



Gang-gang

November 2015

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 11 November 2015

7.30 pm.

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

After the AGM **Chris Davey** and **Kathy Eyles** will present “**The Gang-gang Cockatoo survey - Citizen science in action**”.

The Gang-gang Cockatoo survey is a citizen science project initiated by the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) in 2014 to celebrate 50 years of birding in the ACT. The Gang-gang is the ACT's bird and faunal emblem and the emblem of COG and the ACT Parks Service. Surprisingly, little is known about this popular bird and due to habitat loss across its range, the Gang-gang is listed as vulnerable in NSW. This ambitious project sought to shed light on the population and distribution of the Gang-gang in the COG region, covering the ACT and immediate surrounds in NSW.

Chris Davey will present results from the survey whilst Kathy Eyles will discuss community involvement.

Everyone welcome

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for this month

This column is again being written early (16 October) and, while it covers only a 3 week period from 25 September, in this short time the ACT and surrounds bird scene has undergone a remarkable change. While it was already drying out, the unseasonal (and record) hot spell around the long weekend at the beginning of the month has resulted in a much bigger influx of summer migrants, particularly from a drying inland and including some unexpected ones, than would be expected had the weather remained cool. This includes the **White-browed Woodswallow**, which I only mentioned in my October column as an afterthought, and the related **Masked Woodswallow**, which I didn't mention at all.

There were many reports of these birds overhead, sometimes too high to identify even with binoculars, though at least on several occasions both species could be identified, with in some cases the Masked

Glenn Pure

White-throated Gerygone



Advance notice of 9 December meeting – Members' Night

Due to the continued unavailability of the meeting venue in January the annual Members' Night has again been moved forward to December. A program will be drawn up allowing COG members to contribute short presentations (about 10-15 minutes long) on a range of bird-related topics. So if you have a favourite birding moment for 2015, some special photos to share with members, a birding story to tell, or anything that you think might be of interest to other members, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H), or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com) as soon as possible. Members who have not presented to COG before are particularly encouraged.



Red-backed Kingfisher

David Cook



Rainbow Bee-eater

Lindsay Hansch

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

predominating, as was the case when Michael Lenz found them settling in the trees for brief periods near Gundaroo on 5 October. This seems to be the only report of this happening and is also the last day I can find any reports of them; these species are typically nomadic and follow the weather patterns, and whether more will arrive and actually settle to breed, as they did last year, remains to be seen.

The hot spell also brought about an influx of **White-winged Trillers** and **Rufous Songlarks**, two other species that come to COG's area of interest (Aoi) when things are drying inland. An example of how numbers can build up quickly is from Con Boekel's detailed surveys at Campbell Park where there weren't any trillers present on 3 October, less than five on the next day, but on 5 October there were 9 males and a female. Both species seem to be widely established in COG's Aoi by now. Compared with the few sightings when my October column was written, the **Sacred Kingfisher**, another species whose range extends well inland, also seems to be widely established by now.

The related more inland species, the **Red-backed Kingfisher**, has made a surprise visit to the North Curtin Horse Paddocks where it stayed at least for a few days and was admired by many observers, unlike the other surprise inland species, the **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, reported as far as I can tell only by the single observer. Cuckoos also seem to be more numerous than in the past few springs, in particular the inland ranging species the **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, the latter often being recorded close to the more coastal **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. Similarly the more coastal **White-throated Gerygone** also seems to be often found close by the more inland **Western Gerygone**; both species appear to be widespread this spring.

In contrast, the **Rainbow Bee-eater**, another species whose range goes well inland, does not appear to be present in greater numbers than usual so far, and I can find only a single further record of the more coastal **Dollarbird** following very early observation on 20 September (plus a record from Ainslie on 16 October). As far as I can tell the



Geoffrey Dabb

Masked Woodswallow

similarly coastal **Leaden Flycatcher** also seems only to be present in low numbers so far. The also coastal **Eastern Koel** has been arriving mid to late October in recent years but there have been a few early reports, with Geoffrey Dabb hearing them at Narrabundah for at least 3 days at the beginning of October, with another heard in Garran on 9 October.

Of the other expected spring migrants, Michael Lenz reported 3 **Horsfield's Bushlarks** from Lake George on 27 September and David McDonald noted on 4 October that **Brush Cuckoos** are back in numbers at Wamboin. However, there have been no reports that I can find yet of the other passage migrants on their way to breed in the mountains, the **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail** and **Cicadabird**, or of **Brown Songlark** which, like the **Horsfield's Bushlark**, is an inland species that usually arrives in October or November, mostly present in very small numbers in grassland.

So please keep an eye/ear out for the late arriving species mentioned in the above two paragraphs, as well as for the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** and the **White-throated Needletail** for which there have been single reports so far this spring. The former is a vagrant in the COG Aol which is most likely to be heard as it flies urgently to somewhere else, whereas the latter is usually most often seen after the New Year on its return migration.

As the full complement of summer migrants is nearly complete most of the altitudinal migrants that visit urban/peri-urban Canberra over the winter period have now departed, though there



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Good birding, good food ...

2016 tours

Tasmania birds & mammals

30 January – 6 February 2016
includes Melaleuca flight & pelagic

Alice Springs & the West

MacDonnell Ranges tour

25 April – 2 May 2016

Top End tour

22 May – 6 June 2016
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine & Kununurra. Mitchell Plateau optional

Queensland's Gulf Country tour

22 June – 9 July 1960
Two days added for Rusty Grasswren

Iron Range & Atherton

Tablelands tour

12 – 25 July 2016 (Tablelands optional)

New Caledonia birding tour

14-21 August 2016

Strzelecki Track Outback tour

2 – 21 September 2016
37th tour! Covering 4 states & 5 species of grasswren

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2016

15 & 16 October 2016
12 & 13 November 2016
26 & 27 November 2016

Please see itineraries, checklists and latest news on our website

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have still been a few reports of late-staying **Golden Whistlers** in October as well as of the **Scarlet Robin** which have not moved that far away. Interestingly the **Crescent Honeyeater**, which was last heard calling in my garden in Chapman on 9 September, has also not moved very far and could still regularly be heard calling in gardens about 400 m away until very recently.

Many spring/summer migrants come to the ACT and surrounds specifically to breed and often start to do so almost as soon as they arrive, so the next couple of months will represent the peak of the breeding season. Breeding has been reported throughout the past 3 week period, as might be expected, exemplified by Con Boekel who over 3 days of extensive searching at Campbell Park at the beginning of October observed a total of 23 different species at some stage of breeding. This is about as many as we would expect during our annual nest workshop in the middle of November, so hopefully continuing hot and dry weather doesn't curtail the breeding season early.

Other interesting observations include reports of two different **Grey Butcherbird** nests, one a first in my local patch and a sign of how this species is expanding in Canberra; newly fledged **Southern Whiteface** chicks; and another report of **Australian Shelduck** breeding, this time with 5 chicks. **Tawny Frogmouths** may now be expected to be sitting on chicks, and there was a report just as this column was to be forwarded to the editors of a **Banded Lapwing** chick at the Hoskinstown site (together with 9 adults). The **Flame Robins** at Campbell Park seem to have abandoned their breeding attempts. Elizabeth Compston saw a male in full colour, and possibly a female, near last year's nest site on 18 September, but could not locate it again. On 3 October Con Boekel found another male there in a new area which appeared to be quite tetchy and he thought might be overwatching a nest, but he could not find it again the next day.

Finally numbers of **Plumed Whistling Ducks** at Bungendore increased to at least 41 in October, and we may expect them to peak over summer. The **Powerful Owl** in Turner is still present and for a single night a few days ago moved back to the newly-leaved

pinoak behind the greenkeeper's building where it was discovered last year. Again I suspect that it has been staying in the area for much longer than the year since it was discovered.

The information above was again obtained from my two main sources, postings on the COG -Email Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the Eremaea eBird website, as well as some direct correspondence to me. Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these data sources, without which it would not be possible to put this column together. So please look out for the last returning spring migrants, for species escaping the drying inland, and for further breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



White-browed Woodswallow

David Cook

Gang-gang project

seeking further data required on hollow inspecting and breeding success



An analysis of the survey has provided 150 records from 50 observers of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** hollow inspecting. From these sites only one appears to have produced young although it is unknown how frequently any of the sites were revisited. To obtain further information on the breeding of Gang-gangs within the COG Area of Interest we would like to obtain further details on hollow inspecting during this coming breeding season.

For any sightings of Gang-gangs showing interest in potential nest hollow sites or any other indications of breeding, could you please fill in an online form to be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/incidental-record-form/> and provide information on the location, number of birds and their activity, then if possible regularly return to the site and record any further activity. If there is no activity please still fill in the form and enter a zero for numbers with the words 'This is a zero Gang-gang report' in the notes section.

The project team will also be contacting survey participants who submitted observations about nesting and breeding behaviour to invite them to record observations over this breeding season.

For any enquiries please email ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au. If unable to access the online site then please just send an email to the above address with the details. Note that all locations will remain confidential. Of interest, one site has already been reported for August.

Chris Davey and Kathy Eyles (The GG team)



Gang-gang Cockatoo

Rawshorty

Field Trip Reports

Friday 25 September to Monday 5 October – Capertee Valley, Coolah Tops NP, Munghorn Gap NR

An extended camping trip covering the two recent long weekends and the weekdays between was a new addition to the COG field trips programme for 2015. The trip report has been divided into three parts, one for each different camping venue.

Part A: Friday 25 to Tuesday 29 September - Capertee Valley

The first stop on COG's extended camping trip over the two long weekends in Sept/Oct was to the Capertee Valley in the northern Blue Mountains to enjoy some of the best woodland birding in Australia. Most of the group of 15 camped at Glen Davis campground, while 2 stayed in accommodation at Glen Davis and 4 stayed at the nearby Coorongooba campground in Wollemi National Park.



Regent Honeyeater

Lindsay Hansch

We started the birding with a walk around the campground after arriving on Friday afternoon and saw 43 species within 200-300 metres – **Little Lorikeets** and **Brown Treecreepers** were very vocal around our tents, **Peaceful Doves** were providing a pleasant background noise and 6 species of honeyeater were seen. By bedtime we had also been listening to **Boobooks** and **White-throated Nightjars**.

Each day we explored a different part of the valley – Crown Station Road, Coco Creek crossing, Naico road turn-off, Capertee River at Genowlan Road, Capertee National Park, Glen Alice and Dunville Loop Road – adding new birds at each stop. Perhaps the pièce de résistance was **Regent Honeyeaters** being quite nonchalant in a casuarina. We were able to admire them for ages. Also seen at this site were **Azure Kingfisher**, **Plum-headed Finch**, **Painted Honeyeater** and (by one person) **Turquoise Parrot**.

One afternoon some of the group joined a very interesting tour of the old ruins of the Glen Davis oil shale plant which had its heyday in the 1940s. Spotlighting was also very rewarding with sightings of a **Barn Owl**, 4 species of kangaroo, **Wombats**, **Brushtailed Possums** and “hearings” of **Owlet-nightjar**, **Tawny Frogmouth** and 2 species of Glider (**Yellow-bellied** and **Sugar**).

In all we saw (or heard) nearly 120 species for the weekend including 14 species of Honeyeater. **Hooded Robins**, **Brown Tree-creepers**, **Little and Musk Lorikeets** were seen nearly every day. It is an amazing woodland. Thanks to Sue Lashko for gaining access, organising and leading a fantastic weekend. John Goldie

Part B: Tuesday 29 September to Friday 2 October – Coolah Tops National Park

After the excitement of the **Regent Honeyeaters** at Capertee, we pulled up tent pegs and packed up the campers to head to Coolah Tops National Park, where we based ourselves at spacious Barracks campground. It had a resident **Tawny Frogmouth** on nest, a creek which attracted many small birds, and very few other campers. Although this was a birding trip, spotlighting many Greater Gliders and Ringtail Possums close to camp was rather special. The **Powerful Owls** and numerous **Southern Boobooks** which called every night in the Park were not sighted, but an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** was more friendly.

Sandra Henderson



Clockwise from Top: **Little Lorikeet** (Lindsay Hansch), **Capertee National Park** (Lindsay Hansch), **Gang-gang Cockatoo** (David Cook), **Regent Honeyeater** (David Cook), **Rock Warbler** (Lindsay Hansch), **Red-browed Treecreeper** (Lindsay Hansch), **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** (Sandra Henderson), **Echidna** (Lindsay Hansch)

Part C: Friday 2 to Monday 5 October – Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve

On Friday 2 October 12 participants continued onto Munghorn Gap, where we had permission to camp at the Field Station over the Labour Day long weekend. The first afternoon was spent walking around the reserve, which comprises an interesting mix of sandstone, forest and woodland, and is located on the central western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, not far from Mudgee. Various species were recorded, including **Striped** and **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater**, **Mistletoebird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Red-browed Treecreeper**, **Variegated Fairy-wren**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Brush Cuckoo**, **Speckled Warbler**, and **Restless and Leaden Flycatcher**. Some forest birds, including **Superb Lyrebird** and **Wonga Pigeon** were calling from the wetter gullies. **Southern Boobooks** and **Powerful Owls** called during the night, and at dawn each morning the ringing tones of a **White-throated Nightjar** would wake us from our slumber.

On the Saturday, birdwatching activities included a pre-breakfast amble around some waterholes, followed by a post-breakfast saunter to some cliff faces and to the nearby Moolarben Day Use area, before the hot weather kicked in. We were rewarded with a diverse mix of birds, including two **Rockwarblers**, **Red-backed Kingfisher**, **Pied Butcherbird**, **Brown Falcon**, **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, and a male and female **Gang-gang Cockatoo** perched over the track and almost in touching range. On Saturday afternoon we explored the reserve in Moorlarben Road. The birding was pretty subdued but species included **White-eared Honeyeater**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Little Lorikeet**, a cryptic **Noisy Friarbird** on a nest, an agitated and wing-waving **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and a **Lace Monitor**.

Sunday morning saw us strolling along the nearby Castle Rocks Walking Track. The two main rewards here were the wonderful flora (countless blue sun orchids and many flowering forbs and shrubs, including *Patersonia*, *Grevillea*, *Calytrix* and *Xanthorrhoea*) and the magnificent view from the rocky outcrops, called the Pagoda Formations, at the end of the track. The highlight of the afternoon was the discovery by Martin Moffatt of two low-roosting **Powerful Owls** in a fig tree not far from our campsite.

Much merriment was shared each evening during happy hour and dinner, although the red wine-flavoured peanuts (the result of an errant glass) were not a massive hit. On the final morning we were rewarded with an over-flying **Channel-billed Cuckoo**. Eighty-seven species were recorded for the Munghorn section of the trip, and our many thanks to Sue Lashko for her impeccable organisation.

Kathy Cook

Sunday 11 October – K2C surveys on Bredbo region

Some great breeding records were a feature of the 12th K2C surveys held in lovely spring conditions. Teams of 2-3 observers covered 44 sites on 21 properties from Williamsdale to south of Bredbo and recorded an impressive total of 98 species.

All the expected spring migrants were recorded ; particularly vocal were four species of cuckoo, **Rufous Songlark**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. The return migration of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped** Honeyeaters was evident at one site, with an estimate of 500 passing through. A highlight for the birders at this site was seeing two **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** mingled in with the more common honeyeaters. The older revegetated sites are often some of the most abundant in bird species in the surveys, and now support breeding efforts by species such as **White-winged Chough**, **Brown Thornbill**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Grey Fantail**.

Important breeding records include sightings of immature **Hooded Robin**, a recent **Flame Robin** fledgling, **Scarlet Robins** carrying food, and a **Brown Treecreeper** family carrying food to a hollow. A **Buff-rumped Thornbill** was seen leaving its cleverly-concealed nest in a bark crevice only half a metre off the ground. Honeyeaters are not always easy to find nesting but a **Brown-headed Honeyeater** was seen feeding chicks in its woven hanging nest, and both **Fuscous** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** were seen feeding young. **Black Swan**, **Pacific Black Duck** and **Grey Teal** were seen with very young ducklings/cygnets. A **Southern Whiteface** was observed carting grass stalks to the centre of a dead Boxthorn. The many parrots and cockatoos were observed coming in and out of hollows.

Thank you once again to the COG volunteers, the landholders for their continued support, and to Bush Heritage for hosting us and covering the lunch prepared by Snowy Mountains Gourmet Food. The next K2C surveys will held on 10 April 2016.

Nicki Taws

Monday 12 to Friday 16 October – Green Cape

Imagine waking up at dawn to the sound of waves crashing at the base of the cliff outside the window, scrambling into your clothes, grabbing your binoculars (and maybe a coffee) and heading to the point to identify the passing parade of seabirds. This is how the ten lucky COG members started each day at Green Cape.

I've never done much seabirding but I quickly learnt to spot an albatross from a shearwater from a tern under the guidance of guru Peter Fullagar and his team of expert helpers. Seabirds I saw included **Shy Albatross**; **Short-tailed**, **Wedge-tailed** and **Fluttering Shearwaters**; and **Caspian**, **Crested** and **White-fronted Terns**. A feature of Green Cape seabirding during October is the steady stream of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** heading south on their annual migration to fatten up in Antarctic waters before breeding on islands off southern Australia. **White-bellied Sea-eagles** have learnt to pick up an easy meal by hunting the migrating shearwaters and many in our group saw a sea-eagle take a bird from a raft of shearwaters feeding just off the point.

After an hour or so, it's time to stroll back to the cottage for a leisurely breakfast on the veranda, where we were regularly entertained by mother Humpback Whales and their babies as they headed south close to the cliff edge on their annual migration. Antics included breaching, tail slapping, flipper waving, rolling or otherwise having a good time.

During the day, there is something for everyone. If you're a seabirder, the veranda is a perfect vantage point to watch the passing parade. If you're a landbirder, there are varied habitats to explore nearby, including teatree/melaleuca scrub, heath and forest. To take advantage of this, the group undertook a number of excursions. On Tuesday, we walked the Pulpit Rock Track, where among other birds we saw three groups of **Southern Emu-wren**, **Striated Fieldwren**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, **Brown Quail** and **Brush Bronzewing**. The next day, we visited Saltwater Creek, where we searched the heath without success for the elusive **Ground Pparrot**. On Thursday, we did the Bittangabee Bay to Green Cape walk, where the birds of interest included **Scarlet Honeyeater**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Black-faced Monarch** and I saw a **Beautiful Firetail** on a dead branch above my head!

Green Cape has so much of interest in addition to birds. If you're a botanist, the heath area has a huge variety of wildflowers on display in October. If you're a photographer or artist, there are plenty of subjects to photograph, draw or paint. If wildlife is your thing, there are Humpback Whales, New Zealand Fur Seals (with extra-long whiskers), snakes and lizards to watch by day, and Common Ringtail Possums, wombats and antechinus to spot at night. If you're a historian, you will be fascinated by the history of the lighthouse and cottages, built around 1880 (we has an excellent tour of the lighthouse by NPWS). And if you're all of the above, well you will just need another week at Green Cape.

Not that any of us are the slightest bit competitive, but we raised the benchmark for Green Cape for all groups (not just COG) to 81 bird species. This was even more noteworthy given the absence of any storms to drive the rarer species within sight from land!

A big thank you to all group members who shared their knowledge and experience with those of us who are less experienced birders. And special thanks to Peter Fullagar who organised the birding and Sue Lashko who managed the logistics.

Gillian Carter



Clockwise from Top: COG members at Green Cape (David Letham), Striated Fieldwren (David Letham), Jacky Lizard (David Letham), White-breasted Sea-Eagle (David Letham), Common Scaly-footed—legless lizard (Kathy Cook)

Sunday 11 October - Mullangarri Grassland

Eight COG members joined the walk where 29 species were recorded. Data on ebird shows 53 species for this site. The walk began in an offset between Burgmann School and Mullangarri. The offset yielded a **Eurasian Skylark** in full song, 4 **Grey Teal**, 3 **Australasian Swamphens**, a **Dusky Moorhen**, 2 **Golden-headed Cisticolas** and an **Australian Reed-Warbler**. The offset pond has runoff from the Grasslands and without it the species count would be much lower. There is little in the way of understorey, so species dependent on it are absent. The eucalypts provide nesting hollows for parrots, cockatoos, galahs, **Tree Martins**, **Striated Pardalotes**, **Common Starlings** and **Common Mynas**. There were 9 **Noisy Miners** which are the dominant honeyeater and one **Red Wattlebird**. Two **Nankeen Kestrels** were seen, one chased by **Galahs**. Breeding for **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Australian Raven** and **Australian Magpie** was recorded. Given the numbers of eucalypts felled for developments in Gungahlin, this site, which is hard country for birds, is still a refuge for many species.

Sunday 18 October – private property near Wee Jasper

Disappointingly, just three COG members participated in this outing to the beautiful wooded property 'Bimbenang' on Doctors Flat Road near Wee Jasper. Despite the forest being extensively burnt in the 2003 bushfires, dense cover has returned with the dominant eucalypts being *E rossii*, *E viminalis*, *E dives* and *E radiata*, with a varied shrub layer below.

We were warmly welcomed by the property owners at the front gate and immediately were surrounded by large numbers of birds. Of particular note were **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **White-throated Gerygone**, the latter giving its very short, abruptly-ending Western Gerygone-like call. As we walked up the one kilometre track to the hut, adding new bird species, we enjoyed a variety of wildflowers and later, when we walked a track to the creek, we found a good number of orchids.

The dominant sound throughout the morning was the call of **Rufous Whistlers**, with at least 21 individuals recorded. There were good numbers of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, as well as **Grey Fantails**. Evidence of breeding was found for **Striated Pardalote**, **Pied Currawong** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. **Wonga Pigeons** were heard calling and a **Superb Lyrebird** did a low flypast near the hut. **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** were heard at several locations. A total of 34 species was recorded.

Our thanks to the Bentley family for their invitation to Bimbenang.

Sue Lashko

Wednesday 21 October – Rowes Lagoon

Fifteen members and guests gathered at the rest area and, thanks to the kindness of the lessee, parked in the woodland nearby behind a locked gate.

After noting a few bush birds (including a pair of Australian King-Parrots we decided to give the Tiger Snakes a fair shot and moved out onto the bed of the Lagoon. Two **White-necked Herons** were seen immediately and a single **White-faced Heron** soon flew in. At least 8 **Latham's Snipe** flushed as we walked towards thenNorthern end of the Lagoon, flying off at high speed and altitude. A small number of **Australian White Ibis** were seen and several flights of **Straw-necked Ibis** came in, totalling approximately 100 birds. Other waterbirds seen were 4 **Masked Lapwings**, 24 **Australasian Swamphens** and 2 pairs of **Black Swans**, with 2 downy cygnets. No bitterns were seen or heard.

The most obvious raptors for the day were **Swamp Harriers**, patrolling mainly the eastern side of the Lagoon. Allowing for birds spending a little time on the ground, and having three visible at the same time, we concluded there were at least 4 birds present. One was seen to fly in carrying a stick and landed in the reeds: probably nest building. Other raptors recorded were 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, 1 **Brown Goshawk**, 1 **Whistling Kite**, 1 **Nankeen Kestrel** and 2 **Brown Falcons**.

The most surprising passerines seen were a pair of **Flame Robins**. **Tree Martins** were briefly visible as we approached the wooded areas in the face of quite strong winds. A **White-throated Gerygone** nest was spotted by an eagle-eyed member. A male **Rufous Whistler** was in full song. The woodland area was noticeable for a massive amount of eucalypt blossom - some identifiable as *E. pauciflora* (Snow Gum) while other, very floriferous, trees were more tricky, seeming to be peppermints. Despite this blossom, which attracted a good lot of potentially munchable insects, the only honeyeaters listed were a few **Red Wattlebirds**.

In total we recorded 38 species.

Martin Butterfield

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.

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LATEST UPDATES AND CHANGES TO TRIPS are notified on the trips page of the COG website:

canberrabirds.org.au/
then select 'Our Activities' and 'Field Trips'.

and on the COG chat-line at:

bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2015-08/

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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

Sunday 8 November – Braidwood Landcare Surveys

The Braidwood Landcare group contacted COG in 2011 to see if we would be interested in surveying the birds on five to six properties where some revegetation has been done. These surveys were repeated in 2013 and will again be carried out in 2015. We will not only survey the revegetation sites, but also remnants and riverine areas. 10 to 12 surveyors are required for Sunday, beginning at 7.30am, and must be sufficiently experienced to undertake the survey. Hopefully the 2013 surveyors will be available again. Please contact Sue Lashko on 62514485 or smlashko@gmail.com if you are interested and to receive further details.

Sunday 15 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past eleven years. As usual it will be a very informal outing which again has been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, with participants breaking into groups looking for breeding behaviour, signs of nesting etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunities for bird watching.

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also very welcome. Though every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840) or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com.

Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the Campbell Park map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button. Please remember to take morning tea to have out in the field.

29 November - Gungahlin Cemetery

Gungahlin Cemetery is off Sandford St. Mitchell. Meet at 8.00 am in the carpark of the Norwood Park Crematorium on the opposite side of the roundabout. The cemetery has a large pond at the entrance which supports a variety of waterbirds. It is an excellent site with a lot of trees, shrubs and understorey. It has a good mix of birds including **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Red-browed Finches**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **White winged Choughs**. The highlight is a population of **Dusky Woodswallows** which breed here each year.

Bill Graham.

Sunday 13 December - Tharwa Sandwash.

This is a very good spot for migrants such as **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Dollarbird**, and the resident **Tawny Frogmouths** are usually easy to find. Travel south from Tharwa, turn left onto Smiths Road and take the side track to the left just after you cross Gudgenby River. The walk will commence at 8am. Bring morning tea.

David Dedenczuk

Draft COG Field Trips Programme for 2016

Many thanks to the wonderful leaders of 2015 field trips. You will note that many of them have volunteered to lead again in 2016, as have some newer members. However, there are 6 dates (highlighted in red) for which I am looking for a venue and a leader, so if you have a favourite birding spot, please email me with your preferred date to smlashko@gmail.com. Remember you do not need to be an expert to lead a field trip.

Date	Venue	Leader
January 17	Uriarra	Bruce Lindenmayer
January 31	Jerrabomberra Wetlands	Sue Lashko
February 14	Molonglo Reach boat trip	Jack Holland
February 28	Yerrabi Trig to Boboyan Trig, Namadgi NP	Suzi Bond
March 6	Crace Wetlands	Fleur Leary
March 8-11	Mid-week – Wonga at Bawley Point	Terry Bell
March 13	North Mulligans Flat	Bill Graham
March 20	Eden pelagic	Sandra Henderson
March 25-28	Willandra NP	Kathy Walter & John Goldie
March 26	Narrabundah Hill	Jack Holland
April 10	K2C	Nicki Taws
April 17	Looking for suggestions	Leader required
May 1	Micalong Swamp	David McDonald
May 7	ANBG beginners	Anthony Overs
May 15	Looking for suggestions	Leader required
May 29	Looking for suggestions	Leader required
June 11-13	Ben Ricketts near Barren Grounds NR	Sue Lashko
June 18	Superb Lyrebird survey Tidbinbilla	Chris Davey
June 26	Wanniassa Hills & Fadden Ponds	Ryu Callaway
July 10	Gungahlin Hill	Chris Davey
July 24	Flemington Rd Ponds and Mitchell Pond	Bill Graham
August 6	Lake Ginninderra beginners	Anthony Overs
August 13	Percival Hill	John Harris
August 21	London Bridge	John Bundock
August 28	Late autumn bus trip	Jack Holland & Jenny Bounds
September 3-4	Eden pelagics	Sandra Henderson
September 11	Sherwood Homestead Complx, Uriarra SF	David McDonald
September 17-26	Extended camping trip Coonabarabran area	Sandra Henderson
October 1-3	Buddigower NR	Mark Clayton
October 9	K2C surveys	Nicki Taws
October 16	TSR at Murrumbateman	Bill Graham
October 19-21	Visit from Southern Highlands birders	Leader required
October 23	Looking for suggestions	Leader required
October 29-30	Bird Blitz	Barbara Allam\n
November 6	Goorooyaroo NR	Suzi Bond
November 13	Campbell Park nest workshop	Jack Holland
November 20	Looking for suggestions	Leader required
November 27	Kama NR	Chris Davey
December 11	Looking for suggestions	Leader required

Woodland Surveys- spring survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Hall/Gold Creek

Alison Rowell with Matt Mullaney surveyed in good weather on 1 October. The property was rather dry, and many Redgums of all ages were dying back, as were occasional mature Yellow Boxes. Spring flowering forbs such as Yam Daisy, Bulbine Lily and Billy Buttons were present at some sites, and some mistletoes were flowering. Most sites had been lightly to moderately grazed by sheep and kangaroos. 37 bird species were seen at and between sites. Honeyeater numbers were low, with one or two **Eastern Spinebills**, **Yellow-faced** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** recorded. Four **Thornbill** species were seen (**Striated**, **Brown**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped**), and low numbers of other small birds were recorded (**Scarlet Robin**, **Willie Wagtail**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Varied Sittella**, **Western Gerygone**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Grey Fantail**, **Speckled Warbler** and **Weebill**). **Tree Martins** were flying over some sites, **Nankeen Kestrels** and **Brown Goshawks** were present, and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** called across the site.

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 20 September, recording one of their highest number of species on a spring bird survey, 70 species in total. On the dam near the woolshed, a **Pacific Black Duck** had just brought out a brood of 11 tiny ducklings. Many of the spring migrants were back, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, 3 species of cuckoos, both gerygones, **Rufous Whistlers** and **Noisy Friarbirds**, to name a few. The large dam on the eastern side of the reserve was very full and 29 species of water birds (ducks, cormorants, grebes and herons) as well as various bush birds were recorded in the 10 minute survey there. Other highlights at the large dam were 2 **Freckled Ducks** (they have been around on all surveys this year), **Whistling Kite**, and a **Dollarbird** perched in the dead trees (slightly early for this migrant from northern Papua New Guinea?). There were several sightings of **Superb Parrot** on the western ridge near Forde/Bonner and also flying over the reserve to feeding sites. One survey team had a big highlight, a **Bush Stone-curlew** calling close nearby, one of the birds released in the Sanctuary.

Goorrooyarroo NR North

Nicki Taws did the surveys on a mild and still morning. After good winter rains the groundcover was looking lovely, with a prolific display of the tuberous wildflowers – Early Nancy, Yam Daisy, Creamy Candles and Billy Buttons. The Blakely's Redgum were still looking threadbare after the autumn lerp attack, which may account for the lack of pardalotes, but a flush of new growth was evident on some trees. Birds were active and vocal, with 40 species recorded in the survey sites. Most of the expected spring migrants were recorded with plenty of gerygones (both species) **Rufous Whistler**, **Grey Fantail**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, 3 cuckoo species, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Mistletoebird**. A small group of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** flitted through, and a **White-eared Honeyeater** was recorded at one site. **Speckled Warbler** and **Scarlet Robin** were recorded at two sites each. A **Brown Goshawk** has nested in the same tree for most of the last 17 years and was there again this year. **Superb Parrots** are usually fairly common in the north of the reserve, but this time were heard on only one occasion.

Goorrooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday did the spring survey on 3 October, in perfect weather. 47 species were recorded during the 10 minute counts, and a total of 55 for the morning. Some **Honeyeater** migration was evident with small flocks of

Yellow-faced heading south through the morning, with a smattering of **White-naped**, **Red Wattlebirds** and **Noisy Friarbirds** also on the move. Summer migrants were in reasonable numbers with both gerygones, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **White-winged Triller**, **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Tree Martin** and **Rufous Whistler**. The absence of **Dusky Woodswallows** was a surprise. Five types of raptor included 2 different pairs of displaying **Nankeen Kestrels**, a **Brown Goshawk**, a **Brown Falcon**, 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** and a **Peregrine Falcon** which flushed from a large Red Stringybark at site 1. It was carrying a sizeable item of prey but disappeared too quickly to work out what it was. Other species of interest included **Mistletoebird**, **Varied Sittella**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Grey Currawong** and a female **King-Parrot**; the last is rarely recorded on the surveys. Breeding was recorded for **Australian Magpie** and **Wood Duck**. Three different **Australian Raven** nests had young just off or almost ready to leave.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie surveyed over a number of sunny spring days in the last week of September, recording 34 species in total over the 9 sites. Some sites were quieter than others with only a couple of species inside the site, but a couple of sites had good numbers of birds. Only one **Speckled Warbler** was seen in one of the sites and small birds in general were fairly scarce in all other sites. One site had a nice flock which included **Buff-rumped**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Golden Whistler**, and **White-throated Gerygone**. Interestingly, a **Willie Wagtail** was recorded at two sites. An **Olive-backed Oriole** was heard calling in the distance and there was some obvious breeding activity with **Noisy Miners** and **Pied Currawongs** feeding young.

Majura Field Firing Range

Barbara Allan, accompanied by a Defence Environmental Officer, undertook the spring survey in cold, blustery grey conditions on Saturday 26 September. Despite the suboptimal birding weather, the total species count was 36, with spring returns including **Rufous Whistler**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **White-throated Gerygone** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. The undoubted highlights of the morning were two pairs of **Scarlet Robins** with dependent young. One group was in site 8, while the other was a serendipitous find when stopping to admire a colony of orchids.

Campbell Park/Mt Ainslie NR

Michael Lenz, with Robin Hide, carried out the survey on 30 September in pleasant weather although it was still cool early in the morning. At many sites trees were not in good shape, notably many of the larger eucalypts. The grass ground cover was mostly reduced to short lawn as

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a result of kangaroos grazing. A total of 35 bird species was recorded at sites and an extra 13 species between sites. The most common/widespread species were **Crimson Rosella** (at 8 of the 9 sites), **Noisy Miner** (7 sites), **Galah**, **Eastern Rosella**, **Australian Magpie** and **Striated Pardalote** (each 6 sites). 13 **Australian King-Parrots** were recorded. Most sites were rather quiet, and spring arrivals were few in number. Of special interest were **Brown Falcon**, **Little Eagle**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Mistletoebird**.

Newline

When Sue Lashko arrived for the survey on 23 September, it was four degrees according to the car radio, but the wind chill from the strong southerly wind meant a very wintery start to the spring survey. Sue surveyed the sites furthest from the main road first due to noise from peak hour traffic. The small birds in particular were keeping their heads down, but a male **Speckled Warbler** was seen fossicking under a hawthorn, as well as plenty of **Superb Fairy-wrens**. The site closest to the quarry was quite sheltered and was the most productive with 17 species, including nine **Grey Fantails** in sight at one time, a male **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Welcome Swallows** nesting in the bunker and a party of **White-winged Choughs**. Cattle at one site obligingly disturbed 22 **Red-browed Finches** feeding in the grass and sent them into the hawthorns. The front paddock yielded a **Rufous Whistler** as well as a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** which appeared to be paying close attention to a party of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**. The only raptor for the day was a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. The total of 40 for the morning was lower than usual for spring but not unexpected given the conditions.

Red Hill NR

Harvey Perkins and Stuart Harris did the spring survey on the beautiful, calm and sunny morning of Sunday 27 September. The number of species (33) and total individuals (317) were both pretty close to average for spring surveys at this site. Intent to breed was recorded for four species: both **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas** were seen inspecting hollows; two active **Noisy Miner** nests were seen, one with a bird sitting, and the other, built only about 2 metres up in a small sapling, contained 3 eggs; and a pair of **Laughing Kookaburras** was seen courting/pair-bonding, and finally copulating. Other signs of spring included the return of **Noisy Friarbirds** (3), a single **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** heading west, 6 **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, singles of both **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers**, and 8 **Grey Fantails**. Raven activity was also



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Noisy Miner

David Cook



Noisy Friarbird

David Cook

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pronounced, with 19 **Australian Ravens** recorded across the site (about twice as many as you might normally expect) and they were very vocal and active, though no sign of breeding activity was noted.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds surveyed the woodland patch on 1 October, in mild and still conditions. The total of 43 species was about average for spring. It started well just inside the woodland/grassland edge (mostly Blakely's Redgums and more open than the woodland further in), with 2 **Diamond Firetails** on the track, and a number of **Dusky Woodswallows** (probably 4-5 pairs in the area), a White-winged Triller calling, and four **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** flying around. The trillers and woodswallows are often in this area in spring. The first site (no 2) nearby had 24 species in the 10 minute count (within 100 metres) which is a very high count for that site, and included a **Varied Sittella** foraging, a Dusky **Woodswallow** nest in a niche of a half broken off tree trunk, and **Australian Ravens** on a nest. That site was the most abundant for birds (it's a boom or bust site –sometimes very quiet!). The other 6 sites had the usual assortment of spring birds, with both gerygones calling and active **Rufous Whistlers**, **Olive-backed Orioles** and both bronze-cuckoos. Site 5 deep in the woodland where there is Bursaria and lots of eucalypt re-growth had an abundance of **Grey Fantails**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, 3 **Speckled Warblers** and 2 **Double-barred Finches** amongst others. Pairs of **Brown Falcons** and **Nankeen Kestrels** were also around. There were a few absentees: **Mistletoebird** is normally around 2 of the sites with lots of mistletoe; **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **Spotted Pardalote** were absent also, and there were only one or two **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**.

Symonston: Callum Brae NR/Isaacs Ridge NR

Sandra Henderson did the spring surveys on 21 and 22 September, recording 43 species at Callum Brae and 24 at Isaacs Ridge NR. At Callum Brae, an **Olive-backed Oriole** was calling at the gate to the reserve on arrival. The first surprise in one of the survey sites was a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, probably the first recorded in the woodland survey there, although they have been occasionally encountered in the reserve over the years. The other unusual sighting at that site was two **Australian Raven** nests in a single tree - the nest on the right had two well-grown youngsters doing some experimental wing flapping, while the nest on the left hand side of the tree was still under construction. Three separate active **White-winged Chough** nests were sighted around the survey circuit, with birds on each nest. **Nankeen Kestrels** were sighted in the vicinity of two trees where they are probably breeding, although this wasn't confirmed. Quite unusual was the lack of thornbills - three **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** being the total for the six sites. No **White-throated Gerygones** were

heard at survey sites, although several were heard off-site. The Isaacs Ridge NR sites off Mugga Lane were rather quiet, but a highlight was five **Speckled Warblers**.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Friday 25 September, a cold morning with a light breeze, which strengthened towards the end of the session. The returning migrants were one **Mistletoebird**, just a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, a couple of **Grey Fantails** and **Noisy Friarbirds** in a couple of spots. No breeding behaviour was observed, although frantic gathering of food by some of the little birds did raise suspicion. It would seem that **Speckled Warblers** are becoming regulars now, although only one was seen, outside of surveys this time. Site 3 was the most active, with eleven species. In all, 22 species were recorded during the survey periods, with a further 6 species seen or heard elsewhere on the Hill.

Rural leasehold property near Tharwa

David McDonald conducted the survey on Sunday 20 September. The weather was perfect and a rather late start did not affect bird abundance. Species diversity was good, 36 in all, with five of the sites having seven or more species. An additional eight species were observed outside of the sites. The most widespread species were **White-plumed Honeyeater** and **Grey Fantail**, both observed at five sites. The most abundant were **White-plumed Honeyeater** (17), **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** (7) and **Grey Fantail** (7). Species of special interest included a solitary **Red-rumped Parrot**, decades ago a resident but not observed there for many years, and two **Brown Treecreepers**. Some of the summer migrants were back but not all.

Naas Valley rural leasehold (near Mt Tennent)

Julie McGuiness surveyed on Sunday 20 September. The morning started off overcast and cool, but gradually warmed and cleared somewhat. Most of the Blakely's Redgums were looking quite dishevelled, and no plants were in flower apart from a few Early Nancies that had popped up. It was a pretty quiet morning, considering the season. There were only small numbers of any one species and fewer small birds than is usual, with around 23 species on the sites, with another 7 between the sites. Most appeared to be paired up, though only a couple of breeding activities were seen - **Striated Pardalotes** entering a tree hollow and **Noisy Miners** lining a nest with sheep fleece. **Jacky Winter**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **White-throated Gerygone** were especially vocal. Few migrants were observed, with one each of **Rufous Whistler** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, two **Dusky Woodswallows** and a few **White-throated Gerygones**. Other species of interest were a pair each of **Nankeen Kestrels**, **Varied Sittella** and [Little Corella](#) (the last species is very rarely seen at the property).

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Bird Calendars for 2016

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size: A4, 210mm x 297mm

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2016 Australian Parrots and Cockatoos

\$14

size: A4, 210mm x 297mm

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The Photographer

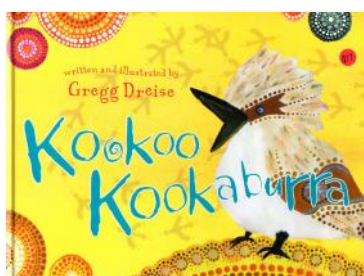
Martin Willis is a well-published wildlife photographer with a passion for the natural environment. With wife Sam, he is located in Malanda, Far North Queensland, an area known for its natural beauty and diverse fauna and flora.

Publications for sale

COG provides a range of birdwatching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices (around 10-30% off RRP).

Below are highlighted a sample of popular publications available from the sales desk at COG meetings. We get new books in all the time and sometimes popular books sell out, but they can easily be re-ordered. If you are looking for a particular book, talk to the sales desk team at the meeting, as they can look at ordering it for you or contact Kathy on

sales@canberrabirds.org.au

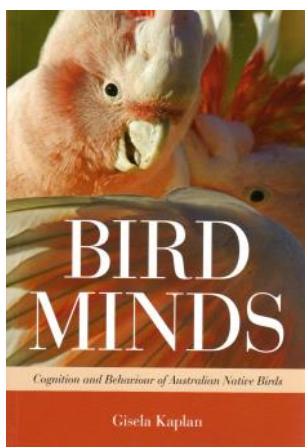


Kookoo Kookaburra

Gregg Dreise

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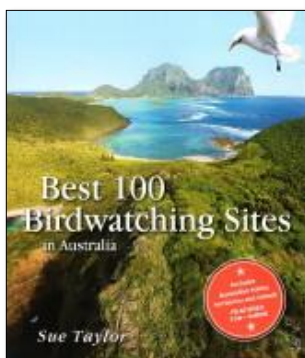


Bird Minds - Cognition and Behaviour of Australian Native Birds

Gisela Kaplan

Bird Minds is the first attempt to shine a critical and scientific light on the cognitive behaviour of Australian land birds. Following on from Kaplan's well-received books on the *Australian Magpie* and the *Tawny Frogmouth*, *Bird Minds* demonstrates how intelligent and emotional Australian birds can be.

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Sue Taylor

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2015-2016 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

C. Bear
P. de Vries
C. Waters

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for December 2015 edition

Wednesday 25 November 2015

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.

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