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ARTICLES

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THE ETYMOLOGY OF "JIZZ", REVISITED

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Background

Two decades ago I published an article in *Canberra Bird Notes* titled 'The etymology of "jizz" (McDonald 1996). In it I sought to answer the linked questions '... what, exactly, is meant by the term "Jizz" and where does it come from?' (p. 2). The then editor, the late David Purchase, said at the time that he considered it one of the most interesting articles that he had published in *CBN*! The article has been republished in a number of languages, some with the publisher's permission, and is heavily plagiarised online.

In that article, in discussing the meaning of the term, I wrote:

Although "jizz" did not appear in the first edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the second edition (Simpson and Weiner 1989, p. 264) defines it as: "*The characteristic impression given by an animal or plant*". This definition is carried across to more readily accessible versions of the dictionary such as the second edition of the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary (Hughes *et al.* 1992).

The current edition of the *OED Online* has the same definition of 'jizz': '*The characteristic impression given by an animal or plant*'. It states that the word's etymology is unknown, and it points out that the word 'guise' is 'coincident in sense but the phonetic relationship remains unexplained and the two words may therefore be unrelated'.

With respect to the etymology of jizz, I drew attention, in the 1996 article, to what I referred to as 'three groups of possibilities', based on the published literature and the opinions of birders:

1. General Impression of Size and Shape—GIS/GISS

At the time of writing the 1996 article, and now, this is the most widely accepted etymology. Dymond (1990) suggested that 'Jizz is a term derived from fighter pilots' acronym, GIS - General Impression and Shape'. Numerous sources state, with neither evidence nor qualification, that GIS/GISS is the origin of the term, developed during the Second World War in the context of aircraft identification. I demonstrated in the 1996 article that, despite extensive literature searches in WW2 data bases, I have not been able to locate any wartime usages of that term.

2. Pre-Second World War usage in nature studies

I noted that a quite different origin from the Second World War's GISS is found in the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary which refers us to a book by a prominent British writer on birds, T. A. Coward, published in London in 1922, titled *Bird Haunts and Nature Memories*. This is what Coward wrote (pp. 141-4):

A West Coast Irishman was familiar with the wild creatures which dwelt on or visited his rocks and shores; at a glance he could name them, usually correctly, but if asked how he knew them would reply 'By their "jizz."

What is jizz? The spelling is uncertain; probably its author could not have informed us, whoever its inventor was; it is certainly not in most dictionaries. We have not coined it, but how wide its use in Ireland we cannot say; it may have origin in this one fertile Celtic brain, or it may have been handed down from father to son for many generations. One thing is certain; it is short and expressive. If we are walking on the road and see, far ahead, someone whom we recognise that we can neither distinguish features nor particular clothes, we may be certain that we are not mistaken; there is something in the carriage, the walk, the general appearance which is familiar; it is, in fact, that individual's jizz.

Jizz may be applied to or possessed by any animate and some inanimate objects, yet we cannot clearly define it. A single character may supply it, or it may be the combination of many; it may be produced by no one in particular... Perhaps the outdoor naturalist, and in particular the field ornithologist, realises the full value of jizz better than most people...Jizz, of course, is not confined to birds...the small mammal and the plant alike have jizz...

To learn the jizz should be the object of every field naturalist; it can only be learnt by study of wild creatures in their natural surroundings.

Coward added a note in the second printing of his book, 1923: 'Since the publication of the first edition, a friend pointed out that in Webster's Dictionary both "gis" and "jis" are given as obsolete variations of guise, and this seems to be the origin of the expressive word'.

Here we have evidence that jizz long predated the Second World War. According to Coward, it was used in the second decade of the 20^{th} century, at least on the west coast of Ireland, with the same meaning as we now give to it in birding, and with the same meaning as that captured by the GISS acronym.

3. Other origins

The 1996 article also drew attention to a range of other potential origins of the term, some of them seen in current usage, including a contraction of 'just is', a corrupted shortening of the word 'gestalt' mispronounced with a soft G, a variant of 'guise' or the related word 'phizz', or a variant of 'gist'.

The 1996 article concluded:

We are left with three loose ends:

- 1. The possibility of common origins for:
- (a) the nineteenth century Scottish word "gizz" (a face);
- (b) the eighteenth century word "phiz" or "phizz" (face; expression of face);
- (c) the English word "gist" meaning the essence of something; and
- (d) Coward's West Coast Irishman's "jizz" (the characteristic impression given by an animal or plant).

2. The possibility that Coward was wrong from the start and that "jizz", being the word he introduced into birding, actually had a quite different meaning from the one he grasped.

3. It would be valuable to find documentary evidence for the use of GISS in the Second World War's efforts in aircraft recognition, and for the drift in usage from that context to birding.

The lack of resolution of this puzzle provides a challenge to readers to take the etymological detective work somewhat further. It also reminds us that in a living and rapidly changing language like English, a given word can have multiple origins and multiple meanings.

Coward was mistaken

Over the intervening years I have maintained a watching brief on this word, and have recently located three literature citation that ante-date what has always been taken as the first time that the word appeared in print, namely in Coward's 1922 book.

The earliest ante-date citation that I have located is a play written by Lennox Robinson and published in Dublin by The Eigeas Press in 1918: *The lost leader: a play in three acts* (Robinson 1918).

This is a play about the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), the 'lost leader' in the play's title. The scene is 'The Smoking-room of the Hotel, Poulmore'. A number of hotel guests are there chatting about various things, including the fishing. One states 'I agree with you, they do you very well here, though **there's not much jizz about the old chap**'. (The 'old chap' is a staff member, apparently the proprietor of the hotel.) Another person in the smoking-room went on 'Oh, it's Miss Mary runs the place. Poor Lucius couldn't keep it going for a week'. Another responds 'That's the old man who came in talk to us at dinner about fishing?' 'Yes. There is nothing he doesn't know about the Poulmore trout and the Knockfierna grouse, but outside of them he's not good for much' (Robinson 1918, p. 21, my emphasis).

What does 'jizz' mean here? My submission to the Oxford English Dictionary on the antedating of the word points out that here 'jizz' has a different sense from the 1922 origin of the word in the OED, and current birding and botanical usage: 'the characteristic impression given by an animal or plant'. The sense that I propose was being used at the time is that of *energy or exuberance or enthusiasm*. Owing to his advanced age, Lucius lacked energy or exuberance or enthusiasm; he lacked jizz.

The OED's current entry for 'jism' (also shown as 'jizz') 'Energy, strength', accords with this sense for 'jizz'. It treats 'jasm' (now rarely used) as a synonym for 'jism', with the first citation for 'jasm' dating all the way back to 1860: 'She's just like her mother... Oh! she's just as full of jasm!'. 'Now tell me what "jasm" is.' 'If you'll take thunder and lightening, and a steamboat and a buzz-saw, and mix 'em up, and put 'em into a woman, that's jasm.''

I suggest that the contemporary words 'jizz' and 'jism', and the obsolete word 'jasm', have a common origin.

In addition, the word 'jazz' is related to 'jizz'. The OED gives, as one of the meanings of 'jazz':

U.S. slang. Energy, excitement, 'pep'; restlessness; animation, excitability. Now rare. In early use freq. In context relating to baseball... The OED's first citation provided for this usage comes from the *Los Angeles Times*, 2 April 1912: 'Ben's Jazz Curve...''I got a new curve this year... I call it the Jazz ball because it wobbles and you simply can't do anything with it''. And in 1913 the San Francisco *Bulletin* wrote 'What is the "jazz"? Why it's a little of that "old life", the "gin-i-ker", the "pep", otherwise known as the enthusiasalum (*sic*)'.

The word 'jazz', as a genre of music, dates back to at least 1915, and this usage accords closely with 'energy, excitement, "pep". For example, the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 1915, wrote: 'The "blues" had done it. The "jazz" had put pep into the legs that had scrambled too long for the 5:15'.

I have identified a number of other sources where this meaning of 'jizz' (energy or exuberance or enthusiasm) applies, including two (in addition to Robinson 1918) that antedate the OED's 1922 Coward source. They come largely from Ireland and the USA. Note the conflation of 'jizz' and 'jazz' in the first three of these sources:

- The *Strand Magazine*, volume 57, page 481, 1919: 'Not precisely a dancer. Have you seen "Hullo, Jizz-jazz!"
- The *Morning Oregonian*, August 6, 1920: 'WANTED Someone to publish the latest song, entitled "That Jazz Jizz Jazziest Hug," on a royalty basis.'
- *Midas: Or, The United States and the Future*, author Cyril Herbert Bretherton, publisher E P Dutton, USA 1926, page 66: 'American jazz bands and vaudeville show that come to Europe have about them a snap and "jizz" that has one Europe in spite of itself.'
- Anthropological report on a London suburb by Charles Duff, Grayson & Grayson, 1935, page 64: 'The "locals" thought that the professionals were not putting enough jizz into it, and it was rehearsed a few times until the necessary melodramatic toughness was worked up.'
- *Ireland, Parliamentary debates; official report*, volume 55, 1935: 'I noticed that Deputy Corry did not speak with his usual amount of "jizz".'
- The *New York Times*, August 19, 1937, 'Girl Scouts merge many nations' slang': "Jizz", meaning exuberance, is a contribution from Elizabeth Pike of the Irish Free State.'
- *The uninvited* by Dorothy Macardle, Doubleday, Doran, 1942, page 163: 'Give more relief in the third act and jizz up the second.'
- *Michael Caravan* by Brinsley MacNamara, Talbot Press 1946, page 129: 'It must be her husband who was playing the fiddle, and the husband of the girl they call "Peterkins" such an extraordinary name was putting great jizz into the music with the kettle-drum, while there was a kind of excitement that you could feel all over the house.'
- The same source, pages 3-4: 'They put great jizz into dead or dying places...'.
- The *Dublin Magazine*, volumes 22-23, Seumus O'Sullivan, 1947, page 17: 'A man of industry and effort when the life and jizz were in him; he never shirked his work even in the broil of the noonday sun.'

- *The seventh pig: and other Irish fairy tales* by Patricia Lynch, Dent, 1950, page 72: 'But the lads goin nowadays hasn't any spirit at all. They 'av no more jizz than a kish of brogues!'.
- *Hold your hour and have another* by Brendan Behan, chapter titled 'On the road to Kilkenny', apparently first published in the Irish Press 1954-1956: 'I was only a minute in Castlecomer, but the next chance I get I'll stop longer. It's a darling, sturdy, sizeable town, and plenty of jizz about it.'

Conclusion

I now suggest that it is clear that Coward made a mistake in saying that, when the West Coast Irishman told him that it was possible to identify a particular bird by its 'jizz', the chap meant identifying it by the general impression that it gave. Rather, the Irishman meant that he could identify that particular species of bird because it had lots of 'jizz', that is, it was characteristically full of energy or exuberance.

I suggest that these quotations from published sources, three ante-dating the OED's earliest source, indicate that the word 'jizz' existed in Irish English (in Coward's time and earlier) with the meaning of energy or enthusiasm or exuberance, and that that usage continued in Ireland over subsequent decades and was taken by Irish people to the USA and elsewhere.

I also suggest that the etymology of 'jizz' is not the aircraft observers' General Impression of Size and Shape, Coward's 1922 west coast of Ireland word with the same meaning, 'guise' or 'gestalt'. Rather, the etymology of 'jizz', as we use the word in birding and botany today, is the 19th century usage meaning energy or enthusiasm or exuberance.

Clearly, over the intervening generations since 1922, the word's meaning has shifted. Today 'jizz' has the meaning Coward gave it: *the characteristic impression given by an animal or plant*.

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A CHANGE IN ATTIDUDE: WHERE DID THE INDIAN MYNA GO WRONG?

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At a recent book fair I purchased a small book entitled "Some Useful Birds of Southern Australia" (Hall 1907). I was somewhat bemused to read under the heading 'Indian Myna':

"The cheerfulness of the young adds considerably to the joy of living, the people of the suburbs of cities getting the benefit."

This set me wondering as when this "dear, gentle, sprightly, and highly-amusing" (Anonymous 1886) bird was transformed into "a kind of feathered cockroach" ("Indigofera" 1990).

The Common (or Indian) Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) was introduced into Australia in the 1860's. The first introductions were in Melbourne in 1862 followed by Sydney at around about the same time. Birds were taken from Melbourne in 1883 and released into cane fields around Innisfail, Ingham and Townsville in Queensland. It was hoped they would feed on the insect pests and ticks. Other introductions included Hobart (late 1890's), the Darling Downs (1918), Adelaide (1957) and Canberra (1968). The introduction into Tasmania failed after about fifteen years and the one into Adelaide also failed.

It would seem that their range was reasonably stable up until the 1950's. The only substantial extensions had been to the north of their release areas in the Queensland cane fields. By 1950 they were common in the Cairns area and the Atherton Tablelands. There was also a small population on the Darling Downs, with another stable population in the Sydney's eastern suburbs and an expanding population in Melbourne.

There were still four discrete populations at the time of the first Atlas of Australian Birds (1977-81) (Blakers *et al* 1984); the wet tropics in north Queensland, south-east Queensland (from the Darling Downs to the Sunshine Coast and including Brisbane), coastal NSW (from Hunter Valley to South Coast and inland to Canberra) and eastern Victoria (mainly in the South Gippsland and Melbourne but as far west as Ballarat and north to Bendigo).

By the time of the second atlas (1998-2002) (Barrett *et al* 2003) the core areas remained the same but the ranges had expanded. There was a now an almost continuous distribution from west of Ballarat to the Sunshine coast in Queensland, plus the separate population in the wet tropics further north. The current distribution is substantially the same with some extensions further inland.

The first references that I have found to Common Myna in the popular press were in 1868 about six years after their release. All these articles (three of them) emanated from Melbourne and laud the birds' ability to attack insect pests (Anonymous 1868a, 1868b, 1868c). The quotation I have given above, describing the bird as "*dear, gentle, sprightly, and highly*-

The quotation I have given above, describing the bird as "*dear, gentle, sprightly, and highly-amusing*", appeared in the Sydney Globe in 1886 (Anonymous 1886).

These two positive themes of being a destroyer of insect pests and a joy to the beholder have gradually been overtaken by a negative theme of the bird becoming an undesirable addition to our avifauna.

I shall deal with each theme in turn.

The Common Myna as a destroyer of insect pests

As mentioned above, the first references to the bird were as a destroyer of pests. This was a consistent theme in press articles up until the 1920's (Anonymous 1894, 1916, 1919, 1924a, 1928). There is particular reference to their use in the cane fields and as tick control agents in north Queensland.

An article in the Cairns Post in 1935 (Anonymous 1935) casts doubts on their effectiveness as a control agent and claims that the bird is now considered a pest.

A later article in 1946, also in the Cairns Post (Anonymous 1946), still claimed that they were useful as a control agent.

Even as late as 1967 Robin Hill in Australian Birds (Hill 1967) states:

"On the whole, this bird is considered quite useful, scavenging about the cities and suburbs and destroying insects in country areas."

The editors of "What Bird is That? (abridged edition)" (Cayley 1973) did not see it as a pest:

"Because it mainly a scavenger of streets, parks, and rubbish dumps, the bird does not caused any economic harm."

This attitude was contradicted in a subsequent edition of Cayley (Cayley 1984), so it may be assumed that it was the editors speaking and not Cayley.

The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (HANZAB) (Higgins *et al* 2006) gives its diet a being "*mainly insects, fruit and food scraps; also bird eggs, nectar and carrion*".

The Common Myna as a source of joy

This has been a reasonably consistent theme from the time of its introduction up until as late as 1985. This is despite it being recognized as a pest as early as 1913 (Anonymous 1913). Most refer to its cheerful and jaunty nature and some even found it amusing (Anonymous 1886, 1907, 1920, 1926b, Chisholm 1912, 1935, Hall 1907, Frith 1985). Most claim it would be a shame to lose it from our avifauna.

This positive attitude was held by some of Australia's leading environmental commentators and authors.

Alexander Hugh Chisholm, the eminent ornithologist, in an article in the Sydney Mail (Chisholm 1912) on acclimatised birds in Australia notes that: "they are spreading rapidly, though still, with, hereditary instinct, living their happy-go-lucky lives in town". He follows this up in his book "Bird Wonders of Australia" (Chisholm 1935) with the following comments:

"I deplore this extension of imported birds into Australian forests. The Myna, it is true, after occupying many years in deciding to spread from the city, has had the grace to keep to settled areas in and near country towns......

Nevertheless (even bearing in mind the point touching on the character of the landscape) I doubt if I would be willing to lose certain introduced birds from Victoria's capital city – the Myna with his important strutting about roadways and his animated chatter, chuckle, and song; the Black with his Celtic melody; and, above all, the Thrush with his quiet ways and charming song. These three birds, together with the native Chickowee, remain for me part of the Spirit of Melbourne....... (Melbourne) would lose some of its distinctiveness if it lost any of these, our four special birds."

The popular Melbourne base naturalist, journalist and broadcaster Crosbie Morrison also had positive things to say about mynas. In his column "Backyard Diary" published in "The Argus" (Morrison 1955) he made the following comments:

"Alex Mackenzie (Glenferrie) take me swiftly to task for my suggestion yesterday that suburban mynas should be encouraged. "Aren't you reversing your form, advocating introduced birds which have driven the native birds from our gardens?" he asks. Perhaps he's right. But the myna is not obnoxious; indeed. I feel that he is a New Australian worth assimilating. He is a scavenger, with a rather attractive swagger. I have never heard of mynas doing any harm. If I must defend my earlier remark, it would be on the basis that if the mynas show no fear of human beings they may encourage other more timid birds to lose their fear too, for there is no doubt that the wild creatures watch one another for alarm signals. The mynas would not fight the newcomers off unless they were competing for the same food supply and nesting sites. Indeed, at a guess I would say that winning the confidence of the mynas might help to bring honeyeaters, wrens and silvereyes to a district rather than keep them out."

A final series of quotes by Clifford Frith, the Cairns based ornithologists, comes from his book "Garden Birds" (Frith 1985)

"Common mynahs are very handsome birds that tend to be overlooked where they occur because they are both introduced and common."

"In area of New Zealand and Australia, it is considered a pest to cultivated fruit crops. In the garden, however, it may be beneficial in removing insect pests."

"It is true that this bird occupies nesting cavities in buildings and trees that native birds might otherwise utilize. It is equally true, however, that this is a handsome and enjoyable bird to look at."

There is no denying that the bird did give joy to some persons. This was certainly the motive behind its release in Canberra. "*In the early 1970s it was established that the Common Mynah was being imported and released into Canberra by a well-meaning, but misguided citizen*" (Frith 1976).

The Common Myna as a Pest

As early as 1913 the bird was referred to as a pest in the Sydney Morning Herald (Anonymous 1913). There was no reason given, just that the "worst bird pests are the aliens". This statement was then followed by a list which included the myna.

Since this initial observation there have been numerous other ones which also claim that the bird is a pest. Some merely state this without giving any reason (Anonymous 1916, 1943, Barrett 1945, Froggatt 1921) others are more specific. There appears to be three main reasons as to why the bird was considered to be undesirable.

The first was that it attacked fruit and is therefore an agricultural pest (Anonymous 1924b, 1926a, 1929).

Another complaint is that they form large congregations when roosting at night. These could be a health risk, but the main complaint is concerned with the noise that they make (Anonymous 1938b, "Stray Feathers" 1948). This was the sole reason given in some of the popular bird books published in the late 1970s/early 1980s ("Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds" (Readers Digest 1976); "Field Guide to Birds of Australia" (Pizzey 1980); "What Bird is That?" (fully revised, expanded, deluxe edition) (Cayley 1984)).

The main complaint levelled at the bird is that it competes for nesting hollows with the native species. The first mention of this is in 1926 in an article on introduced birds from India in the "Sydney Mail" (Anonymous 1926a). Subsequent to this there have been numerous articles in newspapers (Anonymous 1927, 1935, 1938a, 1940, "Indigofera" 1990).

Several popular books also cover this aspect of the birds breeding behaviour ("Birds of Victoria Urban Areas" (Gould League of Victoria" 1969); "Australian Birds" (Trounson 1987)).

Comments in some of the newspaper articles are somewhat disparaging. I have already mentioned the description of the bird being "a kind of feathered cockroach". This came from the "Midweek Magazine" of "The Canberra Times" ("Ingidofera" 1990).

Another such comment comes from "The West Australian" in 1938 (Anonymous 1938). The journalist is discussing the introduction of various exotic birds and weeds to Victoria. He goes on to observe that:

"Dingy sparrows and lice-covered starlings and mynahs are the only birds that one commonly sees, and these are steadily exterminating any remaining native birds".

Conclusion

There is now almost universal agreement that the Common Myna is indeed a pest in Australia. I doubt if one could find anyone who would be prepared to put in a kind word for it.

There are now active community based groups taking steps towards reducing the number of birds by trapping. The first of these was the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) which was formed in 2006. Since then groups have been formed in Hawkesbury (west of Sydney), Eurobodalla (NSW south coast), Lismore, Wollongong, Cairns, the Mid North Coast of NSW and elsewhere in eastern Australia.

There has indeed been a change in attitude. This has probably resulted from the increasing awareness by the population that the natural environment is not something to be toyed with, and that the unique Australian flora and fauna is to be appreciated and enjoyed.

The introduced Common Myna may have given some pleasure in the past as an ornament to our towns and cities, however, as a biological pest controller it was a failure, and now with a growing awareness of its destructive capabilities, it has been rightly identified as a pest.

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OBSERVATIONS OF THE BREEDING BEHAVIOUR OF THE PACIFIC KOEL IN RELATION TO ITS NEWEST HOST

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Abstract. The Pacific Koel (Eudynamys orientalis) is a brood parasitic cuckoo found along the northern and eastern coasts of Australia, but has only recently begun breeding in Canberra, using the Red Wattlebird (Anthochaera carunculata) as its primary host. Wattlebirds in Sydney have been a primary host of the koel for at least 38 years, while wattlebirds in Canberra have only been a host for about 8 years. Very little is known or understood about the koel's behaviour. Thus, from 2013-2016 we recorded both behavioural and vocal observations of the koel in Canberra and Sydney to determine if wattlebirds have had enough time to learn that the koel is a nest threat, to gain a better understanding of adult koel calls and their possible functions and to observe how koels interact with each other and their hosts. Wattlebirds at both sites, as well as a few other species, viewed koels as a threat and were seen attacking and chasing koels away from their nests. While our observations of adult vocalizations mostly concurred with previous studies, more work needs to be conducted on the functions of each vocalization and on the koel's vocal repertoire. Our behavioural observations are similar to what other researchers have found, but further rigorous study on koel ethology is needed.

1. Introduction

The Pacific Koel (*Eudynamys orientalis*) is a brood parasitic cuckoo found along the northern and eastern coasts of Australia (Higgins 1999). It is a relatively recent arrival to the Canberra area, with sightings first starting in 1983 (Canberra Ornithologists' Group Garden Bird Survey, GBS). Since this time, koels have continued increasing in abundance in the Canberra area (Fig. 1) and in 2009 the first koel fledglings were found being fed by Red Wattlebirds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) (Lenz *et al.* 2009). The wattlebird has been the only confirmed host in the ACT until 2014 when one Noisy Friarbird (*Philemon corniculatus*) was observed raising a koel nestling (K. Debono, pers. comm.).

Wattlebirds are also the primary host of the koel in Sydney, where they have been parasitized for at least 38 years, if not longer (Brooker and Brooker 1989). Consequently, koels are more common in Sydney and easier to observe. As this cuckoo is severely under-studied and poorly understood we conducted observational studies in both Canberra and Sydney to increase knowledge of the koel's behaviour and to build on what previous studies on the koel have found (*e.g.* Higgins 1999; Maller and Jones 2001).

2. Methods

While conducting a separate study on the koel and its hosts in Canberra and Sydney, we recorded vocal and behavioural observations of male and female koels and their interactions with other species, especially wattlebirds. We observed koels in Canberra during the 2013-14 and 2015-16 breeding seasons and in Sydney during the 2014-16 breeding seasons. We

surveyed several suburbs around Canberra, focusing mainly on the Belconnen, Canberra Central, and Weston Creek districts. Our study sites in Sydney are listed in Table 1, but the main sites where the majority of koels were observed included Woodcroft, Surveyor's Creek and the Blue Hills Wetlands in Glenmore Parkway, the reserve next to The Crest Sporting Complex in Georges Hall, and the Tench and River Road Reserves that border the Nepean River.



Figure 1. The percentage of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Garden Bird Survey (GBS) sites that reported seeing at least one koel during the year from 1981 - 2015. Typically, one observer records at one GBS site. Accessed on 4/5/2016 from: < http://collections.ala.org.au/ public/showDataResource/dr466 >.

Table 1. Our study sites in Western Sydney, NSW where koel behaviour was observed from 2014-2016. Geographic coordinates are points near the centre of each area obtained from Google Maps.

Name of Site	Geographic Coordinates
Francis Park, Blacktown; Marayong; Plumpton; Stanhope Gardens; Woodcroft	-33.75, 150.88
Glenmore Parkway: Surveyor's Creek, Blue Hills Wetlands Chipping Norton Lake	-33.79, 150.68 -33.91, 150.95
The Crest Sporting Complex, Georges Hall; Kentucky Reserve, Bankstown Aerodrome	-33.91, 150.99
Tench Reserve, Jamisontown and River Road Reserve, Emu Plains	-33.75, 150.67
Glenbrook	-33.76, 150.61

One of our main aims was to determine if wattlebirds at both sites act aggressively towards koels, as wattlebirds in Canberra have only recently become a host of the koel and so may

have not had enough time to learn they are a threat. In addition, we wanted to gain a better understanding of adult koel calls and the contexts in which they are likely to be used. Finally, we wanted to observe how koels interact with each other and with their hosts.

3. Results

In Canberra, we observed (seen and/or heard) female koels only three times and observed male koels 19 times. In Sydney, females were observed 69 times, while males were observed 91 times. Males and females were often seen together, interacting and vocally responding to one another, though the number of times males and females were together was hard to accurately quantify, especially if koels were only heard.

3.1 Attacks on koels by other species

We made a total of 25 observations of lone females (in one case it was two females) being attacked or chased by other birds. In Canberra there was only one such observation made in Narrabundah of a female koel being attacked by two Australian Magpies (*Cracticus tibicen*), at least one Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), and more than one Red Wattlebird. A single Red Wattlebird eventually chased the female away from the area. In Sydney, out of 24 attacks or chases against lone female koels, 63% were made by wattlebirds alone, 13% were made by Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*) alone, and 13% were made by wattlebirds and miners together. Once a Magpie-lark chased and nipped at a female and once a European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) chased a female. In total, wattlebirds were involved in 80% of the attacks or chases against lone female koels. Males appeared to be attacked much less frequently with only a total of 6 observations of attacks. In Canberra, a Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*) chased a male from his calling perch and we saw another male chased by two smaller birds, possibly miners. In Sydney, we only observed once a wattlebird pair chasing a male koel and three times miners chasing or attacking males.

In Sydney, when males and females were seen together we witnessed wattlebirds only attacking both sexes twice and a third time a wattlebird growled at a male and female koel that were near its nest. During one intense interaction, two wattlebird pairs, 4-5 miners, and a Magpie-lark with a nest nearby chased and attacked one male and two female koels. By the end of the encounter, two wattlebirds had managed to pluck out feathers of the male and at least one of the female koels. We also once witnessed a group of Pied Currawongs attacking and chasing male and female koels. We never saw any attacks when males and females were together in Canberra.

Three times in Sydney other species appeared interested in the female koel, but did not behave aggressively that we saw. Once a Magpie-lark breeding pair and a Red Wattlebird flew into a tree where a female koel had landed and they remained close to the koel for several minutes, but never attacked or vocalized. Another time, after a female had been chased into a bush by a starling, she continued giving loud "keek" calls, which alerted three wattlebirds to her presence. They all flew over to the bush where she was hiding and one stayed close to the bush for several minutes. The final time a female Magpie-lark and a Noisy Miner perched close to where a female koel had landed, but did not behave aggressively. The female koel flew off a few minutes later and then the Magpie-lark followed and began nipping at the koel. We also observed a male wattlebird of a nearby parasitized nest perching in the same tree as a male koel, but never attacking. Twice we witnessed a different parasitized pair completely ignore koels near their nest that were being attacked or chased by other wattlebird pairs. Twice in Canberra a calling male koel was ignored by wattlebirds either in the same tree or nearby.

The most serious attack on a female koel occurred on October 7, 2014 in Sydney, when a group of Noisy Miners mobbed the female to death. We only witnessed the final moments of the interaction when the miner group was breaking up and the female had dropped to the ground. As we approached, one miner was calling from a perch and two others were on the ground pecking at her. Though there were no obvious wounds on the koel, she died a few seconds later. It appeared she had been eating fruit, as her beak was smeared with fruit juice and her vent feathers had purple stains.

3.2 Adult koel calls

We observed four types of vocalisations given by adult koels, which have been described previously by Maller and Jones (2001). The male produced two main calls: the "ko-el" and an ascending "wurroo wurroo." We did not note every time a "ko-el" was heard, but this was still the most frequently recorded vocalization, as in Canberra we made 16 observations of "ko-el" calls and only one of the "wurroo" call. In Sydney we made 45 observations of the "ko-el" and 43 of the "wurroo," though our observations were biased towards recording the "wurroo" call as it typically indicated conspecifics were nearby. The "whik" call is a third vocalization described by Maller and Jones (2001) that males typically produce before or after a series of "wurroo" calls. While we do believe males produced this call at our sites, we did not classify it as a separate call when making our observations and thus, cannot comment on its frequency or the context in which it was given. The "ko-el" call was the first and last call to be given during the breeding season when all years and sites are combined to increase sample sizes (Fig. 2a). At our sites, "ko-el" calls started as early as September 3 in Western Sydney and October 24 in Canberra, though the earliest "ko-el" report we are aware of for Sydney in the east was August 29, 2015, reported by A. Burton on the Birdlife Australia chatline, and in Canberra was October 1, 2015, reported by G. Dabb via the COG chatline. "Ko-el" calls peaked around mid-late October until early-mid November. "Wurroo" calls began on October 2 and peaked during late October until mid-December. The number of observations of both call-types drops off during January, but this may only be because the number of trips to the field also decreased during this time.

Females produced the "keek" call, which was typically given in a series of rapid bouts. In Canberra, we only observed females calling on two occasions, but in Sydney we made 50 observations of the female "keek." In addition to the typical male and female calls, on one occasion a male koel was observed giving the female "keek" call while being chased and attacked by a Red Wattlebird pair and when a female koel was being attacked by a nesting wattlebird and Noisy Miners, we observed her give the "ko-el" call, but the pitch was much lower than a typical male "ko-el". The final call-type was a soft clucking given by a male that could only be heard at close range (Maller and Jones 2001). We observed this call-type once while both a male and female were close together in a dense tree. The earliest female "keek" of the season was heard at Woodcroft on September 26, 2014, which is the same day the first "ko-el" of that season at that site was heard (Fig. 2b). Interestingly, both this male and female were seen close to the same nest being built that was later parasitized. The number of observations made of the "keek" call peaked from late-October to early-December. Again, the lack of observations in January and February may only be due to a lack of time in the field.

When possible, we recorded the specific context in which each call was given (e.g. the koel was alone, the koel was responding to another koel, etc., Table 2). We were unsure of the context of three "wurroo" calls and two "keek" calls, so these were excluded from the total.

The majority of "ko-el" calls were given when the male was alone (46%, n = 104 total male calls) and this was the most common call-type to be given in this context. Males did occasionally respond to other males using the "ko-el" call (5%) and males sometimes responded to female calls with the "ko-el" (6%) and vice-versa (25%, n = 20 "keek" calls to male calls). The frequency of "wurroo," calls was similar when the male was alone (16%) or in the presence of a female (17%), but five of the calls classified as being alone were heard in the distance without us actually seeing the bird, so it is impossible to know if the bird was truly alone even though we only heard one call given at the time. "Wurroo" calls were the most common call-type to be given during aggressive interactions with other species and during intersexual interactions. The female "keek" was often given when the female was being harassed or attacked by other birds (43%, n = 51 total female calls) or in response to a male call (39%). It was more common for females to respond to the "wurroo" call (75%, n = 20 keek calls to male calls).



Figure 2. The frequency of observations made of adult koel calls (seen or heard) throughout the 2013-2016 breeding seasons combined for both Canberra and Sydney for male calls (upper graph) and female calls (lower graph).

Table 2. The number and percentage of adult male and female koel calls given in different contexts for Canberra and Sydney combined. Percentages for each sex are out of the total number of calls given by that sex where the context was known (males = 104 calls, females = 51 calls). If a call was heard in the distance with no other calls, the caller was assumed to be alone. An intrasexual interaction involved more than one member of the same sex that appeared to be responding to one another. Intersexual interactions always involved at least one male and one female, but other conspecifics could have been present. This type of interaction includes duetting. Conflict with other species includes any time a call was given while another species was attacking or chasing the koel, regardless of whether more than one koel was present.

Call Type	Calling Alone	Intrasexual Interaction	Intersexual Interaction	Conflict with Other Species
Male "Ko-el"	48 (46%)	5 (5%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)
Male "Wurroo"	17 (16%)	1 (1%)	18 (17%)	5 (5%)
Male "Keek"	0%	0%	0%	1 (1%)
Male Clucking	0%	0%	1 (1%)	0%
Female "Keek"	7 (14%)	1 (2%)	20 (39%; 25% to ko-el; 75% to wurroo)	22 (43%)
Female "Ko-el"	0%	0%	0%	1 (2%)

3.3 Interactions between adult koels

Maller and Jones (2001) described koel duetting, which involves the "keek" of the female and "wurroo" of the male given at the same time. Unfortunately, we did not always take note of when calls overlapped, so accurately quantifying the number of duets we observed was not possible. However, on three occasions, once in Canberra and twice in Sydney, we witnessed a group of male and female koels (three or more individuals) calling simultaneously and flying to different trees. In Canberra this group was large, with two or more males and three or more females. On October 29, 2014 in Sydney we saw one instance of two male koels posturing with wings out and tail fanned, giving "wurroo" calls towards one another in the presence of a female. The males were in adjacent trees, one higher than the other, and sat quietly for a few seconds until one flicked its wings and gave the "wurroo" call, causing the second to do the same. The female also gave the "keek" call on and off during this interaction. This continued for about a minute until the female flew away, followed by both males. Two other times we saw two males producing the "wurroo" call while chasing a calling female.

Two times when a female gave the "keek" call shortly after or as she was being attacked by a wattlebird, a male responded by flying in to join her. In the first instance, the male also responded with the "wurroo" call, and in the second instance, after flying towards the female, the male was subsequently attacked by the wattlebird. Three times males and females called together while being attacked and one of these times both sexes were producing the "keek" calls.

3.4 Interactions of koels and nesting wattlebirds

All of the observations of koel and nesting wattlebird interactions, unless otherwise mentioned, were made in Sydney. Females were observed or heard near 15 active wattlebird nests, but we were only able to check the contents of 12 nests. Four of these nests in the building or egg phase were parasitized on the same day or after the koel was seen and one nest already contained two koel eggs. Two other nests already contained a koel nestling and five nests were never parasitized. In total, 58% (7) of nests where females were seen or heard nearby were already or later parasitized, leaving 42% (5) of nests that were never parasitized. On four occasions (three nests total), the male was with the female. At all but five nests, females were chased away from the nest area at least once (some females were seen close to the same nest more than once) by wattlebirds or other species. Of the five nests that were never parasitized, at least two fledged and one was predated during the nestling phase. The other two nests were last checked in the nestling phase, but were not monitored to fledging. At one of these nests, the female koel was perched within 2-3 meters of the nest, where the parents continually swooped and attacked her until finally driving her away. At two nests where contents were unknown, both nests were predated, one within three days of a female koel watching the nest and the other 2-4 days after a female was seen in the same clump of trees as the nest. Single females were seen close to three wattlebird fledglings and the wattlebird parents attacked or gave alarm calls towards the females each time.

Single males were seen or heard calling near an unparasitized nest in the building or egg phase three times. Two of these nests were predated later and one was never parasitized and fledged wattlebird young. Twice single males were calling near an unparasitized nest with nestlings. One nest fledged, but the other was only monitored until nestlings were almost ready to fledge. Twice single males were seen calling near wattlebird fledglings. This also occurred once in Canberra, where a male was seen calling in the same tree as fledglings that were being fed. Males were never chased away from these nests or fledglings, though, if males were only heard, it was impossible to know exactly how close they were to the wattlebird young.

Many times we observed male and female koels calling near a nest with a koel nestling or near a koel fledgling. This occurred twice in Canberra. The large group of duetting koels mentioned above were calling and flying around in the same park 30-100 m from a recently fledged koel and one male was heard giving the "ko-el" call about 100 m or so from another koel fledgling. Nine times in Sydney, single males were seen or heard calling close to a koel nestling or fledgling. Three times single females were seen or heard in the area near a koel nestling, and once a female was less than 60 m from a koel fledgling. Twice a male and female were calling together near a nest with a koel nestling. There are many anecdotal reports of koel fledglings being fed by other species (Higgins 1999; Jones and Nattrass 2001), but we only witnessed 1-2 wattlebirds feeding a fledgling at a time, so presumably these were the fledgling's foster parents.

4. Discussion

4.1 Attacks on koels by other species

Our observations indicate that wattlebirds do recognize the koel as a nest threat, as they were involved in the majority of attacks on lone female koels. Furthermore, wattlebirds were often seen driving koels away from their nests or attacking koels near their fledglings. Though we saw very little aggression towards koels in Canberra, many Canberra Ornithologists' Group members (e.g. B. Allen, J. Bounds, G. Dabb, P. Fennell, M. Frawley, J. Holland, J. Leonard)

have reported via the COG chatline seeing wattlebirds, Magpie-larks, Australian Magpies and Pied Currawongs responding agonistically to koels. Holland (2015) and Lenz et al. (2009) also mention observing Red Wattlebirds chasing and swooping koels in Rivett and Ainslie, ACT.

Single males were attacked, but less frequently than females, and only once was a male chased by a wattlebird pair. In addition, while females were chased away from 10 out of 15 nests and attacked twice while close to fledglings, males were never seen being attacked or chased from nests or fledglings. This might indicate that males do not play a large role in aiding females in parasitizing nests. *Clamator* cuckoo males have been reported to distract hosts away from their nests, allowing the female to sneak to the host nest to lay (Davies 2000; Erritzøe et at. 2012). While we often saw and heard males and females together, we never witnessed any behaviour that would lead us to believe males were distracting hosts away from nests. Moreover, males were only seen with females at three of the 15 active nests where we saw female koels. Males appeared to sometimes assist females when they were being attacked. Twice we saw a male respond to the female's call by flying to her and in one case the male was attacked because of this. Guthrie (1972) also reports observing a male flying to a female being mobbed that was out of sight in order to defend her, but Guthrie was unaware of any female vocalization given that could have alerted the male to her presence.

The fact that multiple non-host species acted aggressively or at least interested in female koels may not be surprising. Koels have been reported in the past to eat smaller birds (Gosper 1964). It has also been shown in certain cuckoo species that female cuckoo plumage mimics that of *Accipiter* hawks, a predator of adult birds, in order to reduce mobbing by hosts at nests (Welbergen and Davies 2011). This resemblance to hawks can deceive non-host species, as well, especially smaller birds (Davies and Welbergen 2008). If the female koel's plumage is also found to mimic hawks, this might explain why we observed some individuals approaching female koels and staying close by her, but not actually attacking, as attacking a hawk may be a dangerous activity. A third reason for these non-host attacks could be that koels have attempted to use some of these other species as hosts at these sites, though this has never been confirmed. However, up until 2014 wattlebirds were the only known host in Canberra until K. Debono (pers. comm.) reported a koel nestling in a friarbird nest in her back garden. Indeed, Magpie-larks are a common host further north in New South Wales and Queensland and there are a few records of Noisy Miners being parasitized by koels (Brooker and Brooker 1989; Brooker and Brooker 2005; Erritzøe et at. 2012)

4.2 Adult koel calls and interactions

Most of our vocal observations concur with those made by Maller and Jones (2001). However, they considered the "keek" to be a female-only call and the "ko-el" to be a male-only call, but we saw each of these call-types produced by the opposite sex one time only. G. Dabb (pers. comm.) also reported seeing a male give the "keek" call in Canberra, which suggests more rigorous study should be conducted on the vocal repertoire of the koel. In addition, Maller and Jones (2001) only heard duetting at the beginning of the breeding season before koel fledglings were present. However, we saw duetting birds in December and January, long after many koels had fledged in Sydney, and once in Canberra within 100 m of a recently fledged koel. In all these duetting sessions, however, there were three or more individuals, while Maller and Jones (2001) may have been only counting duets as between one male and one female. Unfortunately, we did not keep an accurate account of when male and female calls overlapped and so we cannot say if single male-single female duets occurred

in our study before fledglings arrived. Either way, more study should be conducted on koel duets and choruses.

Based on our observations, the "ko-el" call appears to mainly serve as a territorial or mating call, as the male often stood on a high perch and gave the call when he was alone, possibly advertising his quality to females and/or his nesting territory to males (Higgins 1999; Maller and Jones 2001). However, "ko-el" calls were also heard in response to female calls and vice versa, which may indicate the "ko-el" can be used as a contact and/or courtship call. Females mainly responded to the "wurroo" call, which was usually given in the presence of conspecifics and/or during an aggressive encounter with another species. The "wurroo" call was given during the male-male competition display, during duetting sessions or choruses where males and females were not aggressively displaying (see also Maller and Jones 2001), and when males were chasing calling females. Darwood (2015) also observed duetting between male and female koels several times at her garden in Canberra, which consisted of males giving the "wurroo" and females the "keek". This call may, therefore, have multiple functions. It appears to serve as a courtship or pair bonding call towards females, an aggressive call towards other males, but may also be a contact or distress call during an attack.

The "keek" call appears to serve multiple functions, as well. This vocalization was given while females were being chased or attacked and sometimes caught the attention of a nearby male. It was given in response to both types of male calls and during duetting when the female was in no danger. The "keek" may, therefore, be a pair bonding call and a distress and contact call.

In Sydney at Woodcroft, we witnessed a male-male aggressive display, which has been previously described by Pratt (1970) in an area where koel competition was high and resulted in numerous observations of displaying males. This behaviour has also been reported by Roberts (1961) and G. Dabb (pers. comm.), indicating this is a stereotypical behaviour allowing males to engage in a competitive display without violence. Whether males were competing for female matings or defending nesting territories is still unresolved.

Our temporal calling data shows similar patterns found by Maller and Jones (2001), but is ultimately incomplete, as we did not rigorously record every call heard. The "ko-el" call, for example, was heard most days at every sight in Sydney, but we did not record this call every time. In addition, we recorded the number of observations of a calling male, which could have involved more than one call being given, rather than call rate, as Maller and Jones (2001) did. Thus, any patterns from our data are likely skewed and should be referenced with caution.

4.3 Interactions of koels and nesting wattlebirds

According to our observations, the presence of a female in a nesting territory may not indicate the nest will ultimately be parasitized, but the nest could still be in danger of predation by the koel. While we have no direct evidence koels were predating nests, it is known that brood parasites will predate nests late in incubation or in the nestling phase in order to force the host to renest (Elliott 1999; Davies 2000). In addition, one female was seen watching an active nest for at least 10 minutes that was predated by the next nest visit and a female koel was seen very close to a nest that was predated a few days later.

Several times both male and female koels were seen or heard close to a parasitized nest and nine times males called close to a koel nestling or fledgling. There are many other reports of koel adults and fledglings being observed close together (Higgins 1999; Jones and Nattrass 2001; Lenz et al. 2009; Holland 2014; Darwood 2015; Holland 2015). It has been suggested that the males calling close to young koels could be the biological fathers trying to teach their young the proper calls (Jones and Nattrass 2001). While this has never been confirmed and could simply be a function of male territorial behaviour (males could be calling near parasitized nests to defend their nesting territories from other koels), the fact that males do sometimes call close to koel young may allow the young to imprint on the proper vocalizations. Fruiting trees can also bring juvenile and adult koels together, as Darwood (2015) made numerous observations of male, female, and at least two juvenile koels all eating figs in her back garden. Again, these types of interactions may not necessarily involve the parents and offspring, but could be beneficial for young koels nevertheless.

5. Conclusions

Several species, both hosts and non-hosts, consider the koel to be a threat, indicating that avian species have the ability to learn which species are dangerous in a short amount of time, as koels have been in Canberra about 33 years and may have only been using wattlebirds as a host for about 8 years. Clearly, more studies need to be conducted on the vocal repertoire and behaviour of the koel, but concurrent observations made by different researchers in different areas help to confirm our current knowledge of koel ethology. Banding adult koels and radio telemetry would be incredibly useful in understanding their movements within a site and territorial behaviour. In Canberra, compiling observations from the COG chatline, GBS, and other databases would be helpful in furthering our knowledge of koel behaviour and phenology.

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS OF EASTERN KOEL FLEDGLINGS IN CHAPMAN/RIVETT DURING THE SUMMER OF 2015-2016

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Abstract: My two previous papers (Holland 2014, 2015) published observations on the behaviour of fledgling Eastern Koels (Eudynamys orientalis) in Chapman/Rivett. Here further observations made in the summer of 2015-2016 are reported. These either provide support or add some new information to that published.

Introduction

While observations were posted on the COG discussion list from mid-October 2015, the first Eastern Koels (*Eudynamys orientalis*) did not seem to arrive in my local area until some 2 weeks later at the start of November. After hearing some calls for a few days a male was seen koeling loudly in a silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*) in the backyard of 46 Croton Street Rivett (in an area where many observations have been made in past years) around 07:00 on 6 November. The bird stayed there for over 20 minutes.

Further calling with an occasional sighting of a male up to the end 2015 occurred in this area, around Nelumbo/Kanooka Streets Rivett, around Rene Street Chapman, and from the beginning of December at the corner of Hindmarsh and Eucumbene Drives Duffy. Of these only the Chapman locality has been associated with significant Koel activity in past years. The calls often seemed to move around and were usually suspected to be made by a single mobile bird, though early on the morning of 1 Dec calls could be heard at the same time from the Chapman and Duffy directions.

The only time two birds were close together was on the afternoon of 17 Nov when around 17:35 the whip whip call (which I prefer to the ki ki) was heard a number of times in the lane way between Sollya and Geebung Places Rivett. I looked for the suspected female but could not find her, though the Red Wattlebirds (*Antochaera carunculata*) were very excited. At the same time a male whoa-whoaed (again which I prefer to wirra wirra) close by, then koel-ed around 17:40 and was seen flying into a gum tree behind 16 Mentha Place Rivett where it allowed a close approach. This tree was on the edge of the F1 fledgling's 2015 "territory" (Holland 2015), and was also the closest record to my house before the New Year.

Koel activity increased significantly

Calling dropped off noticeably before Christmas and in particular into the 2016 New Year. So it was a surprise to hear the whip whip call from the small figs at the Woollum Crescent side of 1 Eugenia Street Rivett at 17:35 on 20 Jan and then see birds fly to the nearby silky oak. On approach three birds flew out across the road to 14 Woollum Crescent, after which a female was seen being chased from there by two males down Eugenia St. Soon after another female called whip whip from 8-10 Woollum Cres and flew down the street.

In the next couple of days more calling was heard in this area. On investigation of one of these at 17:55 on 22 Jan I found a male calling (whoaing) on the middle of the wires across Angophora St, 50 m from the T-junction with Darwinia Terrace, with the whip whip whip call heard close by. Then on emerging from the laneway between Woollum Crescent and Angophora Street at 18:08 I heard calling again, and four males (two lots of two) were seen chasing each other around the trees on the verge of 18-20 Angophora Street and then up to the corner of Woollum Crescent, with a further male remaining in a gum tree on the verge. Then there was again a male on the same wires but on the boundary between 3 and 5 Angophora St side, this bird whoaed while two other birds chased past calling whip whip up Pavonia Street. All this activity occurred within 70-130 m of 1 Eugenia Street.

More calling was heard that evening and the next day, often from the above direction, when at about 19:40 a male and a female flew into the gum on the verge of 58 Darwinia Terrace. They stayed there for a while giving some strange calls, and then flew about 50 metres to the figs in the backyard of 4 Chauvel Circle, where the male could be easily seen. It then flew to the plums at the rear of 6 Chauvel Circle where again strange calling was heard. It was last seen flying back towards Darwinia Terrace. This was the only confirmed Koel sighting in my GBS site for the 2015-2016 spring/summer.

A Fledgling found

As I had previously associated increased adult koel activity with fledglings being present (Holland 2014, 2015) I monitored the area around 1 Eugenia Street fairly closely, with more calling heard from this area and a male seen in the silky oak at 06:50 on 25 Jan, as well as two birds seen flying across to 12 Woollum Crescent at 06:38 on 26 Jan, with calling/flying activity in the area lasting until at least 06:53.

At 10:10 on 27 Jan 2016 I found my first fledgling for 2016 in almost exactly the same place (S 35° 20 49, E 149° 01 48) as I originally found my second fledgling (F2) last year (Holland 2015). It was calling quietly while well hidden in the small white-trunked gum on the verge of 10 Woollum Crescent, close to the No 8 driveway. It did not move as it was seen fed by Red Wattlebirds. Adult koels were not around at the time, but had been heard just before at the corner of Darwinia Terrace and Hindmarsh Drive (about 200 m away).

That evening at 17:50 I found the fledgling again in the exotic trees/shrubbery across the road at the border of 9-11 Woollum Crescent, when it flew clumsily (<1 m) several times. Following this at 17:55 whip whip whip, whoa whoa and ko-el calls were heard at the top of Angophora Street.

I could not find it next morning but at 19:45 on 28 Jan I found it in the large exotic tree at the front edge of 11 Woollum Crescent, it called at first but then not again until it was fed by a Red Wattlebird, then it was silent again. It also did not move and while I concluded from this and its soft call it was a fairly recent fledgling, I noted it was highly coloured/marked.

Despite regular checking often both morning and evening over 12 subsequent visits I only located the fledgling once more in the next 10 days to the morning of 8 Feb. This was late on the afternoon of 30 Jan when it was heard in the same exotic tree at the front of 11 Woollum Crescent (but towards the rear) and seen on a quite open perch being fed by Red Wattlebirds at 19:47. Just before at 19:45 two birds had flown from the figs to the silky oak, then to the gum at the rear of 23 Woollum Crescent where an adult male and female were identified. This was the only time adults and the fledgling were actually seen in close proximity, and

also the last time adults were observed in the fledgling's "territory". In fact there were no further adult sightings and very limited calling was heard in February.

In this gap of sightings I thought I could hear it calling softly on a couple of occasions but around 18:00 on 8 Feb 2016 it could be clearly heard but not located high in an argyle apple next to the 6 Woollum Crescent driveway. However, I did locate it in same tree around 19:00 when it was fed by Red Wattlebirds, after which it flew across to a small exotic shrub up against the 9 Woollum Crescent house, and then back again in the adjacent gum where it allowed very clear views.

It could not be located on the morning of 9 Feb but around 18:30 it could be heard down the lane that runs across to Darwinia Terrace alongside the figs at 1 Eugenia Street. It then flew into the figs with a couple of Red Wattlebirds, and then back down this lane and was calling (but not located) regularly in an ornamental pear at the back end of the house at 23 Darwinia Terrace, about 50 m away. Despite regular checking up to the 19 Feb, and occasionally to 25 Feb, this was the last positive sighting of this fledgling, which was clearly much more mobile than when first observed 12 days before.

Additional fledglings

At 06:52 on 7 Feb 2016 I first heard and then found a second Koel fledgling attended by two Red Wattlebirds in a large argyle apple gum on the verge of 24 Rafferty St Chapman (S 35° 21 09, E 149° 01 56), about 700 m from Woollum Crescent spot. It was begging much louder and flew much better (~15 m over the house to an exotic tree) than my first one, which at the time I'd not been able to locate for over a week. It was not where I was expecting one as there has been limited Koel activity there this year. Again despite a number of visits I was only able to positively identify it once more when it could clearly be heard calling from a dense exotic tree in the front of 21 Rafferty Street diagonally across the road just before 07:00 on 10 Feb, though it may have been calling from the rear of this house on the morning of 8 Feb.

On 28 Jan from its soft call I suspected a further fledgling in the laneway between Mentha and Themeda Places Rivett in a fir tree at the rear of 11 Themeda Place at 17:20. This was about 20 away from where F1 first located in 2015 (Holland 2015). On return at 19:35 there was a softer call from the same tree, but while Red Wattlebirds were in the area no fledgling was found. This possible fledgling was not confirmed despite many checks over the next more than 3 weeks. I had been monitoring this area because of a bird heard koeling at the end of Themeda Place Rivett at 06:50 on 12 Jan (see also 17 Nov observation above).

No other fledglings were discovered despite much searching in the Rivett areas where calling seemed to be concentrated.

Discussion

The above observations re-inforce a number of observations made previously (Holland 2014, 2015) as well as provide some new information.

1. Again there was significant adult Koel activity in the area of the first fledgling, but this time it was mainly before the discovery of what appeared to be a relatively recent fledgling.

2. As discussed in Holland (2014, 2015) both fledglings were found where adult activity had not been noticeable around the time of suspected egg laying. The only observation close to the Eugenia St/Woollum Crescent fledgling was of a male calling at the rear of 35 Woollum Crescent around 06:50 on 9 Nov, much earlier than when the egg would have been laid. The only positive observation close to the 24 Rafferty St fledgling was of a bird heard at the top of Casuarina Street Rivett, which then moved to Rafferty/SE corner with Monkman Streets Chapman (about 200 m away from where found) from 06:20–06:25 on 13 Jan. The less than 1 month period when a pretty mobile fledgling was discovered would be too short for incubation, chick development and fledging.

3. The first fledging was found at almost the same spot as F2 in 2015, though it was observed only in the SSW half of F2's "territory" (refer to map in Holland 2015). This contrasts with 2014 and 2015 when there was no overlap in spots where fledglings were found.

4. The first fledgling was much harder to find than in previous years, in 2015 almost every time I checked I could locate any of the three fledglings (see Table 1 in Holland 2015), but in 2016 only six times in around 20 visits from the time it was discovered to when last seen. Of course it cannot be guaranteed that the fledgling found after the eight day break was the same, though I expect it was.

Overall it was a quieter spring-summer for Eastern Koels in my local area, though whether this was typical also in other areas is not clear. It certainly was an earlier season than in past years, with the first fledgling observed on 14 Dec, and 12 reported by the end of the first week of January (compared with one in 2014-2015). The last quite advanced juvenile was reported on 31 Mar, making it long season with a total of 29 individual fledglings that I am aware of. One feature was the relative lack of multiple fledglings within an area, with a maximum of three reported from Christine Darwood's garden in Flynn, as for last year (Darwood, 2015). Interestingly Barbara Allan was able to find only one in Page this year, compared with at least 8 in 2014-2015 (Holland 2015).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Christine Darwood and Barbara Allan for providing information about Koel fledglings seen during the 2015-2016 breeding season in Flynn and Page, respectively. Many thanks also to Virginia Abernathy for exchanging information on the number and locations of fledglings found during this breeding season.

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THE CANBERRA BIRD BLITZ 2015

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Abstract. This paper describes the conduct and outcomes of the Canberra Ornithologists Group's eleventh "bird blitz", held on 24-25 October 2015, and provides comparisons with the ten previous blitzes. In 2015, 338 datasheets were submitted, from 101 grid cells; 177 bird species were recorded, 77 of them breeding. Highlights included the first blitz records of the Australian Shelduck, Caspian Tern, Blue-winged Parrot and Black-eared Cuckoo, and an urban record of the Powerful Owl.

Introduction

On the last weekend in October 2015 (Saturday 24 and Sunday 25), the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) held its eleventh annual "bird blitz". In this exercise, we aim to record all species of wild bird present in the ACT over that weekend, to obtain a broad indication of their abundance, and to record breeding status. To achieve this, we set out to conduct a minimum of one 20-minute 2-hectare survey within each of the 165 grid cells covering the ACT (a 2.5-minute grid on lines of latitude and longitude, so each cell measures approximately 3.5 km by 4.5 km). A subsidiary aim of this exercise is to encourage more of our members to get out, survey and submit datasheets.

The data collected are entered in the COG Atlas database, and subsequently contributed to the BirdLife Australia Atlas database. They are available for scientific purposes and as an input to Canberra land use planning.

Conduct of the blitz

Participants register for their preferred locations or grid cells, on a first-in, best-dressed basis. In the allocation process, some site preference is given to members who survey given sites on a regular basis. More tardy volunteers are cajoled by the organiser into surveying the remaining sites. Less experienced birders may accompany more experienced birders who indicate a willingness to take them along. And as a modest inducement to participants, a variety of prizes are on offer, courtesy of our members. One difference in the conduct of the 2015 blitz was the number of eBird participants who may or may not have realised their records were contributing to the blitz outcome.

Participants are allowed to choose their preferred methodology from the three BirdLife Australia Atlas options: a 20-minute/2-ha survey; within 500 m of a central point, for >20 mins; or within 5 km of a central point, for >20 mins. Incidental records are also welcomed, as are the various options from eBird.

Results and discussion

Operational issues

We enjoyed really good birding weather, and most trails in Namadgi National Park were accessible. Unlike 2013, we did not conduct training classes to assist newcomers.

Level of participation and coverage

At least 77 named COG members and friends took part in the 2015 blitz, plus 10 others who may or may not have intended to contribute to the blitz and whose records arrived via eBird. (a list of known participants is at Table 1). As noted before, this probably equates to about 100 participants if the unnamed companions are taken into consideration. Eight of the named individuals participated for the first time. Congratulations must go to the 11 individuals who have supported the blitz each year since its inception: Ian Anderson, Daryl Beaumont, Muriel Brookfield, Stuart Harris, Shirley Kral, Bruce Lindenmayer, Gail Neumann, Susan Robertson, Philip Veerman and Tony Willis, as well as the author.

Datasheets were received from 101 grid cells. Our best coverage was in 2007, when we managed 122 grid cells. Observers clearly prefer surveying areas where they can be assured of seeing good numbers of bird species – an understandable but, for blitz purposes, somewhat regrettable choice. Twenty-eight per cent of the records came from the ten most popular grid cells covering Jerrabomberra Wetlands and several central Canberra nature reserves. Nevertheless the grid cells surveyed covered most habitat types, so I believe we have a representative sample of ACT avifauna for the weekend. Map 1 shows the grid cells covered, while the table below indicates the comparisons between blitz years.



Figure 1. Number of participants and grid cells.

Datasheets submitted

In the 2015 blitz, a total of 338 eligible datasheets were received, 166 in hard copy, 40 via COG's electronic database and 132 via eBird. Regrettably some participants "mislaid" their records before submitting them so the actual total should have been higher. Datasheet numbers have fluctuated over the 11 years of the blitz from a previous high of 359 in 2013 to a low of 242 in 2006. The actual number each year appears to have more to do with the types of surveys undertaken, and the relative proportion of lengthy surveys. It is at times a difficult trade-off for our blitzers between covering many grid cells and hence generally adopting the "20-minute, two-hectare" survey, and covering fewer areas but doing so more intensively over a longer period with a "within 500m" survey. The situation is further muddied now with eBird contributions avoiding this classification.

Type of survey

As usual, participants were given the option of choosing their survey type to best fit the grid cell or location they were surveying and to allow for personal preference and time or other constraints. Without closer analysis, it is impossible to be definitive about the effects of survey type on outcomes. In the case of the blitz, which is essentially a citizen science exercise involving observers of differing levels of expertise, it is likely that the time spent at each site has a greater bearing on the numbers of species recorded, or the breeding status.

Species recorded

As Figure 2 and Table 2 show, 177 bird species were recorded over the two blitz days in 2015, four more than last year. When all blitz years are considered together, 213 species have been recorded, while 128 species have been recorded every year. By way of comparison, the species total for all of the financial year 2014-15 and the whole of COG's area of concern, as recorded in the Annual Bird Report, was 247 from 246 grid cells (COG 2016). There have been blitz breeding records every year for only 29 species; while 135 species have been recorded as breeding at least once in the blitz.



Figure 2. Number of species recorded, and recorded breeding.

Highlights of the 2015 blitz



at Mulligans Flat remained to be counted.

The standout record for the 2015 blitz was of the Powerful Owl Ninox strenua in the heart of Canberra. "Powl" as the bird is affectionately known, was discovered last November by COG member Terry Munro in the vicinity of the North Canberra Bowling Club, where it has resided since. (see photo to left by *Geoffrey* Dabb. It was also pleasing that at least some of the Bush Stone-curlews **Burhinus** grallarius which had been introduced into the Sanctuary

Other pleasant surprises were four more "firsts" for the blitz, Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*, Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma* and Black-eared Cuckoo *Chalcites osculans*. These species are recorded occasionally now in COG's general area but cannot be relied upon in the ACT in the last weekend of October. Another occasional visitor, the Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, was recorded in the blitz for the first time since 2011.

Species most commonly recorded



Photos and Collage of the most commonly recorded species during the 11th blitz (*Geoffrey Dabb*).

The Australian Magpie (with 217 records, involving 1088 individuals) remained its usual preeminent position as "most common" species. It was followed by the Crimson Rosella (187 records), Pied Currawong (185), Australian Raven (185), Grey Fantail (179), Red Wattlebird (176), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (167), Magpie-lark (163), Galah (151) and Superb Fairy-wren (148) (see Collage previous page).

No surprises here. These species represented the top ten in last year's blitz, albeit in a slightly different order. Apart from being widespread, they are all readily identifiable.

Species recorded only once in blitz 2015

While it was gratifying to record some species which are often overlooked or which are simply not always present in the ACT, it was sobering to note that there were only single records of 21 species. While many of these, such as Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis* and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops* are thought to be present all year but in very low numbers, and others such as Caspian Tern and Black-eared Cuckoo are merely occasional visitors, single records of Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* and White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons* give pause for thought.

Species not recorded in blitz 2015

Thirty-two species which had previously been recorded in the blitz were not recorded in 2015. Inevitably, species known to be present in the ACT over the blitz weekend sometimes fail to be recorded. "Resident" crakes and rails can be elusive, as was the case in 2015 with Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis* and Lewin's Rail *Lewinia pectoralis*. Other species with quite restricted distribution in the ACT, such as Chestnut-rumped Heathwren *Calamanthus pyrrhopygia*, were not recorded in 2015. Several of our occasional visitors did not visit over the blitz weekend, including Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*. Waders are always a hit-and-miss proposition for the blitz weekend, mostly the latter on this occasion. And there were few recordings of arid-zone specialists, suggesting that conditions to our west had not deteriorated badly by October 2015. But the lack of records of the endearing little Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala leucopsis* reflects a more worrying decline as also reported in the Annual Bird Report.

Of some concern was the absence of so many of our high-country specialists, including Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*, Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythrops* and Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*. There are possible non-worrying explanations for our missing this group of birds. Some are migrants and may simply not have returned by the last weekend in October. Our survey did not coincide with the efforts of a banding team, responsible for previous good returns. We did not have as many observers in the high country and they did not spend as long there as in some years. But it does appear that the 2003 fires are probably a continuing influence here.

Breeding

As Table 2 and Figure 2 show, in the 2015 blitz 77 species of bird were recorded as "breeding" – that is a generous interpretation, including the widest parameters recorded such as "display" and "inspecting hollow". The highest breeding we have recorded in the blitz was 87 species in 2007 and the lowest, 65 species in 2011. As usual, the species most commonly recorded as breeding were either relatively large and/or conspicuous ones, namely (in order of frequency) Australian Magpie *Cracticus tibicen*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Magpie-

lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*, Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*, Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*, Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*, White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*, Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* and Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*.

Arguably the most pleasing breeding record was that of the nest-building Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus* along the Naas Valley fire trail. We have only had one previous breeding record for this species in the blitz, in 2006, a pattern reflected in the Annual Bird Report. Another noteworthy breeding record was the nest with eggs of a Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*, in a tussock along the Cotter Hut Rd. We did record a surprising number of copulations including between pairs of Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseyornis melanops*, Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis pallidus* and Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*.

ACT-listed vulnerable and endangered species

If we exclude the Swift Parrot Lathamus discolor which is unlikely to be here in late October, and the Australian Painted Snipe and Regent Honeyeater which are seriously rare in the ACT, of the bird species listed as vulnerable or endangered in the ACT, only the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus lathami was not recorded during the 2015 blitz and in fact has only been recorded in three previous blitzes, most recently in 2008.

As usual, the most widely recorded of the "vulnerables" was the White-winged Triller Lalage tricolor, particularly from urban or semi-urban nature reserves, and mostly in low numbers. There were 25 triller records, of 1-12 birds, from 17 widespread grid cells. There was a single breeding record: display, at Mulligans Flat NR. The triller reporting rate of 7.4% was a little below its blitz average of 8.3%.. The Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang* was the next most commonly reported "vulnerable", with 22 records of 1-4 birds, from 18 grid cells, the majority of which were in Namadgi NP. Its recording rate of 6.5% was below its blitz average of 7%, and no breeding was recorded. The Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii* too appears to be holding its own adequately. There were 9 records of 1-10 birds from six grid cells, all in north and north-west Canberra. Its reporting rate of 2.7% was below the blitz average of 3%. No breeding was recorded. There were 6 Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* records of 1-5 birds from nature reserves in 5 grid cells, at a reporting rate of 1.8%, below the blitz average of 2.6%. Encouragingly the sittella was recorded breeding, with dependent young at Mulligans Flat.

The picture for the other vulnerables is less positive. The Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus* was recorded 7 times, from 7 grid cells in the south of the territory, with a maximum of 5 birds at one location. Its reporting rate of 2.1% was just below the blitz average of 2.2%. Encouragingly, there was one breeding record, of carrying food, on Old Boboyan Rd. The Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides* appears to be stable for the moment at very low numbers: there were 8 records of 1-2 birds, from 6 grid cells. The west Belconnen nest was again active. The Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata* appears to be faring the least well of our vulnerable species, being only recorded once at a known location for the species at Glendale; its reporting rate is down to 0.3% from a blitz average of 1.1%.



Photos and Collage of the vulnerable and endangered species in the ACT (*Geoffrey Dabb*)

A case study: the Laughing Kookaburra Dacelo novaeguineae



To the perturbation of many, Australia Birdlife recently nominated the kookaburra as one of our common species experiencing а decline in numbers (see photo on left by Geoffrey Dabb). So it is of particular interest to see what the blitz records show. In 2015, there were 88 records of 1-5 birds, from 58 widespread urban and rural grid cells. Its reporting rate of 26% was comfortably above the blitz average of 21.4% and there were two breeding records, from North Woden and Hawker. The latter was of a particularly vocal nestling safely and comfortably ensconced in a large old wooden possum box attached to a eucalypt in the Pinnacle NR. And yes, it went on to fledge successfully.

Trends

While the number of records and reporting rate of the majority of species fluctuate, in some cases markedly from year to year, after eleven blitzes, trends are emerging for certain species, trends which are for the most part also reflected in COG's Annual Bird Reports. I have chosen the reporting rate as the most helpful indicator of trends and have highlighted only those species with sufficient records to make sense of possible movements.

Many of the ducks and other waterbirds are doing very well, perhaps thanks to the increasing number of urban wetlands being created, particularly in north Canberra. While the reporting rate of the Australian Wood Duck Chenonetta jubata remained fairly steady, that of others showed considerable increases. The Hardhead Aythya australis recording rate of 9.2% was up 78% on the previous 10 years average; Grey Teal Anas gracilis 11.5%, up 76%. Coot Fulica atra, Dusky Moorhen Gallinula tenebrosa and Purple Swamphen Porphyrio porphyrio were all up slightly, while the Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseyornis melanops* recording rate of 3.3% was up 39%. The recording rate of all of the raptors was down, in the worst case of the Brown Falcon Falco berigora by 47%. Amongst the parrots, the greatest increasers were the Little Corella Cacatua sanguinea (up 71%) and the Rainbow Lorikeet Trichoglossus haematodus (up 153%). All the cuckoos increased with the exception of the Pallid Cuckoo Cacomantis pallidus which declined 14%. Amongst the honeyeaters, the Noisy Miner Manorina melanocephala is doing unfortunately well, with a recording rate of 19.5, up 24%. Other "pest" species including the Australian White Ibis Threskiornis molucca and the Spotted Dove Streptopelia chinensis showed serious increases (103% and 79% respectively), though the Common Starling Sturnus vulgaris and the Common Myna Sturnus tristis were roughly stable. The robins were mixed, with the Eastern Yellow up 50% but the Flame down 49%. The small woodland birds were generally speaking not faring well with both pardalotes, Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra cyanoleuca, Speckled Warbler Chthonicola sagittata, Dusky Woodswallow Artamus cyanopterus, Southern Whiteface Aphelocephalaleucopsis, Diamond Firetail Stagonopleura guttata and even Superb Fairy-wren Malurus cyaneus experiencing declines.

Conclusions and lessons for the future

Blitz 2015, like its predecessors, has increased significantly the amount of data about Canberra's birds. Several of the grid cells surveyed would in all probability not have been covered but for the targeted effort of the blitz. The blitz data are made available to the managers of Canberra's national park and nature reserves. A lesson to be drawn from the blitz is that, when prompted, more of our members will get out, survey and submit datasheets and perhaps revisit favoured spots.

There is, inevitably, an element of "luck of the day" in terms of the results but the long-term trends are already being highlighted. The blitz breeding observations are particularly useful in fleshing out a more detailed overall picture of bird breeding in Canberra. And given the tendency of our vulnerable species to be patchily distributed, the additional blitz information about where they are and in what numbers is highly valuable.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks must go to all COG members who participated in the 2015 blitz, and particularly to those who put in two full days of birding in remote sites. The assistance of staff at Namadgi National Park in providing advice, and access to areas behind locked gates,
is greatly appreciated. Thanks also go to Jaron Bailey for extracting and manipulating blitz data from the COG databases and from eBird, to Nicki Taws for provision of the map, and to Geoffrey Dabb for his wonderful photographs. And sincere thanks too to all those COG members who donated prizes.

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Sue Beatty	Kay Hahne	Peter Milburn
Daryl Beaumont	Bill Handke	Martyn Moffat
Terry Bell	Jenny Handke	Terry Munro
John Bissett	Lindsay Hansch	Gail Neumann
Rosemary Blemings	John Harris	Harvey Perkins
Con Boekel	Stuart Harris	Angela Plant
Jenny Bounds	Sandra Henderson	Lucy Randall
John Brannan	Jim Kennedy	Steve Read
Muriel Brookfield	Sibilla Kovacs	Susan Robertson
John Buckley	Shirley Kral	Julian Robinson
Clarrie Burgemeister	David Landon	Alison Russell French
Martin Butterfield	Kim Larmour	Scott Ryan
Ryu Callaway	Sue Lashko	Alastair Smith
Mark Carey	Fleur Leary	Nicki Taws.
Anne Carrick	Christine Ledger	Alan Thomas
Brian Chauncy	Bruce Lindenmayer	Mieke van den Bergh
Grahame Clark	Joan Lipscombe	Philip Veerman
Julie Clark	Trevor Lipscombe	Ben Walcott
Kirsty Craven	Ethel Luff	Ros Walcott
Roger Curnow	Noel Luff	Tony Willis
Geoffrey Dabb	Rod Mackay	Kevin Windle
Christine Darwood	Alison Mackerras	Patrick Wyllie
Chris Davey	Paul Mackerras	

Table 1. Known blitz participants 2015.

Table 2. Species recorded during the 2005 - 2015 blitzes.[X=present;*=breeding]

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Emu	Х		X	Х			Х	X			Х
Stubble Quail		Х			Х		Х		Х	Х	Х
Brown Quail		Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Indian Peafowl	Х			Х		Х			Х	Х	Х
Magpie Goose				Х	Х						Х
Musk Duck	Х	X*		X*	X*		Х	Х		Х	Х
Freckled Duck								Х	Х	Х	Х
Black Swan	X*										
Australian											X*
Shelduck											
Australian Wood	X*										
Duck											
Pink-eared Duck		Х	Х		Х			Х	Х	Х	Х
Australasian.	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*
Shoveler											
Grey Teal	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х	X*
Chestnut Teal	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Northern Mallard	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
and hybrids											
Pacific Black Duck	X*										
Hardhead	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Blue-billed Duck	Х	Х		Х	Х		Х			Х	Х
Australasian Grebe	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х
Hoary-headed	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Grebe											
Great Crested	Х									Х	
Grebe											
Rock Dove	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х
Spotted Dove				Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х
Common	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Bronzewing											
Brush Bronzewing					Х						
Crested Pigeon	X*										
Peaceful Dove	Х	Х		Х	Х		Х		Х	Х	
Wonga Pigeon	Х			Х				Х			Х
Tawny Frogmouth	X*										
Australian Owlet-				Х			Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
nightjar											
Australasian Darter	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*
Little Pied	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х
Cormorant											
Great Cormorant	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Little Black	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Cormorant											
Pied Cormorant			Х	Х	Х		Х		Х	Х	Х

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Australian Pelican	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
White-necked		Х	Х		Х		Х	Х	Х	X	Х
Heron											
Eastern Great		Х	Х	Х	Х	X	Х	Х	Х	X	Х
Egret											
Intermediate Egret				Х		X	Х	Х		X	Х
Cattle Egret		Х					Х	Х	Х	X	Х
White-faced Heron	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	X	X*
Little Egret				Х			Х				
Nankeen Night	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	X	Х	Х	Х	X	Х
Heron											
Glossy Ibis		Х	Х				Х				Х
Australian White	X	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х
Ibis											
Straw-necked Ibis		Х	Х	Х	Х		Х		Х	X	Х
Royal Spoonbill		Х	Х	Х	Х	X			Х	X	Х
Black-shouldered	X	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х	X	Х
Kite											
White-bellied Sea-			Х	Х			Х		Х	X	Х
Eagle											
Whistling Kite	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х		X*	Х	X	X	Х
Brown Goshawk	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	X	Х	X	X*
Collared	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X	Х
Sparrowhawk											
Spotted Harrier								Х	Х	X	
Swamp Harrier	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	X	Х	X*	X	Х
Wedge-tailed	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X	X*	Х	X*	Х
Eagle											
Little Eagle	X	X	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*
Nankeen Kestrel	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	X	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х
Brown Falcon	X	X	X*	Х	X	X	X	X*	X	X	Х
Australian Hobby	X	X	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	X	X*	X	Х
Peregrine Falcon	Х	X	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*
Brolga											Х
Purple Swamphen	X*										
Buff-banded Rail		Х		Х	Х				Х		
Lewin's Rail								Х			
Baillon's Crake				Х	Х		X		Х	Х	
Australian Spotted			Х		Х	Х	X		Х	X	Х
Crake											
Spotless Crake								X		Х	
Black-tailed					Х		X	X			
Native-hen											
Dusky Moorhen	X*										
Eurasian Coot	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*
Black-winged Stilt			Х		Х				Х		Х

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Bush Stone-curlew										Х	Х
Black-fronted	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*
Dotterel											
Red-kneed		Х	Х	Х	Х				X*	Х	X*
Dotterel											
Banded Lapwing					Х						
Masked Lapwing	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Australian Painted							Х	Х			
Snipe											
Latham's Snipe	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Pectoral Sandpiper									Х		
Bar-tailed Godwit			Х								
Sharp-tailed	Х		Х		Х		Х		Х	Х	
Sandpiper											
Painted Button-	Х			Х	Х	Х	Х	Х			
quail											
Caspian Tern							-		-		Х
Whiskered Tern				Х	Х						
Silver Gull	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*
Glossy Black-	Х	Х		X							
Cockatoo											
Yellow-tailed	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*
Black-Cockatoo											
Gang-gang	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х	X*	Х
Cockatoo											
Major Mitchell's			Х				-		-		
Cockatoo											
Galah	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*
Long-billed				Х		Х	Х		Х	X*	Х
Corella											
Little Corella	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х
Sulphur-crested	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Cockatoo											
Cockatiel					Х						
Rainbow Lorikeet	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Australian King-	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х
Parrot											
Superb Parrot	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Crimson Rosella	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Eastern Rosella	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Red-rumped Parrot	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Blue-winged						l	<u> </u>		<u> </u>		Х
Parrot											
Turquoise Parrot	I	ļ	ļ								
					Х						
Eastern Koel			X	X	Х	X*		X	X	X	X
Channel-billed			X	X	X	X* X		X	X	X	X

Table 2 continued

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Horsfield's	X	X*	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Bronze-Cuckoo											
Black-eared											Х
Cuckoo											
Shining Bronze-	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*
Cuckoo											
Pallid Cuckoo	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	X*
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	X	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*
Brush Cuckoo	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Powerful Owl					Х						Х
Southern Boobook	Х			Х		Х		Х	Х	Х	Х
Eastern Barn Owl							Х				
Laughing	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*
Kookaburra											
Red-backed			Х	Х							
Kingfisher											
Sacred Kingfisher	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*
Rainbow Bee-eater	X	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х
Dollarbird	X	Х	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х
Superb Lyrebird	X	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X	Х	Х	Х
White-throated	X	X*	Х	Х							
Treecreeper											
Red-browed	X	Х	Х		Х	Х			Х		
Treecreeper											
Brown Treecreeper	X	X	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х
Satin Bowerbird	X	X	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	X	X*	X*	X*
Superb Fairy-wren	X*										
Pilotbird	X				Х	Х	Х		X*		
White-browed	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X	X*	X*	X*
Scrubwren											
Chestnut-rumped						Х		X			
Heathwren											
Speckled Warbler	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	Х	Х	X*
Weebill	X*	X	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X	X*	Х	X*
Western Gervgone	X	X	Х	Х	X	Х	X	X	Х	X*	Х
White-throated	X*	X	X*	Х	X	X*	X	X*	X*	X*	X*
Gervgone											
Striated Thornbill	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*						
Yellow Thornbill	X	X	X	X	X*	X*	X	X	X	X	X
Yellow-rumped	X*										
Thornbill											
Buff-rumped	X*										
Thornhill											
Brown Thornhill	X	X*	X*	X	X*						
Southern	X	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Whiteface											
Spotted Pardalote	X*										

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Striated Pardalote	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Eastern Spinebill	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х
Yellow-faced	Х	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х
Honeyeater											
White-eared	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*
Honeyeater											
Yellow-tufted	Х						Х		Х	Х	Х
Honeyeater											
Fuscous	X*	Х	X*	X*	X	X*	X	X*	Х	X*	X*
Honeyeater											
White-plumed	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х
Honeyeater											
Noisy Miner	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Red Wattlebird	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
White-fronted Chat					Х	Х	Х	Х			Х
Crescent				Х	Х	Х	Х		X*		Х
Honeyeater											
New Holland	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*
Honeyeater											
Brown-headed	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	Х
Honeyeater											
White-naped	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*
Honeyeater											
Noisy Friarbird	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Painted										Х	
Honeyeater											
Spotted Quail-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Х
thrush		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Eastern Whipbird	X7.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Varied Sittella	X*	X*	X*	X	X*	X*	X	X*	X*	X*	X*
Black-faced	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*
Cuckoo-shrike				37	37			37	37		37
Cicadabird	N7.4	N7.4	N7.4	X	X	X	NZ.	X	X	X7.4	X
White-winged	X*	Χ*	Х*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х*	Х*	Χ*	Х*
Triller	v	V*	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	Vż
Crested Shrike-tit	Λ	Λ^{*}	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ		Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ^{*}
Olive Whistler	v	v	v	v	v	v		v	Vż	v	v
Golden Whistler									Λ^* V*		
Rufous Whistler	Λ^{τ}	X^*	X^{*}	X^{*}	X	X [*]	X	X	X^{τ}	X^{τ}	Λ^{τ}
Grey Shrike-thrush	X	X*	X* X/*	X*	X	X* X/*	X	X	X	X	X
Olive-backed	Х	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*
Oriole		V	V	17	V		V	V	17		
Masked		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Woodswallow		V.	V.	77	V		V	V	17	V	
White-browed		Χ*	X^*	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Woodswallow						1					

Table 2 continued

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Dusky	X*										
Woodswallow											
Grey Butcherbird	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*						
Pied Butcherbird										Х	
Australian Magpie	X*										
Pied Currawong	X*										
Grey Currawong	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*
Rufous Fantail	Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х		
Grey Fantail	X*	X*	Х	X*							
Willie Wagtail	X*										
Australian Raven	X*										
Little Raven	X*	X	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	Х	X*
Leaden Flycatcher	X*	X*	X*	X*	X	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*
Satin Flycatcher	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Restless Flycatcher	Х	Х	Х		Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	
Magpie-lark	X*										
White-winged	X*										
Chough											
Jacky Winter	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Scarlet Robin	X*	X*	X	X*	X*	Х	X*	X	X*	X*	Х
Red-capped Robin	Х	X*	X*	Х	Х	X*	Х	X	Х	Х	Х
Flame Robin	Х	X*									
Rose Robin	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х
Hooded Robin	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х
Eastern Yellow	X*	X*		Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х
Robin											
Eurasian Skylark	Х	X	X	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	X	Х	Х
Golden-headed	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х	X*	Х
Cisticola											
Australian Reed-	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х
Warbler											
Little Grassbird	X	X	X	X	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rufous Songlark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	X*	X	X	X
Brown Songlark	X*	X	X*	X	X		X	X			
Silvereye	X	X	X*	X	X	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*
Welcome Swallow	X*										
Fairy Martin	Х	X	X*	Х	X*						
Tree Martin	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*
Bassian Thrush	Х	X		X	X			X	X*		Х
Common	X*	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*
Blackbird											
Common Starling	X*										
Common Myna	X*										
Mistletoebird	X*	X	X	Х	X*	X*	Х	X*	X	Х	Х
Double-barred	X	X*	X*	X*	X	X	X*	X	X	Х	Х
Finch											

Common name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Red-browed Finch	X*	Х									
Diamond Firetail	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
House Sparrow	X*										
Australasian Pipit	Х	Х	X*	X*	X*	X*	X*	Х	X*	X*	Х
European	Х	X*	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Goldfinch											
Common	Х				Х	Х	Х	Х	X*	Х	Х
Greenfinch											

Notes

Domestic ducks and geese, which frequent the lakes, have been excluded, as have domestic chickens even when recorded far from civilisation. The peafowl have been included as they appear to be a naturally reproducing "wild" population, in suburbia. The "mallards" group has been lumped as their exact identity cannot be assured – it probably includes crosses with domestic as well as wild birds. The Emu, Brolga and Magpie Geese are – or were - probably part of the semi-captive population at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. The Bush Stone-curlews are included as, though initially introduced to the Sanctuary at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve, they are free to roam.

Map 1. Blitz coverage 2015.



THE RED ROCKS GORGE PEREGRINE FALCONS

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During the 2014 and 2015 breeding season, I walked from Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge along the Murrumbidgee River about once a week, usually with one or more friends, to observe the Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*). There is excellent historical data on the timings of peregrine breeding in the A.C.T. in HANZAB (Marchant and Higgins 1993), much of it coming from the very extensive research carried out by Jerry Olsen and Penny Olsen and colleagues in the 1980s. In both 2014 and 2015 three falcons were fledged from the nest on the cliff at Red Rocks Gorge. A short photographic presentation about the 2014 breeding event was given at the members' night in December 2014.

Location

Peregrines are a breeding resident of the A.C.T., with breeding territories of over 30 pairs identified in the late 1980s by Olsen and Olsen (1988, 1989a,b). Many of the territories were in Namadgi National Park, but Red Rocks Gorge has also long been known as a breeding site. Red Rocks Gorge is on the Murrumbidgee River, just over three kilometres from the Kambah Pool Reserve carpark. The track is on the opposite side of the river from the cliff, allowing the birds to be observed from a safe distance. The breeding ledge is high on the cliff, and climbing is prohibited at the Gorge between August and January. Red Rocks is a noted climbing spot, being a 60m cliff face, but the various climbing clubs in the A.C.T. note on their websites the prohibition on climbing during the breeding season. Bolts marking some of the most popular climbs can be seen in the cliff face.

Peregrines do not build nests, although they will use old stick nests or hollows, and even underground nest sites on occasion. The ledge they've been using at Red Rocks Gorge is quite exposed, and we have marveled at how the young birds have survived both rain and hot sun exposure. Climatic factors are known to affect the timing of the start of the breeding season in the A.C.T. (Olsen and Olsen 1989a).

Incubation

Egg-laying in A.C.T. peregrines has been recorded mid-August to mid-October, and brooding can start before all eggs are laid. In 2014 brooding was first observed 7 Oct, late in the incubation period (since young were seen on the 16^{th}). In 2015 an adult was brooding by 7 Sep. The incubation period is around 33 days. It was not possible from the other side of the river to determine how many eggs had been laid. It is apparent from some of the photographs we took that there is a depression at the back of the ledge, where the eggs were laid and the new young were somewhat protected.

¹ All photographs used in this article are by the author.

Young Peregrines

Eyasses were first sighted on 16 Oct 2014, and 17 Oct in 2015. In both years four eggs hatched, and four very fluffy babies were sighted, but not always captured on film. Persuading four baby Peregrines to line up to be photographed was possible on only very few occasions! One of the four perished in the first few weeks in both years, leaving three healthy youngsters.



Peregrine adult on eggs, 7 Sep 2015, showing small nest ledge, with bird in apparent small depression at back of ledge. As eyasses grow they spend much of their time on the ledge slightly lower and to the right, with several rocks.



Oct 2014, showing four eyasses. The bird on the left is the one which perished, and at this stage was already much thinner and paler around the face.

On several occasions parent birds were observed bringing food either to the nest ledge, or to a nearby dead tree. We observed the eyasses being fed by the parent birds on several occasions, with galahs and pigeons the identifiable prey items. In one case an adult sat on the nearby dead tree and plucked a galah for its own meal, feathers raining down to the river, while the young were dining on pigeon.



A mouthful of feathers! Adult plucking Galah.



Adult feeding chicks.

The eyasses grow very quickly, with minimal brooding during daylight hours after the first three weeks post-hatching, by which time wing and tail feathers are appearing and they turn from cute, white, fluffy babies to rather grotesque and awkward "teenagers". They were very quiet initially, but by 3-4 weeks become quite noisy especially when a parent approached the ledge.



Peregrine eyasses October 2014 – the cute stage.



"Teenage" Peregrines – the awkward stage.

As feathers develop, the eyasses move around much more, venturing further along the ledge in both directions, and jumping up and down the small distances from one part of the ledge to another.



November 2015. The young are eating well and trying out their wings.

Fledging

Fledging occurred by 11 November in 2014, and by 16 November in 2015. In both cases we were able to identify three juvenile birds still within the vicinity, mostly on top of the cliff, but one of the 2014 fledglings was seen at the bottom of the cliff on 11 November, making clumsy progress back up in short jumps. A week later all three were flying very confidently.



Fledgling on top of the cliff, 27 November 2014.

Concerns

Whenever we visited the peregrines it was very obvious that the parent bird(s) were very much aware of our presence. In many cases one adult sat in a large kurrajong tree at the top of the cliff, while the second adult was in a dead tree on the ridge behind us. At no time were we threatened by the birds. This was initially a concern, so I consulted fellow COG member and peregrine expert Penny Olsen, and was assured that if the birds felt at all threatened they would make sure we knew it!

Close to the end of the 2015 breeding season, it was disturbing to find a group camped close to the river, with climbing gear, and an unrestrained dog. They had obviously spent the night there and were packing up their tents and climbing gear. This was reported to TAMS.

More insights into Peregrine Falcon breeding

Peregrine Falcons are known to successfully breed on high-rise buildings in city centres, both in Australia and overseas, and many city webcams have live webcam feeds. A London-based project has links to many of these webcams, but of course the breeding season is quite short, and time differences sometimes make it difficult to see birds during their daylight hours.

Closer to home, the Orange campus of Charles Sturt University has a webcam on a peregrine nest site on a campus water tower – worth checking out later in the year.

As an added bonus, in 2014 a pair of Mistletoebirds nested straight across the river from the Peregrine Falcons, and we also observed the progress, only a few metres in front of us, from nest building to fledging, with a very similar time frame to that of the falcons. These delightful little birds also fledged three young that year, and we saw the first of them emerge from the nest and fly to land next to us on the rock we were sitting on. Grey Butcherbirds, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and Tawny Frogmouths also raised young along the Red Rocks track in 2015, so breeding records for those species were also submitted.

Many thanks to Anne Carrick, Lia Battisson and John Bundock, who shared the peregrine-watching experience.

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NOTES FROM THE HINTERLAND: SAME-SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

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In the past few years I have prepared notes for Canberra Bird Notes (Butterfield 2014, 2015) on three topics, covering observations from Carwoola and Bungendore (to the East of the ACT). This report updates those topics to cover some observations in 2015-16. Thanks to David McDonald and Garry Moffit for comments on a draft.

Tawny Frogmouths: presence and breeding

A pair of Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) continued to be present in my GBS site from January 2015 onwards. As expected they constructed a nest in a large Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus meliodora*) starting on 21 Aug 2015 – approximately the usual date.

As has been the case for several years a pair of Pied Currawongs (*Strepera graculina*) also constructed a nest in the same tree and displayed aggression every time this author crossed the lawn. More unexpected was the amount of aggression the pair displayed to the Frogmouths with the sitting male getting attention many times.

The breeding timetable of the Frogmouths was complicated this year. From the start of construction to the male starting to brood was 19 days: 2-3 days longer than usual. After 28 days (average length of incubation) on 7 Oct the male displayed the agitated behaviour which in past years has typically indicated that at least one chick was hatching. It was some days before I saw a chick and I was hoping to count back from the date of them leaving the nest to confirm the date of hatching. The Currawongs continued their obnoxious behaviour, causing me to have some concern for the welfare of the chicks.

Unfortunately we had planned a trip interstate commencing on 8 Nov on which date the chicks were still in the nest. When we returned (14 Nov) the nest was empty. The period of our absence meant that the brooding period could have ranged from 33 days following the day of agitated behaviour (normal duration) to 37 days (2 days longer than ever noted in the past). I was unable to locate the family despite carefully searching each tree in my entire GBS site (the nest tree is approximately in the centre of the site). This was very unusual as the family tends to stay in very visible positions in the site for 20 -30 days before vanishing – anthropomorphising, to show the chicks the boundaries of the parent's territory. I have considered the change in behaviour to be an outcome of the harassment by the currawongs.

There may be two possibilities:

They moved outside the range of the Currawongs (but within the adults' territory) on to adjoining properties which I could not search on a regular and rigorous basis; and/or

They adopted roosts in denser foliage (of which there is much) to hide from the marauders and I just failed to locate them.

When the adults returned to the GBS site towards the end of January they roosted in a site they had used very occasionally in the past. The site offers much denser foliage cover. I also noticed an adult currawong attempting to harass them despite the currawong chicks having fledged many weeks earlier. These observations lead me to conclude that option 2 was at least part of the difficulty of locating the family after fledging.

In March and April the pair of Frogmouths has adopted its more normal daytime roosts and I have found them slightly more often than in the past. It is interesting that the birds have only roosted "snuggled together" for 60% of the days I have found them this year. In 2015, which I believe to be the old normal, they had snuggled up on 80% of days. I am tempted to suggest that this change of behaviour implies that one of the birds is a new partner but in the absence of bands it is impossible to be sure.

Plumed Whistling ducks at Bungendore

A review of the records of Plumed Whistling Ducks (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) in the COG Area of Interest was published recently (Butterfield 2014). Numbers of birds have steadily build-up in the flock at the waterbodies close to the village (now approaching suburb status) of Bungendore from 2009 to September 2014.

Records submitted to eBird¹ for the Bungendore area from Nov 2014 to Jun 2015 show a dramatic increase in the size of the flock in Feb 2015.



From 2 Feb 2105 until 26 Apr more than 70 birds were frequently reported in the flock, with a peak of 102 birds on 2 Feb. A number of observations of smaller numbers during that period indicates that the flock moved around and sometimes split up resulting in some observers only seeing part of it.

The period in each year in which the birds have been recorded has also extended since the previous review was published. In 2015 there were still 20-22 birds present until 23 Jun.

¹ As a high proportion of records submitted to COG come from eBird and most of the regular observers at Bungendore use that system I didn't invest further time necessary to access any remaining records.

There were no records in July, which is now the only month in which the birds have not been seen in the area.

In spring 2015 the first reappearance was recorded on 6 Aug with 16 birds on the Trucking Yard Lane dam. A similar number of birds were recorded there or on the nearby Bungendore Meadow dam over the next 10 days. The sites at which the birds have been found then extended to include a dam on Burrows Lane (approximately 250m south of the known site at Bungendore Meadow Dam). The birds were seen here almost exclusively from 22 Aug until 5 Oct, by which time the flock had increased to 43 birds.

There was then a gap in reporting from any of the known sites until 5 Nov 2016. Contact was also made with some local landholders to try to find where the flock had gone, but no definitive reports were received (in two cases landholders said they had seen unusual ducks which might have been this species). In a conversation on June 1 2016 with the owner of the land on which all three dams are located he stated that the ducks had relocated to another dam on his property which is not visible from the road. On 5 Nov 2 birds were reported from Bungendore Sewage Treatment Plant (STP). From then until 9 Dec 1-6 birds were present at one or other of the three dams to the south of the village. Numbers then jumped with 21 - 35 birds being reported from the WTP from 9-12 December.

There is then a two week gap in reports (possibly reduced observer effort over Christmas) and the flock of around 35 birds reappeared moving between the three Southern dams. In February (the latest month for which comprehensive data (ie a download for all sites) is available from eBird) the flock has been mainly at Trucking Yard Lane and continued at 35 birds. At the individual hotspot level there are several records of 20 - 30 birds of this species at Trucking Yard Lane in March and April 2016 as well as several records not including the species.

The flock sizes reported to eBird are summarised in the scatterplot 'Plumed Whistling Ducks in the Bungendore area'



I believe observer effort has been reasonably consistent with previous years and that for some reason the birds have not arrived in this area in the large numbers reported in Feb – Apr 2015. It is tempting to ascribe this to the relatively hot and dry summer but:

My rainfall records have given an overall average amount of rainfall since Oct 2015; and Pastoralist friends in the local area have commented on their livestock doing well despite the apparently dry weather conditions.

Examining Bureau of Meteorology climate data suggests that my records are very broadly consistent with rainfall records from Wagga Wagga, Cootamundra and Deniliquin. I am therefore reluctant to link the reduction in the birds arriving here to short term local variations in rainfall. However I have noted a comment in an ABC article² that there have been severe water restrictions (for rice irrigation) in the Deniliquin area leading to reduced rice production. Possibly this has had an impact on breeding or bird survival in that area leading to lower numbers being available to come to Bungendore?

Whatever the answer to that question, it is clear that our understanding of where the birds are located while they are in this area still has some gaps. It is also unclear why they choose to stay at a site for several days or weeks and then move to another site: when viewed at Trucking Yard Lane they appear not to be disturbed unduly by observers on foot within 20m and rarely react at all to the movements of cattle into or around the dams. It has been suggested that their presence at Trucking Yard Lane is correlated with local rainfall: that has not yet been investigated but will be the subject of further research.

Banded Lapwings at Hoskinstown

In a recent review of the records I have maintained for the Carwoola area since moving here in 2007 (Butterfield 2015) I commented on the observation of large numbers (up to 45) of Banded Lapwings (*Vanellus tricolor*) feeding in an oats paddock on the Hoskinstown Plain in Oct 2012 – Mar 2013. As the management of the property on which these sightings were made has been quite consistent from year to year it has been somewhat surprising that the birds have not been sighted there since.



² http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-20/pooling-water-rice-crops-nsw/7100862

It was even more surprising to read a COG chatline report of 11 Banded Lapwings on 20 Jul 2015 in a paddock beside Hoskinstown Rd, approximately 2.5 km from the previous site. Many COG members visited the site over the next few days causing some interest amongst local residents. (The land owner did notice the activity but, as people were very responsible in respecting his property, was not concerned³.) Over the next few months the birds ranged over an area of approximately 10 hectares ⁴ including a marshy area beside the road and a dam.

Although the number of birds sighted varies somewhat I believe this simply reflects the propensity of the birds to wander across the site and, when sitting, to be hidden by - or indeed mistaken for - one of the many cattle droppings. If the lapwings were over the lip of the dam they were totally hidden from view from the road.



An image (see on left) by *Christine Darwood*, shared on the chatline⁵, was taken of birds copulating on 16 Aug 2015. While many reports were given, both on the chatline and in personal conversation, of birds appearing to be sitting on eggs this behaviour was not consistent and the birds could never be relocated, in the positions described, on follow-up visits. However a chick was sighted on the morning of 16 Oct 2015 by a local observer, and reported to eBird on his behalf by this author.

Twelve birds were sighted by this author in the afternoon of 16 Oct after being flushed – probably by a raptor but I was looking at the grass in an effort to relocate

the chick and only alerted to the disturbance by the alarmed calls of the flying birds. Six Banded Lapwings were still present on 31 Oct 2015.

As a consequence of the good rains in November the grass grew quite tall in the area from the start of that month onwards. As a result, if the birds were there, they could not be seen from the edge of the paddock (and despite permission to visit from the landowner this observer did not fancy sharing the area with a small, but potentially frisky, bull). Since most references to the preferred habitat of the species (Marchant and Higgins, 1993) refer to short grassland it may be that they did not find the taller grass suitable. However it was notable that at the previous visit of the birds the oats crop in which they spent most of their time was of such a height that often only the heads of the lapwings were visible above the crop. This had introduced a rather sporting element to counting the numbers present.

It will be interesting to see if the birds return again in future years. I was aware of a single historical report to the Atlas of NSW Wildlife of this species from an area close to the Molonglo (on the opposite side of the Plain about 6 km from the Hoskinstown site, but <u>had</u>

³ This contrasts with reports on birding-aus of birders trespassing to observe a Paradise Shelduck.

⁴ Area assessed using the polygon feature of Google Earth Pro

⁵ http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2015-08/msg00097.html

regarded that as an identification error. They are known from Lake Bathurst (approximately 45 km from Hoskinstown) but are also not present in every year there (M. Lenz *pers. comm.*). I am now inclined to regard the species as an irregular breeding visitor to the Carwoola area. (And will look very carefully at all members of the genus *Vanellus* seen in the area from now on.)

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Banded Lapwing in flight (Julian Robinson)

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FIRST BREEDING RECORD FOR PINK-EARED DUCK IN THE ACT

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Abstract. In March 2016 I recorded eight newly hatched Pink-eared Ducks (Malacorhynchus membranaceous) at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. This is the first successful breeding event for the species in the ACT. The fledging period is not known, but observations of the young from soon after hatching indicates a fledging period of approximately 60 days.

Introduction

"Breeding does not occur in the ACT". So states the venerable Steve Wilson (1999) in reference to the Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceous*. Wilson's statement was correct until the early autumn of 2016.

Observation

On Monday 14 Mar 2016 I visited the 'big dam' (Fig. 1) at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve (NR), following my fourth unsuccessful attempt to find a reported Turquoise Parrot *Neophema pulchella*. At the dam I recorded 20 Pink-eared Duck which included an adult pair with eight ducklings. I noted the ducklings looked newly hatched (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. The "big dam" at Mulligans Flat NR (Julie Clark).

I was aware that this was a very unusual event and when I returned home I reviewed the appropriate references including the entry for the species in the Annual Bird Report (COG 2016). I found Mr Wilson's comment remained extant and was used in the Report. Until my sighting, the Pink-eared Duck had not been recorded breeding in the ACT.



Figure 2. The first photographic record of the family of Pink-eared Ducks at the 'big dam'. The young were noted as newly hatched, 14 Mar 2015 (*Alastair Smith*).



Figure 3. The young Pink-eared Duck at14 days old, 28 Mar 2015 (Roger Williams).

It is worth noting that Wilson (1999) reported most records came from the shallow waters of Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR and Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant (FSTP). Indeed, it was not until Nov 2012 that the first record appeared from eBird of Pink-eared Duck at Mulligans Flat NR (Frank Antram, pers. comm.).

Ten days later, on 24 Mar, I again visited Mulligans Flat NR to look for an Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides* that had been observed. I recorded 21 Pink-eared Duck, and noted that the family was now down to six ducklings. This was my last visit though I continued to peruse sightings of the family recorded in eBird.

The duck family were regularly observed over the autumn. The last known sighting of the young was on 3 May when four ducklings were recorded and photographed (Con Boekel, pers. comm.). At this stage the young were almost indistinguishable from the adults.

Breeding

HANZAB (Marchant and Higgins 1990) notes the Pink-eared Duck breeds widely over inland south-eastern Australia in an area bounded by a line from Eyre Peninsular to Pedirka, South Australia to Blackall and Charleville in Queensland to Walgett and Bathurst in NSW and to the Melbourne area in Victoria. It is also suggested that the species may breed more sparingly elsewhere in its range.

No precise breeding season is known for the species and it appears to breed any time when conditions are suitable in SE Australia between August and February, often following summer rains. As the nest site is usually over water on logs or stumps (Marchant and Higgins 1990; 1253), there are many of these potential nesting sites on the Big Dam and it is likely this family utilised a semi submerged log. In more recent times the Big Dam may not have been a suitable nesting site. In 1998 the dam wall was breached, it was not until 2012 that it was repaired. In the years in between water levels varied greatly. The dam was completely dry in 2003 (Jenny Bounds, pers. commun. to editor). Hence the dam may have met the requirements for breeding only in the last few years. Pink-eared Ducks are also known to use nest boxes so it is unsure why the species has not utilised these at Kellys Swamp, particularly when there have been so many birds recorded over-summering on nearby FSTP.

HANZAB (Marchant and Higgins 1990; p1253) also suggests the incubation period as 26 days, and only the female incubates the eggs. The fledging period is not determined with the length of hatching of eggs within a clutch generally 24-48 hours. Young are precocial and swim straight away.

Noting the newly hatched state of the young I first observed, this would indicate that the eggs for this particular clutch were laid around 15-17 February 2016.

There was a notable change of status of Mulligans Flat NR young as recorded by observers in eBird:

- 14 Mar 8 ducklings
- 26 Mar 6 ducklings
- 30 Mar 5 ducklings
- 13 Apr 5 ducklings
- 02 May 4 ducklings



Figure 4. The young Pink-eared Duck 35 days old, 18 Apr 2015 (Con Boekel).

The ducklings were probably hatched around 12/13 Mar 2016 and at 52 days were still clearly in juvenile plumage (lacking pink "ear") so distinguishable from adults. One of the young still retained a vestige of the downy young's eye stripe (Marchant and Higgins 1990; p1247). This may suggest a fledging period of approximately 55-60 days.



Figure 5. The young Pink-eared Ducks at 52 days old, 2 May 2015 (*Con Boekel*). Note the duckling on the left is much smaller than the other two and has still the eye stripe. The two larger ducklings have already a face pattern similar to that of the adult.

Some additional notes on behaviour

The ducklings were attended by one or both adults and the attending bird was generally more agonistic towards other ducks, including other Pink-eared Ducks. The ducks were also sensitive to observers and the adults would guide the ducklings either towards deeper water or to the far side of the dam (Con Boekel pers comm).

Conclusion

With the sighting of four young on 4 May, almost indistinguishable from adults, it can be safely suggested that not only was this the first breeding event of Pink-eared Duck recorded in the ACT, but also it was a successful event. At least four young fledged.

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NOTES

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PIED BUTCHERBIRD BREEDING RECORD

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The Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis* is classed as a rare, non-breeding visitor in the COG area of interest (Canberra Ornithologists Group 2015) and it breeds between August and November in southern Australia (Pizzey 1997). The time between fledging to independence is about 15 months (Higgins *et al.* 2006). The juvenile birds that we observed were probably between 4 and 8 months old.



Pied Butcherbird (*David Cook*)

On 20 Apr 2014 Darryl Beaumont and I visited the Miowera Pines track where we recorded an adult Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis* and two juvenile butcherbirds. We heard what we thought was the begging call of a young butcherbird and as we followed the birds about the trees we did not see any adult feed a juvenile bird. We considered our observation was insufficient to record as a breeding record, although the presence of adult and juvenile birds was recorded in the COG database.

During our visit to Miowere Pines track on 3 Apr 2016 there were two adult Pied Butcherbirds and two juvenile bids. While watching the adult bird sitting next to the Australian Hobby, we were attracted to a juvenile by its begging call. Almost immediately an adult bird flew to the juvenile bird, which was sitting on a bare branch, however the bird was partially obscured by leaves. The begging call then ceased. The begging call was a wingey upward "*weer*, *weer*", which became more rapid as the adult approached. The juvenile Pied Butcherbirds were chocolate brown on their head, nape, back wings and tail with some buff or white colouring in their wings and tail. Under the chin and neck was a lighter brown and the breast and belly were whitish. For approximately 10 minutes we watched the juvenile birds and an adult perch on a dead mullein stalk *Verbascum sp.* then pounce to the ground before returning to a mullein stalk or the fence. There were many moths and grasshoppers present. Meanwhile the other adult was perched near an Australian Hobby (*Falco longipennis*).

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VISIT OF A BAR-SHOULDERED DOVE IN DECEMBER 2015

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Introduction

The Bar-shouldered Dove (*Geopelia humeralis*) is found in the North and East of Australia, and although their range reaches further south than the ACT, there is only one previous record of this species in the ACT in the COG (Canberra Ornithologist Group) database. That record was of a single bird at Mount Clear in the far south of the Namadgi National Park. Bar-shouldered Doves are usually found in pairs or small groups, they like to forage on the ground, and require daily access to water.

The Observations

On the 10/12/2015 at 4:35pm I glanced out of my window (in Flynn), then quickly looked again properly, for there, amongst a handful of Crested Pigeons (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), was a Bar-shouldered Dove. I recognised it immediately as I have seen this species a number of times near Penrith and at other spots on the NSW coast.



The bird was a medium sized dove, appearing to be in good condition. Its face, upper breast, beak and eye-ring were grey. It had a pinky-copper coloured back of neck, and a grey-brown back, with black scalloping on these parts. The belly was white with no scalloping, and there was also no scalloping on the breast. The feet were dark pink. Large white margins were

¹ All photos by the author.

obvious on the tail feathers when seen from below. When the bird flew, or stretched out its wing, the primary and secondary wing feathers were seen to have chestnut coloured centres. I immediately sent text messages to a few friends who I thought would be interested, and Roger Williams who was not far away, came straight over to look and confirm the id.

During the following seven days, the bird was seen many times, and several other people came to have a look, all with success as the bird did not seem to go far. Over the first few days it would run to hide if I ventured outside, but then started to fly to trees nearby, or the overhead power lines. Later in the week it would fly further away if disturbed

The bird was heard to call a few times, in the early mornings of the last four days it was present. The call had a similar tone to the calls of Peaceful Doves, but was a "Hook, coo" call, the coo descending in pitch. It was also heard in flight, the wing beats not as noisy, but more of a whistle, than that of the Crested Pigeons.

Although it foraged near to Crested Pigeons and Galahs at times, it was never "with" them. During the seven days that I observed it, it was swooped by three different birds, being a Red Wattlebird, a Magpie-lark and a Pied Currawong. I believe all of these birds were breeding, but none of them swooped any other birds in my garden that I saw.



The Bar-shouldered Dove was observed foraging in the grass, and also where I threw some seed for the birds – but generally on the far edge unless the other birds were absent.

It was also often observed sun-bathing, and stretching a wing up, and one day when the sprinkler was on it did the same thing under the water. Sometimes it was seen just resting on a small rock or on the lawn, and was also observed drinking from the small pond.

On a few evenings I noticed that the Dove was roosting in the fig tree, and on one afternoon at around 17:30 h I saw it fly up into that tree to roost.

The Bar-shouldered Dove was seen in my garden on seven consecutive days. On the morning of 18 Dec 2015 it was heard calling, but not seen again.

Conclusion

It was a real privilege to have this rare visitor to the ACT spending a week in and around my garden. After watching the Bar-shouldered Dove's behaviour, especially the stretching of its wings which it did on numerous occasions, I could not help wondering if it had sore or tired wings. Perhaps it had had a long and arduous flight. I only hope it was able to find its way to a safe place, and hopefully back to the company of its own species.

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A WAMBOIN ROBIN RESCUE

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The Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang* is listed as 'vulnerable' in both NSW (where I live: the rural residential locality of Wamboin in the County of Murray) and the ACT. The frequency of observing this species in Wamboin, as elsewhere in the region, increases markedly in Autumn.

In early April 2016, one of our neighbours contacted me to report on a robin rescue. He wrote:

Thought I would share what happened yesterday. We had a red robin [subsequently confirmed as a Scarlet Robin] fly up into the ceiling through the garage manhole. We left lights on in and out but it was unable to fly back out. I spent several hours up there and we both were getting tired. I made up a net on a rod and when I returned it was asleep with its head in its chest. It was within reach of the rod so I took the gamble. It landed well and I crawled through the trusses quickly and grabbed the little thing. There was no struggle. I went up to the garden with it in my hand, opened my palm and it perched on my finger. It just sat there, looked at me then looked around and flew off. [My wife] was over the moon too.

I shared this report with the subscribers of the Canberra Ornithologists Group's CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list <u>http://tinyurl.com/hrdkblg</u> and one replied:

This is just beautiful David. Something for the Canberra Bird Notes I would suggest...humanity aligning with science! Please thank your neighbours for me.

I have done so.

Isn't it wonderful that we have people in our communities who are not committed birders, but who nonetheless care so much for the well-being of our wild native birds, especially for this species that needs all the help that we can give it.

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PLUMED WHISTLING-DUCKS FEEDING IN CATTLE MANURE

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The Plumed Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna eytoni* is uncommon in the Canberra Ornithologists Group's area of interest, but is being reported more frequently since 2009, especially in the Bungendore area (Butterfield 2014). I undertake regular, frequent surveys of the birds that use the water bodies on the periphery of Bungendore, including the Trucking Yard Lane dam, the Bungendore Meadows dam, the first small dam on Burrows Lane and the Bungendore Sewage Treatment Plant. Plumed Whistling-Ducks have used each of these sites over the last decade, as recorded in the Eremaea eBird database (<u>http://tinyurl.com/z53orpn</u>) and summarised by Butterfield (2014).

This Note describes what may be unusual feeding behaviour of the Plumed Whistling-Duck.

On 4 March 2016 I conducted a survey at the Trucking Yard Lane dam on the southern edge of Bungendore, co-ordinates 35° 16.094'S, 149° 26.132'E, commencing at 11.46 am. Five bird species were observed, including 24 Plumed Whistling-Ducks. I observed these ducks for six minutes. Most were loafing on the western wall of the dam (their most frequent location) but one was on the eastern side where the bank slopes gradually from the water to the surrounding paddock.

Throughout the whole period of observation this duck (which was alone) was apparently feeding in a fresh, moist pat of cattle manure located about four metres from the water in the dam. The bird inserted its bill into the manure and walked straight to the water. There it placed its bill below the surface, swizzled it around briefly, and returned to the manure. This was repeated about 12 times over the six minutes that I observed the behaviour. It was still behaving this way when I departed.

HANZAB (Marchant & Higgins 1990) provides information on the food used by this species:

Almost entirely herbivorous. Behaviour: Usually pluck sward on land with gooselike bill but also take food from water by dabbling from surface. On land usually feed in compact, constantly moving groups but in water more dispersed. Most feeding at night (loc. cit.).

HANZAB also mentions as foods 'animals insects' and 'animals', both mentions being somewhat cryptic.

On 9 April 2016 Martin Butterfield posted a message on the Canberra Ornithologists Group's CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list (<u>http://tinyurl.com/hdcwdnf</u>):

I had occasion to visit [Bungendore] this morning and found inter alia 25 Plumed Whistling Ducks (PWD) on the Trucking Yard Lane Dam. This sighting also answered in part what they feed on, when one of the cattle provided a large serve of hay residue into the water. I regret I didn't get a photograph of this incident but I suspect it is not uncommon as a good proportion of the ducks, including at least one PWD immediately arrived in the area and began dabbling.

These two observations, a month apart, at the same location and of possibly the same flock of Plumed Whistling-Ducks, invites the question: what contents of the cattle manure constituted food for the ducks? At the time of my March observation, with the continuous movement between the manure and the water, I wondered if it may have been insects in the manure, but it could just as readily been seeds or vegetation. Butterfield's observation confirms that there was something in the manure that was a desirable food source for at least some Plumed Whistling-Ducks.

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PIED BUTCHERBIRD AND AUSTRALIAN HOBBY PURSUING YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATERS

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On 20 Aprl 2014, Darryl Beaumont and I drove to Paddy's River Travelling Stock Reserve for a bird outing. After spending some time in the wooded reserve observing the usual bush birds we ventured into an open area that was probably once a part of the former Miowera pine plantation. Along the forestry track are scattered apple box trees *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*, remnants with regrowth after the 2003 bush fires. Perched upon the tallest dead branch of an apple box was an Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis* and on lower dead wood were Pied Butcherbirds *Cracticus nigrogularis*, an adult and two immature birds.

Hunting behaviour

Shortly after these birds attracted our attention, there was a flurry of activity so we went through the gate for a closer view. By then the birds had resettled on their original perches. We soon realized that the activity sprang from small flocks of about 6 to 10 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters Lichenostomus chrysops passing through on their annual autumn migration. The honeyeaters were travelling in a north to south directions stopping briefly in the apple box along the forestry road. We observed three or four chases by the hobby and the butcherbird and after each chase the pursuers would resume their perches towards the southern end of the track. Then the chase began again at the northern end of the trees. One butcherbird crashed, wings splayed out, to the ground on the road where there were trees on either side. At almost the same time another butcherbird almost crashed toward the ground but righted itself just in time. Then, in less than an eye-blink, the hobby swooped down towards the ground where the butcherbirds were struggling to compose themselves. In fast flight the hobby snatched the honeyeater from on or near the ground and flew off with a honeyeater in the direction where we were standing and then swiftly moved out of sight. While we could not see the detail because everything happed so quickly, it seemed to us that the butcherbirds flushed the honeyeater from the trees, into the clearing between the trees and down towards the ground enabling the hobby to grab it. Australian Hobbies catch birds and insects in mid-air using strategies such as fast contour-flying between trees (Olsen 2006) and this strategy would describe our observation although the nature of this hunt required the bird to fly close to the ground and then rise swiftly away. After the chase the butcherbirds flew up to the nearby trees. We followed the butcherbirds around for a while as they flew from tree to tree calling to each other. Some five to ten minutes later the hobby returned to its perch, but it was time for us to leave.

In Apr 2015 we returned to Miowera track and while we located the Australian Hobby we failed to see any Pied Butcherbirds. Another visit was made to the area on 3 Apr 2016. Four Pied Butcherbirds were present including two juvenile birds. Also present was an Australian Hobby. At least one Pied Butcher followed the Hobby from tree to tree, sometimes perching within 20 cm of it. The morning was overcast and no honeyeaters were passing through on the annual migration.

Literature search

Pizzy and Knight (1997) make reference to Pied Butcherbirds co-operating with Australian Hobby to pursue small birds. This behaviour is mentioned in HANZAB (Marchant and Higgins 1993, Higgins *et al.* 2006), which describes Australian Hobbies taking the opportunity to pursue prey flushed by many things including stock, farm machinery, people and Pied Butcherbirds. HANZAB also mentioned that Pied Butcherbirds seem to follow the hobby and attempt to catch small birds flushed into shrubs by the Hobby.

As I was curious about the benefits the Pied Butcherbird receives from the hunt such as the one that I witnessed, I read as many of the references in HANZAB that I could find on the feeding association between the two species. Table 1 summaries the nine articles I read.

Source	Number of Pied Butcher- birds	Location	Prey species	Behaviour
Le Souëf 1918	4	Victoria	Magpie-lark	PB assisting the AH at every turn
Barnard & Barnard 1924	ns	Duaringa, Central Queensland	na	PB hunt the hiding bird out, when the AH has it in a flash
Slater 1961	1	Derby WA.	Rufous- throated Honeyeater	PB driving prey out, AH stooped and eventually caught the bird
Hawtin 1984	3	Merbein South, Victoria	ns	PB attempting to flush prey, AH perched nearby or circling overhead waiting to pursue prey
Hawtin 1984	>1	Red Cliffs, Victoria	House Sparrow	AH pursuing birds disturbed by PB.
Nevinson 1988	>1	Riverina NSW	Common Starling	PB seems to follow the Hobbies, attempt to catch small birds scared by AH. Also PB flushes the prey and twice AH was seen to make the kill
Maher 1989	3	Gulpa State Forest NSW	Common Starling	PB kept chasing prey, AH stooped each time, finally grabbed it
Debus, 1991	1	Hillston NSW	Crested Pigeon	AH chased prey apparently flushed from shrub by PB
Debus et al. 1991	2	Northern NSW	Striated Pardalote	Prey repeatedly flushed by PB, each time AH pursued the prey

Table 1: Summary of articles on the cooperative hunting behaviour of the PiedButcherbird and Australian Hobby.

PB = Pied Butcherbird; AH = Australian Hobby; ns = not specified; na = not available

Conclusions

A feeding association between these two species has been recorded for over 100 years by bird observers across Australia. In most cases more than one Pied Butcherbird is involved (up to 4 birds). All articles clearly record the butcherbird's behaviour of flushing prey from vegetation and the hobby taking advantage of the prey flushed into the open. Five of the articles described the Australian Hobby successfully catching the prey. One article suggests that the butcherbird attempts to catch prey scared by the Hobby (Nevinson 1988). In no article was the Pied Butcherbird observed actually catching and consuming prey as a result of the cooperative hunting behaviour. The fact that the Pied Butcherbird follows the Australian Hobby would indicate that it receives some benefit from the hobby's behaviour, albeit not easily observed. In my observation I did see the Pied Butcherbird catch or almost catch a honeyeater but it lost its prey to the Australian Hobby when the butcherbirds. Notwithstanding the lack of observations, Pied Butcherbirds must successfully catch and consume prey sufficiently frequently for the feeding association to continue over time.

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OBSERVATIONS OF MAGPIE-LARKS NESTING ON LIGHT POLES IN CRACE, ACT

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During the first week of Feb 2016, I noticed a Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) nest on the horizontal beam of a light pole in Abena Avenue Crace, one block west of the Crace shops, between Redruth and Quain Streets. This was the second Magpie-lark nest of the season in this street - the first was in Oct 2015, on the directly opposite side of the street. A photo of the streetscape is shown in Fig. 1 below. Although difficult to see, a Magpie-ark is perched next to the nest in this photo.



Figure 1. Abena Avenue, Crace, looking east towards Crace shops.

Construction of Crace began in 2009. As with many new suburbs, most of the street trees are quite immature as can be seen above. However, only 150 metres from where the Magpie larks have nested on the light poles, the Hilltop Reserve contains many mature trees - the tops of



these mature eucalypts can be seen in the distance in the photo above (between the deciduous tree and the building on the right).

Two bolt heads protrude from the horizontal beams on each light pole. While I did not observe either nest during construction, on both occasions, the birds used the bolt head closest to the vertical pole, apparently as part of the base for their nest (Fig. 2)

Figure 2. Male Magpie-lark on nest, 2 Oct 2015.

I did not take any notes of the breeding event from Oct 2015, however, when the second nest appeared in Feb 2016, I observed the nest every few days until the second week of March. On 14 Feb I observed one Magpie-lark sitting on the nest. When the second bird arrived they swapped over. This pattern continued throughout February. On 21 Feb the two birds were taking turns attending the nest. I observed one bird fly off while the remaining bird perched on the side of the nest and poked around in the nest with its beak for about 45 seconds before sitting on the nest. I could not see any evidence of young, so it was not clear that the adult was feeding nestlings - it may have been re-positioning eggs.

On 1 Mar two nestlings were visible and being fed by both adults (Fig. 3).



Figures 3 (left) and 4 (right). Adult feeding two nestlings, 1 Mar 2016 (left); Two nestlings perched on the rim on the nest, 8 Mar 2016.

On 6 Mar I led a COG walk in Crace starting at the Crace Ponds and walking along Abena Avenue to observe the Magpie-lark nest. On this occasion, two adults were present but only one young was observed being fed. The weeks leading up to this time had been relentlessly hot, so I feared that perhaps only one of the two nestlings had survived. However, two days later on 8 Mar, two nestlings were perched on the rim of the nest (Fig. 4).

By 10 March the nest was empty and the young were being fed by the adults nearby.

I am in no way certain, but assume that both the nests of Oct 2015 and Feb 2016 belonged to the same pair of Magpie-larks. What is most puzzling is why they would choose to nest in such an exposed location when it is no more than 150 metres to mature trees suitable for nesting that would offer better protection from the elements and predators - perhaps competition for nest sites is an issue. However, given the success of at least the second nesting of the season, the choice of nesting site for this pair of Magpie-larks appears sound.

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COLUMNIST'S CORNER

What Bird Subspecies Is That? Baldwin Spencer leaves his mark

Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929), the foundation professor of biology at Melbourne University had a busy professional career, holding many positions, including the presidency of the Victorian Football League 1919-1926. In 1896, when proposals for the biological regions of colonial Australia were a scientific preoccupation, Spencer put forward his own theory.

Spencer divided Australia into three faunal regions: (a) most of inland and western Australia was in an 'Eyrean' sub-region; (b) the north formed a 'Torresian' sub-region; and (c) the south-east corner east of the dividing range, with Tasmania, was the 'Bassian' sub-region. That particular regional approach has been described as belonging to the 'Colonial Period (1820-1910)', being followed in due course by different approaches reflected in names such as 'Ecogeographical Period (1950-1980s)' and 'Systematic Period (1980s-2000s)' (Ebach 2012).

For a scientific conference in Canberra in 1954 experts in various fields assembled a handbook titled 'The Australian Capital Territory as a Region'. Two members of the then Wildlife Survey Section, CSIRO, Francis Ratcliffe and John Calaby, contributed a chapter on the 'zoology' of the Territory. In approaching this task they found it useful to discuss Spencer's regions in relation to the ACT. With respect to the birds 'the Bassian element predominates', 'with a fairly strong Eyrean representation', and 'a very small Torresian intrusion'.

However, the appearance around Canberra of 'two supremely typical Eyrean species' (the Galah and Crested Pigeon) illustrated 'the unstable nature of faunal boundaries'.

Although not to be taken as representing 'static zoogeography', the names of Spencer's regions lived on. Harry Frith used them in *Birds in the Australian High Country* (1969), giving examples of local 'high country' bird species that had evolved within Spencer's regions and were 'now on the whole still characteristic of them'.

The names of Spencer's sub-regions were given currency by their use in the Reader's Digest volume on Australian birds. There, Dick Schodde added two further 'fauna divisions', thereby reducing the nominal 'Torresian division' in New Guinea to two fragments of eucalypt savannah, neither of which, ironically, included the coastal area adjoining Torres Strait. Schodde added: 'Baldwin Spencer's divisions are now restricted to the birds of the eucalyptus forest, woodland and desert, all of which grade into one another to some extent'. As zoogeography had clearly moved on from Spencer's sub-regions, it is a little surprising that his names for them should be thought useful now in English names for Australian birds. Apart from 'Eyrean Grasswren' (presumably from its occurrence near Lake Eyre) the first example was 'Torresian Crow'. This was recommended in 1978 to overcome the 'geographical tug-of-war' between 'Australian' and 'Papuan' Crow. 'Torresian' was not entirely satisfactory given the species range across much of the Eyrean division.

Then came 'Bassian Thrush', something of an insider's proposal since to appreciate the reference you would need to know the given meaning of 'Bassian' (not something in the Macquarie dictionary). Moreover the species is usually given as taking in a subspecies, the 'Wet Tropics Bassian Thrush'(!), in north Queensland.



The sub-regions proposed by Baldwin Spencer

As it happens, subspecies are what I wanted to talk about. Birdlife Australia has embarked on the ambitious exercise of assigning ENGLISH NAMES to subspecies of Australian birds. Generally, this has been achieved by attaching a geographical description to the *existing*

English species name. Although that approach produces a long name it avoids the confusion from giving a subspecies a completely different name from the species name.

Consider 'Norfolk Island New Zealand Pigeon' (now extinct, unfortunately). This is a long name, and looks a little odd, but conveys the information that this is the subspecies of the New Zealand Pigeon that is (or was) found on Norfolk Island.

Perhaps these names will prove useful for the purpose of conveying to non-scientists a better idea of the subspecies of Australian birds. You will have the choice, for the local Silvereyes, of saying 'South-eastern' and 'Tasmanian' instead of *westernensis* and *lateralis*. (It will be best not to dwell on the magpies. 'Southern Victorian Australian Magpie' and 'Coastal New South Wales Australian Magpie' should be regarded as offered for information rather than everyday use.)

As the ranges of most subspecies do not coincide with named geographic areas there has necessarily been a fair amount of approximation, adopting the best of various unsatisfactory choices. For subspecies in northern Australia, the labels 'Wet Tropics', 'Cape York' and 'Top End' have been pressed into service. In the absence of anything better there can be no strong objection to those.

For some 20 subspecies 'Torresian' has been chosen as the geographical adjective. In the Birdlife Australia list this is used to indicate a subspecies with a range that includes part of Australia *and* New Guinea. It might apply to a northern Australian subspecies (of several Australian ones) that is shared with New Guinea (*e.g.* Torresian Grey Shrike-thrush) or to a single Australia-New Guinea subspecies to be separated from more distant subspecies (*e.g.* Torresian Superb Fruit-Dove).

In that sense 'Torresian' might reasonably be used for an Australia-New Guinea subspecies that extends far south of the Torresian sub-region as conceived by Spencer (*e.g.* Torresian Nankeen Night-Heron). This seems to be another example of groping for a name to describe the great inter-linked bird region of Australia-New Guinea to which Tim Low has devoted a chapter in his recent book about the origins of Australia's birds: 'Every biologist I have asked about this has agreed, often with great emphasis, that New Guinea *is* Australia' (Low 2015).

Low mentions several names proposed to fill this need although 'none has caught on' - like the 'Australinea' of Richard Dawkins. Perhaps 'Torresia', if its narrow Spencerian sense can now be put to one side, would be a suitable choice. Already it seems to be part of the way there.

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Stentoreus

Birding in Cyberspace, Canberra Style

Perhaps the most interesting innovation with respect to Birding in Cyberspace in recent months has been the **expansion of the facilities in eBird** globally, including via its Australian portal now known as eBird Australia (formerly Eremaea eBird) <u>http://ebird.org/content/australia/</u>. As recently as May this year eBird announced the release of an upgrade that enables us to search its rapidly growing media database. At the time of writing the database included 698,436 photographs, 153,037 bird calls and 44,843 bird videos! eBird wrote:

Last November we released the ability to add photos and audio directly to your eBird checklists, archiving these rich media in the Macaulay Library. As of this week, we're pleased to announce that all of these images and recordings that you've worked so hard to get are easily searchable through the eBird/Macaulay Library Media Search. Take a look for yourself—but we don't take any responsibility for the decrease in your productivity! Start searching here https://ebird.org/media/catalog .

Further information on using this resource is online at

http://ebird.org/content/australia/news/introducing-ebirdmacaulay-library-media-search/ .

In addition to this search capacity, at the time of writing eBird was at an advanced stage in developing a new facility that will be known as Community Review. Previous columns in this series have discussed the increasing interest in citizen science, which includes citizens pouring through databases and correcting errors there. Zooniverse https://www.zooniverse.org/ is a prominent example. eBird will be the next cab off the rank in this respect. Although eBird has sound quality control systems that combine automated data processing with the direct involvement of expert reviewers, the Community Review process will enable the rest of us to report any errors in the identification of birds and their calls included in the rich media database. Our reports will then go to the reviewers for confirmation.

Bird webcams have been around for many years. Mostly they are fixed cameras that are trained on some particular event of interest, not uncommonly bird breeding activities, with the resulting video streamed live over the internet for all to monitor. The well-known **Sea-EagleCAM** at BirdLife Australia's Discovery Centre in Sydney, established in 2009, is online here http://www.sea-eaglecam.org/video.html. In recent months there has been much interest, globally, in the **Californian Condor webcam** at http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/49/California_Condor/. I have been fascinated by the interactions between these birds and their chick.

For those of us who prefer books, printed on paper, The Birdbooker Report is an interesting website. You may enjoy their page on the **Best Bird Books of 2015**: <u>http://birdbookerreport.blogspot.com.au/2015/12/best-bird-books-of-2015.html</u>. How good it is to see there, as Number One among the Best Books, Joseph Forshaw and William Cooper's wonderful *Pigeons and Doves in Australia*. The editor of *CBN* will, I am sure, welcome your comments on the Birdbooker's assessments of the 2015 bird book league table.

It seems many years since I last opened one of the printed encyclopaedias that still linger somewhere in the bowels of my bookshelves. Online sources have long superseded them, and for good reasons. We all know about, and most of us make substantial use of, Wikipedia (although, interestingly, my speech recognition software has trouble with that spelling!).

Whether you describe yourself as a birder, a birdwatcher, a bird observer, a lister, a twitcher or something else, you might find some interest in the Wikipedia entry on **Twitchers' vocabulary** <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitchers' vocabulary</u>. The Wikipedia authors point out that:

Twitchers' vocabulary is the set of <u>jargon</u> words used by <u>twitchers</u>. Twitchers are committed bird-watchers who travel long distances to see a new species just to add a species their "<u>lifelist</u>", "year list" or other lists. Some terms may be specific to regional birding communities, and not all are used due [*sic*] to dialectic and cultural differences.

Some other components of twitchers' vocabulary are found in such fine (printed) books as Sean Dooley's 'Anoraks to Zitting Cisticola' (Allen & Unwin, 2007) and Bill Oddie's classic 'Little black bird book' (Portico, 1980 and many subsequent editions). Perhaps, from these and your own sources, you may care to edit the Wikipedia entry to make it more up-to-date and comprehensive? And if you have not yet ventured into the wonderful world of editing Wikipedia, information on how to do so is available here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Tutorial/Editing.

While on the topic of twitching, what about **Noah's Big Year** <u>https://www.audubon.org/features/birding-without-borders</u>? Noah is, of course, Noah Strycker. In 2015 he set out to break the previous record of the maximum number of bird species observed over a 12 month period. His goal was to see 5,000 bird species during that calendar year. This is how he described his challenge prior to embarking upon it:

It will be one continuous trip, with no out-and-backs. In chronological order, I will spend a few days in Antarctica, three and a half months in South America, two months in Central and North America, a week and a half in Europe, two and a half months in Africa, three months in Asia and some Pacific islands, and three weeks in Australia, traveling by short hops. I'm packing super light. Everything—binoculars, a tiny laptop, malaria pills, a mosquito net, water-purification tablets—must fit in one small, carry-on backpack. My bulkiest item is a compact Leica spotting scope. I might take an extra pair of underwear.

Nobody has ever before tried a single, yearlong, round-the-world birding trip.

If you did not follow Noah's exploits throughout the course of 2015, and would like to know whether or not he reached his goal of 5,000 bird species in the year, all will be revealed if you visit <u>https://www.audubon.org/news/day-365-so-long-and-thanks-all-birds</u> !

How many times have you heard people say 'I find it really hard to identify birds by their calls'. You may well have said the same thing yourself! In 2015 the Cornell Lab of Ornithology <u>http://www.birds.cornell.edu</u> published, in their excellent print and online magazine *Living Bird*, some articles on **identifying birds by their calls**. In May last year they published an article *How to Listen to Bird Song—Tips and Examples From The Warbler* Guide by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, authors of *The Warbler Guide*, see <u>https://www.allaboutbirds.org/how-to-listen-to-bird-song-tips-and-examples-from-the-</u>

<u>warbler-guide/</u>. Although their guidance is specifically with respect to North American warblers, there is much that we can gain, with respect to Australian birds, from their advice. The authors write:

The Warbler Guide system is based on a simple idea: if you can accurately and objectively describe a sound, you can identify it. As a bonus, when you describe a song you pay closer attention to its details, and it becomes easier to recognize.

One reason why birders can identify birds by sight is that we have a whole vocabulary for it: words like "eyeline," "streaking," "wingbars," "upperparts." But how to describe a song? We might describe it as "sweet" or "rough" or "dark," but these words mean different things to different people. Or we might focus on the melody, like we would with music. The problem there is that many birds don't have a consistent melody—try memorizing the constantly changing song of a Northern Mockingbird, for example.

So instead, we've developed three simple questions that will separate most warbler songs, and many other bird songs: sound quality, pitch trend, and number of sections.

They go on to answer the questions: What is the Sound Quality of the Song? What Is the Pitch Trend of the Song? How Many Sections Does the Song Have? They suggest words for describing these, and provide simple sonograms to provide a visual illustration of what they are talking about.

A particularly useful one-page summary *cum* visualisation of the guidelines was published in the Summer 2015 edition of *Living Bird*, generously provided free of charge online by the Cornell Lab at http://digital.livingbird.org/livingbird/summer_2015/?pm=2&u1=friend&pg=68#pg68.

I am sure that the editor of *CBN* would welcome any feedback about the utility of their guidance, in an Australian birding context, from either bird call experts or from people who have previously found difficulties in this area and have used the Stephenson and Whittle guidance to help them learn to identify Australia birds by their calls.

T. Javanica

This column is available online at <u>http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/canberra-bird-notes/</u>. There you can access the web sites mentioned here by clicking on the hyperlinks.

Details on how to subscribe to *Birding-Aus*, the Australian birding email discussion list, are on the web at <u>http://www.birding-aus.org/</u>. A comprehensive searchable archive of the messages that have been posted to the list is at <u>http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/birding-aus</u>.

To join (subscribe to) the *CanberraBirds* email discussion list, send an email message to <u>canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au</u>. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

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BOOK REVIEW

Birds of the Wet Tropics of Queensland & Great Barrier Reef & Where to Find Them. By Lloyd Nielsen

Mount Molloy, Author: 2nd ed., 2015, 404 pp.; ISBN 9780957988156, RRP AU \$45.00

Reviewed by JOHN GOLDIE, Watson, ACT (walter.goldie@iinet.net.au)



There is now an updated version of Lloyd Nielsen's book on birds of the wet tropics. And I like it. The rich green area on the north Queensland coast from near Townsville, through Cairns, to near Cooktown and inland on to the high ranges, including Atherton Tableland is known as "The Wet Tropics". This area has a rich diversity in birds (as well as mammals), including a high degree of endemism – there are a dozen or more species found nowhere else and numerous other distinctive and identifiable forms of other species just in this area. Nielsen's coverage extends out onto the adjacent Great Barrier Reef to include the local sea birds.

The book has four main sections as well as the usual introductions, explanations and brief side-topics, all of which are

useful. The first section, and I suspect the main aim of the author, is to provide a field guide to this part of Australia so that local residents can more easily come to know the birds of their region. To that end, Nielsen has arranged his material in a different manner to the well-known Australia-wide field guides. Rather than being in a taxonomic order – which is neither here nor there for most of us, but just has to be learnt – he has arranged them by visual clues. Most categories are colour based, but some are arranged by other characteristics such as "long tails". Many people who are used to the arrangement in conventional field guides may find this confusing or unhelpful; however the author says he chose this method after a lifetime of watching people try to work things out and feels this approach will help them.

Field guides are not just for mad-keen birders with lots of knowledge and the patience to fit with convention, they are also for people with a casual interest in birds who just want to identify something they have noticed. To that end I think his approach will have widespread appeal to the residents of this region – it is a regional field guide after all. I think the reason it succeeds in this different format is that he has not tried to be simplistic in forcing a bird to fit in only one category. Those that belong to more than one category are shown in full detail in each of their categories (rather than describing it just once and using annoyingly frustrating cross-references for the other categories). For example, the Spotless Crake is under both "Red eye-ring" and "Black or very dark plumage".

The second main section is titled "Difficult birds to identify (& some to watch for)". I found this an excellent section, and for me at least, worth buying the book for in its own right. He has singled out 41 cases of difficult-to-separate birds and devoted a double page spread of pictures and text to pointing out the distinguishing features of the species that can be confusing. Mostly the cases are species pairs (goshawks v's sparrowhawks, the 2 tattlers), and sometimes there are multiple species to separate (such as the 5 species of egrets or the various wagtails). In particular I found the material on the local specialities, such as Bower's and Little Shrike-thrush and the two thrushes, invaluable. He has also offered a very interesting

discussion on current developments on a couple of species – whether there is a hitherto unknown species/sub-species of quail-thrush in the region, whether the Cicadabirds in the different habitats are in fact different species (New Guinea has multiple species of Cicadabird, so Australia might too), and so on.

The third main section is on "Status and Range". This is a concise text description for each species covering how common it is and in what areas it is generally, or seasonally, found. This is a great supplement to the distribution maps.

The fourth main section is on "Best Birding Areas". This is another wonderful section for visiting birders. There are nine specific maps covering the region with a lot of text describing good birding locations on each map. So no matter which particular area you are visiting there will be a map and text to guide you to places you can go. He points out that there are also many other places, some of which will be excellent on some occasions, that can be just as rewarding. By reading the third section in conjunction with this section you will soon be able to look out for other prospective places to seek out the large range of birds that inhabit this region.

In summary I feel the field guide portion of this book will suit some people and not others, whereas the other sections are a real bonus for birdwatchers visiting the region. I was very pleased to have this book with me on a recent visit and think others will find it worthwhile too.

RARITIES PANEL NEWS

The record to note in this group is that of the Square-tailed Kite, a "first" endorsed record for the ACT and helpfully supported by a photograph. There have been reports of this species to the east of the region and it is a regular visitor to the south coast, so it was probably just a matter of time till one turned up here. The white crown is a diagnostic feature of this species, along with upswept wings, prominent and barred primaries and rufous underbody.

Apart from the kite, there is not a lot to report on this occasion. The Azure Kingfisher was first recorded in Canberra in 1966 and does turn up occasionally. It can be confused with the larger Sacred Kingfisher. Helpfully this bird turned up after the majority of the Sacreds had migrated and was captured digitally by many in COG. The tiny size, short tail and vivid colours are diagnostic. The White-headed Pigeon, another denizen of the coast, also turns up from time to time, particularly in the cooler months. The Turquoise Parrot is thought to be also a very occasional visitor, though it may go unrecognised. It was first recorded in the Brindabellas in 1988. The Pale-headed Rosella was an aviary escapee and has since been recaged. It is usually found along the Queensland coast.

ENDORSED LIST 88, MAY 2016

White-headed Pigeon Columba leucomela

1; 25 May 16; Tony Lawson; Dixon Drive Holder

Square-tailed Kite Lophoictinia isura

1; 31 January 16; Steve Holliday & Prue Buckley; Mt Ainslie NR

Turquoise Parrot Neophema pulchella

1; 7 March 16; Julie Clark & Jill Duncan; Mulligans Flat NR

1; 24 April 16; Tristan Webber; Yaouk Trail

2; 29 April 16; Lach Read, Orana School, Weston Creek

Pale-headed Rosella Platycercus adscitus

1; 21 May 16; Roger Barson; Bromell Cct, Wanniassa

Azure Kingfisher Ceyx azureus

1; 14 May 16; Duncan McCaskill; Lake Ginninderra

Contents continued from outside back cover

Columnist's Collier	
What Bird Subspecies Is That? Baldwin Spencer leaves his mark Stentoreus	183
Birding in cyberspace, Canberra style T. Javanica	187
Book Review	
Birds of the Wet Tropics of Queensland & Great Barrier Reef & Where to Find Them. By Lloyd Nielsen	
John Goldie	190
Rarities Panel News and Endorsed List 88	192

Canberra Bird Notes

Columnist's Corner

Canberra Bird Notes is published three times a year by the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc. and is edited by Michael Lenz. Major articles of up to 5000 words are welcome on matters relating to the status, distribution, behaviour or identification of birds in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding region. Please discuss any proposed major contribution in advance. Shorter notes, book reviews and other contributions are also encouraged. All contributions should be sent to one of those email addresses:

CBN@canberrabirds.org.au or michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com

Please note that the views expressed in the articles published in Canberra Bird Notes are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Responses to the views expressed in CBN articles are always welcome and will be considered for publication as letters to the editor.

CANBERRA BIRD NOTES 41 (2) JULY 2016

A	rticles	
	I UICICO	

The etymology of "jizz", revisted	
David McDonald	
A change in attitude: Where did the Indian Myna go wrong?	
Noel Luff	
Observations of the breeding behaviour of the Pacific Koel in relation to its	newest host
Virginia Abernathy	
Further observations of Eastern Koel fledglings in Chapman/Rivett during th	ie summer
of 2015-2016	
Jack Holland	
The Canberra Bird Blitz 2015	
Barbara Allan	
The Red Rocks George Peregrine Falcons	
Sandra Henderson	155
Notes from the hinterland: Same, same but different	
Martin Butterfield	161
First breeding record for Pink-eared Duck in the ACT	
Alastair Smith	167
Notes	
Pied Butcherbird breeding record	
Gail Neumann	171
Visit of a Bar-shouldered Dove in December 2015	
Christine Darwood	
A Womboin robin rescue	
David McDonald	
Plume Whistling Ducks feeding in cattle manure	
David McDonald	176
Pied Butcherbird and Australian Hobby pursuing Yellow-faced Honeyeaters	•
Gail Neumann	
Observations of Magpie-larks nesting on light poles in Crace, ACT	
Fleur Leary	
Continued on	inside back cover