



Gang-gang

OCTOBER 2014

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday 8 October 2014

7.30 pm.

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

The first presentation on an **aspect of COG's history** in relation to **COG's 50th Anniversary celebrations** will be by **Dr Richard (Dick) Schodde** who will talk on **"The Early Days, or Recollections."**

The main presentation entitled **Bitterns in Rice and Wildlife-friendly Farming**, will be by **Matt Herring**, a wildlife ecologist who leads the biodiversity research, education and conservation consultancy called Murray Wildlife.

The globally endangered **Australasian Bittern** is one of Australia's most threatened birds. Beginning in 2012, the Bitterns in Rice Project has revealed that the rice crops of the NSW Riverina support a population that can reach well into the hundreds and it appears there is widespread breeding as well. It's an unusual situation, where agriculture and conservation can potentially work

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What to watch out for this month

Based on my own observations, including those in my local patch of NW Coolleman Ridge and the southern part of Narrabundah Hill, as well as postings on the COG chatline, it has been a very slow start to the spring/summer migration season. It all started off promisingly enough with, soon after I sent my September column to the editors, the first **Dusky Woodswallows** returning on/around the relatively warm last weekend of August. These have continued to be reported more widely and in increasing numbers since. Also arriving about the same time were the first returning **Olive-backed Orioles** and **Western Gerygones**, but in much smaller numbers, with the related **White-throated Gerygone** not arriving until about 2 weeks later, also in small numbers, though there seemed to be quite a few calling during the Mulligans Flat woodland survey during the third weekend of September.

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White-throated Gerygone

Photo: Julian Robinson

Everyone welcome

closely together. Matt's presentation will illustrate the story from the beginning, highlighting interesting findings along the way, which include other species like Eastern Grass Owls and significant numbers of Australian Painted Snipe. Working closely with dozens of interested rice growers, *Bittern Friendly Rice Growing Tips* are being trialled and refined as more data comes to hand. Targeted habitat bays and pesticide free areas, surveys to find the post-harvest haunts and plans for satellite tracking are all underway.

Committee News

Notice of COG's 2014 Annual General Meeting is given on Page 5 of this newsletter.

The COG Committee considered a request from the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conservation Trust for \$5000 in each of the next two years to support the Bush Stone-Curlew project at Mulligans Flat. The Committee agreed to the request.

A decision was also made to donate \$5000 to the Conservation Council. The request from the Council indicates the funds will be used to support their work on the extension of cat containment in the ACT, as well as continued lobbying to prevent development in central Molonglo.

The Committee was advised that a project being run by Dr Andrea Griffin of Newcastle University, with funding from the Australian Museum, will use genetic studies to examine issues such as the spread of feral bird species. Dr Griffin has been studying Common Mynas for some time.

Sandra Henderson

The first **Noisy Friarbirds** also returned about the same time, and this is the only migrant not recorded in August to have so far reached my local patch where there have been at least two birds present. Many have been reported together elsewhere, which is interesting given the low numbers present here last spring/summer. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, which were seen here in August, were also present in low numbers from mid-month, which seems to reflect the available data on *Eremaea* eBird in that numbers this month are only slightly higher than in last month. Certainly the spring return migration of both it and the **White-naped Honeyeater** (except for one count of nearly 50 birds) has not been spectacular so far.

In my GBS site migration of the **Red Wattlebird** has been much more noticeable as they have been flying in small groups of up to a dozen birds quite high towards Cooleman Ridge over the past week. Interesting is that numbers in my GBS site have remained steady over the past 3 months with in particular a still profusely (yellow) flowering mugga ironbark attracting up to 15 squabbling birds together during this time. Also interesting is that since the start of this migration the first dependent young has been observed in my garden, and also small birds (and large ones such as **Australian Ravens**) are being vigorously harassed by other, presumably nesting, birds.

A rather mild spring so far, with no day over 20°C for the first 3 weeks, is demonstrated by the numbers of the **Australian Reed-Warbler** and **Latham's Snipe**, both present since the beginning of the month, only slowly increasing, whereas numbers of the **Mistletoebird** reported seemed to be higher at the end of August than during September. Likewise reported numbers of the **Rufous Whistler** seem not to have increased much in September over those reported in August. While the **Pallid Cuckoo** and the **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** have all been reported from after the first week of September, numbers have been low so far, and early signs are that it will be another poor season for cuckoos in the ACT. Finally the first **Sacred Kingfishers** were reported by Leo Berzins just before this column was forwarded to the editors.

By contrast the **Superb Parrot**, probably the spring/summer migrant most reported over winter has been seen over a much wider area than central Gungahlin where they seemed to congregate in the latter half of winter, possibly returning to nest sites and areas. Likewise numbers of the **Fuscous Honeyeater** have also been quite high for September, possibly reflecting a return migration though quite a few seem to have overwintered. On the COG bus trip we found them common on Rocky Knoll at Lake Ginninderra (see

separate report) and Jenny Bounds tells me she's been recording them regularly at the Botanic Gardens. Surprisingly few others seem to have reported them there, as they are easily overlooked when high in the foliage and only giving their soft contact calls. They used to be viewed as a "passage migrant" during autumn and spring to and from their stronghold in higher areas of the ACT, but they seem to be both spring/summer as well as altitudinal migrants.

Certainly from the above it appears that the spring migration has not been major or compressed to date, with by the end of the third weekend in September no reports yet of the **Leaden Flycatcher**, the **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Songlark** (both which may be expected if conditions dry out inland) and **Rainbow Bee-eater**. So please keep an eye/ear out for further arrivals of these species, as well as the **Dollarbird**, **Brown Songlark**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Eastern/Pacific Koel** which usually arrive in October, as well as the **Rufous Fantail**, **Satin Flycatcher** and **Cicadabird**, often the last of the migrants to arrive, and which may be seen passing through on their way to the mountains to breed. Watch out also for the **White-browed Woodswallow**, particularly if conditions dry out inland; already there has been a sighting of 120 overhead in early September.

Some of the winter altitudinal migrants were still being reported around Canberra during September, in particular the **Golden Whistler**, with the **Scarlet Robin** moving away from urban Canberra but in some cases not far such as the Pinnacle (again see the separate bus trip report). Good numbers were also seen at Mulligans Flat during the woodland bird survey on the third weekend of August, as was a **White-eared Honeyeater** surprisingly calling. Numbers of this species seem to have sustained during September though it's now hard to tell from my main source, the Eremaea eBird database, whether these were seen in Canberra or in the bush further out.



Horsfield's Bushlark

Photo: Julian Robinson



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2014 tours

SW Western Australia
10 -19 December 2014

2015 tours

Tasmania
31 January – 7 February

Alice Springs
18 – 25 April

Top End
25 May – 2 June – 7 June
Pt 1 Darwin Kakadu Katherine.
Pt 2 Katherine Kununurra Mitchell Plateau

Iron Range
July 13 days

New Caledonia
2 – 9 August

Strzelecki Track
5 – 24 September

Central Coast NSW
1 – 8 October

2015 plains-wanderer weekends

7 & 8 November 2015
21 & 22 November 2015
6 & 7 December 2015

Please see itineraries, checklists and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

The same applies to the few records of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, which certainly was no longer present close to my GBS site in September. It does appear that the **Flame Robin**, which breeds at much higher altitudes, has now gone from the urban/peri-urban parts of the ACT. There have been further reports of a single **Rose Robin** and a single report of four **Swift Parrots** during September, but I can't find any records for the **Pink Robin**, the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** or the **Brown Gerygone** for September. So please keep an eye out for the remaining altitudinal migrants, as any sightings in Canberra after the end of September will be significant.

While the **Azure Kingfisher** seems to have departed by the end of August, the **Pied Butcherbird**, though often hard to locate, seems to have stayed at the National Film and Sound Archives for most of September. The long-staying **Musk Lorikeets** also seem to have departed by the end of August, but there have been reports of a single **Purple-crowned Lorikeet** as well as of a single **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** during September. A surprise was a record of a **Blue-faced Honeyeater** from Hawker towards the third weekend of September. The **Plumed Whistling Ducks** also seemed to have returned to their favoured spot in Bungendore, as they seem to do in summer.

As might be expected there was again a higher number of reports of breeding during the month, with the undoubted highlight being the three **Musk Duck** ducklings delightfully photographed with their mother by Julie Clark on Yerrabi Pond. Sadly only two had survived by the time of the COG mid-week walk there. With rain predicted as I finish this column, it could point to a good breeding season, with many of the spring /summer migrants, many of them still to arrive, coming here specifically to breed.

With the weather finally having warmed up at the early closing date (24 September) for the October Gang-gang, we can look forward to an increased spring influx of birds, so please continue to watch out for these species arriving and the last altitudinal winter migrants moving away, as well as for all breeding activity. As usual please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland

Other Surveys/Activities of Interest to COG Members

Tracking Bunyip Birds Campaign

Matt Herring, our main speaker at the October COG meeting, is involved with the launching of the crowdfunding campaign - **Tracking Bunyip Birds** - to raise \$50 000 so they can satellite track endangered Australasian Bitterns. They have 40 days to raise this sum.

COG members have been asked to please consider getting behind the project. Pledges start at \$20, with each one entitling you to different rewards. It would also be greatly appreciated if you could share this link through your networks because they're going to need a lot of help. Their page has a campaign video, a description of the project, details of the rewards and a budget.

<http://pozible.com/bunyipbirds>

If they don't reach the \$50K target, pledges are not withdrawn from donors and the project doesn't go ahead, but if we can make it happen then it's going to be a very exciting journey, following the bitterns' movements online. Matt expects we'll learn so much, such as how mobile they are when breeding in the rice, where it is they go after rice harvest and which wetlands they depend on during the non-breeding season.



Purple-crowned Lorikeet

Photo: Rawshorty

Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 12 November 2014; 7.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc. will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 12 November 2014, in the **Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School**, corner of Gawler Crescent and Melbourne Avenue, Deakin.

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2013 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of President's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2014-2015
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members
10. Other matters for which notice has been given
11. Close of meeting.

COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate

For the position* of

(*Positions: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Ordinary Committee Members)

On the 2015 COG Committee.

(Name):

(Signature):

I second the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

I accept the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

Posted nominations must reach the COG mailbox (PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608) by Friday 7 November 2014.

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 31 August - Mystery Bus Trip

Two full buses of 22 participants joined Jenny Bounds and me on the annual COG bus trip, starting off in surprisingly thick fog (despite the very good forecast). This didn't lift until we'd returned to the buses just after 10 am at our first stop, the Pinnacle Nature Reserve, where John Brannan, a COG and Friends of the Pinnacle member, helped show us his "local patch". While Jenny and I weren't familiar with this spot, one participant lived nearby and several others regularly walked there, making it less of a mystery spot for them. Despite the fog not lifting bird life was pretty active, with in particular lots of **Eastern Rosellas** and **Rainbow Lorikeets** seen/heard on our way in until we came to quite an active spot where there were at least two male **Scarlet Robins** seen as well as **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and **Striated Thornbills** heard calling. However, the real highlight here was finding a very well camouflaged **Scarlet Robin** nest with a female sitting, the first I can remember seeing. This species is known to move away from peri-urban Canberra after winter, but it is unclear how far, and the Pinnacle seems to be one of the closest places where it does, with John having observed a number of breeding events here.

We then moved on to Shepherd's Lookout where, despite the ideal conditions, bird life was relatively quiet, but with some highlights, a **Southern Boobook** roosting owl nightjar-like in a large hollow (unusual in my experience compared with dense vegetation), a **Speckled Warbler** seen by most participants (certainly more than the few that saw those at the Pinnacle), and for the slower second half of the group at least 3 **Varied Sittellas** typically moving down the branches of a relatively small eucalypt. Despite the quiet bird activity, all participants, quite a few of whom had not been there before, enjoyed the spectacular views from the lookout under perfect conditions while a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** called from the river below us.

After lunch beside Lake Ginninderra we moved across the lake to "Rocky Knoll" off Diddams Close which, after a reccie there earlier, Jenny and I had renamed "Honeyeater Hill" due to the 7 species of honeyeater we saw attracted by the flowering grevilleas and mistletoe. This time we managed only 6 with the most numerous and conspicuous being the **Fuscous Honeyeater**, a species easily overlooked and not familiar to many of the participants. Not only did we have good views of this relatively plain species, but we also were able to hear it give a range of its calls, including the most characteristic one both Jenny and I recognised as its "summer call".

In total close to 70 species were seen or heard on the day, unfortunately not by all participants, and boosted by waterbirds seen incidentally while we were having lunch by the lake. The surprise was the lack of summer migrants, limited to only the **Grey Fantail** (assuming at least some of these were returnees rather than overwinterers) at the first two sites and several **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (possibly overwinterers due to the available food supply) and **Dusky Woodswallows** (likely returnees) at the Rocky Knoll. This was disappointing as we had deliberately moved the date back two weeks from last year to try to ensure it coincided with the first wave of spring migrants. The sight of more than six groups of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** feeding in the median strips on our way back to the cars at the National Library and then dropping off the buses reminded us winter wasn't over yet. Despite this all participants enjoyed what it an important social occasion. My thanks again to Jenny Bounds for her help in planning the day and for driving the second bus, and to John Brannan for his help in introducing the Pinnacle and its birds to us.

Jack Holland

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 September – Eden pelagics

After several days of inclement weather the forecast for the pelagics weekend was surprisingly good. All participants were at the wharf early for departure on both Saturday and Sunday – thank you!

The Saturday outing proved to be remarkably quiet birdwise, and very chilly to start with. We encountered several groups of Common Dolphins along the way, and when the boat got to the shelf an adult and a very young

Wandering Albatross appeared – the latter a great treat, because quite a few of us had never seen an all-brown juvenile bird. A mystery bird checked us out, and Leo managed to get a diagnostic ID photo, so we learned early the next morning that the bird had been a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** – a good sighting and a new bird for many of us, as was a **Northern Giant Petrel**. Although **Shy Albatross** were sighted, none settled near the boat, and the trip back to Eden proved uneventful.

Sunday proved to be a completely different day! By about the halfway point it was apparent there were many more birds around enjoying the glorious weather. As we approached the shelf we encountered the first of a great many Bottle-nosed Dolphins, which were sighted on and off for long periods. At least one participant was longing to see a **Wandering Albatross**, and on schedule one appeared as soon as the boat reached the shelf. It was not alone – at one stage we had no less than 15 **Wandering Albatross** close by on the water or circling at close quarters. As well as the varying ages and races of wanderers, several other albatross were attracted to the slick, and by the close we had eight albatross on our list. Apart from various races ('**Snowy**', **Antipodean** and **Gibson's**) of **Wandering Albatross**, we saw **Black-browed**, **Shy**, **Campbell** and **Buller's Albatrosses**. The **Soft-plumaged Petrels** showed up – four in all, as well as an adult **Brown Skua**, **Great-winged Petrel**, **White-headed Petrel** and **Northern Giant Petrel**. On the run back into Eden, with a whale on the wish list, one of the several sighted obliged by breaching several times very close to the boat, and appeared to wave us goodbye as we made for the harbour. A spectacular day! Many thanks are due to boat crew Richard and Bill.

Several of the Saturday group walked the lake boardwalk after the pelagic, and found not only an **Azure Kingfisher**, but also a **Grey Goshawk**, a welcome bonus for the day.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 6 September - Kelly Road

A small, but enthusiastic, group carpooled to Kelly Road, a site off the Monaro Highway, just south of the ACT/ NSW border on a day that started off sunny, but soon became overcast and rather bleak.

The first site, at the northern end of Kelly Road, initially seemed to have no birds at all but, just as we were heading back to the cars, we got good sightings of a pair (male and female) of **Hooded Robins**, then a family of **Brown Treecreepers** and a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels**. We hadn't seen **Hooded Robins** at Kelly Road for several years, so it was delightful to see them there again.

Our second site was midway along Kelly Road, at Black Flat TSR. Again things were quiet, but as we were enjoying our morning tea we were visited by a pair of **Jacky Winters** and a **Grey Butcherbird**.

The third site was further south, just beyond the farmhouse. Some roadside fruit-trees and eucalypts were in flower there, and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills** were actively moving through the trees. A **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** was also observed constructing a nest in some low bushes.

A total of 32 species was recorded over the three sites. Many of the winter migrants had still not arrived back and it's an area well worth visiting during summertime.

Ian Anderson and Tony Willis

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

Wednesday 17 September – Yerrabi Pond

Thirty members and guests fought their way through astonishing peak-hour traffic to the gathering point in Wunderlich St. After going through the rituals we headed down to the shores of the pond (and a few members, including a tall beardie, decided that the weather wasn't as nice as first thought and returned to the cars for an extra layer).

The most evident bird initially seen was **Eurasian Coot**. Bill Graham advised that he surveys the area regularly and the coot population averages 650. This seemed a very reasonable estimate of the number present today. The other members of the "eternal three" - **Purple Swamphen** and **Dusky Moorhen** were also present, albeit in much lesser numbers.

Moving a little north we had our first **Musk Duck** encounter, with a very cooperative male. About 500m further north we found the female with 2 well grown ducklings. The female dived repeatedly and fed the ducklings who seemed committed to life on the surface. The whole family moved surprisingly rapidly across the pond and gave another show on the western side.

An **Australian Reed-Warbler** called from a small clump of reeds (of which there are few on this water body). This was my first Spring 2014 return for this species. Black Swans were evident on the western side of the Pond and the surrounding lawn. They included a pair with 7 cygnets.

The final sighting of note was a flock of 5 **Superb Parrots** which flew into a small tree near the playground where we had started, and where a single male had been sighted by an early arrival. Overall we recorded 37 species.

Mention is also made of the very good number of species (9) with breeding records: **Magpie-lark** (Nest Building and On Nest); **Noisy Miner** (Nest with Young); **Magpie** (NY x 2); **Red Wattlebird** (NY); **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** (Inspecting Hollow); **Purple Swamphen** (Dependent Young); **Little Pied Cormorant** (Display); **Black Swan** (DY); **Musk Duck** (DY).

Martin Butterfield

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 Shoal haven Valley. Reasonable rates, hampers on request.. Group booking discounts. Email enquiry@deuatinhuts.com www.deuatinhuts.com

Ph 02 4847 1248

Nature Lodge Optics

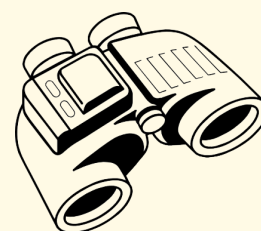
Nature Lodge Optics, a family owned business based in Huskisson, Jervis Bay, has been supplying quality binoculars to customers in the Canberra region since 2007.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2014

A reminder about COG's bird blitz on the weekend of 25-26 October - COG's annual effort to record all species of birds present in the ACT across as wide a variety of habitats as possible; and to record any breeding activity. You are encouraged to "adopt" one or more locations or entire grid cells, and those already adopted will be shown on our website www.canberrabirds.org.au and updated from time to time. But don't be perturbed if your favorite location has been taken - multiple surveyors per location are OK. In order to claim a site, please put in your bid to Barbara Allan, the blitz organizer, on blitz@canberrabirds.org.au or phone her on 6254 6520.

If you are very familiar with a site and regularly survey there, or do BirdLife Australia-registered 2 hectare surveys there, you would probably be the best person to survey that site for the blitz if you can. But if last years' sites were boring or unpleasant or bird-free zones, pick somewhere new this time. Or better still, do a 2-ha 20-min survey to "cover" the site, then move on to somewhere more interesting. If you are a beginner, probably the easiest way to participate is to do a survey in your local park – but remember only to record the birds whose identity you are absolutely sure of. And if work or family commitments preclude you from doing much at all, be sure to try and do at least a 20-minute, 2-ha survey of your own backyard and environs, to support COG's blitz.

As usual, depending on the weather and Namadgi National Park management, we hope to be able to conduct surveys beyond the locked gates in the Park. The organiser is looking for more 4WDs and competent drivers to tackle the fire trails. Please contact Barbara if you'd like to be involved and/or if you have room in your vehicle and are willing to take passengers.

Datasheets are available at COG meetings; from the organiser; or from the COG website under "forms" – the COG observation record sheet is the general-use form. You may also use COG's electronic input option for your blitz records. If you use hard-copy datasheets, please mail them to COG blitz records, PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608; deliver them to Barbara; or hand them in at the November COG meeting. If you use other electronic bird input systems, contact Barbara for advice on how to provide your data.

While most of us find the act of going out and recording birds rewarding enough in itself, it is good if we can offer modest incentives such as participation "lucky draw" prizes. If you are prepared to donate books, wine, DVDs, native plants or anything suitable as a blitz prize, the organiser would love to hear from you!

There will be regular blitz updates on the COG website, including lists of unloved sites awaiting adoption, so do check it out. Currently the following prime sites are awaiting owners: Mt Majura; Mt Ainslie; Orroral Valley; Campbell Park; Newline; Dunlop grasslands; Jerrabomberra grasslands; Tuggeranong Hill; Urambi Hills; Yankee Hat; Yerrabi Track; Brandy Flat – and more.

Join us for a fun weekend of birding for a cause!

COG Trips

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

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

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

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

and on the COG chat-line at:

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

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

Future Field Trips

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

The October long weekend outing will be to Buddigower Nature Reserve near West Wyalong. Instructions are as follows. Get yourself to West Wyalong. If coming from the Wyalong end of town turn left on to the Newell Highway (to Narrandera) and follow this until you see the Charcoal Tank Rest Area sign. 500 metres past the rest area is the Charcoal Tank Road off to the RIGHT. Turn here and travel for approximately 7.1 km until you come to a well-defined laneway to the left. This should have a sign on the left of a cut out sheep and the name MACOMA and AJ and LM Clarke. Turn left down this lane and follow until the lane turns left to the farm house through a double gate – **DO NOT** turn into the farm house but go straight ahead over a short, sharp rise (there are a couple of big farm dams to the right) and follow what now has become a two wheel track. NOTE about half way along this section on the right is a wash out followed by a small gully. It should be possible to get a two-wheeled drive vehicle over this with care – it may be best to do this section in daylight. Keep going until you see the open gate and the Buddigower Nature Reserve sign. Turn right at the gate and look for my signs. You will go through some burnt mallee then into open box woodland. Follow the track until you see tents set up. The area we will be camping in is an old mining lease and there are several old shafts in the general area. Try to stay left of the track as there is one area I am not sure would take the weight of a vehicle. **There are NO facilities on site;** it is a take everything in, take (almost) everything out camp. West Wyalong is only about 17 km away so if people wish to slum it in a motel or caravan park they are welcome to do so. I hope we will have several bird banders operating in the reserve that weekend.

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

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

Mark Clayton

Sunday 12 October – K2C bird surveys, Bredbo region.

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the

rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer.

Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or phone 6251 0303, mobile 0408 210736.

Wednesday 15 October – Pine Island South to Point Hut and return

Meet at 9am at Pine Island South at 9am.

Sunday 19 October – Bango Nature Reserve

This visit to Bango Nature Reserve, created in 2011, is COG's first. The reserve is on Blakney Creek Road South near Bango, NE of Yass. Allow 1 hour 10 minutes from Civic. Southside members who wish to carpool from Kambah Village shopping centre, meet there at 7.20am for a 7.30 departure. Please register with Lia Battisson by email: liabattisson@grapevine.com.au and she may be able to assist with carpooling for northside members.

Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 October – Bird Blitz - See separate notice on Page 9.

Sunday 2 November – “Bibaringa”, Cotter Road

Bibaringa' is a private property managed by the Guth family and used primarily for horse agistment. It adjoins Mt Stromlo to the west and runs along Cotter Road for a few kilometres. The topography is quite hilly with some creek lines and numerous healthy eucalypt remnants. Between 1998 and 2008, Stuart Harris regularly visited this property as a friend of the Guths and compiled a list of over 100 species, as well as leading a few COG walks there. Since 2008 Stuart has been preoccupied with numerous projects and has only visited Bibaringa a few times so he is glad to return there to lead a bird walk and see what this lovely property has to offer. The walk will commence at 8.30am so please assemble at the Bibaringa front (pink) gate from 8am onwards. It is a couple of kms past the Mt Stromlo turnoff if heading towards the Cotter. Please take care parking near the front gates, where we will car pool and drive a short way through the property to start the walk. The aim is to finish the walk at approximately 11am. Please bring sturdy footwear and some morning tea and water. Please RSVP to Stuart at shadowplay369@gmail.com by the end of October.

Sunday 16 November — Campbell Park, morning nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held for the past ten years. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or breeding behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, with participants looking for signs of nesting, etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching. The workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Though every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually a “hot spot” where most of the breeding activity occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H) by email on jack.holland@environment.gov.au.

Meet at 8.00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting

it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the Campbell Park map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

Sunday 23 November - Brindabella National Park 4WD

The Brindabella National Park lies along the range west of Canberra, and is notorious as being the epicentre of the 2003 Canberra bushfires. It receives few visits from birders so we will use this opportunity to fill in some gaps in COG's bird distribution data for the summer season. We will explore a number of sites in the Park, driving from one to another. Four wheel drive vehicles are essential. People without such vehicles will have an opportunity to carpool with 4WD owners, subject to space being available. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10. Rendezvous at 7.30 am for carpooling at the Bushfire Memorial car park in Stromlo Forest Park, off Swallowtail Road, Wright, 35 19 28S, 149 01 41E. We will return mid-afternoon. Bring water, lunch and (optionally) swimming togs. Registration for this trip is essential. For further information, or to register, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706, mobile 0416 231 890, or email brindabella14@canberrabirds.org.au. The trip will be cancelled if a total fire ban is in force, or if the fire danger rating is 'severe' or higher.

Sunday 7 December – TSR 48, north of Gundaroo

We aim for an early start to visit this open yellow box/red box woodland reserve with a good suite of common and not so common woodland species. Participants should meet at 7.00am in the car park at the netball centre just north of the intersection of Northbourne Ave and Mouat Street, Lyneham, for carpooling. The drive will take about 35 minutes from the meeting point to the reserve. The number of participants is restricted to 10. Wear sturdy shoes and bring morning tea. Please register with Michael Lenz at 6249 1109 or michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com

Gala Dinner

Saturday 22 November 2014 - Gold Creek Station, Hall

In celebration of Canberra Ornithologists Group 50th Anniversary Year

The finale of COG's anniversary year celebrations is a dinner, held in the rustic setting of Gold Creek Station function centre, a large woolshed style building. COG is encouraging current and former members to join in the celebrations and they will be given priority for bookings. **The number of places is limited and early booking is advised.**

Cost : \$60 per head all inclusive with meal and drinks. The menu will be country style food, canapés on arrival, a main course, dessert and coffee/tea. All drinks are included (beer, quality local wines, fruit juice, soft drinks).

Time: 6.30pm start with pre-dinner drinks.

Dress: informal.

Venue: Gold Creek Station, off Victoria St, Hall. (Victoria St is the main entrance road into Hall from the Barton Highway. Coming from the Canberra side, turn right at sign on entrance gate, before the Hall showgrounds and village).

Former Senator, Bob Brown will be Guest Speaker. A keen photographer, Bob is expected to focus on birds with his own photos and stories.

To book: download the booking form from the COG website (www.canberrabirds.org.au) or pick up a booking form at a COG meeting. Complete the booking form and send to COG. Payment must be made to secure bookings. Bookings will only be confirmed after payment is received, and will depend on places available at the time. Bookings must be made by **1 November 2014** at the latest (early booking recommended).

Enquiries: cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au or speak with COG Secretary Sandra Henderson at meetings.

Further information on the website at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/other-events/50th-anniversary-galah-night/>

NOTE: People who are NOT current or former members of COG who wish to attend this event should contact COG in the first instance.

Musk Duck mid-morning snack

Conditions were just about perfect for **Musk Duckling** observation this morning and I had great views of the two young and mama duck. I understand there were three ducklings up till yesterday, but today just two. From what I could see, their day passes with feeding and resting by turns, all on the water.

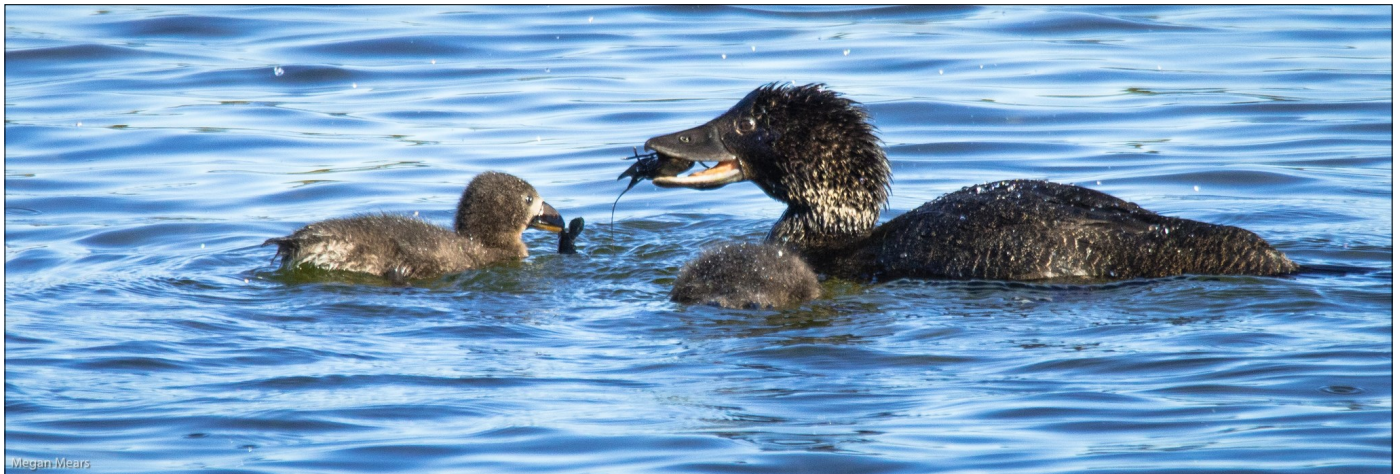
The ducklings like to ride on their mother's back, even though there's only room for one and I could see that she was submerging her back for easy access. The ducklings spent a lot of time climbing aboard then sliding off again. For feeding, the mother dived for yabbies, frequently rising without one. I believe the yabbies live closer to banks, rather than in the deep water that the female has favoured over recent months, so the family was near the edge of the pond at times.

The **Musk Ducks** ignored the showers of white bread confetti thrown in from the side of the pond, even when hundreds of coots thundered overhead. This pond may be in the middle of suburbia but **Musk Ducks** have important business to get on with, and often the ducklings were face down in the water, observing fishing, or else they were watching the bubble trail to see where their mother might emerge.

The loveliest part, I think, is hearing their contact, which was mostly begging for food and today I was close enough for that.

The mature male Musk Duck, presumably papa, is still around Yerrabi Pond, but is not feeding the young. Nor is he involved in carting them places.

Megan Mears



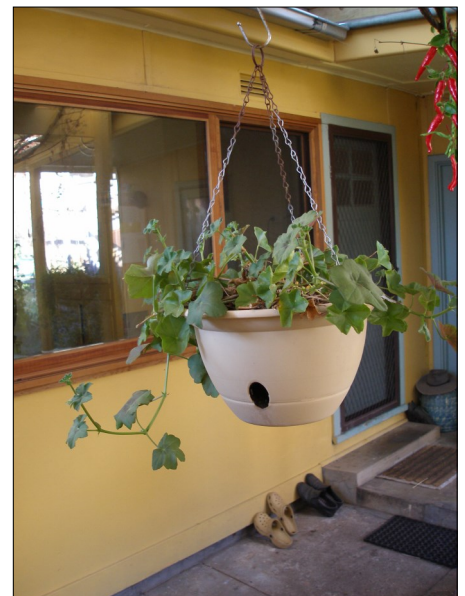
Musk Duck, female and ducklings

Photo: Megan Mears

Spotted Pardalote nest

I live in Queanbeyan and keep a diverse bird-friendly garden. My partner and I enjoy watching the many visitors and seasonal changes of bird population. Our garden focusses more on permaculture principles rather than native plants; however, we have water, mulch and shelter available all year round which attracts both introduced and native birds. We first noticed **Spotted Pardalotes** last year as they took some nesting material from hanging baskets, but the sightings were brief. This year, they've set up house right at our back door. Our kitchen window and dining table are about 2 metres from this hanging basket. At first we wondered why there was always dirt around the base of the pot, then noticed they were burrowing into the pot via the drainage hole. They then spent a long time lining the cavity and now both parents are busily feeding hatchlings which we can hear but can't see. We move around the area daily as we have an outdoor kitchen, but are careful not to get too close. We're keeping the geranium alive with an occasional misting. What amazing little birds! I just hope the resident Currawong hasn't noticed them.

Carolyn Brooks



Spotted Pardalote nest site

Photo: Carolyn Brooks

Gang-gang Cockatoo Project Update—August 2014

Survey progress

Community participation in the Gang-gang survey continues to grow. As of 25 September, there are 420 registered users and 2850 records in the Atlas of Living Australia Gang-gang survey database. Together with paper records, we have well over 3000 sightings eight months into the survey.

Results of the May Muster are summarised in the following table. There was a total of 143 sites surveyed with sheets received from 56 suburbs and 4 rural sites.

May Muster	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues
Total number of sites	131	130	129	125	125	125	128
Total number of sites GGs	28	27	28	29	30	25	26
Total number of sites GGs	21.37	20.77	21.71	23.20	24.00	20.00	20.31
Total number of individual	168	160	161	134	165	171	156

At the time of writing this report, the project team is reviewing the August Muster Survey data and forms are still coming in from the Muster week. Please send in your Muster Form if you have yet to do so.

Very few sightings of breeding activity have been sent through to the Gang-gang survey query line. We are keen for observers to report any obvious breeding behaviour through spring and particularly adult birds inspecting, working on and occupying, hollows. Observers of breeding behaviour and/or nesting are asked to send in these sightings via ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au

Also for observers, please note any changes in feeding behaviour and the group size/age of birds in your online or paper form reports. We would expect that group sizes may be changing and some movement of the birds to the mountains.

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

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

Community engagement

Make sure your families and local schools are aware of the 'Imagining Gang-gangs' Student Art Competition and Exhibition. The school holidays is a great time to get the kids/grandkids involved in an art project. Entries close on the 7 November and the student's art will be exhibited from 26 to 30 November at M16 Artspace Griffith – please put this date in your diaries. There is an A4 poster and flyer on the webpage that members can place on community noticeboards.

The art competition was also promoted in the Inspiring Australia in the ACT e-newsletter distributed by the CSIRO and on Radio Landcare (2XX). We will be at the upcoming Scouts ACT EnviroACTION Forum on Friday 10 October at Hackett Community Centre promoting COG and the Gang-gang survey. There will be a line up of interesting speakers at the Forum and community tables to introduce young people (16-24 years) to the many opportunities for environmental volunteering in the ACT. <https://www.facebook.com/events/264388547083221/>

Further media coverage about the Gang-Gang survey will be sought when the August Muster results are compiled and ahead of the November Muster Count.

The GG survey project team



Gang-gang Cockatoo, female

Photo: Yuri Amelin



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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Questabird

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



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

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

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

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

2014-2015 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

M Willis, Kambah
T Dewick, Evatt

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for November 2014 edition

Wednesday 28 October 2014

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au Or

c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG library

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COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'.

Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to;

canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au

The subject is 'subscribe' (without the quotation marks).

