



Gang-gang

APRIL 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday 13 April 2016

7.30 pm.

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

The short presentation will be by **Stuart Rae** on “**Broad-billed Sandpipers: information gained from data recorded with geolocators**”.

Stuart has been studying Broad-billed Sandpipers in northern Norway for several years as part of a long-term study on arctic-breeding waders. The study has involved the use of geolocators and the first results from these will be described, giving details of the birds' behaviour as well as migration routes and over-wintering areas.

The main presentation, by **Julian Reid** from the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society, is entitled “**The A B G D of arid Australian bird communities, contrasting mulga tall shrublands and riparian woodlands.**”

Julian worked with his CSIRO and Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory colleagues in the early 1990s on a large biological survey

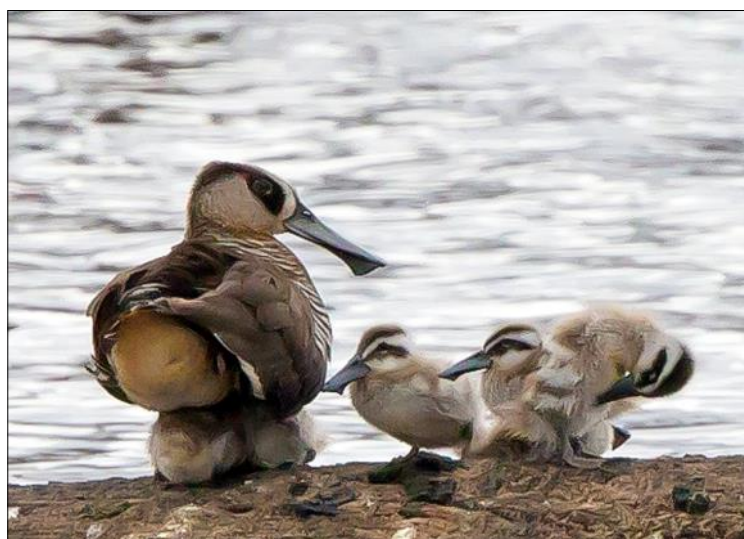
(Continued on page 2)

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

In the 5 weeks from 25 February that constitute the reporting period for this month's column, the weather can roughly be divided into two halves. Initially it was very hot, particularly for the first half of March with many days with temperatures over 30°C, though there were some good falls of rain towards the end, and since then it has been cooler and drier.

The change in weather did seem to have an effect on bird movements with the first altitudinal migrants, **Scarlet Robins** and **Golden Whistlers**, reported from Canberra and peri-urban areas nearby from that time, and by the end of the month these two species had been widely reported. The other species expected to arrive during this time, the **White-eared Honeyeater**, has been much less reported, though I had an early one move through my garden on 18 March.

The change in weather was also the time of the first honeyeater migration, with the first small flocks of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**



Pink-eared Duck with ducklings

Con Boekel

Everyone welcome

April Meeting—*continued from Page 1*

program of the greater MacDonnell Ranges region in central Australia. For his doctoral studies completed last year, Julian reanalysed the bird data gathered at 117 sites under the umbrella of diversity relationships. In his presentation he will focus on the contrasting patterns of community composition and turnover among three broad habitat types, namely riparian, tall mulga shrubland, and montane. They each support distinctive bird species and communities, and have unique diversity properties, whether relating to species richness (alpha), compositional turnover (beta), or the origins and broader distribution of component species (gamma diversity). Julian will briefly discuss the conservation implications of this study, noting that several rare species went undetected.



Noisy Friarbird, young birds

Sue Lashko

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

reported by Jean Casburn over her garden in Duffy and by Wayne Gregson at Stromlo on 12 March, actually a few days before the change. Flocks were reported regularly from then but stayed small (up to 50 birds) until the Easter weekend when on 27 March Judy Middlebrook reported huge numbers of honeyeaters flying from the Brindabellas quite low over Uriarra Village, with wave after wave coming over between 10.45 and 11.45 am, with very little time for resting in the trees (note both the timing and behaviour is similar to the experience during the COG walk at Narrabundah Hill the day before – see separate report in this issue). Numbers were estimated as in the low thousands and there was hardly any time during this period when there were no birds in the air.

On 30 March Lindsay Hansch posted that after a big day on Sunday and no action on Monday and Tuesday, the honeyeaters over his house in Jerrabomberra, one of the current major migration routes, really got going from about 11 am. He sat outside for a while at 12:30 and one stream of honeyeaters flew over that was constant for just over 8 minutes. To count them was impossible but a wild guess was in the order of 3000-4000 birds. There were many other large flocks also of up to 400-500 birds. He noted this was the biggest concentration he had seen for 3-4 years. While to me conditions that day didn't seem optimal for large-scale migration, after a while the urge to migrate will overcome the less than ideal weather.

The first migrating **White-naped Honeyeaters** were also reported over Easter; these should increase and become the main if not the sole species in the flocks by the end of April. So please keep an eye and ear open for these birds moving through in your local area, as it looks promising for a very good year.. Watch out also for any other species such as **Fuscous Honeyeaters** amongst them, which in my experience tend to dwell longer in the tree stopping points. Also watch out for **Red Wattlebirds** and **Noisy Friarbirds** which migrate in a similar fashion; quite a few instances of this have been reported for the former as opposed to the latter for which there seem to have been only a few birds remaining during March. **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** have also been seen moving through; they tend to do so in a more leisurely fashion and it is often not clear that they are migrating except for the elevated numbers together.

Other species which have been coming into and through Canberra in large numbers over the reporting period are **Silvereyes** and **Grey Fantails**, which also migrate but often do so in mixed feeding flocks (MFF), together with other birds such as both species of pardalote. A prime example of this was the large feeding flock observed at Goorooyarroo by Steve Holliday during Easter which was dominated by **Striated Pardalotes** (100+), **Silvereyes** (50+), **Grey Fantails** (40+) and **Spotted Pardalotes** (10+). Also present were **Golden Whistlers** (10+) and small numbers of other species such as **Scarlet Robin**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Weebill**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**,



Pink-eared Duck with ducklings

Christine D

Eastern Spinebill and **Varied Sittella**. There was quite a frenzy according to Steve. So watch out for these MFFs, which should continue until at least the end of April, and any species moving through with them.

Despite all this movement there have still been some significant breeding events observed during the reporting period, particularly of waterbirds, with the following highlights:

- The **Pink-eared Ducklings** found by Milburn at the large dam at Mulligans Flat and posted on the COG chatline with some very cute photos by Christine D. Like others I found it hard to believe this was the first breeding record for this species in the ACT, but a check of the 2013-2014 Annual Bird Report (ABR) notes it to be "uncommon non-breeding visitor". Other sources such as Steve Wilson's book *Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change*, also confirm "Breeding does not occur in the ACT". The literature indicates that they breed over water in a tree hollow, on a stump or an old nest of another waterbird. I agree with Martin Butterfield that the large dam with its many old dead trees in the middle since its expansion following the relatively recent repair of the breach represents a unique situation in the ACT in that for the first time there may be suitable habitat for them to breed. I can't think of any other local dam that replicates this situation.
- Since this posting many observers have enjoyed this spectacle, with several mentioning the presence also of **Grey Teal** ducklings, on one occasion sharing the same log with the above in the middle of the big dam. Together with another brood observed at Lake Jerrabomberra earlier in the month, and the one from Kelly's Swamp in January, there have now been three breeding records for this species so far this year, for which as I mentioned in my



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Top End tour

22 May – 6 June 2016

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22 June – 9 July 1960

Two days added for Rusty Grasswren

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15 & 16 October 2016

12 & 13 November 2016

26 & 27 November 2016

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February column there are surprisingly few on the COG database since 1998.

- Early in March Sandra Henderson reported a second set of two **Hoary-headed Grebes** chicks at the small dam in Hume, again a species for which as I mentioned in my February column there are very few breeding records on the COG database since 1997. Other water bird breeding records in the second half of March include **Pacific Black Duck** ducklings at another dam at Mulligans Flat, and some very tiny “fluffball” **Purple Swamphen** chicks seen by Ryu Callaway at the Fadden Hills Pond.
- Other late breeding records around the Easter period were **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Rufous Whistlers**, **Red-browed Finch** and **Varied Sittella** all still observed feeding or with dependent young.

Last but (for me) certainly not least there have been reports of 2 further fledgling or juvenile **Eastern Koels** during March. Together with others reported recently to me from earlier in the breeding season, including of four taken into Wildlife care, this makes my total around 28 which betters last year’s estimate of around 25. This may reflect the wider publicity as there seemed to be reduced koel activity in my local area this year, and fewer multiple fledglings in suburbs such as has previously occurred in Page, though the breeding season did start much earlier and was thus prolonged.

I can’t help wondering if the **Freckled Duck**, which is also listed in the 2013-2014 ABR as a “uncommon non-breeding visitor”, will be the next to be found breeding at the large dam at Mulligans Flat as it also nests in similar situations. It also seems to be present in increasing numbers both at this dam and at Kelly’s Swamp where Geoffrey Dabb counted 24 of them around Easter. The presence of both species is a sign of a drying inland, and their numbers contrast with the other increasing recent visitor, the **Plumed Whistling Duck** whose numbers have been much lower this summer, with a maximum of 25 around Bungendore in March.

The surprise species for the reporting period was of a female **Turquoise Parrot** at Mulligans Flat, which certainly seems to be the place to be at the moment.

Again the 2013-2014 ABR notes it as a nomadic visitor from coastal areas (and west of the ranges such as around Cowra in my experience) which was last recorded in 2009-2010. This bird appears to have only stayed around for a few days, unlike the **White-cheeked Honeyeater** which is still being observed at the Jerrabomberra wetlands, including consorting with the closely related **New Holland Honeyeaters**. However, it has still a long while to stay before it matches the **Powerful Owl** in Turner, which is still present and being admired despite on one occasion having to put up with the noisy use of heavy machinery, wood chippers, towers and chainsaws, plus many other vehicles and workers clearing up when a very large branch of a nearby pin oak tree broke off and dropped all over the power lines.

Returning to bird movement I can find no further records of the early leaving species mentioned in last month’s column except for a late observation of the **Rufous Songlark** on 27 February. There have also been sightings of the **Brush Cuckoo** as late as on 18 March, and the **Dollarbird** and the **Rainbow Bee-eater** were last reported on 10 and 13 March respectively, about the usual time the last of these species leave. In contrast the **Sacred Kingfisher** was still being reported after the Easter weekend. Of species moving through Canberra during March as “passage migrants”, there was a rather early one of the **Rufous Fantail** in John Layton’s Holt garden on 13 March, and the species was then reported over Easter as well as in the ANBG on 30 March.

Of the other birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April the last record of the **Latham’s Snipe** I can find is 17 March, but the **Leaden**



Turquoise Parrot

Julie Clark



Latham's Snipe

Geoffrey Dabb

Flycatcher, Australian Reed-Warbler, Tree and Fairy Martins were still reported in small numbers over Easter. While I can find no reports of the **Pallid Cuckoo** in the reporting period, **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** were still being reported over Easter, as was the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory of the local cuckoos. Despite the storms in the first half of March only small numbers (maximum of 15) of the **White-throated Needletail** seem to have been reported (6 observed still on 30 March), with smaller numbers still of the related **Fork-tailed Swift** during the reporting period.

Though this Gang-gang edition won't be available until around 5 April please continue to watch out for the last of the species mentioned in the two columns above as well as for any **Satin Flycatchers** passing through, a species which has not been reported during autumn to date. Watch out also for any remaining **Eastern Koels** of which a juvenile was still in Christine D's Flynn garden on 28 March (and a male on 20 March). Christine is often the last to observe this species showing the advantage of having fig trees able to be monitored through her windows.

Species that are still being reported but usually leave during April include the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, **Noisy Friarbird**, and most of the **Rufous Whistlers**, as well as most of the **Grey Fantails** of which there again seem to have been many moving through this March. A number of these will overwinter, as will

Global Big Day: May 14, 2016

You can make your birding really count by contributing towards something bigger, and what better place to start than the Global Big Day! The Global Big Day is an international bird blitz run by the organisation behind eBird, and aims to get as many birders from all over the world out birding and submitting data during that day. Last year, 14,000 people in 135 countries took part, submitting almost 45,000 checklists and recording 6,085 species of birds around the world in a single day. Australia contributed 482 species from 702 checklists to these impressive figures. The ACT participation, however, was not a very good reflection of our birds or our birding community: 93 species in 36 checklists from 11 participants, with over half of those checklists coming from just 3 observers. We can do a better job this year. If every COG member put in an effort to contribute a single list on the day, no matter where in the world they might be, that amounts to a few hundred lists; if some of us were to contribute a few lists each, that would be even more. Even better, you can really get into the spirit of the day and introduce someone new to birding, taking them along with you!

Contributing is simple. For current eBird users, simply submit lists into eBird as usual on the day. Those of you who aren't on eBird will need to create an account. There is nothing to fear - take the plunge and try something new. Not only is it a user friendly and robust system which ensures your data is available for centuries to come, eBird also boasts a range of data exploration and analysis tools as well as allowing you to access your data and view sightings that other users have made within hours. This link should have all the information you need to get started: http://help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/topics/439564-getting-started?b_id=1928&t=412380. All eBird records collected within the COG area of interest will be downloaded to the COG database.

Let's put in a team effort to make this Global Big Day big. Go COG!

Ryu Callaway

Eremaea ebird: <http://ebird.org/content/australia/>



Red-capped Robin

Julie Clark

the **Mistletoebird** and increasingly the **Superb Parrot**, for which flocks of up to 30 birds were still being reported during March, as well as some further southside records and a flock of 35 flying over the Bungendore Sewage Treatment Works, noted by David McDonald as very unusual in this area.

There has been a report of the **Flame Robin** already moving into the open areas of peri-urban Canberra, so watch out for these and other winter altitudinal migrants such as the **Rose** (already one record mid-month also at Mulligans Flat where David Rees most unusually saw a male, a **Scarlet Robin** and a **Red-capped Robin** within a few minutes of each other) and **Pink Robins**, the **Crescent** (one very early report already) and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, which may be first seen during late April or early May. Watch out also for the **Swift Parrot** migrating from Tasmania, especially if the gums in your area are flowering well.



Crescent Honeyeater

Lindsay Hansch

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, postings on the COG Email Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

April is the second of the two autumn months when there is significant bird movement in the ACT. So please keep up the reports for the last records of the spring/summer migrants that leave the ACT during this month, those species that are still to come down from the mountains into Canberra to spend autumn/winter here, for MFFs and any further breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Pink-eared Ducklings

Con Boekel

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 6 March 2016 - Crace Ponds and Hilltop Reserve

It was already a hot morning as nine of us started our walk around the Crace wetlands and pond area. We first saw a couple of **Australian Reed-Warblers**, apparently posing for us. A little further along, I mentioned that “this is the place where a few times I have seen a **Spotless Crake** but not for months” and magically one walked out right in front of us, with another lurking in the reeds.



Spotless Crake

Julie Clark

We did a slow loop around the wetland and pond observing the usual water birds (**Eurasian Coots**, **Dusky Moorhens**, **Purple Swamphens**, **Wood Ducks** and **Pacific Black Ducks**), plus some not so common ones including a **Golden-headed Cisticola**, a **Little Grassbird**, a **Hardhead** and two **Grey Teal**. One unusual observation was a pair of **Pacific Black Ducks** copulating on the water. Some not so rare birds included a flock of 27 **House Sparrows**! A raptor, some way off towards Percival Hill, is likely to have been a **Collared Sparrowhawk** but it couldn't be positively identified. Overhead sightings included **Australian White Ibis**, two **Little Pied Cormorants** and 13 **Little Black Cormorants**. Strangely absent near the water were **Welcome Swallows** but we did find some later on our walk along the street.

We decided to walk the few blocks to the Hilltop Reserve to observe in quite a different environment, stopping on the way to observe a pair of **Magpie-larks** which have nested atop a light pole. In this very exposed spot, a quite advanced chick was easily seen, but only one - less than a week earlier when there were definitely two chicks in the nest. In such an exposed spot it would be difficult for the parents to keep the chicks sheltered from the blazing sun and predators.

At the Hilltop Reserve quite a few old eucalypts have been retained which provide nesting hollows for many birds. Here we saw numerous **Red-rumped Parrots**, a **Pied Currawong**, **Australian Ravens**, **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, two **Striated Pardalotes**, two **Galahs** and a number of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, including one which seemed to be enlarging a hollow. There were only a few **Noisy Miners** and some **Common Mynas** at a tree hollow. We returned to our starting point near the ponds and overhead spotted more **White Ibis** followed by a single **Straw-necked Ibis**. In all a total of 32 species were observed. Fleur Leary.

Tuesday 8 - Friday 11 March – Wonga at Bawley Point

On Tuesday, most of the group of 9 COG members met for a seafood lunch at Innes Boatshed at Batemans Bay before a leisurely drive northwards in ideal weather conditions.

The following morning we travelled to Lake Wollumboola which, although a longish drive, was very worthwhile. Prior arrangements resulted in a local guide Frances Barr being able to pass on interesting news about recent sightings and leadership for a walk



Part of the Bawley Point group checking out the waders

Sandra Henderson

along the beach and lake foreshores. One notable sighting was a **Marsh Sandpiper**, whilst **Bar tailed Godwits** and **Red-necked Stints** were present, and **Double-barred Plovers** from New Zealand were first timers for some. Resting on the beach were large groups of about 5 species of tern, usually allowing fairly close observation.

Later at Wonga we again teamed up with local cheerful identity Margaret Hamon who lead us on a beach jaunt that produced no less that 7 **Hooded Plovers**. So interesting was her presentation of her work in this area that several of us showed an interest in being volunteers in the next breeding season.

There was not the variety or profusion of honeyeaters present in the actual cottage grounds as on previous visits due to reduced flowering. However, quiet sessions on the patios produced regular visits to the terracotta birdbath by **Lewin's Honeyeaters**, **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **Golden Whistlers** and a pair of **Eastern Whipbirds** amongst others.

Perhaps the most endearing sighting was no less than 6 **Yellow Thornbills** huddled together in a small dish.

We again visited the ANU campus at Kioloa and the highlight there was a flock of about 40 **Topknot Pigeons** in flight formations, wheeling around, then landing in nearby trees for photo opportunities.

We have been invited to conduct a bird survey on this large, diverse property and possibly this can be arranged on our next field trip in August 2016.

Terry Bell



Hooded Plover

Sandra Henderson



Yellow Thornbills

Sandra Henderson



Eastern Whipbird

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 13 March – Mulligans Flat North

Ten folk joined the walk in North Mulligans on a mild autumn morning. A total of 47 species was recorded. The walk began on the Bicentennial Track then followed the main gully down passing four dams. The raptors seen were: **Collared Sparrowhawk**, **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Australian Hobby** and **Black –shouldered Kite**. The autumn migration was underway with an aggregation of 20 **Noisy Friarbirds** and 5 **Olive-backed Orioles**. A mob of 17 **Pied**

Currawongs followed them into woodland in NSW near a vineyard where they were all put up by bird-scaring gunshot. A highlight was the sighting of 5 **Yellow Thornbills** high up in the foliage and 3 **Mistletoebirds** giving different calls. Both **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones** were present as well as a **Golden Whistler**. Five **Scarlet Robins** and three **Common Bronzewing**s added to the tally. Two **Australian King Parrots**, not usually reported here, were heard at the start. Although there were big stretches of silence along the border track, this was remedied by mixed feeding flocks and other sightings in the gully.

Bill Graham

Wednesday 16 March - Pryor Arboretum and Acacia Inlet

On a pleasantly mild day 21 members and guests, including a visitor from Alberta, attended the walk. It was slightly surprising that several long-standing members of the group had never visited the Pryor Arboretum before. Perhaps they had been dissuaded by the weedy and blackberry-rich vegetation. That has been subject to a lot of improvement in the recent past and with ready access to the Lake is now a pleasant area.

Our first section was a loop of the Pryor Arboretum, mainly close to the shore of Lake Burley Griffin. A good selection of the commoner waterbirds were seen and 3 **Silver Gulls** which flew past. An **Australasian Reed-Warbler** was seen in the fringing reeds.

In terms of landbirds, no rarities were seen. The most interesting sightings were three species of columbid (**Rock Dove**, **Crested Pigeon** and **Common Bronzewing**) and a group of 23 **White-winged Choughs**. To achieve that size it is likely to be 2 clans travelling together. A total of 38 species were seen on this segment.

The second section of the outing, down the well-used bike path to Acacia Inlet Park, was initially quite devoid of birds in the long *Themeda* grassland. A **Grey Currawong** was foraging in the ribbons off a *Eucalyptus viminalis* beside the path. On arriving at the Park a modest flock of **Dusky Woodswallows** was hawking over the canopy. The canopy was well occupied with about 19 **White-plumed Honeyeaters** with a handful of sedentary **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. Several **Australasian Swamphens** were grazing in the shorter grass and 11 **Eurasian Coots** were swimming in the Lake. 28 species were seen in this section, 8 of them being additions to the trip list.



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During the species call it was noticeable how few Summer migrants were seen or heard. No **Noisy Friarbird**, **Tree Martin**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Dollarbird** nor Cuckoo of any species. Has the recent hot dry weather caused them to vote with their wings or were we just unlucky?

For the day as a whole we recorded 46 species, compiling separate checklists for the [Pryor Arboretum area](#) and the [Acacia Inlet segment](#).

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 20 March - Eden pelagic

Eleven COG members joined crew Richard and Lindsay for the pelagic on a cool, windy morning at Eden. As soon as the *Connemara* left the harbour it was apparent the conditions would be a challenge. Richard motored down past Green Cape, with a 3-4m swell (and no promise of anything better) leading to a decision not to head out to the shelf. We pulled up about 10km offshore, but few birds were attracted to the boat. A few shearwaters settled briefly on the water, but albatrosses were few and far between and while a couple circled once or twice, none settled on the water to give us a better look. The highlight of the seabird sightings was a **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel**, a new bird for at least a few of us. Four species of albatross were seen flying near the boat – **Black-browed**, **Indian Yellow-nosed**, **Buller's** and **Shy**. The first 3 were somewhat unexpected at this time of year. There were plentiful **Wedge-tailed** and **Short-tailed Shearwaters**, a single **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, and two **Fluttering Shearwaters**. Two **Arctic Jaegers** were identified. The boat returned to Eden earlier than usual, but we were treated to really close views of the **Black-faced Cormorants**, other cormorants, **Crested Terns** and a lone **Pacific Gull** on a barge and several pontoons near the wood-chip loading facility. Very few dolphins were seen on the day, and no seals, but a single large turtle had a good look at us well out to sea.

Most of the Canberra-based participants had followed Leo's advice and called in at Merimbula on the trip down to Eden to see the **Beach Stone-curlew** which has taken up residence at one end of the beach at Spencer Park. The bird was easy to find for at least some of us, as was the fur seal which has also taken up residence on the sand. While filling in time on Saturday afternoon, some went to the Lake Curalo boardwalk, and while it is nice to see the **Royal Spoonbills** and other regulars there, the



Beach Stone-curlew

Ann Eldridge



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surprise was the 102 **Masked Lapwings** (yes, I counted them) on the Aussie Rules field next to the cricket oval. The entry in Pizzey says they do flock in autumn, but this number was very unexpected!

Sandra Henderson

Easter Saturday 26 March – Narrabundah Hill

Eighteen members and guests joined me on this outing where we walked for about 2.5 km along northern and most of the western boundaries of this reserve, and returned by the same route. The aim was to observe honeyeater migration, as well as to find any early-arriving altitudinal migrants and any later-departing summer migrants.

We started under cloudy/high fog skies and not the cold and clear overnight conditions which are optimal for significant honeyeater migration. However, it was third time lucky and during morning tea at around 10:15 am at the NW corner of the reserve participants noted a number of flocks moving in the distance towards the top of Narrabundah Hill. Soon after about 250 m down the western fence we counted a flock of about 110 birds streaming over above us, as well as several smaller groups. None were seen here on the way back, but after 11:30 am a number of flocks of between 30-50 birds passed over us about 300 m from the car park. This made a total of over 300 birds seen migrating during the morning.

Based on my many years of experience with them, the birds moving over were surprisingly quiet and didn't seem to rest very long if at all, but as far as we could tell all were **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, as would be expected for early season migration. At both spots birds were heading in an ESE to SE direction, presumably crossing Weston Creek towards Oakey Hill. Migration also seemed to be rather late and not start until mid-morning, indicative of them overnighing some distance away.

Compared with previous walks here at this time, examples of that other autumn phenomenon, mixed feeding flocks (MFF) were much less evident and smaller this year. Most were associated with the **Grey Fantail** which seemed to be everywhere throughout the walk, with a very conservative estimate of around 35 seen on the day. This species typically moves through the ACT in loose groups during March/early April, migrating at a much more leisurely pace. A surprise was the relative absence of similarly migrating **Silvereyes** which form the bulk of the MFFs in my GBS several kilometres away. The best MFF seen on the day was probably the one which included **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** allowing their identifying features to be pointed out, as well as several **Yellow Thornbills** picked up by Duncan from their calls and probably usually overlooked. This MFF was seen close to the middle of the day at the second honeyeater migration spot.

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.

We welcome customers new and old to call us on 02 4441 7770

Other species probably on migration were a couple of groups of **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, one of which contained a still begging juvenile which finally coaxed its parent to feed it the caterpillar which was being bashed on a branch. Co-incidentally I had seen a very similar event in my GBS the previous day with an even more persistent juvenile finally getting the food morsel. Some very alert eyes located a number of **Dusky Woodswallows** feeding about 50-100 m overhead, possibly why we haven't been able to locate them recently. A late staying **Western Gerygone** seen close to the turn back point made the walk in the sun along the western border worthwhile, and most participants had reasonable views of this highly active and rather featureless species.

The **Rufous Whistlers** still present were calling and surprisingly all birds seen were males in contrast to the comparatively drab female/immature **Golden Whistlers** seen nearby. The latter are winter altitudinal migrants which seem to already have come into Canberra in big numbers, as have the **Scarlet Robins** of which seven were seen on the 1 km northern border, including a couple of males in very close proximity. A surprise species (given few if any previous observations and no flowering nearby) was a single **New Holland Honeyeater** seen (and photographed) by a few participants when it rested briefly on top of a large eucalypt shrub.

A total of 49 species was recorded, with 45 of these along the northern border. Given this fact, in the future it may be possible to be flexible and curtail the length of the walk, particularly if conditions are warm.

Jack Holland



Bassian Thrush, Meroo N.P.

Sandra Henderson

MUDBRICK COTTAGE— MALLACOOTA

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental. It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra).

10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town.

It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531, or barbdebruine@hotmail.com

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 10 April – K2C Surveys

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws by **Wednesday 6 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or ph.0408 210736.

Sunday 17 April - Warks Road - Blundells Creek Road

Meet at 7:30am at the Stromlo Forest Park car park. From there we will car pool, with a preference for vehicles with 4WD or AWD. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$8. Please bring lunch, water, a raincoat and some warm clothes. We are likely to hear and see a variety of interesting birds, including **Pilotbird** and **Eastern Whipbird**. Numbers will be limited to the first 16. Contact David Dedenczuk on 0417 222 154 or email ddedentz@bigpond.net.au

Sunday 1 May – Micalong Swamp Flora Reserve

The Micalong Swamp Flora Reserve is one of the two Wetlands of National Importance in the Canberra region. (The other is Yaouk Swamp.) See <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/wetlands/report.pl>. On this visit we will combine birding, botany and bushwalking.

Micalong Swamp is some 80 km west of Canberra, two-thirds of which is a dirt road (the Brindabella Road), so it will be best if we use 4WD/SUV-type vehicles. We will do a 12 km loop walk around the Swamp, observing the birds that use the Swamp and its margins. The track is flat, with no hills.

As this will be a full day trip, please bring morning tea, lunch and water. There are no toilets at the venue. Rendezvous for carpooling in the carpark of the Stromlo Forest Park at 7:30 am. We expect to arrive back in Canberra at around 4:30 pm. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10.

Registration is essential. For further information and to register please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, or email micalong2016@canberrabirds.org.au.

David McDonald

Saturday 7 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

This morning walk will be the first for 2016 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours. Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter. Registration is essential. Please book your place with Anthony (0419202155, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide.

Anthony Overs

Sunday 15 May – Farrer Ridge

Details on website soon.

Sunday 22 May – An Introduction to Queanbeyan's Urban Reserves

Details on website soon.

Sunday 29 May - Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge

The path between Kambah Pool and Pine Island offers a fairly easy walk to the Gorge along (although mostly well above) the Murrumbidgee River. It is about 2.5 km to the Gorge with a steepish down and up (roughly 30 metres elevation) about half way along, where the path dips to the river. There is potential for interesting sightings, especially the famed **Peregrine Falcons** near the Gorge, although it's well before their nesting season. The vegetation is regenerating quite well since the 2003 bushfires, but is still more open than before fires so you may want sunscreen, certainly bring water and something for morning tea.

Meet Michael Robbins at 9 am at the car park at the south end of Kambah Pool, second turning left after you cross the cattle grid at the entry to the Bullen Range Nature Reserve.



LOIRE VALLEY TIME TRAVEL

Spring has arrived in the Touraine Loire Valley and with it the migrants which have spent winter in Africa or sunny Spain.

The Eurasian Cranes and White Storks have flown over in their great V formations. These days some of them no longer bother to leave at the beginning of winter and remain in the nearby wetland of La Brenne. Smaller migrants such as the Grey Wagtail can now be glimpsed as yellow flashes streaking up small fast flowing streams.

The early emerging butterflies are out and about and frog spawn is everywhere.

In the damp meadows the Snakeshead Fritillaries and the very earliest orchids are flowering. As the spring progresses more birds will arrive, more butterflies will be on the wing and more orchid species will blossom.

If you would like to book a tour with us that combines a visit to a chateau, a winery and some nature watching get in touch. Your Australian guide has a background in both heritage and nature conservation and lives in the Loire Valley.

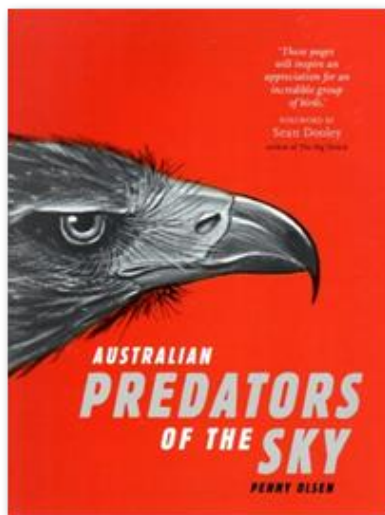
Susan and Simon

www.tourtheloire.com

Tel: 02 6100 7744
(Canberra)

contact@tourtheloire.com

BOOK OF THE MONTH



Australian Predators of the Sky \$28

By Penny Olsen

This new book from Olsen comprises over 200 striking paintings, lithographs and engravings of all 34 Australian species—25 diurnal birds of prey and nine owls. For each species, a distribution map is provided, as well as the origins of its scientific name. Several full-colour illustrations of the species by various artists are accompanied by intriguing notes about the bird.

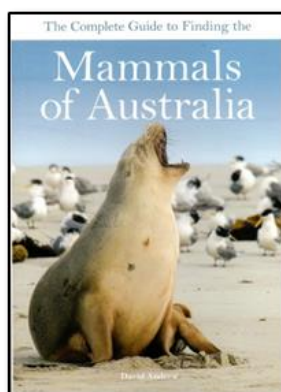
Publications for sale

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

NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

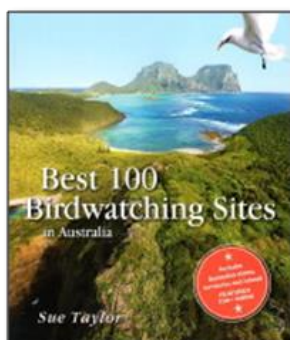


Finding mammals in Australia

David Andrew

For the first time ever, *The Complete Guide to Finding the Mammals of Australia* advises interested amateurs and professionals where to locate many of Australia's mammals. The book describes Australia's best mammal-watching sites state-by-state.

Member's price \$35

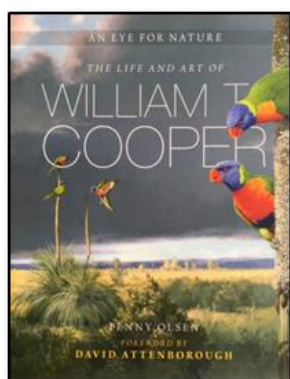


Best 100 Birdwatching Sites in Australia

Sue Taylor

Inside this illustrated guide you'll discover some of Australia's better birdwatching sites.

Member's price \$28 **SALE PRICE \$24**



An Eye for Nature – The Life and Art of William Cooper

Penny Olsen

William T. Cooper's paintings of birds which set him apart—his raucous cockatoos, colourful parrots, animated turacos and flamboyantly displaying birds of paradise. Often placed in meticulously studied landscapes, these intricate bird portraits reveal Cooper's close observation not only of his subjects' appearance, but their habits, poses and behaviour.

Member's price \$33

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG membership

2015-2016 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

S Cechet
J Fogerty

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2016 edition

Wednesday 27 April 2016

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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COG library

Membership: Sandra Henderson
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gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann
Newsletter distribution:

Dianne Davey

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG E-mail Discussion List
COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'CanberraBirds'.

Join (subscribe to) the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

To unsubscribe, either permanently or temporarily, send an email message to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@canberrabirds.org.au.

If you wish to re-subscribe after being unsubscribed temporarily, simply follow the 'subscribe' instructions above.

Canberra Bird Notes

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