

ANDREW COCKBURN

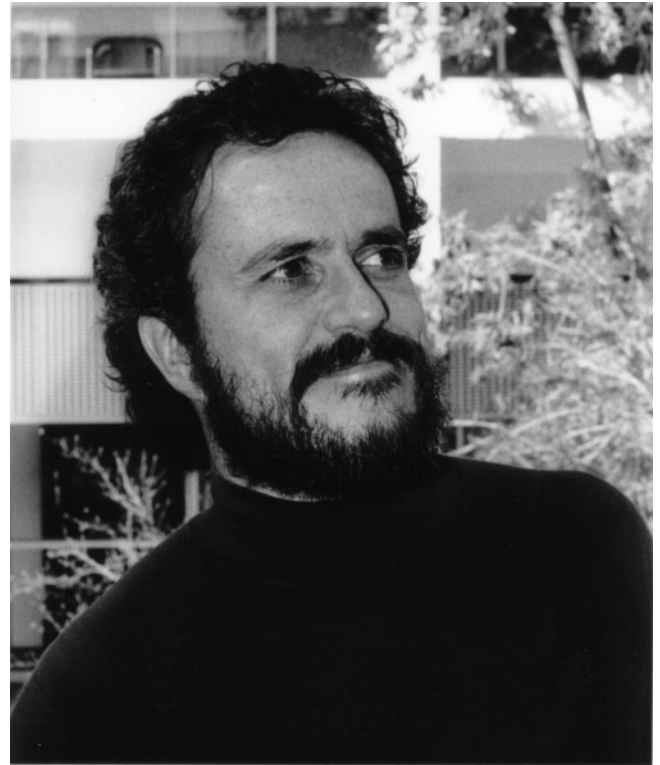
Andrew Cockburn is one of the most accomplished avian researchers in Australia. His rise has been steep. In 1984, he joined the then Department of Zoology at The Australian National University as a lecturer. After six short years he was made a Professor and became Head of the combined Departments of Botany and Zoology, staying in that position for 9 years. He then spent one crowded year as the University's Dean of Science before returning to the department as Professor of Evolutionary Ecology. In 2004, he again took on the position of Head of the School of Botany and Zoology.

Andrew began his research career as a mammalogist. Eventually he saw the light and, in the late 1980s, birds started creeping into his research portfolio. Sometime in the early 1990s they became his major focus. In the relatively short time since, he has generated enough research of substance to publish over 50 ornithological papers, most in heavyweight international journals.

White-winged Choughs were the subject of Andrew's first foray into avian research and their cooperative breeding set him on a path of discovery that continues today, into the evolution of cooperative avian societies. His findings have profoundly changed the way cooperative breeding is viewed (e.g. Cockburn 2003) and reclaimed its discovery as an Australian achievement (Boland and Cockburn 2002). His keynote address on his further research on the subject at the 2003 Australasian Ornithological Conference was widely praised.

In recent years Superb Fairy-wrens have garnered most of Andrew's attention. In one of the longest-running, most intensive studies of any species, he has banded over 5000 wrens in the Botanic Gardens in Canberra and, through observation and molecular study, has defined their pedigrees and followed their lives. Among the extraordinary findings is a mating system featuring almost complete cuckoldry, with some 75% of offspring being sired by males other than the social father and the majority fathered by just a few super-studs. This is achieved by pre-dawn liaisons: females travel in darkness through several territories to a spot where they expect to encounter their preferred male; occasionally, if he is absent, they mate with other hopeful male hangers-on. Largely as a result of Andrew's research, the Superb Fairy-wren account in *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, which he reviewed meticulously, is among the longest.

Along the way Andrew has supervised students and collaborated with colleagues in research on many other birds including Shy Albatross, Kokako, Emu, Crimson Rosella, Dusky Woodswallow, Peregrine Falcon, Pied Currawong, Brown Thornbill, Laughing Kookaburra and Brown Falcon, on subjects concerned mainly with the evolution of life histories and mating systems, but which range from sex allo-



cation to flock size and vigilance. He also has an interest in conservation biology.

Andrew is a Birds Australia member and has contributed enormously to Australian ornithology, both through his own work and that of his many students. Several of his protégées are now building bird-biased groups of their own in other departments and universities. Not least, he has been a leader, helping to earn for Australia an international reputation in the evolutionary ecology field, and attracting international students and professionals to study, visit and work in Australia.

The calibre of Andrew's students is such that two-thirds of his Honours students have achieved first-class passes. Most have proceeded to PhDs, including several at Cambridge and Princeton. He is exceptionally successful at gaining research funding and attracting post-doctoral students. He has assisted many successfully to gain coveted Australian Research Council fellowships, fosters several budding ornithologists each summer through student summer scholarships, and raises interest in bird study through his lectures and talks.

Andrew's achievements and awards are numerous, so just a few examples must suffice. As a member of two Australian Research Council panels, he helped to decide where the country's limited research dollar is spent. He chaired the National Committee on Plant and Animal Sciences and now chairs the Sectional Committee on Integrative Biology for the Australian Academy of Science. For many years he was on the edito-

rial boards of the international journals *Behavioral Ecology* and *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* and is now the latter's Reviews Editor. He brought the influential Sixth International Congress of Behavioral Ecology (1996) to Australia and has given invited seminars across the globe, in Canada, France, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

Andrew is one of Australia's most distinguished scientists, as recognised by his election at a relatively young age to the prestigious Australian Academy of Science. His contribution to ornithology has been through his international achievements and presence and, more locally, by the promotion of ornithology, ornithologists and ornithological excellence.

The Serventy Medal recognises excellence in ornithological publication. Andrew's publication record is substantial and outstanding in its quality, making him a most worthy recipient.

Boland, C. R. J., and Cockburn, A. (2002). Short sketches from the long history of cooperative breeding in Australian birds. *Emu* **102**, 9–17.
Cockburn, A. (2003). Mating systems and sexual conflict in cooperatively breeding birds. In 'Cooperative Breeding in Birds: Recent Research and New Theory'. (Ed. W. D. Koenig.) (Cambridge University Press.)

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