



Gang-gang

JULY 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

Wednesday 13 July 2016

7.30 pm.

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

This month there will be three shorter presentations of slightly increasing length:

Chris Davey - the Canberra Nature Map and how COG members can participate in this exciting initiative.

Michael Lenz - Observations at a suburban Welcome Swallow roost

Richard Beggs - Removing a reverse keystone species: Impacts of an experimental cull of Noisy Miners on small-bodied woodland birds in remnant woodland fragments within an agricultural matrix.

More details of each presentation are given on the next page.

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

As soon as I forwarded my June column to the editors on 25 May the warm dry weather we had been experiencing during autumn turned much colder and wetter, with significant rainfall events over the weekends of 4-5 June (over 100 mm) and 18-19 June (around 40 mm). How this has affected bird activity in the COG area of interest (Aoi) in the slightly greater than 4 weeks to 24 June is again unclear, though from the drop in the number of postings on the COG E-mail Discussion List ("COG chatline") activity seems to have been much lower, presumably at least in part because the weather has restricted opportunities for people going out to bird watch.

It is clear that the **Dusky Woodswallow** is staying over for winter this year, with Donna Belder seeing around 20 at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 11 June. Others have confirmed their presence there, which seems to have been the main spot to see them, though there was another report of 2 at Lake Ginninderra on 29 May, both places being near water which they often favour during winter. As expected **Olive-backed Orioles** are also overwintering in small numbers and have usually been reported as single birds but with Shorty noting that on 28 May

Continued Page 3



White-cheeked Honeyeater

Shorty

Everyone welcome

JULY MEETING

This month there will be three shorter presentations of slightly increasing length:

To start **Chris Davey** will give a presentation about **‘the Canberra Nature Map and how COG members can participate in this exciting initiative’**.

The Canberra Nature Map is a unique partnership between nature lovers, nature experts and the ACT Government that allows anyone to report sightings of rare or endangered plant and animal species as well as any of the many treasures that Canberra's Nature Parks are home to.

With your help, the aim of the Map is to:

- accurately map every rare plant and endangered animal in the ACT and maintain records for future generations
- improve public education and awareness of the diversity and significance of Canberra's Nature Parks

influence development decisions and protect Canberra's treasures by providing critical species location data to Government.

Michael Lenz will then present **‘Observations at a suburban Welcome Swallow roost’**.

Welcome Swallows roost communally outside the breeding season. One such roost is located at Norgrove Park/Kingston Harbour in Kingston. The numbers of swallows that can gather there are the highest recorded to date in COG's Area of Interest. Counts in 2015, and more comprehensively in 2016, reveal the importance of weather factors on Welcome Swallow behaviour. The housing development around Kingston Harbour is a mixed blessing for the swallows: it provided a good and safe roost site but can cause stresses to the birds, notably at morning departure.

Finally **Richard Beggs** will give a presentation on **‘Removing a reverse keystone species: Impacts of an experimental cull of Noisy Miners on small-bodied woodland birds in remnant woodland fragments within an agricultural matrix’**.

Birders love to hate **Noisy Miners** and the clamour for a terminal solution is getting louder. In this talk about his PhD project Richard will attempt to bring a little scientific restraint to the debate. **Noisy Miners** were a part of the eastern Australian landscape long before 1788. They haven't changed their behaviour since then but we have changed the landscape so significantly that they have

managed to colonise huge areas of remnant woodland and in the process deny access to many already threatened woodland birds. Whilst culling seems an intuitively attractive solution, we don't have hard evidence that this will benefit small woodland birds in the long term. Richard's study aims to carry out a carefully-controlled experimental cull to attempt to find out what the impacts are on small woodland birds.

RENEW YOUR COG MEMBERSHIP

Now is the time to renew your COG membership. Fees remain the same for this year at \$40 for an individual and \$45 for family membership.

The simplest way to do this is to complete and submit the online membership renewal form:

(<http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/joining-cog-and-renewing/>)

and pay using electronic funds transfer. You can still also renew in person at a meeting (there will be someone taking memberships at the July meeting), or you can send your renewal by mail with a cheque.

If you still receive Gang-gang and/or Canberra Bird Notes by mail please consider whether this is necessary. As has been pointed out in recent annual financial reports, the costs of providing direct member services exceed the amount collected in subscription fees, so every member who elects to read the electronic versions instead of receiving a print copy reduces costs to COG. The online versions include colour photos, and notification of their availability is usually sent out several days before the print version is posted.



Dusky Woodswallow

Shorty

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

two birds visited his water bath. He mentioned this had been happening for the past 5 years. I found this very interesting as in my experience I've never seen them utilise water baths (possibly because few have been recorded in my GBS site), but also for birds returning to the same spot each year out of the breeding season. Does any reader have this same experience - if so please let me know?

It is also clear that **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** are over wintering, with Ryu Callaway recording between 10 and 20 birds, a relatively high number for the time of year, at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 18 June. The **White-naped Honeyeater** is also staying over in small numbers, and there have been a number of reports of small numbers of **Fuscous Honeyeaters** in June, as there have been of the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Mistletoebird** (a surprising number recorded in the woodland surveys late in June) and **Grey Fantail**. Of the late staying summer migrants still reported in May, only the **Superb Parrot** and **Tree Martin** were observed in June, with Julie Clark seeing one of the latter at Shepherds Lookout on 15 June. Surprisingly there have been no reports of the **Rufous Whistler** (a few of which often overwinter) since 25 May. Also of interest is Jean Casburn's report of 14 **Red Wattlebirds** still migrating from Narrabundah Hill towards Duffy on 13 June. Please continue to keep an eye out for the above species, as well as any other overwintering spring/summer migrants.

Of the species that come to Canberra for winter, the hot spot for seeing the **Flame Robin** seems to be around the new pond off Edgeworth Parade in Coombs, where the COG Wednesday walkers saw two flocks of 8 and 10 birds, respectively, on 15 June. They seem to have moved to there from the Stromlo Forest Park (SFP) less than a kilometre away, as has the **White-fronted Chat** of which 15 were seen there, as I could find neither species at SFP on 20 June. The robins have also been reported at Callum Brae with a late report of 2 pairs at the eastern edge of Mt Ainslie/Campbell Park. I've now also been able to find them in the local spot which has been most reliable for them in recent autumns/winters. Several more **Rose Robins** have been reported away from the Botanic Gardens, and there has been at least one further report of the **Pink Robin**, but the only report I can find of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** is of 2 birds by Shorty at the Tharwa Sandwash on 18 June. This is at the northern end of their main stronghold along the Murrumbidgee River, as shown by the ACT Bird Atlas.

Ryu Callaway



Rose Robin



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Good birding, good food ...

2017 tours

Tasmania birds & mammals

28 January — 4 February 2017 includes
Melaleuca flight & pelagic

Alice Springs & the West MacDonnell Ranges tour

22 to 30 April 2017
One day added for Sandhill Grasswren

Top End tour 2017

22 May to 7 June 2017
Part 1: Darwin, Kakadu NP, Pine Creek &
Katherine. Part 2: Katherine, Victoria R,
Timber Creek & Kununurra. Mitchell Plateau
optional

Queensland's Gulf Country 26 June to 13 July 2017

Two days added for Rusty Grasswren.

Iron Range & Atherton Tablelands tour 2017 (Tablelands optional) 17 to 30 July 2017

New Caledonia birding tour Early August 2017

Strzelecki Track Outback tour 3 to 22 September 2017 38th tour! Covering 4 states & 5 species of grasswren

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2017 28/29 October 2017 18/19 November 2017

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

After some further reports of **Crescent Honeyeaters** along the Murrumbidgee River between the Kambah Pool Reserve and Pine Island in late May, as well as one in Jean Casburn's Duffy garden, I first heard one briefly in my GBS site in Chapman on 8 June, about a month later than might be expected. A male was then present and conspicuous by its call (and also often for this species surprisingly easy to see) from 10-14 June which suggested it might stay, but since then there has only been brief loud calling on 22 and 24 June. In contrast there had been no further reports of **Swift Parrot** sightings until 23 June when a flock of about 20 were seen wending their way through the traffic on Parkes Way, heading north into Duntroon.

So watch out for these winter altitudinal migrants as well as for other species that I associate with winter such as the **Restless Flycatcher**, for which there has been a further report of a bird at Callum Brae on 9 June. **Grey Currawongs** also often come into the suburbs and surrounding peri-urban areas of Canberra during winter, though they are resident at some spots all through the year.

There have been few sightings of "unusual" birds during June. The **Azure Kingfisher** was last reported from Lake Ginninderra on 8 June. In contrast the **White-cheeked Honeyeater** continues to be present at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, and presumably the **Powerful Owl** is still roosting in Turner despite no apparent reports for it in June. A **Grey Goshawk** has also been reported for some months from Ginninderra Creek. Interestingly it is a grey rather than the white morph which usually seems to visit the ACT, and which famously I can remember seeing in the bare willows near the Dairy Flat Road bridge as I was in a taxi going to the airport mid-morning many years ago.

Despite the much wetter conditions, large numbers (a maximum of at least 90 reported on 11 June) of **Pink-eared Ducks** have remained at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, with Steve Wallace posting a video on 9 June of about 50 feeding as a single vortexing group for at least an hour. Later other observers also reported this behaviour. On 12 June Steve posted videos of **Australasian Shovelers** diving there, including several doing this near vortexing Pink-eareds. Shorty had previously reported this behaviour on 14 May which, according to the literature (including HANZAB), seems to be have been rarely observed from this dabbling duck species. A **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** was reported there on 24 June (ed!). Late May/early June the **Australian Shelducks** and **Plumed Whistling Ducks** continued to be reported from Bungendore, with a maximum of 72 and 34, respectively, with a late report of 27 of the latter there on 23 June.

For the first time in many months I can find no reports of breeding other than **Australian Wood Ducks** in gums looking at hollows, and a dependant young **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** still being fed in my GBS site as late as

17 June. The young for this species as well as the **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** seem to remain dependent on their parents for feeding for many months. Readers will have seen large flocks of the former (joined sometimes by many **Little Corellas**) feeding on the nature strips/road verges, and flocks of up to 50 of the latter have been reported in the past month. Interestingly there was suddenly a spate of reports of mixed feeding flocks (MFF) from mid-June, many related to the formal woodland surveys. This is another sign that the new breeding season is yet to commence, as they usually break up once the spring breeding commences.

Among the few reports of roosting behaviour Ryu Callaway has informed me that he has been doing weekly counts of **Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos**, **Little Corellas** and **Australian White Ibis** at his local Hannah Community Park in Fadden from the start of 2016, with 230, 375 and 300, respectively, counted there on 18 June. I'm still following the **Red-rumped Parrots** and **Magpie-larks** in my local area, with the roost flight and roosting behaviour of the latter continuing to be very different from 2015.

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 web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. As usual 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 any of the spring/summer migrants overwintering in the ACT; of those rarer species that do come down from the mountains into Canberra to spend the autumn/winter here; for large single species flocks and MFFs (these should continue until the spring breeding commences); for roost flights and roosting behaviour, as well as any winter breeding of species such as the **Black-shouldered Kite**. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Ryu Callaway

Brown Quail

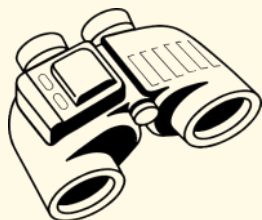
Nature Lodge Optics

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

Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study

We are seeking the support of your organisation on a very important matter, bird feeding in Australia. I am a research fellow working with Prof Don Driscoll and Dr Kelly Miller at Deakin University and Prof Darryl Jones at Griffith University, investigating the complex and controversial issue of bird feeding through the **Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study**.

Why is research into bird feeding needed?

We estimate that over 40% of Australian households provide food for birds with more providing water. However, despite their good intentions of wanting to help native birds, people end up attracting undesirable visitors, including introduced species and hyper-aggressive birds such as **Noisy Miners**. Bird feeding is a major issue that we cannot ignore and the absence of any real evidence-based research means we don't know the effect bird feeding is having on the environment. Our study will help fill this information gap to inform principles around bird feeding.

How will we investigate bird feeding?

We are currently recruiting citizen scientists to participate in the study and we already have over 4500 people registered and ready to take part! We have developed a customised online web portal (www.feedingbirds.org.au) that allows participants to enter information about their bird feeding and watering activities. We will work closely with our participants to understand what people are feeding birds, how often and why specific food and/or water is provided. We will also examine the motivations behind these activities and what are felt to be the benefits to themselves and to the birds.

What does it mean to be a supporter of the Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study?

By supporting the study you are not endorsing bird feeding *per se*; instead you are supporting scientific research into this highly complex issue and adding to the knowledge gap to aid the development of principles around bird feeding. We can work together and gain mutual benefits for our native birds and educate the public on more sustainable bird feeding.

Where can I get more information?

You can contact Dr Gráinne Cleary directly through email (g.cleary@deakin.edu.au) or by phone (0435 547 743). You can also visit the web portal (www.feedingbirds.org.au) where we have provided more information on the study.

Photo essay: Australian Wood Duck displays and related behaviours

Con Boekel

On 10 and 11 June I photographed the behaviour of **Australian Wood Duck** on Sullivan's Creek downstream of Barry Drive. While doing so I noticed repeated patterns of display with related behaviour. These images show 5 forms of display/behaviour and one example of attempted copulation.

1. The male on the left has just executed what might be called a big splash display*. The bird started on the water, flew at a steep rate of climb for around two metres and followed this with a deliberate belly-first splash into the water. The consequent splash, as in this case, is much larger than when **Australian Wood Duck** normally land. I noticed this several times and on 13 June saw something very similar by **Pacific Black Duck** at Kelly's Swamp.



2. Here is body held high in the water, neck stretched vertically.



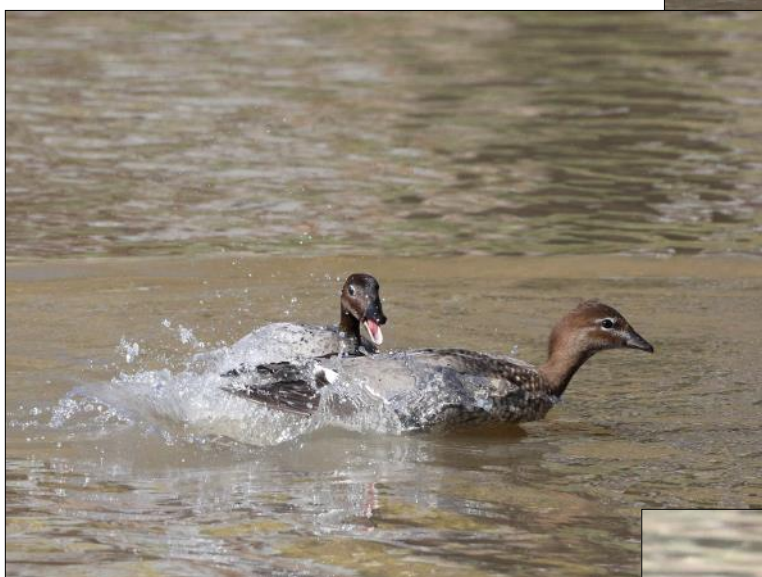
3. Male threat display. Head held partially submerged. Neck stretched forwards along the water. Beak open, displaying the pink tongue.



4. Body held very high in the water, neck partially extended vertically. A variation of 2.



5. Attempted copulation. After several attempts by the male at copulation, the female flew off.



6. Puffed up chest. Male rises slightly at the front. The head held slightly back and down. Bill tucked in tightly.



*I was irresistibly reminded of the young men of my childhood who competed to make the biggest splash with bombs in the local swimming pool while the young maidens looked on with over-casual disinterest.

ADOPT A WETLAND

Latham's Snipe are a migratory bird that breed in Japan and spend winter along the eastern coast of Australia. They are regularly seen at Jerrabomberra Wetlands and other sites around Canberra. The ACT records of Latham's Snipe are patchy and are related to 'effort' rather than being a good indication of numbers (in relation to being able to compare populations). This summer, the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, in partnership with Canberra Ornithologists Group, would like to undertake semi-structured surveys at a variety of Canberra wetlands where Snipe are known to occur. We are calling for volunteers to visit one wetland or a series of wetlands in your neighbourhood on a set weekend each month between August 2016 and March 2017. This is part of a broader research project in partnership with the Victorian Snipe Project, to try to gain understanding of the movements and habitat use of these elusive birds.

How you can help?

We are asking interested COG members to "adopt a wetland" (or more) which you are prepared to survey once a month from August 2016 to March 2017. Further details will be advised before August. Send the name and location of your preferred wetland/s to Chris Davey at chris_davey@aapt.net.au



**Wednesday
17th August
2016
Mount Hope**



Malleefowl Monitor Training

Monitoring Malleefowl will not in itself save them, but it is an extremely important tool in understanding how the species is going. If there was a sudden crash in any population, we need to be aware of the situation ASAP. Annual monitoring is also essential if we are to understand long term trends that may vary due to many factors including climate change.

Malleefowl exist right across Australia so we need to ensure everyone is monitoring in the same way. Over many years we have developed a method of monitoring Malleefowl that doesn't upset the birds, doesn't place more demands on the people doing the work than necessary and is scientifically robust.

We have developed a system that uses modern technology and is easy to use. Volunteers are supplied with smartphones with our own monitoring app installed.

At the training we will show you how to use the equipment and we will visit several mounds and go through the real thing!

Apart from learning how to take part in this important Citizen Science project, you will be mixing with lots of very knowledgeable Malleefowl people.

Please RSVP by 29-7-16 to Graeme Tonkin
graeme@malleefowl.net.au

**Wednesday 17th
10.00am - 12.00pm
at the Public Hall,
Mount Hope**

- We will look at the National database and talk about where all the data goes
- everyone gets to play with smartphones and learn how we use them in the field

**1.00pm - 4.00pm
Travel to Site.**

- We will use GPS to navigate to Malleefowl mounds
- At the mound we will practice the best monitoring methods and how to use the smartphones to record data

BBQ lunch supplied.

Note that we will be walking through sometimes heavy bush. Ensure that you have good walking shoes and clothing to protect yourself from scratching and sun...sounds fun doesn't it?

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Field Trip Reports

Sunday 29 May – Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge

Four brace of COG stalwarts found their way through thick fog to Kambah Pool where they were blessed with beautiful sunshine, and numerous **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** sitting atop the dead trunks along the top of the Bullen Range waiting for their chief to order a raid. Fortunately it didn't happen. Instead the group followed the intrepid chronicler of Red Rocks Peregrine Falcons down to the Murrumbidgee River in search of the **Crescent Honeyeaters** she'd heard earlier. We found them just upstream among mistletoe flowering in the *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. After much looking everyone managed at least a halfway reasonable view of this first of the nine species of honeyeaters we saw. Not everyone was as lucky to get a good view of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** we saw across the river, although by the end of the trip most people had seen or heard **Eastern Spinebills**, **White-eared**, **New Holland**, **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, and **Noisy Miners**, with a few people seeing/hearing the **Brown-headed Honeyeater**.

The leader, having remembered that the new path ('Centennial Trail') no longer dips steeply down to the river, but contours along higher up so as to make it easier for mountain bikers, led the group along the river bank, having little desire to climb back up to the path -a cooler, but perhaps more interesting walk. Certainly most of the party had good views of **Little Pied Cormorant** and **Great Cormorant**, and a few of **Pacific Black Duck**, **Red-browed Finches** and **White-browed Scrub-wrens** that favoured the river route. Before leaving the river we saw two green **Satin Bowerbirds** on the other side. Arriving at Red Rocks all saw the nest site, but not the famed Peregrine **Falcon**. However, we did see two **Brown Falcons** and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Returning along the Centennial Trail we did see several **Eastern Yellow Robin**, a male **Scarlet Robin**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Striated Thornbill**, **Brown Thornbill** and **Silvereye**. We saw/heard 42 species for the morning.

Michael Robbins



Tuesday 7 to Friday 10 June – Ben Ricketts Environmental Preserve

After a weekend of wild weather which brought 600mm of rain to Robertson, we were rather relieved to arrive in the Southern Highlands on Tuesday to fine, if rather cold and windy, weather. Eight members of the 12 member party met at Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve just out of Moss Vale for the first excursion of the trip. Gumboots were the order of the day and Bong Bong Weir was well and truly overflowing. The strong wind kept waterbirds confined to a few sheltered spots on the broad section of the Wingecarribee River created by the weir and woodland birds were hard to hear. The highlight of the visit was a platypus!

A brief visit to a very soggy and wind-battered Robertson yielded few birds but along an adjacent lane we found at least 32 **Satin Bowerbirds**, almost all green birds, feeding on the dozens of fruiting privet. By then, we were ready for some respite from the wind and cold, so picnic lunches were forgotten and we adjourned to the Robertson Pie Shop for lunch, before driving on to Ben Ricketts Environmental Preserve, where we stayed for the next three nights.

On Wednesday, we made a pre-breakfast visit to Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, hoping to find **Eastern Bristlebird** and **Southern Emu-wren**, and perhaps hear **Eastern Ground Parrot**. Some members of the party managed brief views of the former and emu-wren were heard at three sites but the strong winds continued to blow and birds



From Top: **White-throated Treecreeper** (AE), **On the path to Minnamurra Falls** (EK), **COG members at Minnamurra rainforest** (AE)

Ann Eldridge (AE), Elizabeth Kay (EK)

were very reluctant to emerge from the heath. A longer walk after breakfast to Cook's Nose produced a reasonable birdlist, dominated by **New Holland Honeyeaters**, **Eastern Spinebill**, and **Little** and **Red Wattlebirds** feeding on flowering banksias. The spectacular views from the edge of the escarpment made the walk worthwhile.

The afternoon was spent at Jerrara Dam between Jamberoo and Kiama. Among the 32 species recorded there were large numbers of **Lewin's Honeyeater**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Rainbow Lorikeet** feeding in the flowers of coral trees. **Brown Cuckoo-Doves**, a pair of **Olive-backed Orioles** making a catbird-like call and a **Red-vented Bulbul** were welcome additions to our growing trip list. We returned to Ben Ricketts via Saddleback Mountain where we again had spectacular scenic views to the coast and surrounding farmland.

Continuing strong winds on Thursday morning meant a leisurely start to the morning rather than another early morning return to Barren Grounds. Later, we birded along Misty Lane, a quiet and sheltered road below the escarpment. Large numbers of Tasmanian **Silvereyes** (more than 200) were on the move and more than 40 **Satin Bowerbirds** were also recorded. A **Grey Goshawk** showed well as it soared overhead and **Brown Cuckoo-Doves** coming down to drink at a pond were almost invisible in the shadows until they moved.

After lunch, we drove to Wingecarribee Reservoir where the strong wind was whipping up white caps but it did mean that we were able to get close-up views of a **Great Crested Grebe** close to the shore in a lee. We then visited 'Andrewville', a private property dominated by Southern Highland Shale Woodland, where the highlight was a **Rose Robin**.

On our final morning, we visited Minnamurra Rainforest Centre in Budderoo National Park, where we recorded at least 13 **Superb Lyrebird** including a male displaying, another **Grey Goshawk** and many **Brown Gerygone**.

Our last stop was a final visit to Barren Grounds, as some members of the party had never seen **Eastern Bristlebird** or **Southern Emu-wren**, but the forecast gentler winds were not to be and the birds remained hidden.

We recorded 82 species for the trip, just one less than during our 2013 trip, so, given the strong winds, everyone returned home happy.

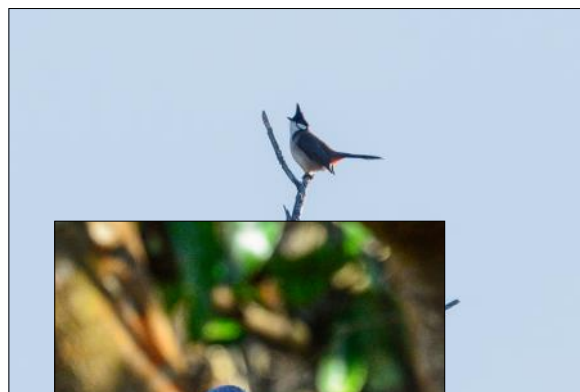
Sue Lashko

Wednesday 16 June –Ponds of Coombs and North Weston

Eighteen members and guests gathered at the North Weston Ponds and sorted ourselves into a small number of cars for the short drive to Edgeworth Pond to start the walk. It was still cool, but bright sunshine and no wind made for pleasant walking conditions.

As we crossed the street to look at the ponds, a few **Eurasian Coots** and **Australasian Grebes** were seen on the water before attention was grabbed by a flock of birds feeding on a grassed area. While the birds were rather nervous it was concluded that there were at least 12 **Australasian Pipits**, 8 **Flame Robins** and 15 **White-fronted Chats** in the flock. A number of **Superb Fairy-wrens** and 2 **Golden-headed Cisticolas** were foraging in flax plants a little further on.

As we crossed the wall at the end of the pond a further group of 10 **Flame Robins** were seen perched on a fence. We walked out to a lookout over the Molonglo Valley watching 2 immature **Black-shouldered Kites** flying



From Top: **Red-vented Bulbul** (AE), **Eastern Yellow Robin** (EK), **Cooks Nose walk** (EK), **Rose Robin**, **Lyrebird outside café** (EK) Ann Eldridge (AE), Elizabeth Kay (EK)



More photos from Ben Ricketts outing: Jerrara Dam walk, river crossing (EK), Golden Whistler (AE), Superb Fairy-wren (EK) Elizabeth Kay (EK) Ann Eldridge (AE)



Galahs scarring a eucalypt, Wanniasa

Ryu Callaway

between perches. At least 15 **Red-browed finches** were feeding in a creek bed below the walkway.

We re-joined the road around the outside of the suburb but soon dropped back down to the fire trail (since there was no room for birds between the McMansions). There was not surprisingly a good flow in the Molonglo but few birds although 3 **Double-barred Finches** were seen in a deciduous tree and 2 **White-faced Herons** were exploring a small pond.

A short stroll along the road brought us back to the North Weston Ponds. There were few waterbirds present with 3 **Hardheads** the only ducks and a highlight was a decision that the grebes present here were **Hoary-headed Grebes**. Four more **White-fronted Chats** were seen, first feeding on the ground and then perching conveniently for photos on a fence.

We totalled 36 species for the outing.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 19 June – Fadden Pond and Wanniasa Hills

Just 3 other hardy COG members assembled for the first ever COG outing that I was to lead, which, despite an unpromising weather forecast, turned out to be a very mild morning without a drop of rain and some nice birds to be found. We first started at the pond, where a **Spotless Crane** had been vigorously overturning leaf litter in front of the 2 early arrivals. Despite much waiting, it did not reappear for the other 2 members, who were fortunately able to see it much later upon return from Wanniasa Hills. We recorded a decent 24 species on around the pond although the adjacent gully was uncharacteristically quiet.

We then walked up to Wanniasa Hills, and went off-route to investigate the **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** call detected by a pair of sharp ears almost immediately upon entering the reserve. Before we knew it, we were in the middle of a large mixed feeding flock. A male **Mistletoebird** was a nice surprise, and a male **Golden Whistler** posed beautifully on every exposed branch. Four species of thornbill along with both pardalotes, **Weebills**, **Eastern Spinebill**, **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, and a pair of **Scarlet Robins** were recorded. The highlight of the morning was that the **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** which had initially lured us to this mixed feeding flock was adding material to a half-built nest, which was quite an unexpected find for June. Other interesting observations included a **Galah** vigorously rubbing its head on a bare patch of the trunk of a eucalypt (referred to in HANZAB as scarring, and is worked on for up to an hour a day over many years, from the beginning of the breeding season until the start of incubation, especially by the male. It is done on the nest tree, either around the nest hollow or on the trunk, and varies in size from a very small chewed area to covering 5m of the trunk. It involves "interspersed bouts of working on scar with bill-strooping" and "eye-wiping by wiping face on scar, [which] leaves behind a dusting of fine powder from skin of periophthalmic ring". Most **Galah** nest trees have some scarring, and it may be a territorial display as it is much more prominent in areas of high Galah density). Another **Galah** was carrying a leafy twig into a hollow on another tree. A pair of **Red-rumped Parrots** sat in their favourite tree and the female disappeared into their usual hollow. After experiencing the beautiful views of the Tuggeranong Valley, the morning was wrapped up nicely with an easy downhill stroll and a few green **Satin Bowerbirds**, making 32 species for the reserve. We recorded a total of 41 species for the morning.

Ryu Callaway (with Galah behaviour info supplied by Sandra Henderson)

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 17 July – Gungahlin Hill

Details will be posted on the chatline when the leader returns to Canberra.

Chris Davey

Wednesday 20 July – Australian National Botanic Gardens

Meet at 9.00am in the car park near the bridge to the café.

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 6 August – Lake Ginninderra – beginners' outing

This is the second of our bird walks for 2016 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 0419202155 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

Anthony Overs

Saturday 13 August – Percival Hill

This walk will begin at Gungahlin Pond dam wall at 9.00 am and will take up to 3 hours. Bring morning tea – no coffee shops (and no toilets, by the way!) Directions: Turn off Gundaroo Drive into Candlebark Close and park at the end of Candlebark or at the end of any of the other little nearby streets which run into the reserve near the dam such as Platypus or Lyrebird. Meet on the dam wall at the closest (eastern) end although it is pretty obvious anyway when you get there.

John Harris

Sunday 21 August – London Bridge Homestead

Details in August Gang-gang

John Bundock

Sunday 28 August – Late winter mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Aspects are expected to be the same as previous trips of this kind, ie cost of \$20 for transport by two 12-seater buses, the point of departure will be the National Library car park (still free on weekends) at 8 am and it will run until mid-afternoon (please bring morning tea and lunch). However, to keep it fresh we are again

looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we again plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and will be able to see some interesting birds. The final itinerary will depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 H or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com).

Jack Holland, Jenny Bounds

Saturday 3 September – Sherwood Homestead Complex, Uriarra State Forest

The 'Sherwood' historic site, formally known as the 'Sherwood Homestead Complex', is a European settler homestead site located on Uriarra Creek in the Blue Range Hut/Uriarra State Forest area. The homestead was occupied from 1863 to 1922. In September, the descendants of the daffodils planted there at that time should be in flower, a magnificent sight. More information on the Sherwood Homestead Complex is available online at <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2015-661/default.asp> and <http://tinyurl.com/jtwlhev> .

Please rendezvous for carpooling in the carpark of the Stromlo Forest Park at 8.00 am. We will drive to the Blue Range Hut and do a circular walk from there, about 10 km total distance, a bit hilly. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$5. We expect to arrive back in Canberra early to mid-afternoon. Please bring your lunch and water. There are no toilets at the venue.

For further information, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, or email sherwood2016@canberrabirds.org.au .

David McDonald

Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 September – Eden pelagics

As usual, COG will be running two spring pelagic trips, on 3 and 4 September, from Eden. With early places offered to those who missed out on the March trip, there are a very limited number of places now available each day.

To participate, you need to be at the Eden Wharf by 6.45am on the day of the trip (returning by around 3pm). The cost is \$110 per person per day, payable by July 31. The September trips nearly always see a number of whales, as well as a variety of seabirds such as albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters.

If interested, please contact me. Please don't pay until I've confirmed you have a place.

Sandra Henderson, shirmx2931@gmail.com



LOIRE VALLEY TIME TRAVEL

The Loire Valley is riddled with caves. They are not natural but the result of over 2000 years of limestone quarrying. In the winter they provide a perfect habitat for hibernating bats, but their constant humidity and temperature also provide perfect habitat for winemakers.

A visit to a small family run winemaker here can be a fascinating experience. The area excels in light tannic reds, crisp fruity whites and vintage sparkling wine. If you have ever wondered if the French concept of terroir really exists, a visit to any of our carefully chosen winery partners will convince you. Equally impressive is how open and honest the winemakers are. Ask a question about winemaking and vineyard management and you will get a direct and detailed answer.

Winemakers are very aware of their heritage, but are also open to improving their wine by adopting new practices. We highly recommend including a tasting on your itinerary with us.

Susan & Simon

www.tourtheloire.com

[loirevalleytoursnature
walks](http://loirevalleytoursnaturewalks)

**Tel: 0261 00 7744
(Canberra)**

contact@tourtheloire.com

Sunday 18 September – Flemington Rd. and Mitchell Ponds

Note change of date from 24 July.

Meet at 8.00am in carparks near the corner of Flemington Rd and Randwick Rd., opposite the Canberra Racecourse. Both ponds are on Sullivan's Creek. The eBird list has 87 species for Mitchell Pond including **Double-barred Finch**, **Pink-eared Duck** and **Little Grassbird**. The second pond is on the corner of Flemington Rd and Morisset Rd., opposite the Belconnen Dog Obedience Club. 94 species have been recorded here on eBird, including **Latham's Snipe** and **Cattle Egrets**. As there are stables nearby, **Little Corellas**, **Rock Doves** and other grain eaters are often present.

Bill Graham



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Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871
Tel: 07 4094 1665
Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

**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

DEUA TIN HUTS (Via Braidwood)

Comfortable accommodation on the door-step of the Deua National Park at Krawarree via Braidwood NSW.

Three cosy huts accommodating up to 14 people.

A short walk into the Deua National Park, the Big Hole and Marble Arch, walks in the beautiful Shoalhaven Valley.

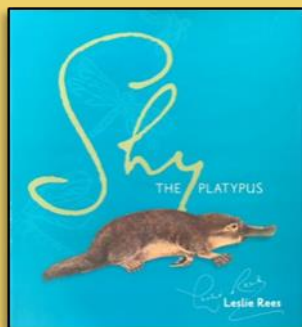
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CHILDRENS BOOK



Shy The Platypus Leslie Rees

National Library Publishing presents a stylish, highly illustrated re-publication of Leslie Rees' classic tale, *Shy the Platypus*. This exciting story of the life of a young platypus describes her growing up and experiencing encounters with humans, other platypuses and different animals.

Leslie Rees published over 40 children's books and won major awards (Order of Australia & NSW Premier's Award) for his 'contribution to Australian literature'. Leslie Rees' animal stories were an important part of the Australian children's books from the 1940s onwards.

Members' Price \$15

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

Bird Book

Caren Lockhart and Adrian Lockhart

Bird Book is a 70 page softcover book of poems and drawings.

The book has an unassuming name and poetically tells wonderful stories of our interactions with the bird world. Delightful illustrations not only capture the form of each story's birds, but also provide a magical glimpse of their behaviour. The book covers many of our favourite birds such as bowerbirds, cockatoos, oystercatchers, Crested Pigeons and Sacred Kingfishers.

Members' Price \$20.

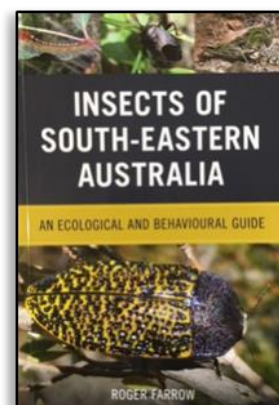


Insects of South- Eastern Australia

Roger Farrow

Insects of South-Eastern Australia is a unique field guide that uses host plants and behavioural attributes as the starting point for identifying insects. Richly illustrated with colour photographs, the different species of insects found in Australia's temperate south-east, including plant feeders, predators, parasites and decomposers, are presented.

Members' Price \$30. (RRP \$45)

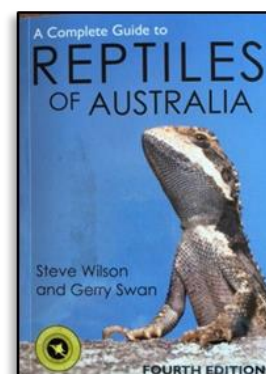


Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia

Steve Wilson and Gerry Swan

This book represents an accessible identification guide to reptiles, including: Crocodiles, sea turtles, freshwater turtles, geckos, flat-footed lizards, skinks, dragons, goannas, blind snakes, pythons, file snakes, colubrid snakes, terrestrial elapids, sea snakes, and sea kraits. Species are illustrated with lively colour photographs showing them in their natural habitat. Each is accompanied by a distribution map; a description – with distinguishing features highlighted in bold text; notes on the species' range and preferred habitat; information on subspecies and similar species; and, wherever appropriate, conservation status.

Members' price \$41. (RRP \$50)



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:

R Kiggins
S Harrington
S Bond
H-J Noh
J Quinn
D Briedis
E Kay
M Wood
B Serafin
A Booth
T Riley

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for August 2016 edition

Wednesday 27 July 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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canberrabirds.org.au

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COG library

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Newsletter distribution:
Lia Battisson

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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.

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