deadline

Wednesday 25 January 2012

Please send, articles, advertisements, updates etcetera to the Editors at
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
or c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

COG info

President—Chris Davey, ph 6254 6324

Email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Vice President—Matthew Frawley

Email: frawley.matthew@gmail.com

Treasurer—Noel Luff

Email: noelluff@hotmail.com.au

Secretary—Sandra Henderson 6231 0303

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary
COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Newsletter distribution

Brian Fair and helpers

COG membership

2010-2011 memberships:

- Individuals, families and institutions: \$35
- school students (under 18): \$17.50.

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson ph 6231 0303
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for changed address or other details

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible.
Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

Cog library

For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on 6254 6520

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'. Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au with the subject 'subscribe' without the quotation marks

Editor Canberra Bird Notes

Michael Lenz
lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

Gang-gang editors—Sue Lashko and Greg Ramsay

Email: gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au



Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to
Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.
PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**