



Gang-gang

MAY 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

Wednesday 11 May 2016

7.30 pm.

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

The short talk will be given by **Neil Hermes** on 'The Jerusalem Bird Observatory.'

Every year hundreds of thousands of European migratory birds are channelled along the ranges of Israel on their way to African summer haunts. For over 30 years, an observatory and ringing (read bird banding) station has been operating in the very heart of Jerusalem. This site is a very successful environmental centre which educates thousands of people about birds and bird migration every year.

The main presentation will be by **Geoffrey Dabb** on "Birds of Black Mountain – the historical, the typical, the notable, and the mixed flock".

If asked for a talk on the birds of 'Black Mountain' you would need to think about what was distinctive or interesting about that site, near to the heart of Canberra. You could, if you

(Continued on page 2)

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

It has been very dry and unseasonably warm for the 4 weeks from 31 March that constitute the reporting period for this month's column. Reports are of very dry/drought conditions inland, but these have less effect on birds which may visit now than on the spring/summer migrants. The only observation of this kind of "unusuals" is another report of the **Blue-faced Honeyeater** at Hall, which I suspect may possibly be resident there. This is not the case for ducks and other waterbirds, as evidenced by the good numbers of **Freckled** and **Pink-eared Ducks** remaining at both the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the big dam at Mulligans Flat.

The often clear and still conditions (though minimums didn't get close to the best migrating conditions of a frost until after Anzac Day) have



Blue-faced Honeyeater

Stuart Harris

Everyone welcome

April Meeting—*continued from Page 1*

wished, treat the subject as simply 'The woodland birds of Canberra'. The site, apart from the much visited Botanic Gardens, is not particularly valued by birdwatchers - although it is by botanists. However, three sets of survey work in the 1960s and 1970s help in understanding what goes on there and point to some distinctive features. This talk looks at those historical records and adds some recent observations. This is a revised version of a presentation given in April for the Friends of Black Mountain as a Heritage Festival event.



Intermediate Egret

Ryu Callaway

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

probably been responsible for a very good honeyeater migration season, possibly the best for some years. Numbers were particularly high in the first half of the month, at first mainly **Yellow-faced**, but as the month progressed the percentage of **White-naped Honeyeaters** steadily increased to constituting 50% or more from mid-April. As the month went on they also seemed to be migrating much earlier in the day, which I attribute to the need "to get out of here" compared with the more leisurely pace at the start of migration. Widespread small honeyeater migration was still being observed up to Anzac Day, though in smaller numbers, and I expect it will have pretty much ended early in May when this Gang-gang arrives in your inbox or letterbox.

Also reported migrating have been **Red Wattlebirds** often in single species groups of up to 60 birds, particularly round the middle of April. Occasionally there have been small numbers of **Noisy Friarbirds** observed in amongst them. Again from about mid-month there have been a number of reports of this latter species, which in March appeared to have already largely moved away. In contrast, numbers of **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** moving through seem to have dropped by mid-month, as did those for the **Grey Fantail**. The latter was present in some extraordinary numbers in March and the first half of April, with Barbara Allan having 500 in view on the Pinnacle, only to be gone an hour later. **Silvereye** numbers, also very high during the same time, also seemed to drop significantly, at least in my local patch.

Of the above-named species, the **Noisy Friarbird** is the only one that usually completely leaves our area with all the others, whereas **Red Wattlebirds** continue to be present in good numbers, staying over in winter in small but variable numbers. **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Olive-backed Oriole** are generally considered as the last of the near complete migratory species to depart before winter starts. There have been quite a few reports of the former, often in larger groups as they gather together before migration, but typically fewer of the latter in April. Please keep an eye out for these two species, most of which have usually departed by the first or second week of May, as well as the others mentioned above.

I can find no further records of the early-leaving species except for a late observation of the **Rufous Songlark** skulking quietly in the grasslands (as any remaining here tend to do in autumn/winter) during the K2C surveys on 10 April. Perhaps due to the warm conditions the **Sacred Kingfisher** was last reported on 8 April. Unexpectedly the **Latham's Snipe** does not seem to have been reported since mid-March, but many of the other birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April stayed well into the first half of April. These include the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (still reported on 23 April), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**. Nick Payne posted a photo on the COG chatline of a fairly advanced juvenile **Eastern Koel** on his back fence in Griffith on 31 March, increasing the number of fledglings/juveniles by 1 to 29 for this breeding season.



Royal Spoonbills with begging chicks

Denise Kay

While the **White-throated Needletail** was not reported after 30 March, on 10 April Shorty saw a group of about 60 **Fork-tailed Swift** circling high above Jerrabomberra Wetlands. He took a quick photo then checked it on his camera, looked back up and they were gone. So it isn't a surprise that species that usually leave early in April were staying close to mid-month including the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** (last reported 11 and 26 April, respectively) as well as the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory of the local cuckoos (19 April), and the **Rufous Whistler** (26 April). Some of the two last-named species do overwinter, as will some **Mistletoebirds** (24 April) and increasingly the **Superb Parrot** (still reported on 26 April).

Of the species that come to Canberra for winter, on 31 March, the day after I forwarded my April column to the editors, Kathy Walter and John Goldie reported at least 3 **Swift Parrots** at the Hackett tank on Mt Majura. These birds stayed in that area for over a fortnight, with up to 8 birds seen and last reported on 17 April. The first altitudinal migrants which arrived in March, the **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler** and the **White-eared Honeyeater** have been widely observed in April. The **Flame Robin**, which moves into the open areas of peri-urban Canberra during April, has been reported in some areas it hasn't been seen in for a while (Callum Brae and Narrabundah Hill), but not yet in others places where it has (Campbell Park).

So watch out for these and other winter altitudinal migrants such as the **Rose** (a few have already been reported) and **Pink Robins** (none so far), the **Crescent** and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** (none reported in urban Canberra during April) which may be first seen during late April or early May. Watch out also for other species that I associate with winter such as the **Restless Flycatcher**, one of which made a quick visit to Duncan McCaskill's garden in Giralang in mid-April, the first time he'd seen it there for over 20 years.



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Good birding, good food ...

2016 tours

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 2016
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
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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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Despite all this movement and the dry conditions there was still some breeding reported including:

- A pair of **Australasian Grebes** with quite immature dependent young at the Majura Firing range;
- **Spoonbills** with begging chicks at Giralang Pond. While it is unclear where they may have bred the COG website data sheet shows breeding only in a few years in the ACT;
- An adult pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** in an Ainslie garden with an immature male in tow;
- Two separate **Rainbow Lorikeet** breeding events in the same park in Fadden, one with a chick near to fledging. Interestingly the COG data sheet on our website shows no nest young records as of 2013, and no breeding records for either March or April; and

Weebills feeding young on Mount Majura.

It is also pleasing that 5 of the **Pink-eared Ducklings** at the large dam at Mulligans Flat survived, at least until mid-April as well as 6 **Grey Teal** ducklings.

Late autumn/winter is also the time large flocks form such as the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, **Galah** and **Little Corella**. So keep a watch out for them, as well as mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) which have been reported during April and should continue until the spring breeding commences. With the early evenings and late mornings it is also a good time to observe roost flights and roosting behaviour. The **Magpie-larks** which I wrote up for CBN are behaving completely differently this year, with no roosts or gathering on wires within my GBS site. However, it is still clear at least some are flying out to the Chapman horse paddocks to feed and undertake a long roost flight of at least 500 m without stopping back over Darwinia Terrace in the evening well down into Rivett. I've also located a roost site for **Red-rumped Parrots**; for many years I've observed loose flocks of up to 100 also flying to and from the Chapman horse paddocks, but have never found an actual roost site.

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

So please keep up the reports for the last records of the spring/summer migrants leaving the ACT, of those species that are still to come down from the mountains into Canberra to spend the autumn/winter here, for large single species flocks and MFFs, for roost flights and roosting behaviour, and any late autumn breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Rainbow Lorikeet juvenile

Ryu Callaway

Future water infrastructure works at Callum Brae

I have met with the ranger for Callum Brae, for a briefing on work Icon Water is going to be carrying out from July to December this year to upgrade the valves, pipes and pumping station at Callum Brae (these are all up along the quarry fenceline, off Mugga Lane).

Work will involve substantial upgrades of all the water infrastructure on site, including improvement of the road to the pumping station, addition of one or more buildings at the pumping station site, and replacement of pipes which run from those major storage tanks on the other side of Mugga Lane. There will have to be some trimming of vegetation on the quarry side of the track, and removal of small trees on the other side of the track. Icon Water have been reminded about the regular use of the vegetation in that area by small bird species, including **Speckled Warblers** and **Red-browed Finches**, and have been asked to leave the dead blackberry thickets and other tangles near the gate. They will also be responsible for vegetation regeneration for quite some time after the actual work is completed. Weed spraying is part of the contracted work (which is good because this is quite a weedy spot, with a lot of verbasicum down from the track).

I will be in contact with the ranger throughout the process, so if you have concerns while the work is carried out please get in touch with me.

It is also expected that rabbit control and serrated tussock spraying will be carried out soon in the reserve, as well as some blackberry control.

Sandra Henderson
shirmax2931@gmail.com

Geoffrey Dabb

Red-browed Finch



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/>

Field Trip Reports

Thursday 24 to Monday 28 March (Easter Long Weekend – Willandra National Park)

Another excellent trip organised by Kathy Walter and John Goldie!

The highlight of the weekend was the entertainment that they had organised for the Saturday night. The headline act of Flash Kath and the Grey Falcons (Nugget Goldie, SuePer Woman, McGuinness Magee and Glowing Neon Electric Green) lived up to expectations. They were ably supported by the acts of Dianne and Stewart Deans, Margaret Strong, Terry Bell and that well know crooner David Cook. The evening entertainment was rounded out with a rat shearing demonstration by Martyn Moffatt and rat master Ethel Luff. Ratty is still in a state of shock and mortification.

On the Sunday evening we had poetry courtesy of Rae Lister and the brief appearance of Flash Jack Luff.

But it was not all fun and frivolity. There was the serious business of bird watching. The birding highlights included a **Square-tailed Kite**, a pair of **Banded Lapwings**, **Orange Chats** (on two occasions), a **Black Falcon**, a flock of **Ground Cuckoo-shrikes**, a **Blue-winged Parrot** and a **Spotted Bowerbird**.

The lagoon was half-full and there was a reasonable representation of waterbirds. The night birds were also evident: a **Southern Boobook** was found at the shearing shed, a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** paid us a visit at dusk at the campsite, an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** perched out in the open, a **Spotted Nightjar** was briefly spotlighted and a **Barn Owl** screeched late one night.

On the Sunday trip to the north of the park we visited some mallee. The only mallee specialist we could find was the **White-fronted Honeyeater**; however the trip was very productive and some very nice birds were seen in the mallee and surrounding woodlands, including quite a number of the birds mentioned above.

The list of birds for the National Park totalled 85 with an additional 13 being seen on the Sunday jaunt outside the Park, giving a total of 98 species. If we add the **Inland Dotterels** seen by Dianne and Stewart Deans as they exited the Park and the immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle similarly seen by John and Kathy we made the grand total of 100.

Once again, thank you Kathy and John.

Noel Luff



Flash Kath and the Grey Falcons

David Cook



From top clockwise: Terry (DC), Old bottle in Willandra rubbish dump (SL), Some of the 64 stands in Willandra shearing shed (SL), Ram shed (SL), Unstable bridge (SH), Shearers' quarters (SL), Old cart in Willandra rubbish dump (SL), Rae and Jane in the dinghy (SH)
 DC: David Cook, SL: Sue Lashko, SH, Sandra Henderson



From top clockwise: **Red-capped Robin** (DC), **Tawny Frogmouth** (DC), **Blue-winged Parrot** (DC), **Yellow-billed spoonbill** (DC), **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** (SH), **Red Kangaroo** (SL), **Collard Sparrowhawk** (DC), **Southern Boobook** (DC), **Snake run over by car while eating another snake** (SL)
 DC: David Cook, SH: Sandra Henderson, SL: Sue Lashko

Flash Kath from Canberrai

I've **twitched** at Burrabogie and I've **twitched** at Toganmain
I've **twitched** at Big Willandra and out on the Coleraine
But before the **twitching** was over I longed to get back again
Birdwatching for the **Canberra Orno's** on the One Tree Plain

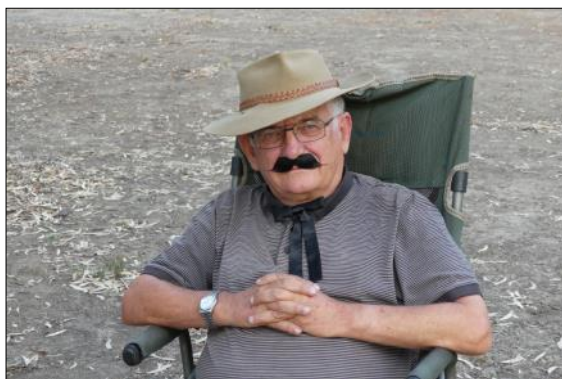
Chorus

All among the **birds** boys all among the **birds**
Keep your **binos up** boys keep your **binos up**
I can do a respectable tally myself whenever I like to try
And they know me round the **hotspots** as **Flash Kath from Canberrai**

I've **twitched** at Big Willandra and I've **twitched** at Tilberoo
And once I **saw Bourke's Parrot** boys upon the famed Barcoo
At Cowan Downs and Trida as far as Moulamein
But I was always glad to get back again to the One Tree Plain

I've **ticked** them **on pelagics** and I've **twitched with God knows who**
And **seen** them in the **saltbush** with the grass seeds showing through
But I never **spotted a Night Parrot**, wherever it might remain
When **birding** for the **Canberra Orno's** on the One Tree Plain

I've been **birding** up the Lachlan and I've twitched on Cooper's Creek
And once I **saw a grasswren** and **chased it all bloom'n week**
But when Gabriel blows his trumpet lads I'll catch the morning **chorus**
And push for the **Canberra Orno's** on the One Tree Plain.



From top clockwise; Ethel, Martin and Ratty (DC), Sueper woman (DC), Willandra shearing shed (SL), Noel Luff ready for his rendition of Flash Jack From Gundagai (JG)

DC: David Cook, SL: Sue Lashko, JG: Jane Green

Sunday 10 April – K2C surveys, Bredbo area

Autumn is always an exciting time to be birdwatching in the region with the mass movement of many species from summer to winter habitats. The honeyeater migration was a highlight of the K2C bird surveys held in very mild dry conditions. The largest number of honeyeaters recorded at a site was 600 passing through over the 20 minute period, the majority being **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** with an estimated 25% **White-naped Honeyeaters**. The migration was most evident in the Michelago area, but small flocks were recorded at sites from Williamsdale down to Bredbo. Other honeyeaters moving included small groups of **Red Wattlebirds** and one group of **Noisy Friarbirds**.

Ravens also congregate in large numbers at this time of year, particularly **Little Ravens**, and several groups of 100 or more birds were seen. Other autumn movements include the appearance in the lowlands of the **Flame Robin** (recorded at one site) and **Golden Whistlers** (several sites). At the same time, late-departing summer migrants were still enjoying the warm days including **Dusky Woodswallow** (up to 40 at two sites), **Grey Fantail**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Rufous Songlark** skulking quietly in the grasslands.

Threatened species were in encouragingly good numbers particularly **Scarlet Robin** (12 properties), **Hooded Robin** (6), **Brown Treecreeper** (9), **Diamond Firetail** (7 sites including more than 12 birds at one site), **Speckled Warbler** (3), **Varied Sittella** (1), and **Gang-gang Cockatoo** (2 sites, including a flock of 25 at one site).

The K2C bird surveys are in their 7th year. We thank the landholders for their ongoing interest, the many COG volunteers who contribute their time, and Bush Heritage Australia for their support. The next surveys will be on Sunday 9 October.

Nicki Taws

Sunday 17 April – Blundells Creek Road and Warks Road

A small party of COG members travelled to Warks Road in the heart of the Brindabellas. Due to backburning operations, the connecting Blundells Creek Road was closed to traffic but, undeterred, the party walked the three kilometres downhill to the intended destination. A number of birds were seen during this descent, including migrating honeyeaters, the majority being **White-naped**, with a smaller number of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. The party reached the intersection with Warks Road in mild, still, overcast conditions, and admired there the giant ribbon gums and peppermints that had survived the 2003 fires. Many more birds were heard than seen in the lush vegetation, including three **Superb Lyrebirds**. Great views were had of a couple of pretty **Spotted Pardalotes**. In all, the party recorded some 23 species for the morning.

David Dedenczuk



COG members, Blundells Creek Road

John Bundock

Wednesday 20 April – Tharwa area

Twenty-one members and guests arrived at the Visitors Centre and headed off towards the lower slopes of Mount Tennent on a beautifully clear morning. Throughout the 2.25 km ascent to the Cypress Pines Lookout we could see and hear migrating honeyeaters flying just above the foliage and occasionally settling. At the start most of the birds were **Yellow-faced** but as we went up the proportion of **White-naped Honeyeaters** increased. It is almost impossible to have an accurate count of the birds but amongst the group we considered 400 **Yellow-faced** and 150 **White-naped** to be reasonable estimates.

Two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were soaring over the ridge behind the lookout when we got there, eventually disappearing over towards the summit of the mountain. The descent was a little less demanding, and delivered a few more species including 2 **Jacky Winters** on some dead timber in an open paddock. We totalled 24 species in this part of the outing.

After a pause for sustenance we ventured down to the Gudgenby River where we saw the most exciting action of the day with 3 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** overflying, 2 of which performed a spectacular talons-locked, tumbling flight. Returning to the Centre the distinctive call of a **Peaceful Dove** was heard and the bird soon spotted. The call then became stereophonic and 2 Peaceful Doves were evident in the one tree. We recorded 22 species in the grounds of the Centre.

A few members departed before the final foray to the Tharwa Sandwash. One of the departees was kind enough to swing by that site and send a text giving precise directions to the roosting **Tawny Frogmouths**. Having ticked them, a few more members had other commitments but 6 of us walked along the basic track. A few more migrating **Honeyeaters** were logged (2/3 **Yellow-faced**) as were a number of additional bush birds. We totalled 24 species on this stage of the trip.

Overall we recorded 47 species for the day.

Martin Butterfield.



Peaceful Dove

Ryu Callaway

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Tawny Frogmouth

Ryu Callaway



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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

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

Meet at 9am just past the roundabout at the intersection of Sulwood Drive and Sainsbury St, Wanniasa (between Sainsbury and Gaunson, on the reserve side of road). There is a fairly flat area suitable for parking close to the gate into Farrer Ridge Reserve at this point.

Farrer Ridge has some densely vegetated areas, as well as grassy slopes, so we should see a good range of birds, including robins. The views from the trig point are spectacular. No bookings required, and weather permitting, we'll have morning tea on the highest point.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 22 May – An introduction to Queanbeyan's urban reserves

Meet at 9am in the carpark on Cooma St, across from the end of the Edwin Land Parkway (on the outskirts of Queanbeyan). This carpark offers access into both Barracks Flat Park, and the White Rocks Reserve. White Rocks is a large area, criss-crossed by numerous tracks, and at one point near the river has a noted outcrop of limestone. I encountered several mixed flocks on my last visit, and it has a gully favoured by a group of **Common Bronzewings**. Barracks Flat is a smaller area, with some woodland as well as a more formal suburban park area (playground, toilets, etc). No bookings required: bring morning tea.

Sandra Henderson

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.

Tuesday 7 to Friday 10 June – Ben Ricketts (near Barren Grounds NR) - mid-week accommodated

Ben Ricketts Environmental Mountain Cabins are near Jamberoo and just 1km from Barren Grounds Nature Reserve. We will be accommodated in 3 cabins which each consist of one room plus bathroom. We will bird on the property as well as at Barren Grounds. Expect early starts for pre-breakfast searches for **Eastern Ground Parrot** and **Eastern Bristlebird**, as well as spotlighting at night for mammals and owls.

There will be a limit of 12 participants. Currently there are just a few spots remaining. To register, contact Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com

Sunday 19 June – Wanniasa Hills and Fadden Pond

Note the change of date for this outing.

Arrive by 8am on this cold chilly winter morning (hint: remember your gloves!) to Fadden Hills Pond located on the corner of Bugden Ave and Nicklin Cres. There are no proper parking arrangements in the area- note that the gravel parking near the tennis courts is for tennis club members only. I suggest you park along Stopford Cres or Nicklin Cres out of the way, and carpool where possible. We will spend some time loitering around the pond. A **Spotless Crake** was present throughout the cooler months last year, and the tree-lined creek occasionally presents some nice birds like **Rose Robin**.

We will then (slowly) walk up to Wanniasa Hills NR, doing a loop of the SW section of the reserve. Mixed feeding flocks abound over winter in the comparatively healthy eucalypts of the reserve. With some patience, we can expect to get some very decent views of **Golden Whistlers**, **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Scarlet Robin**, pardalotes, and a range of thornbills. Be prepared for some mildly



LOIRE VALLEY TIME TRAVEL

April in the Loire Valley is all about the return of the Barn Swallows, Sand and House Martins, and Common Swifts. Everyone looks forward to them zooming through the sky screaming and buzzing. Best of all is to sit out on the terrace of a lovely old stone building overlooking the river in the evening.

Enjoy a glass of local wine and watch the swifts, joined by bats, hunting in the evening light around their roosts in the roof spaces of picturesque village houses.

If you like swifts and swallows as much as we do, email us and book a tour. The sight of these aerial acrobats around the chateaux of the Loire will be one of the highlights of your trip.

Susan & Simon

www.tourtheloire.com

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(Canberra)

Who are Susan & Simon?

Simon Brand and Susan Walter are Australians who have lived in Europe for 18 years. Simon lived in Canberra in the 70s and 80s, and Susan is a field naturalist from Queensland. We now provide custom tours of France's Loire Valley using a classic 1950's car.

contact@tourtheloire.com

steep and rocky sections, as I will modify the route as we go depending on where the mixed feeding flocks are. We will then check out the dam just in case there is a grebe swimming in its murky depths (assuming it rains between now and then) or a duck or two to add to the list. Hopefully, the fog will have cleared up by this point and we will return via the southernmost peak (the smallest but also with the best views). This may be a good opportunity for a quick snack while taking in the breathtaking views of Tuggeranong and the Brindabellas, with the possibility of a raptor or two. The whole morning should take about 3-4 hours.

Ryu Callaway

Saturday 25 June - Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve- Superb Lyrebird survey

Note the change of date for this outing.

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning's survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours. This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004.

If interested and for further details please contact Sue Lashko on 62514485 (h), or email smlashko@gmail.com

Chris Davey



Superb Lyrebird

David Cook



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Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

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Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

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

Woodland Surveys- autumn survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 3 April in heavily overcast and cool to mild conditions. Autumn migration movement was apparent with larger than usual numbers of species moving through (**Grey Fantail**, **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Welcome Swallow**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**). However, there were very few migratory honeyeaters, with only a couple of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** around. Several of the spring migrants were still around, eg **Western Gerygone** and **Rufous Whistler**. Numbers of **White-eared Honeyeaters** had increased as they move in from higher country for the cooler months, and **Golden Whistlers** were also at a couple of sites. **Scarlet Robins** were recorded at 8 sites across the reserve. Other interesting sightings were 1 **Jacky Winter** and 1 **Red-capped Robin** in a mixed flock, a flock of 32 **Little Ravens**, and several sightings of **Varied Sittellas**. The large dam had good numbers of waterbirds including 1 **Australian Shelduck**, 15 **Freckled Ducks**, **Pink-eared Ducks** with ducklings, and large numbers of **Eurasian Coot** and **Welcome Swallows**. **Superb Parrots** were around the large dam area and were also heard as we entered the reserve off Forde. A total of 55 species was recorded, down on the usual autumn species counts in the low 60s; however, there was still a lot of activity in terms of overall numbers of birds at many of the 24 sites.

Goorooyarloo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the survey on 27 March in mild, partly cloudy conditions. After a slow start, dominated by **Noisy Miners**, it turned out to be an excellent morning, with several fairly unusual records for the reserve. 55 species were recorded, compared with 44 for the equivalent survey last year, with 41 found during 10 minute site counts.

A **Pied Butcherbird** was heard, the third record in the reserve in the last few months, and a species that appears to be increasing in the ACT. A **Rainbow Lorikeet** was heard, only the second record, and still a rare bird in this part of Canberra. At a dam between sites 1 and 8 there was a lot of activity, highlighted by a **Diamond Firetail**, 2 **Southern Whitefaces** and a **Speckled Warbler**. Site 7 had quite a few small birds in it, but shortly after the site count a larger mob arrived, dominated by **Striated Pardalotes** (100+), **Silvereyes** (50+), **Grey Fantails** (40+), **Spotted Pardalotes** (10+), **Golden Whistlers** (10+) with small numbers of other species such as **Scarlet Robin**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Weebill**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Varied Sittella**, quite a frenzy of activity.

A few groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** passed through during the morning, with a handful of **White-naped**. **Silvereyes** were also on the move. Elsewhere there were 8 **Varied Sittellas** at site 1, an **Owlet-Nightjar** calling at site 3, **Scarlet Robins** seen and heard in several places, 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** causing widespread panic, and a **Brown Falcon**. Only a few species of summer migrants were recorded - **Rufous Whistler** (2), **Noisy Friarbird** (1), **Tree Martin** (1), **Western Gerygone** (1) and **Olive-backed Oriole** (1).

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie surveyed over the week prior to Easter. The most northerly site had an excellent mixed flock which included a couple of **Scarlet Robins**, 3 **Speckled Warblers**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Striated**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Golden Whistler** and 3 species of honeyeater. Most other sites were very quiet which was a bit disappointing.

Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan surveyed the 8 sites on the range on Thursday 31 March, on a beautiful autumn morning, still, cool and sunny.

Birds were fairly plentiful at most sites, even those which traditionally reveal few species. The area is drying out, but the vast majority of trees looked very healthy, except for one species that was infested by lerps. At the grenade range, down near the airport, half the trees have died after a long slow decline, and the survivors do not appear to be able to last very long. But even this site produced a range of the usual suspects: **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, **Australian Magpies**, ravens, **Noisy Miner**, **Magpie-lark**, **Common Starlings** and **Welcome Swallows**.

It was a good morning for choughs, being observed at 5 sites, with 27 observed at one site. **Scarlet Robins** were seen at 5 sites, **White-throated Treecreepers** at 4, while **Laughing Kookaburras** were heard around 4 sites. There were good examples of the crossover of species during autumn, with about 50 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** seen passing over one site, and a further group of 30 between sites. **Rufous Whistlers** were heard a couple of times, **White-eared Honeyeaters** observed 4 times and **Eastern Spinebill** only once. **White-throated Gerygones** were still there, as were a couple of **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**, and a single **Speckled Warbler**. Highlight of the Mick's Dam site was a pair of **Australasian Grebes** with quite immature dependent young,

In the lengthy traverse between the sites we observed 30 **Little Ravens** in open grassland, 2 **White-faced Herons**, 2 **Australian Pipits**, a **Golden Whistler**, a **Pacific Black Duck** and a **Grey Teal** on one of the numerous but generally bird-free dams. Back at Range Control we looked in vain for the Diamond Firetails spotted there on an earlier occasion, the only birds in sight being a couple of **Welcome Swallows**, and a single **Crimson Rosella** foraging on the ground beneath an old pine tree.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on 22 March, a calm and mild morning. This produced 42 species including a few summer migrants such as **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygone**, and a single **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**. Sites opposite and south of the concrete dump were the busiest with a **Brown Falcon** in one site being mobbed by 10 **Rainbow Lorikeets**, 5 **Little Corellas**, **Noisy Miners** and both rosellas. Other raptors seen were **Nankeen Kestrel** and **Wedge-tailed Eagle**.

Jerrabomberra West NR

The woodland survey at this site was done on Easter Saturday morning (26 March) by Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French, in fine, mild but overcast conditions. The feature of the morning was the number of medium sized parrots in the area, with **Crimson Rosellas** and **Eastern Rosellas** in good numbers at most sites, and several pairs of **Red-rumped Parrots** as well as one **Australian King-Parrot**. Although a small flock of **Little Corellas** flew over, there were very few large white cockies this survey. A highlight was 8 **Dusky Woodswallows** around site 2 - the open woodland area they are often recorded in over spring/summer. Small bird numbers were on the low side at the site counts, although one **Rufous Whistler** actively called in one site (single trill call), and a **Mistletoebird**, **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Silvereyes**, **Grey Fantail** and a few **Superb Fairy-wrens** were also in site counts, as well as the usual **Noisy Miners** at some sites.

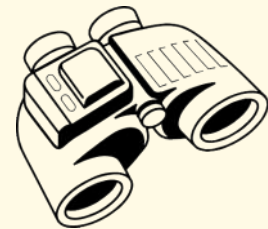
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However, quite a large mixed feeding flock was encountered deep in the woodland between sites 5 and 7; including 3 **Scarlet Robins**, 4 **Speckled Warblers**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Weebills**, **Red-browed Finches**, **Grey Fantail**, and a **Rufous Whistler**. There was no small honeyeater migration activity, possibly due to the early overcast conditions. After the survey, a very quiet adult **Pallid Cuckoo** flew up, and a **White-throated Gerygone** called during morning tea. A **Nankeen Kestrel** over the grasslands was the final bird for the morning. The total species count was 40, about average for an autumn survey.

Symonston: Callum Brae NR/Isaacs Ridge NR

Sandra Henderson reported several mixed feeding flocks contributing to a good species list for the autumn surveys at the six Callum Brae sites with 45 species in total. Dams within the reserve are very low. Both **Scarlet** and **Flame Robins** were present at the top of the reserve, and a surprisingly large number (16) of **Dusky Woodswallows** were hawking near the quarry fence. In the same area a small flock of **Silvereyes** was feasting on fleabane, while the **Eastern Rosellas** preferred nearby thistles. Site 4 proved most species-rich, with three **Grey Currawongs**, a **Scarlet Robin**, two **Speckled Warblers** and a **White-throated Gerygone** in the mix. At site 5 a few small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** flew over during the survey period.

Isaacs Ridge reserve was very dry and there was only a small number of birds at the three sites, with less than 20 species in and outside sites. The surprise of the morning was a **Brown Goshawk** which flew in and sat on a branch. A group of three Common **Bronzewings** close to the step-thru on Mugga Lane was the only significant sighting outside the actual sites.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Thursday 17 March, on a mild, still morning that started out overcast but lightened somewhat as the morning progressed. The very first bird of the morning was a **Nankeen Kestrel**. Raptors are not routinely recorded at this site. Very few little birds were seen. There was only one mixed feeding flock and it was composed of **Grey Fantails** and **Silvereyes**, which is the same composition as reported in autumn last year. The **Rainbow Lorikeet** at Site 2 has found a mate. Site 7 produced eleven species, albeit that most of the activity was in the outer (50-100 metres) ring. In the last two minutes of the survey period **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Scarlet Robin** and **White-throated Treecreeper** were added to the species list. Only two **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were observed. In all, 22 species were in sites, with an additional 10 between sites.

Rural leasehold property near Tharwa

David McDonald conducted the survey on Monday 28 March. The weather was mild and still, but there was a thick cloud cover. The vegetation has changed markedly since the December survey, with lush growth of native grasses, along with substantial growth of woody weeds. Although a good bird count was expected, both the species diversity and the bird abundance were surprisingly low. Just 24 species were observed, including 21 at the sites and three extras between the sites. The number of species at the sites ranged from 1 to 6, with the most widespread being the **Crimson Rosella**, **Galah**, **Australian Magpie**, **Common Starling** and **Australian Raven**. The small bush birds usually common in grassy box woodland were almost entirely absent. No breeding was observed, the threatened species that are usually found at this site were not observed, nor was any migratory behaviour. It was pleasing to see a good number of **Red-rumped Parrots** as they have been largely missing over the last decade, though disappointing to see quite large numbers of **Noisy Miners**, a species rarely observed at this location until recently.



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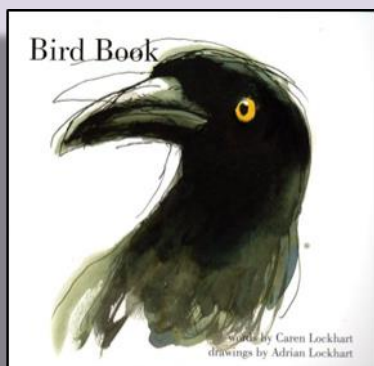
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Dr Kate Brandis and Patricia Gadd analysing feathers on ANSTOs iTRAX facility



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Members' Price \$20.



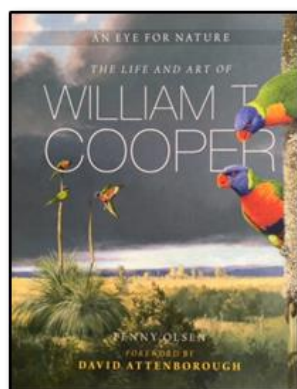
Publications for sale

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

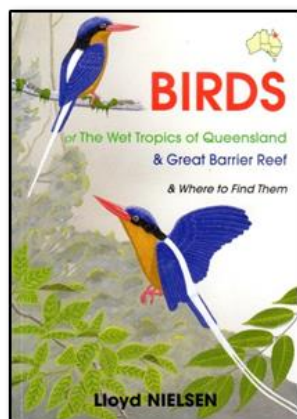


An Eye for Nature – The Life and Art of William Cooper

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.

Members' price \$33



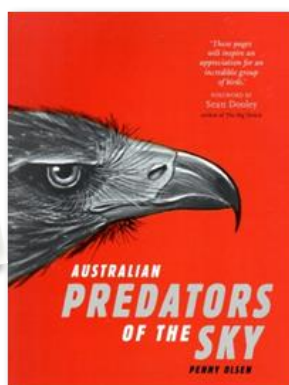
Birds of the Wet Tropics of Queensland

Lloyd Nielsen

This 404 page book - is a handy reference for the 451 species recorded in the Wet tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. Every bird accurately illustrated by the author - award-winning field ornithologist Lloyd Nielsen. There is a section devoted to birds difficult to identify.

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Penny Olsen

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Members' price \$28

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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.

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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:

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R Malcolm
S Wishart
H Swan
R Brownlee
A Marks
B Hogg
S Sekhon

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for June 2016 edition

Wednesday 25 May 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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