

## **Canberra Ornithologists Group**

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) wishes to provide brief comments relating to the consultation draft of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. COG is a volunteer-based community group with around 350 members whose mission includes the conservation of native birds and their habitats. COG plays an active role in advocating for the protection of native vegetation/bird habitats and for the mitigation of threats to and impacts on native birds. COG has a special interest in woodlands and the conservation of threatened woodland birds. COG has been undertaking a large scale, long term bird monitoring project in ACT woodlands for over 15 years, and has been active in bird monitoring in the ACT for more than 40 years.

Woodland bird species in the Canberra region are continuing to decline due to factors such as land clearance (largely for urban housing and infrastructure), land degradation, fragmentation, and impacts from poor land management practices such as overgrazing by domestic and native animals (kangaroos).

Overall, our Group feels the draft is disappointing, and we are not confident that the Strategy will achieve any real changes or improvements in the condition of our local bird species, indeed of Australia's native birds generally, over the next decade. While the high level and general aspirational goals, vision etc in the Strategy are well and good, there needs to be more specific actions to achieve real change, real recovery, especially at the local levels, as well as more meaningful targets and evaluation measures.

COG also suggests that there needs to be more focus in the Strategy on the bigger picture issues of landscape scale re-construction, ecological connectivity and improved land management practices for better biodiversity outcomes, not just a focus on threatened species or at the species level.

The Commonwealth also needs to take a stronger role on the ground with respect to Australia's biodiversity assets under its direct control, and the Strategy needs to include what the Commonwealth's responsibilities should be in this respect, what actions the Commonwealth will take. For example, in the ACT, high quality native grasslands and woodlands under the control of Australian Government authorities (Defence) have been very poorly managed, allowed to be overgrazed and to deteriorate significantly, thus impacting on endangered communities and native animals.

COG believes that national environmental legislation, such as the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act, must be strengthened and acted on (eg illegal land clearance) in order to stop the continuing loss of biodiversity and to achieve real improvements. Yours sincerely Jenny Bounds  
Conservation Officer 5 June 2009