



Gang-gang

AUGUST 2014

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 13 August 2014

7.30 pm.

*Canberra Girls Grammar School,
Multi-media centre, corner Gawler Cres
and Melbourne Ave, Deakin*

The first presentation on an **aspect of COG's history** in relation to **COG's 50th Anniversary celebrations** will be by **Barbara Allan** on "History of COG's Bird Blitz, and plans for our 10th Blitz in 2014".

The main presentation entitled "**Seventeen years of ANU-COG Bird Research**" will be by **Professor David Lindenmayer** from the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the ANU.

David is well known to Canberra Ornithologists Group members and will outline how volunteers from COG have contributed to major ANU research projects since 1996 – and they continue with this support to this day. This talk will provide an overview of key research findings to date from work at Booderee National Park (Jervis Bay), the Nanangroe Natural Experiment in woodlands and plantations near Jugiong, and the South West Slopes Restoration Study.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

The four weeks since my last column have often been cool, wet and windy with a limited amount of the characteristic July weather of big frosts followed by clear still days. Without the excitement of the **Australasian** and **Australian Little Bitterns** experienced during June, this is reflected in the comparative lack of reporting on the COG chatline. The former was last reported at the AIS pond in late June, and the latter at McKellar Ponds on 9 July. In contrast the **Musk Lorikeets** have stayed up to the time of writing this column, with numbers at Wanniasa gradually decreasing and those at Hughes moving to the adjacent Deakin. There have also been some other lorikeets observed, with a single record of **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets**, and Nicki Taws heard unidentified lorikeets at Lake Ginninderra. So keep an ear out for any lorikeets in your area, particularly if gums are flowering, as they still are in my GBS site.

The most unusual sighting has been of three **Great Crested Grebe** in East Basin on 6 July, which unfortunately were only observed for a limited time. It again posed the question in my mind of why this species is relatively rare in Canberra when it seems to be more common (like the **Musk Duck**) to the north and

Continued Page 2



Musk Lorikeet

Photo: David Cook

Committee News

COG has purchased its own laptop for use at meetings.

Jenny Bounds prepared a response to the ACT Government's Environmental Offsets Policy.

See reports in this issue on the very successful COG photo competition and forum.

Sandra Henderson

Steve Wilson Medal

As part of the COG 50 year celebrations the COG Committee is pleased to announce the inauguration of the annual award of the Steve Wilson Medal. A Committee has been established to receive nominations for the award which will honour the contribution made by Steve Wilson, one of the founding fathers of COG. The Committee consists of the current COG President Alison Russell-French, Bruce Lindenmayer and Neil Hermes. Committee decisions must be unanimous.

The award will recognise meritorious contribution by an individual to COG and is open to any COG member or ex member. The recognised service will have been voluntary and may have been through committee or other roles. It is not necessarily recognising long service or research. It is for service to COG, not service to birds.

Nominations can be made by any current COG member and must be in writing (no more than 2 pages). Each nomination must be endorsed by a proponent and one other member.

The inaugural award will be made to two recipients and will be announced at the Gala Dinner on 22 November.

Please make nominations to hermes.neil@gmail.com until 1 October 2014.

CALL FOR HISTORIC COG PHOTOS

As part of the COG 50 year celebrations there will be a special edition of Canberra Bird Notes at the end of 2014. The edition will include articles on historical aspects of COG going back to the earliest days.

If anyone has old photos of COG activities, particularly of people, could they forward electronic files to Neil Hermes. Could you please identify any COG members in the pictures.

Neil Hermes hermes.neil@gmail.com

What to watch out for this month—*continued from Page 1*

northeast of the ACT such as at Pejar Dam between Crookwell and Goulburn. It was also common on a large private dam COG visited with the Goulburn Field Naturalists north of Mittagong several years ago. I'm not sure about the sometimes advanced theory that it's the presence of carp stirring up the bottom that keeps both species away.

Of the spring/summer migrant species the **Superb Parrot** seems to have been the most widely observed during July, in particular in Gungahlin, with up to 30 seen together. In contrast to June, I have only one record of a single **Dusky Woodswallow**, and only a few reports of the **Olive-backed Oriole** and the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. Numbers of **Grey Fantails** and **White-naped, Yellow-faced** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** overwintering seem to be a bit higher. Other spring/summer migrants observed during July have been the **Mistletoebird**, **Western Gerygone**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Noisy Friarbird**. Numbers of the above species, which are usually among the first to return, together with **Fairy** and **Tree Martins**, will increase towards the end of August, so keep an eye out for them.

At the same time the winter altitudinal migrants will start to move away from Canberra with reports of **Scarlet Robins**, particularly numerous this winter, already starting to move out. Similarly the **White-eared Honeyeater** is already hard to find in my local patch of Coleman Ridge/Narrabundah Hill, with none in my GBS for July. Around 20 **Flame Robins** have been reported from Campbell Park, but again were not able to be found in my local patch in July. There have only been a few reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, though one again was calling loudly at the same spot in Chapman a number of times during July, but still not venturing into my nearby GBS site. I can find only single records of the **Rose Robin** and **Swift Parrot** in July, and there still don't seem to be any confirmed reports of the **Pink Robin**, as well as any further reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** or the **Brown Gerygone**. So please keep an eye out for these species before they leave the ACT, most by early September.

Despite my prediction in my June column that mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) would start to break up, surprisingly there were still plenty reported in July, particularly in the last half, sometimes very large and containing some unexpected species for the area. Single species flocks of larger birds have also been reported, notable examples being up to 66 **Pink-eared Duck**, 24 **Eastern Rosellas**, 70 **Red-rumped Parrots**, 80 **White-winged Choughs** and 80+ **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** (there have also been many reports of smaller Y-T B-C flocks). Despite this winter behaviour there have been more reports of breeding during July, the highlight being a **Bassian Thrush** nest with advanced young at the ANBG. Steve Wallace noted that there are only 5 previous breeding records for this species in the COG database, the last in 1998! This was possibly a late autumn/early winter breeding event, as were two records of **Rainbow Lorikeets** feeding begging dependent young, while for the report of still begging young **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** breeding probably had occurred earlier.

The **Australian Magpie** has been widely reported as nest building already, as has the typical early starter, the **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, with the **Australian Raven** and **Brown** and **Striated**

Thornbills seen collecting nest material. There have been further reports of **Australian Wood Duck** and **Purple Swamphens'** successful breeding during July, and the **Black-shouldered Kites** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands successfully raised three juveniles. During the Mulligans Flat woodland survey a **Pacific Black Duck** nest with one egg was found on the ground. The **Masked Lapwing** reported in my June column as nesting near the pool in a backyard in Percy Crescent Chapman sat on three eggs for another two weekends, until I discovered a cat in the backyard early one morning on the third. Despite it being fended off for a day or so, the birds soon abandoned with the eggs still present for a couple of days, but gone by the following weekend. So it wasn't the cold weather that led to the failure this year, but the attentions of a predator.

I hope everyone has been looking for roost flights or finding roosting birds following Michael Lenz's presentation at the July meeting, though no reports of this seem to have been posted on the COG chatline. Particularly for the **Pied Currawong** and **Australian King-Parrot**, Michael's experiences mirror mine in Chapman, but I've never seen any evidence of **Red Wattlebirds** or **Noisy Friarbirds** (very few in my local patch for the last few years) going to a roost site. The most obvious species going to roost around my GBS has been the **Galah**, which seem very nervous on settling and often fly from the tree after a few minutes, but obviously do settle eventually as around 20 burst out of a tree when disturbed one July morning.

Even with one month of winter to go, there will be the first signs of spring movement of birds during August, so please continue to watch out for unusual species such as the rarer lorikeets, the first spring/summer migrants returning, altitudinal winter migrants moving away, the last of the MFFs and large single species flocks, an increasing level of breeding, or aspects of birds' roosting behaviour. As usual please ensure that all significant observations end up in the COG database.

Jack Holland



Scaly-breasted Lorikeet

Photo: Harvey Perkins



Australian Ornithological Services

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2014 tours

3 — 10 August
New Caledonia

6 — 25 September
Strzelecki Track 35th tour
The 4 states outback expedition
(1 place left)

30 September — 8 October
NSW Central Coast. Gloucester Tops
NP, Barren Grounds NR,

10 — 19 December
SW Western Australia

2015 tours

31 January — 7 February
Tasmania birding & mammal tour

February/March
New Zealand: South & Stewart Is-
lands & North incl. Hauraki Gulf pelagic

18 — 25 April **Alice Springs**

24 May — 7 June **Top End**
Part 1: Darwin to Katherine
Part 2: Katherine to Kununurra
Part 3: Mitchell Plateau

July **Iron Range & Atherton Tablelands**

September: **Strzelecki Track outback tour**

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Landscapes for Birds Forum - Saturday 5 July - celebrating COG's 50th Anniversary

As part of COG's 50th Anniversary events, this public Forum aimed to improve awareness of the need for landscape scale conservation and restoration/enhancement of habitats for birds. Increasingly, there is a call for an ecosystem approach or whole of landscape approach, and a critical focus on connectivity of core habitats, so birds (and other animals) can move across the landscape, particularly against a background of a changing climate.

The Forum, held at the ACT Legislative Assembly Reception Room, attracted a mixed, public audience of around 75 people, and it was pleasing that most were not members of our group. Public participation/engagement was an important aim of the Forum. Various studies, research, community/landholder engagement and on the ground work in the ACT and nearby NSW were the topics of the guest speakers. Mick Gentleman, MLA, and the new ACT Planning Minister, opened the Forum.

Dr Veronica Doerr, (CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences) began the Forum with a presentation about the importance of the whole of the landscape for birds (and biodiversity), in terms of core sites and corridors for movement, including paddock trees as stepping stones. Dr Adrian Manning (ANU) then spoke about the Mulligans Flat–Goorooyarroo Woodland Experiment which aims to restore a large woodland landscape and re-introduce locally extinct species. Rainer Rehwinkel, (Chair of the Kosciuszko to Coast - K2C - project, and threatened species officer at NSW Office of Environment and Heritage), spoke about the Landscape Connectivity Partnership and local NSW projects for birds. Nicki Taws (representing Greening Australia) then brought on-ground work into focus with a presentation about the Birdwatch project in re-vegetation sites in the local region. Finally, Chris Davey (COG) gave a progress report on the citizen science survey of the Gang-gang Cockatoo which COG is undertaking over its 50th anniversary year.

COG wishes to thank the speakers for making the event so successful.

Photo Exhibition Huge Success

From 30 June to 4 July, COG put on a photo exhibition showcasing the best of members' bird pictures.

Fifteen members exhibited 48 photos of 29 local species. Favourites amongst the species on show were **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, **Nankeen Kestrels** and **Eastern Spinebills**.

The exhibition was opened by Nicole Lawder MLA and over 300 visitors viewed the display. Visitors were encouraged to vote for their favourite picture. Kathy Walter was the winner of the lucky draw prize.

The Favourite Photo was one of a pair of **Satin Bowerbirds** at a bower by Julian Robinson and the runner up was Charlie Davis's photo of Rosellas in a Fog.

Congratulations to all who entered photos and thank you to everyone who visited and made the show such a success.

Many people have suggested that this might become an annual event and the Committee would be keen to hear members' views.

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 6 July - Bird Watching by Bike – Mulligan's Flat & Goorooyarroo

Eleven people gathered in the Mulligan's Flat car park on a breezy winter morning to cycle through Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves. It was good to have some younger birders on the trip.

Only the Centenary Trail and a couple of other service roads in the reserves are now open to cyclists, so some walking was also required. After a short ride we took our first stop to walk through the woodland. We hoped to find a mixed feeding flock and **Red-capped Robins** which had been seen some days before. We did eventually find a pair of **Red-capped Robins**, but no mixed feeding flocks. There were a few isolated birds including a **Whistling Kite** flying overhead, a **Scarlet Robin** and a small flock of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. The non-birding highlight was seeing a Bettong bolt away into the distance.

We hopped back on our bikes for a 5km ride into Goorooyarroo to our second stop on the lower slopes of Old Joe Hill. Again, the birds were fairly scarce. We did find 3 species of thornbill, several **Scarlet Robins** and admired an old **Wedge-tailed Eagles'** nest. As we were leaving we finally



At Mulligan's Flat

Photo: Kathy Eyles



Bird watching by bike Goorooyarroo Nature Park

Photo: Kathy Eyles

Questabird

[QuestaBird](#) is a fun new adventure app for mobile devices that gets kids (and adults too!) outdoors and experiencing the environment. Players join quests to photograph birds, earn gold, buy supplies, gain levels, build their collection and become Australia's highest-rated adventurers. The game uses real bird data, with all the known Australian species, along with GPS location tagging. Verified sightings are submitted to the Atlas of Living Australia to help protect our biodiversity.



As part of the COG's 50th anniversary, [QuestaBird](#) will include a special COG-sponsored "Gang-gang Cockatoo Quest" for the Canberra region, with special prizes, bonus gold, and the sightings coming directly to COG for follow-up.

To find out more log onto <http://www.questabird.com/>

Note: The game is currently available only on Android devices, with an iPhone version expected soon.

found our first mixed feeding flock of the day, which included 3 **Varied Sittellas**.

The species total for the morning was 27.

Duncan McCaskill

Wednesday 16 July – Farrer Ridge

Nine hardy souls joined me for a wander on Farrer Ridge on a day where the forecast was dismal. The drizzle stopped as we entered the reserve, and by the end of the walk the weather was almost pleasant. We recorded 28 species for the morning, which under the conditions was surprisingly good. Although the promised view of the mountains was hidden in the fog, there were good numbers of birds in a mixed flock of thornbills, **Weebills** and **Superb Fairy-wrens** at the top of the ridge. The highlight came at the end, when we found two **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** chewing on damaged sections of the branches of two small eucalypts.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 19 July- Percival Hill

Ten COG members and friends met at 9.00 by Ginninderra Creek on the eastern side of Percival Hill for a walk led by **John Harris**. The morning was clear and still, with light frost, but a cold wind sprang up later. While still assembling we were treated to a display of unusual antics by a flock of c. 35 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, which flew down to the creek and cavorted in the long grass, while others bathed vigorously in the water where it crossed a short concrete causeway. A **White-faced Heron**



Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo

Photo: Sandra Henderson

gave good views of itself at close range, and a **Collared Sparrowhawk** flew low overhead. John then led us up the wooded slope and along pathways northward in the direction of Gungahlin Pond. A scattering of passerines was seen en route, and a sizeable mixed feeding flock detained us for some time. It included 4 **Double-barred Finches**, **Scarlet Robins**, **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, a **Willie Wagtail**, a **Grey Fantail**, an immature **Golden Whistler** and a **White-eared Honeyeater**. Nearby a party of 5 foraging **White-winged Choughs** came under sustained aerial attack from 3 or 4 **Australian Magpies**. The choughs were notable because John had not recorded this species on any previous visits to the site. Other birds seen or heard were **Striated Thornbills**, **Masked Lapwing**, **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**. Distant views of common waterfowl on Gungahlin Pond boosted the species count. Two **Collared Sparrowhawks** gave a flying display. They were judged not to be a pair as they appeared to be about the same size. A solitary high-flying **Australian Pelican** was a surprise, and a distant **Nankeen Kestrel** rounded off the morning. In all, 32 species were recorded. Our thanks are due to John for giving us the benefit of his knowledge of the area, its history and its bird life.

Kevin Windle



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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Nature Lodge Optics

Nature Lodge Optics, a family owned business based in Huskisson, Jervis Bay, has been supplying quality binoculars to customers in the Canberra region since 2007.

Originally established in the UK in 1946, the owners established a branch in Australia several years ago and have become the region's leading independent binocular store.

Open 7 Days, the store always has over 100 pairs of binoculars in stock with a particular emphasis on Birdwatching products.

Major brands such as Steiner, Zeiss, Bushnell, Nikon & Pentax are represented together with smaller hi-tech brands like Weaver, Vortex, Forest Optics, Visionary and Vanguard.

A selection of Spotting Scopes, Night Vision & Tripods are always available.



As a family business and NOT a franchise the owners Daniel and Joanna Payne will always be happy to source the specialist or unusual products that individual customers require having established a global network of suppliers.

The store also specialises in polarised eyewear with brands such as Maui Jim, RayBan & Oakley to name just a few.

The helpful and informative website www.binoculars4u.com.au is regularly updated but is no substitute for personal service and recommendation which is always on hand.

COG Trips

At the start of each trip, and before proceeding on the trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form, which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities as follows:

- I declare I am capable of undertaking this trip having: discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured I am adequately equipped.
- I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group.

Changes to trips are notified on the trips page of the COG website

<http://canberrabirds.org.au/>

and on the COG chat-line at:

[http://
bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/
archives/html/
canberrabirds/2012-03/
index.html](http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html)

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give preference to members for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people.

Future Field Trips

Saturday 9 August – Lake Ginninderra Beginners' Outing

This is the second of our bird walks for 2014 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

Saturday 16 August - Brindabella Hills Winery

Meet at 0830 at Hall Cemetery at the start of Wallaroo Road for carpooling followed by the drive into the winery which has limited parking etc. Water resistant and sturdy footwear is required due to long wet grass and uneven ground. The walk will last until about 11am and conclude with morning tea/coffee at the cafe there or a wine tasting for those inclined. There will be a limit of 20 participants so please register with Stuart Harris at shadowplay369@gmail.com

Sunday 24 August – Lake Tuggeranong

The circuit around Lake Tuggeranong is around 7km, all quite easy walking. Meet at 9am at the bitumen car park on Mortimer Lewis Circuit (off Drakeford Drive) between the dog park and the houses. There is a children's playground and covered BBQ shelter close to one end of the car park, and one of the lake's beaches (Nguru) right in front of the car park. Apart from waterbirds, Lake Tuggeranong often has a nice selection of little bush birds. No need to book. Contact Sandra Henderson if you need any more information (shirmax2931@gmail.com).

Sunday 31 August - Late winter mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Aspects are expected to be the same as previous trips of this kind; ie transport will be by two 12-seater buses (cost approx. \$20 provided both buses are full), the point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am and it will run until mid-afternoon (bring morning tea and lunch), but to keep it fresh we are again looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we again plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and where we will be able to see some good birds. This would depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@environment.gov.au). At the deadline for the Gang-gang copy there were still plenty of seats available, but please hurry as the buses can fill up very quickly.

Saturday 6 September - Kelly Road - morning walk

Kelly Road runs parallel to the Monaro Highway south of Williamsdale. This morning walk in early spring should produce some of the early migrants. Meet for carpooling at Kambah Inn (corner of Marconi Crescent and Drakeford Drive) for a 7:45am departure to arrive at Kelly Road at 8:30am. People who prefer to drive themselves there could meet us on-site [first exit to Kelly Road, about 2km south of ACT/NSW border] at 8.30am. Bring morning tea.

Ian Anderson and Tony Willis

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 September – Eden pelagics

COG has booked the weekend of September 6 and 7 for two one-day pelagic trips. The outings leave from Eden Harbour in the early morning (time to be confirmed), and return mid-afternoon. Each trip can accommodate 12 people, and the cost per person per trip will be \$100.

Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but there may be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip.

This trip is currently full, with a waiting list. Sometimes there are cancellations so if you wish to be added to the waiting list, please book with Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com) and indicate which day you prefer (Saturday or Sunday).

Friday 12 to Sunday 14 September – Mates Gully TSR – campout

Mates Gully TSR is about 20 km south of Tarcutta, approximately 2 1/2 hours driving time (210km) from Canberra. The vegetation is Mugga Ironbark/Scribbly Gum/Red Box Shrubby Open Forest. We plan to arrive late Friday afternoon and depart after lunch on Sunday. The campout will be on a "take everything in, take everything out" basis – there are **NO FACILITIES**. We will bird in the TSR as well in neighbouring areas. The campout will be limited to 15 people. Please register with Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com. Further details will be sent to participants.

Friday 26 to Monday 29 September – Yerranderie – long weekend campout

Julian Robinson will lead this campout. Yerranderie is near Oberon and access is by 4WD only. It is a 6-7 hour drive from Canberra. See <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/yerranderie-regional-park>. Further details in September Gang-gang. Please register with Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com

Friday 3 October to Monday 6 October - Buddigower Nature Reserve – long weekend campout

The October long weekend outing will be to Buddigower Nature Reserve near West Wyalong. Instructions are as follows. Get yourself to West Wyalong. If coming from the Wyalong end of town turn left on to the Newell Highway (to Narrandera) and follow this until you see the Charcoal Tank Rest Area sign. 500 metres past the rest area is the Charcoal Tank Road off to the RIGHT. Turn here and travel for approximately 7.1 km until you come to a well-defined laneway to the left. This should have a sign on the left of a cut out sheep and the name MACOMA and AJ and LM Clarke. Turn left down this lane and follow until the lane turns left to the farm house through a double gate – **DO NOT** turn into the farm house but go straight ahead over a short, sharp rise (there are a couple of big farm dams to the right) and follow what now has become a two wheel track. NOTE about half way along this

section on the right is a wash out followed by a small gully. It should be possible to get a two-wheeled drive vehicle over this with care – it may be best to do this section in daylight. Keep going until you see the open gate and the Buddigower Nature Reserve sign. Turn right at the gate and look for my signs. You will go through some burnt mallee then into open box woodland. Follow the track until you see tents set up. The area we will be camping in is an old mining lease and there are several old shafts in the general area. Try to stay left of the track as there is one area I am not sure would take the weight of a vehicle. **There are NO facilities on site;** it is a take everything in, take (almost) everything out camp. West Wyalong is only about 17 km away so if people wish to slum it in a motel or caravan park they are welcome to do so. I hope we will have several bird banders operating in the reserve that weekend.

If coming from the Arianh Park direction, once you are on the Newell Hwy again look for the CT rest area sign. Before you get to the rest area the Charcoal Tank road is off to the left. Whichever direction you are coming from please be aware of heavy vehicles on the road – they don't always see your indicators and I have had to take evasive action on more than one occasion. In the event of very wet weather the trip will be called off. If unsure please call 62413620 (h) or 0419 482341 (m) – mobile reception is not all that good in the reserve.

To register, or for more detail contact me on my home phone or email chollop7@bigpond.com

Mark Clayton



Gang-gang Cockatoos eating sawfly larvae, Callum Brae NR. Photo: Rod Warnock

Gang-gang Cockatoos eating sawfly larvae

I cloned out some twigs but otherwise apart from cropping the image is as is.

Here I feature predominately a male bird but a partial image of a female in the background. I toyed with removing the female but then I relented when I saw the female's eye peeking at me through the branches. In addition the image is very early in the series before the pair demolished all the larvae then flew off. You can see that the saw fly larvae were not all that impressed with the attention.

Richard Allen commenting on Gang-gang's eating larvae --"The male was eating Saw Fly larvae. He snipped off the branchlet containing ball of larvae holding it in foot while carefully munched on them one at a time. He appeared to squeeze out the yummy stuff and discard skins. "

Rod Warnock

Gang-gang Cockatoo Project Update—May 2014

Survey sightings

The Gang-gang survey has now been running for six months covering the late summer, autumn and winter months. The community response has been fantastic and largely enabled by the Atlas of Living Australia portal. Approximately 75% of observations are being entered on-line with a pleasingly low error rate (about 2%).

There are now 368 registered users of the on-line COG/ALA portal and a total of 2068 records. The largest group of Gang-gangs so far observed is 55 birds seen flying over Uriarra Crossing on 16 June by a lucky observer.

An analysis of the autumn survey records, at the broad urban scale, shows the following distribution of observations.

	No. reported suburbs	Average no. reports/suburb
North Canberra	13	34.5
South Canberra	20	17.7
Belconnen	9	12.3
Weston Creek	8	6.6
Gungahlin	6	2.3
Tuggeranong	6	1.8
Queanbeyan	2	1.0

Within Belconnen virtually all observations are from Aranda and Bruce whilst in north Canberra they are from Acton, O'Connor, Hackett, Watson, Ainslie and Campbell; in other words those suburbs bordering the Black Mountain, Mt Ainslie and Mt Majura Nature Reserves. In south Canberra the suburbs of Deakin, Red Hill and Hughes bordering Red Hill Nature Reserve have the most observations, as do the suburbs of Fisher and Pearce bordering Cooleman Ridge and Mt Taylor. See overleaf.

The location of Gang-gangs varies with preferred habitat type and age and location of suburb. Up to 20 and 30 birds have been reported. For observations where the sex of the bird has been identified, the same number of males and females has been reported.

Gang-gangs are feeding on small seeds including eucalyptus seeds and seeds of the introduced Chinese Pistachio, Chinese Elm and more recently the Hawthorn. *Eucalyptus bicostata* appears to be a favoured feeding tree. During the autumn period and into the winter the average group size has increased from 2.57 in March to 4.75 in June.

Community engagement

July was a big month for the Gang-gang Cockatoo at the ACT Legislative Assembly. The Gang-gang was the most popular subject at COG's 50th Birthday Photo Exhibition (with 5 entries from members) and Chris Davey presented an informative talk about the Gang-gang survey at COG's Public Forum, 'Landscapes for Birds'. A number of forum attendees expressed interest in being part of the August Muster Count.

We participated in an interesting story on ABC local radio's morning program with Genevieve Jacobs. Bruce Thornton who works at the ANU looking after Halls of Residence regularly sees up to 40 Gang-gangs along Daly Road. A few lucky birdos have since sighted this large of group Gang-gangs with many juvenile birds, including this gorgeous young female and shy male.

	Suburb	No. reports	Nature Reserve
North Canberra	Hackett	124	Mt. Ainslie NR, Mt Majura NR
	Ainslie	69	
	Campbell	63	
	Reid	61	
North Canberra/Belconnen	Acton	104	Black Mt NR, Bruce Ridge NR
	O'Connor	73	
	Aranda	56	
	Bruce	33	
South Canberra	Deakin	44	Red Hill NR
	Red Hill	38	
South Canberra/Weston Creek	Torrens	33	Mt Taylor NR, Cooleman Ridge NR
	Fisher	23	
	Pearce	15	

A reminder that the August Muster Count is coming up (21- 27 August) and we want as many people as possible in the COG region involved in our winter count. This Muster will help us track the expected movement of birds from the mountains to the plains. The hard copy data form for Muster week can be downloaded from the website. The form has been slightly revised to provide room for observers to record information about feeding and bird interaction. As for the May Muster count, records can also be entered using the electronic form at the end of the Muster week. Instructions for the Muster count and both forms can be found on the Muster page.

<http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/gang-gang-survey/gang-gang-muster-instructions/>

As we head towards spring we encourage observers to continue submitting their daily observations and to keep an eye out for breeding and nesting activity. Observers of any obvious breeding behaviour and/or nesting are asked to send in these sightings via ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au

If you are unsure how to participate in the Gang-gang survey details of how to contribute can be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/gang-gang-survey/>

If you have any queries please email to ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au

The GG survey project team



Gang-gang Cockatoo, female

Photo: Kathy Eyles

Woodland winter surveys

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Note: The winter survey round proved more challenging than usual, due to wet and windy weather over the official survey week, with some surveys having to be done in the first week of July.

Hall/Gold Creek – Monday 30 June

Alison Rowell surveyed Gold Creek (Hall area) in cold, sunny weather but very damp ground conditions after the weekend rain. It was a fairly quiet survey, with few of the honeyeaters that have been reported from some of the other sites, but a couple of mixed feeding flocks livened things up. These included **Scarlet Robins**, **Weebills**, 3 thornbill species, **Speckled Warblers**, **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Grey Fantails**, **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Golden Whistler** and a **Diamond Firetail**. A highlight was watching **Crimson Rosellas** on the ground, eating the flowers of the Urn-heath *Melichrus urceolatus*, something Alison had not observed before, and the shrubs were in bud and early flower so the birds weren't eating young fruits. **White-eared Honeyeaters** were recorded walking around feeding from the same flowers, a regular sight in winter surveys there.

Mulligan's Flat NR – Wed 2 July and Sunday 6 July

Jenny Bounds reported on the surveys done over two mornings in early July, after cancelling the scheduled 29 June survey due to wet and windy conditions as an intense cold front came through that weekend. Wed 2 July was cold with light fog, but no wind and there were quite a few mixed flocks around. Sun 6 July was partly overcast and not optimum due to a cold breeze, but at least no rain. In the end, a total of 43 species was recorded over both mornings, reasonable for a winter survey there. The usual species were around, **Scarlet Robin**, **Speckled Warbler**, 4 species of thornbills, **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. Highlights included: a **Whistling Kite** over a couple of sites including the dam near the Woolshed; 7 **White-naped Honeyeaters** at one site, 80 **White-winged Choughs** in one flock on the NE side of the reserve, 2 **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos**, a pair of **Common Bronzewing**s foraging near the Woolshed; and 5 **Australian Shoveler** at the large dam (which was quiet otherwise). A **Pacific Black Duck** nest with one egg was also found. Several sites recorded **Grey Shrike-thrush**, including 2 first year immature plumaged birds. The next Mulligans surveys are Sunday 21 September, and Sunday 30 November.

Gooroo NR North – Monday 30 June

Nicki Taws reported on the survey in very cold but still conditions. Birds were in their typical winter recess; some sites were very quiet but there was at least one species at each site even if only a **Magpie**. The small birds were as usual congregated into feeding flocks of **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Speckled Warbler**, **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Scarlet Robin**. A nice surprise was a **Western Gerygone** hiding in one of the feeding flocks, along with the only **Grey Fantail** seen for the morning. Rosellas of both species were very scarce. **Grey Currawongs** called from two widely-separated sites. One interesting species not recorded before in the survey was the **Australian King Parrot**, a single male calling loudly until seen on its way by the **Noisy Miners**.

Gooroo NR South – Sunday 22 June

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the winter survey with a rather foggy start, but conditions were perfect. 37 species were encountered during the morning, a fairly average count for winter, although several regulars such as **Speckled Warbler** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill** were absent. Five species of small honeyeaters were found - **Yellow-faced**, **Fuscous**, **White-eared**, **White-plumed** and **Eastern Spinebill**. A **Brown Falcon** was flushed from site 1, several **Superb Parrots** were at sites 4 and 5, and **Scarlet Robin** was heard at site 8. Interesting incidental records included 4 **Varied Sittellas**, a **Mistletoebird** and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Pardalotes of both species were in good numbers. Four kinds of butterfly were also recorded, although just a single individual of each - Cabbage White, Yellow Admiral, Australian Painted Lady and Common Grass-blue.

Majura Field Firing Range – Friday 4 July

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan did the survey on the range, starting in fog which quickly lifted to a typical still, sunny winter day, not very cold, and almost perfect for bird observing, apart from the fact that the birds were pretty far and few between. On two sites nothing was recorded within the site, but a few calls were heard off site. There was only one (slightly) unusual sighting, which was a **Hoary-headed Grebe** on the dam at site 9, accompanied by a **Pacific Black Duck**, half a dozen **Wood Ducks**, and a single **Eurasian Coot**. This was the most prolific site, with 16 species observed.

At the Grenade Range site there were 2 **Wood Ducks** inspecting hollows, and the most numerous birds there were 35 **Common Starlings**, as well as a few **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas** and 6 **Red-rumped Parrots**. There were a few observations of **Scarlet Robins**, a single observation of **Magpie-lark**, and a few little brown birds, but it was mainly a morning of the usual suspects of cockies, parrots and magpies.

Mt Majura NR – 15 and 25 June

Kathy Walter and John Goldie did the survey over two days on 15 June (5 sites) in beautiful weather and 4 sites on 25 June in not so beautiful weather! The bulk of the sites on the 15th produced excellent mixed flocks – perhaps the best day surveying they have had there. One mixed flock had 22 species including: around 50 **Striated Pardalotes**, 20 **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Silvereyes**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Buff** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Scarlet Robin** and **Grey Fantail**. A **Rose Robin** and five different **Honeyeaters**, including **Fuscous**, **White-naped** and **Brown-headed**, made up part of another mixed flock. Of interest, a **Brown Goshawk** and **Hobby** were seen in separate sites.

Campbell Park/Mt Ainslie NR – Monday 23 June

Michael Lenz surveyed in overcast conditions with light to moderate winds. Weather deteriorated only well after the survey was completed. A total of 32 species was recorded at sites, with another 3 between sites. The most widespread species were **Spotted Pardalote** (7 out of 9 sites), **Crimson Rosella** and **Grey Fantail** noted at 6 sites. Small mixed feeding flocks were present at 3 sites, including 2 **Speckled Warblers** and 1 **Brown-headed Honeyeater**. Of interest were a pair of **Australian Ravens** were in recycling mode, pulling branches out of one old nest and using them to repair another old nest a short distance away; a **Superb Parrot**, rarely recorded at Mt Ainslie, in the paddocks east of the reserve; 40 **Welcome Swallows**; 1 male **Flame Robin** and 570 **Eastern Grey Kangaroos**.

Newline – Saturday 28 June

Sue Lashko reported on the survey in a good weather window (despite a forecast of strong winds), and lots of birds. The largest flock - 110 birds flying between trees - included 57 **Silvereyes**, as well **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, **Striated Thornbills**, **Weebills** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters**. This was in the front paddock east of the driveway and, when returning almost 3 hours later, most of the birds were still there, tucked into the low *Pyrocanthus* bushes, out of what was by then a strong breeze. In the site opposite the concrete dump, a somewhat different mixed feeding flock with both pardalotes, **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **White-naped Honeyeater**, **Weebill**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Southern Whiteface** and **Speckled Warbler**. Then, a party of 17 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** landed in a Blakely's Red Gum close by feeding among the many buds on the tree.

Jerrabomberra West NR - Friday 27 June

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey in the woodland area, taking advantage of a window of calmer conditions in a week of windy, wet weather. There were mixed feeding flocks of small birds at 3 of the better woodland sites, which included 4 **Thornbills** (**Buff-Rumped**, **Striated**, **Brown** and **Yellow-rumped**), **Speckled Warbler**, **Weebill**, **Golden Whistler**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Brown Headed Honeyeaters**. Surprisingly 3 **White-naped Honeyeaters** were flying around the woodland. **Wood Ducks** were calling from the trees at several sites, an indication of breeding starting, a number of **Little Corellas** were around, one **White-eared Honeyeater** (a winter migrant there) was seen and heard, and a **Brown Falcon** flew through. On the way out at the edge of the grasslands, a very large flock of about 30 **Goldfinches** was interesting - with some **Superb Fairy-wrens** and a couple of **Southern Whitefaces**. Two brown **Flame Robins** (females or

immatures) were a highlight over the grasslands, perching on the dead verbascum stalks; **Flame Robins** have been recorded on the grasslands edge in this area in other years. A total of 36 species was much higher than average for a winter survey there.

Callum Brae NR – Thursday 17 June

Sandra Henderson surveyed before the usual survey week, and managed a beautiful sunny, crisp morning, before the cold, wet spell set in. Highlights were a group of 15 **King Parrots** feeding on the ground near the quarry fence, three mixed feeding flocks, one of which included five **Varied Sittellas**, and another which included two **Speckled Warblers**, and the roosting **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** not far from the entrance - 209 of them still warming up in the early morning sun before heading out for the day. There were good numbers of **Yellow-rumped**, **Striated** and **Buff-Rumped Thornbills** around, seven **Scarlet Robins** and one **Flame Robin**. A number of **Galahs** and **Rainbow Lorikeets** were inspecting nest hollows. 41 species were recorded for the morning, but no raptors.

Rural leasehold in Tharwa – Friday 4 July

David McDonald rose from his sick bed and left home in perfect winter weather: sunny, still, albeit cold. By the time he reached the site it was thick with fog, freezing cold, and wet underfoot. The birds were scarce and it was the least productive survey he had done there in over 2 decades. The first site had just two species: one **Eastern Rosella** and two **Crimson Rosellas**, a poor start. The next site, in contrast, was full of birds, with eight species including good sized flocks of **Striated Thornbills** and (not often seen there) **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. A male **Scarlet Robin** gave the only flash of colour for the morning. In all, just 17 species were recorded, with only two or three at most of the sites, then 2 of the speciality birds at the last site, a **Speckled Warbler** and a **Brown Treecreeper**.

Tuggeranong Hill NR – Friday 27 June

Lia Battisson reported on the survey in overcast and cold, but still conditions, with a light breeze later in the morning. The highlight of the morning was flushing five **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** at very close quarters. There was very little else of note, except at site 3, where a pair of **Eastern Rosellas** had an altercation with 2 **Common Mynas** at the entrance to a hollow, and at site 2 where a small mixed feeding flock spent a little time. 19 species were observed during survey counts, with a further four elsewhere on The Hill.

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2014-2015 memberships:

- Singles: \$40
- Family: \$45
- Institution: \$40
- School student (under 18) \$20

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

Y Zhang, ANU
P Christie, Isaacs
G Small, Queanbeyan
D Watkins, Cook

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for September 2014 edition

Wednesday 27 August 2014

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc. to the Editors at:

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au Or

c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301

Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

COG information

President—Alison Russell-French

0419 264702

Email: president@canberrabirds.org.au

Vice President—Neil Hermes

0413 828 045

Email: hermes.neil@gmail.com

Treasurer—Noel Luff

Email: noelluff@hotmail.com.au

Secretary—Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary

COG, PO Box 301

Civic Square, ACT 2608

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

membership@canberrabirds.org.au

for changed address or other details

Gang-gang Newsletter

Editor: Sue Lashko

Email: gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Newsletter distribution:

Dianne Davey

Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

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canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au

