



Gang-gang

August 2015

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 12 August 2015

7.30 pm.

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

Barbara Allan's short talk will be the annual review of the previous year's **Bird Blitz**, a brief look at the findings across the ten years of blitzes thus far, and an invitation to participate in Blitz 11, on 24-25 October. Please come along ready to nominate your preferred sites!

The main presentation will be by **Brett Howland**, a Ph D student at the Fenner School at the ANU, and is entitled "**Managing kangaroo grazing for the conservation of grassland and grassy woodland fauna including birds**".

Large mammalian grazers are ecosystem engineers, altering the resources available to species through selective consumption of plant matter, redistribution of nutrients and trampling. In south-eastern Australia, high intensity grazing by the native eastern grey kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, has been linked to ecological decline of multiple taxa. While efforts to manage the impact of grazers on biota have been undertaken, the effectiveness of these interventions is

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

With only one month of a fairly cold and wet winter to go, all birds species you might expect to see in Canberra at this time of the year have been recorded with the exception of the **Pink Robin**. The **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** was first reported from just below the Red Hill Restaurant early in July by Roy McDowall, his very first post on the COG chat line, which again demonstrates both the value of reporting and how everyone can make an interesting contribution. Again a number of observers availed themselves of the opportunity to see this very attractive species, which I understand was last seen there on 16 July.

The altitudinal migrants that visit Canberra over the winter period will be moving away over the next 6 weeks or so. Indeed there has been some movement already, but not necessarily away, with participants on the COG Wednesday walk mid-month observing a conservative estimate of 60 **Flame Robins** at Tidbinbilla, where there had been very few early in July.

Lindsay Hansch

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater



Everyone welcome

August Meeting —continued from Page 1

limited by a lack of knowledge of what constitutes optimal grazing levels.

Brett has investigated the relationship between kangaroos, grass structure and fauna to address this knowledge gap. He has found that: 1) there was a strong negative relationship between the abundance of kangaroos and grass structure; 2) high intensity grazing had a negative effect on the reptile community; 3) the occurrence of a threatened grassland reptile, the striped legless lizard, *Delma impar*, was positively related to fine-scale grass complexity, and negatively related to kangaroo density at the landscape-scale; 4) birds with similar traits favoured similar grass structures, while bird with different traits showed a range of grass structural preferences; and 5) kangaroos selected forage habitat away from roads, where there was a higher percentage cover of short grasses.

Brett was awarded a grant from the Canberra Bird Conservation Fund for the kangaroos and birds aspects, but members should find the interaction with other fauna fascinating as well.

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

A week or so ago numbers had also at least doubled in the only place I can find them reliably in recent years at the extreme edge in my local patch on Cooleman Ridge, and I've also now found them in an unexpected spot closer to home. So it's worth looking for them in places where they are usually present but were also absent earlier in July, such as Callum Brae and Stromlo Forest Park, before they move back to the mountains.

The **Scarlet Robin** will also move away from urban/peri-urban Canberra over this period. From the reports it seems that this species has been very common here this winter, indeed I've had them present in my GBS site in Chapman since late May, originally a pair but more recently a single male. Surprisingly they have been more conspicuous than the **White-eared Honeyeater**, which I've hardly sighted in my local patch in July after being recorded daily in June. My experience is that this species pretty much stops calling towards the end of its period here which makes them much harder to observe. So watch out for these in August as well as the **Golden Whistler**, which is often present until early October, but again has been largely absent from my local patch in July.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** is still around my GBS site, but again much less conspicuous; there have been a

few other reports of this species in July. In contrast four **Swift Parrots**, winter visitors from Tasmania, were last reported from Ainslie on 28 June, with no further sightings reported since. They seem to have moved on or perhaps are foraging more widely given the greater availability of water to drink.

In the reporting period starting from the last week of June I can again find no reports of the **Dusky Woodswallow**, but there have been a few further reports of summer migrant species the **Rufous Whistler**, **Western Gerygone**, **Mistletoebird**, the **Australian Reed-Warbler**, **Tree Martins**, **White-naped** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters**. The **Superb Parrot**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Grey Fantail**, **Silvereye** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** have been more widely reported. Steve Read posted a very interesting observation on the last-named species from the Jerrabomberra wetlands; they were perching in one of the small eucalypts, sallying out to hover just over the canopy of the adjacent tree, seizing a sawfly larva in their bill, then returning to the first tree to bash the larva against a branch several times, eat it, and fly back for the next snack. The literature confirms that these are one of the few bird species that will eat these larva, or spitfires as we used to call them when we were young.

The species listed above, as well as **Fairy Martins** and **cuckoo species** are usually also the first "summer migrants" to return to Canberra, and depending on the

John Bundock



Flame Robin

season this can happen before the end of August. Indeed the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which I've mentioned before is the least migratory of the local cuckoo species, was already reported several times from the Carwoola area during July. So watch out for any of the returning species mentioned above.

The **Banded Lapwing** was also found in July near there at Hoskintown. This is another species that seems to favour the eastern side of the COG Area of Interest. However, both David McDonald and Martin Butterfield have confirmed that the **Plumed Whistling Ducks** have not been seen at the Bungendore dams in July, though there were still around 40 **Australian Shelducks** present early in the month. So the former has yet to be recorded there for July, though Steve Read did report a single bird at the Jerrabomberra wetlands early in the month. In contrast the **Powerful Owl** was still present in Turner at least to mid July. I suspect that it had been resident there for a considerably long period prior to its serendipitous discovery in late November 2014.

Christine D also reported a couple of **White-fronted Chats** with the Lapwings, which Martin Butterfield noted was the first record for his collection of data (since 2007) for the broad Carwoola area. The latest report I can find for them at the Arboretum is from 8 July, but it's not clear to me whether they have moved on or are no longer of interest. I was wondering if they had moved there from Stromlo Forest Park (SFP) where I failed to find them in late June, and a number of other observers confirmed that they hadn't been able to be found there for several months. However, on 12 July Dianne Deans found 30 less than a kilometre away at the corner of Max Jacobs and Gornall Streets, Wright. This was not a complete surprise to me as while driving through these new suburbs to get to SFP it struck me how much seemed to be suitable habitat for them. However, it's also possible these birds were moving back from the Arboretum.

The only report of roosting behaviour I can find is by Duncan McCaskill who noticed a huddle of **Weebills** at Mulligan's Flat



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Spotted Pardalote,
at nest in side of wombat burrow

John Bundock

about half an hour before sunset, similar to the one described by Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley in the latest Canberra Bird Notes. There were 5 sitting very closely together along a small branch of a small wattle only about 3 metres or less above ground. They were very noisy and there was some jostling for position – Duncan noted that it looked like they were competing to be in the middle. There were at least 3 other Weebills calling noisily nearby. However, between 20-30 **Magpie-larks** can still be observed each evening flying in from the nearby horse paddocks and roosting together close to my GBS site. This phenomenon has been followed for nearly 6 months now, and has gone through a number of different phases and roost sites.

Quite a few mixed feeding flocks have still been reported, in particular by COG woodland surveyors in late June/early July. These will break up once the breeding season commences, indeed despite the cold and wet weather a surprising amount of breeding activity has already been reported commencing from early July, including **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills** either seen building a nest or carrying nesting material. A female **Hooded Robin** was also photographed carrying likely nesting material. **Spotted Pardalotes** were photographed at Tidbinbilla making a tunnel in the wall of a wombat burrow, and **White-winged Choughs** were reported nest building in Garran, the process facilitated by the abundance of mud. A number of observers have noted **Australian Wood Ducks** given their characteristic clucking sounds outside hollows in big trees.

On 12 July Barbara Allan reported that her **Australian Magpies** had started nest-building in exactly the same spot as the last two years, and at approximately the

same time. The female was doing most of the repair work of the old nest which was pulled apart by ravens. Interestingly last year's offspring hasn't been sent away and often is still fed by his parents. I have a threesome of adult magpies in my GBS site, one of which has started building a new nest above an old one suspended below held by just a few twigs. It may be hard to believe but soon the swooping season will be upon us!

A pair of **Black Swans** was seen in West Basin with 4 cygnets, two of which were riding on their mother's back, and the other two were following close behind the male. These are known all year round breeders, and it's hard to be clear if they're the first of the new or the last of the old breeding season. Definitely the latter were two separate observations of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** still feeding dependent young early in July. The dependent young **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** in my GBS site I reported in my last column have continued to be regularly seen, in fact as I'm writing I can hear one begging loudly and being fed. There are often two present, and a couple of days ago there were clearly three young birds.

The information above was again obtained from my two main sources, postings on the COG E-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the Eremaea eBird web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these data sources, without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Again the above shows that while we are still in winter Canberra and the ACT continues to provide rewarding birdwatching, and promises to become even better in the coming months. So please watch out for any overwintering or early arriving summer migrants or the departing altitudinal migrants mentioned above, for further signs of early breeding, for roosts and roost flights, and for the last mixed or single species feeding flocks. As usual please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Hooded Robin

Julie Clark

Gang-gang Survey

Kathy Eyles and Chris Davey at the Citizen Science Forum, 23-24th July, The Shine Dome, Canberra with a poster display produced to promote the results of the COG Bird of the Year project-Gang-gang survey.

Chris and Kathy will present the results of the survey with a talk at the Australian National Botanic Gardens 12:30 on Thursday 6th August. A presentation will also be given at the COG AGM on Wednesday 11th November with a write-up of the project in Canberra Birds Notes early in the New Year.

Chris Davey (Bird of the Year Project Coordinator)



Kathy Eyles, Chris Davey—Citizen Science Forum

Canberra Bird Notes giveaway

As part of the Committee's ongoing work to reduce the volume of COG's stored material, we are offering surplus hard copies of various CBN editions between 1987 and 2014 to any interested members.

If you are missing a particular edition or would like a copy of a number of years, please let me know by the end of August. If available, the editions you request can be picked up at the September COG meeting, or an alternate pick up can be arranged.

Julie McGuiness, julie.mcguiness@gmail.com.

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Striated Thornbill and Brown Thornbill
Sandra Henderson



Field Trip Reports

Tuesday 23 to Thursday 25 June – Little Forest Plateau

A group of 14 COG members really enjoyed this recent excursion, as usual, very capably organised and lead by Kathy Walter & John Goldie. It was particularly pleasing to meet new members Irene & Harry Bluhn in their first participation with our travelling birders family, to coin a phrase. (Another interesting aspect worth mentioning is that the Turner **Powerful Owl** continues to attract publicity and awareness to our general benefit. After several visits the Bluhns eventually located this bird with the kind assistance of other COG. members leading to their renewed interest and eventual membership of our club.)

Most of us stayed in comfortable cabin style accommodation at the Ulladulla Headland Holiday Park. It is being named specifically as it identifies the location where **Variegated Fairywrens** occurred and, more importantly, provided close up views of a family of 5 **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. This was surely the highlight of our trip!

At the nearby lighthouse at Warden Head despite the blustery weather conditions, aided by a telescope, we were able to identify many seabirds including a single **Black-browed Albatross**, **Australasian Gannets**, terns, and gulls. Down below on the foam-swept, rocky ledges were **Sooty Oystercatchers**, cormorants and a single **Eastern Reef Egret**. Several fur seals including an injured specimen attracted our attention whilst dolphins and migrating whales made regular appearances.

Unfortunately the weather gods were not particularly kind to us at the start of the Wednesday outing to Little Forest Plateau which was our main objective. Indeed the forecast was far from promising as it was already very cold, windy and decidedly overcast as we set out. For this humble scribe struggling through the thick undergrowth on a slippery pathway supported on my bush stick amidst the wind whipped branches proved something of an ethereal experience. For some strange and unaccountable reason, the words of a long-forgotten school-learned poem, Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', came to mind: "Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink".

Perhaps the connection was the unusual activity of the abundant bird life as there was a profusion of honeyeaters of all descriptions frequenting this obvious wintering ground. Everyone noticed, however, that they were in constant motion, rapidly flitting around in groups landing only momentarily on most occasions. Viewing and identification through binoculars proved quite difficult under these circumstances. To some degree, I suppose, to a birdwatcher it was a frustrating experience but nevertheless the 6km walk through this high country heathland was a really truly exhilarating experience. Towering sandstone rock formations, rugged gorges bathed in sunlight, panoramic coastal views were all features long to be remembered. Not to forget the



Glossy Black-Cockatoo

Chris Grounds

historical perspective also, for there on the near horizon was Pigeon House Mountain first sighted and named by Lt. Cook in 1770 in his voyage of discovery.

Getting back to birds, of the target species, **Rockwarblers**, **Beautiful Firetail** and **Southern Emu-wrens**, only the latter was recorded by most of the group.

Over the three days, no less than 12 **Honeyeaters** were observed and, with the exception of **Brown Headed & Noisy Miners**, nearly all were contained in the plateau land form – **Little** and **Red Wattlebirds**, **Lewin's**, **Yellow-faced**, **White-naped**, **White-eared**, **White-cheeked**, **Crescent** and **New Holland Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills**. The total bird count was a very respectable 80, from a number of locations, including several local nature parks and the very productive Burrill Lake on our final day.

Participant T.2.

Sunday 5 July – Jerrabomberra Hill

Keen COG members met in sub-zero conditions for the walk to the top of Mount Jerrabomberra. Although it briefly seemed that things were improving, the fog rolled back in; by the finish at 11.30 the temperature had improved to a balmy one degree! Despite the fog, a good haul of 32 species was seen.

The first surprise was a group of five **Laughing Kookaburras** in one tree - perhaps someone is feeding them? A mixed feeding (freezing?) flock gave us good views of a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, a **White-Eared Honeyeater**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Eastern Spinebills**, a **Golden Whistler**, a **Mistletoebird** and a **White-throated Treecreeper**.

The fog thwarted hopes of views of the mountains from the lookout, but towards the end of the walk we were treated to a fly past by nine **Common Bronzewings**, and encountered a flock of **Red-Browed Finches**. Views of **Fuscous**, **White-plumed** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** in a flowering eucalypt finished the morning on a good note.

Sandra Henderson



Laughing Kookaburras

Anne Carrick

Wednesday 15 July – Tidbinbilla

The main reason for choosing Tidbinbilla for this month's Wednesday walk was the prospect of seeing robins, but the numbers seen were a surprise. A post-walk discussion in the carpark resulted in a consensus view that we'd seen around 60 **Flame Robins**, in addition to a dozen **Eastern Yellow Robins** and 10 **Scarlet Robins**. The Flame Robins were in large groups on every grassy slope, and this count is very conservative.

A number of the participants had excellent views of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** flying low through the trees, with **Australian Ravens** in pursuit. A large mixed flock at the half-way point contained **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills**, all feeding on the ground, as well as assorted robins and **Superb Fairywrens**. A flock of around 30 **Red-browed Finches** was sighted in a patch of thick scrub. A total of 37 species was seen.

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.

Changes to trips are notified on the trips page of the COG web-site

<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

Saturday 8 August - Lake Ginninderra Beginners' Outing

This is the second of our bird walks for 2015 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 6254 0168 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.

Wednesday Walk, 19 August

The Wednesday Walk in August will be to Campbell Park on 19 August. Meet at the Northern end of the car park off Northcott Drive at 9:00am (follow Northcott Drive around the edge of the carpark till you get to the final row of parking).

Sunday 23 August – Callum Brae (Note the change of date)

Meet at 9am at the Narrabundah Lane entrance to Callum Brae - there is parking across the other side of the road. The walk will take in some key areas of Callum Brae: "nursery corner" (if you've ever wondered when people refer to it on the chatline), several of the dams on the reserve, and some areas that are good to come back to later in the breeding season. The walk will follow a circuit around the reserve, mostly on mown tracks. No bookings required.

Sandra Henderson

Late Winter Mystery bus trip; Sunday 30 August – 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/or where 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.

At the time of going to the editors one bus was already full so if you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 H or by E-mail on jandaholland@bigpond.com) at your earliest convenience.

Saturday September 5 and Sunday September 6 – Eden pelagics

COG has booked the weekend of September 5 and 6 for two one-day pelagic trips. The outings leave from Eden Harbour at 7am, and return mid-afternoon. Each trip can accommodate 12 people, and the cost per person per trip will be \$100.

Both trips are fully booked but if you wish to go on the waiting list, contact Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com), as there are often late cancellations.

Friday 11 to Sunday 13 September – Bethungra/Ulandra Nature Reserve – accommodated

It is a decade since COG visited the Ulandra Nature Reserve which is close to the village of Bethungra, 24 km SW of Cootamundra. We will be staying at the Bethungra Hotel B&B (formerly the historic Shirley Hotel) and birding in the Ulandra Nature Reserve and other spots in the region. An alternative accommodation option is camping at the Bethungra Dam & Reserve which is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. Participants staying at the Hotel will be on a half-board basis, i.e. dinner will be provided on Friday and Saturday, and breakfast on Saturday and Sunday, we will bring our own Saturday and Sunday lunches. Participants will make their own bookings at the Hotel which has 13 rooms of various types and sizes.

Registration for this field trip is essential. To register, and/or for further information, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, phone 6238 3706/0416 231 890, or email ulandra@canberrabirds.org.au .

Saturday 26 September to Monday 5 October – Capertee and Munghorn Gap

To take advantage of two consecutive long weekends, an extended camping trip has been planned, beginning in the Capertee Valley at Glen Davis campground for the Canberra Family and Community Day long weekend. We will probably then move to other national parks in the area, before arriving at Munghorn Gap where we will be camping at the field station there for the Labour Day long weekend.

A more detailed description of the trip will be emailed to participants later but at this stage, if you are interested, please email me at smlashko@gmail.com. Participants may join the trip for all or part of the time, with a maximum of 16 people at any one time.

Sue Lashko

Monday 12 to Friday 16 October – Green Cape (accommodated)

For some time now, COG has visited Green Cape every second year to stay in the former lighthouse keepers' cottages and enjoy the wonderful wildlife watching (birds and whales, in particular) in Ben Boyd National Park and in the surrounding seas. The internal layout of the cottages has recently been altered to provide space for a live-in caretaker. As a result, there are only 10 places available for this trip. The commitment is for a 4-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. The total accommodation costs will be \$140 per person (payment details will be provided once numbers are finalised). There is also a \$7 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival.

To register, email smlashko@gmail.com. As with all COG trips, preference will be given to COG members. More detailed information will be sent to participants closer to the date. **One place remaining.**

Sue Lashko and Peter Fullagar

Woodland Surveys - winter survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Hall/Gold Creek

Alison Rowell reported on the survey done on 29 June in still and sunny conditions, although there weren't many birds about until the last site where a mixed feeding flock was encountered, the highlight of which was seven **Southern Whitefaces**. Obliging they posed in a leafless sweetbriar. There were **Buff-rumped**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills** at several sites, but no whistlers and few honeyeaters, except **Red Wattlebirds** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. Melichrus (Urn Heath) was flowering on most sites, and a **Crimson Rosella** was seen eating the flowers or young fruits from one. Sometimes **White-eared** or other **Honeyeaters** are seen feeding in these low shrubs at that site in winter.

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and a smaller than usual team surveyed on Sunday 28 June, in cold and overcast/foggy conditions, but the visibility was not too bad. It was definitely several layers of clothes and gloves weather! Most of the sites were quiet, with most birds seen between sites in mixed flocks moving through. A few **Honeyeaters**, **White-eared**, **Brown-headed**, **White-naped** and a couple of **White-plumed** were around, but no **Red Wattlebirds** and no **Silvereyes**. Pairs of **Scarlet Robins** were around 5 sites, and one **Grey Fantail** and one **Golden Whistler** were recorded. Seven duck species were recorded, mostly on the large dam, including 2 **Freckled Ducks** sitting on logs there (they were also recorded on the March survey). A **Collared Sparrowhawk** around sites 21 and 22 on the eastern side of the reserve was a good sighting, but unsurprisingly, those sites had few small birds there at the time! A total of 47 species was recorded for the morning survey, reasonable for winter and generally the usual species mix at this time of the year. **White-plumed Honeyeater** was a nice sighting as they have become scarce at Mulligans.

Goorrooyarroo NR North

Nicki Taws reported on the surveys on a very wintery morning when the fog waxed and waned but never lifted. Despite the fog there was plenty of small bird activity even if it was a bit difficult to see them at times. Mixed feeding flocks were encountered at four sites, consistently made up of **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbill**, **Weebill** and **White-eared Honeyeater** +/- **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Fantail** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater**. No robins were seen. An army of 30 **White-winged Choughs** marched through one site. **Wood Ducks** were clucking outside hollows in a couple of big trees.

Goorrooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley surveyed on Sunday 21 June in beautiful conditions, although early fog. The ground was soggy after the recent heavy rain, and some creeks were running. 36 species were recorded for the morning, 30 during surveys, fairly typical totals for winter. As usual for winter, mixed flocks were on most sites, including **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Fantail**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Weebill**, **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**, and **Striated**, **Brown**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, in various combinations. The last was probably the most numerous. Other species recorded included several **Mistletoebirds** and **Speckled Warblers**, **Brown Goshawk** (the only raptor), a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths**, a smattering of **Little**

Ravens, and a flock of at least 50 **Welcome Swallows**. **Australian Ravens** were very prominent with several noticed displaying and chasing other ravens of both species out of their territories.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter, John Goldie and Megan Mears did the woodland surveys over 3 days. Five of the sites were surveyed in very cold, foggy conditions. A few sites were fairly quiet with one site only producing a single **White-eared Honeyeater** inside the 100 metre circle. **Wood Ducks** were calling from elevated perches at or near many sites. Highlights included a couple of mixed flocks with good numbers of **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Buff** and **Yellow Rumped Thornbills**, **Speckled Warblers** (2), **Brown headed and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Eastern Spinebill**, **Grey Fantail** and **Weebill**. Two **Grey Currawongs** feeding on the ground were very special and, apart from a single **Crimson Rosella**, the only species at one particular site.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz surveyed on Monday 15 June, on a calm morning with largely overcast sky and no frost. A total of 31 species were recorded at the sites with an additional 3 between sites. Seven of the sites were very quiet with as few as 3 species, mostly missing small birds. Two mixed feeding flocks were encountered at sites, one including 15 species. **Noisy Miners** harassed **King Parrots** and **rosellas** at several sites. **Noisy Miner** (6 sites), **Weebill** (5 sites), **Crimson Rosella** and **Spotted Pardalote** (4 sites each) were the most widespread species. Species of interest were **Brown Goshawk** (at 2 sites), **Brown-headed Honeyeater** (flock of 9), **Speckled Warbler** (2 x 2), **Western Gerygone** (1 in MFF), and **Mistletoebird** (1 male).

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on Tuesday 23 June, a cool, still morning. There was an early highlight in the front paddock with a mixed flock of **Buff-rumped**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills**, a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, **Weebills**, a male **Golden Whistler**, a **Grey Fantail** and **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**. Interestingly, a dozen **Spotted Pardalotes** were feeding on the ground. Other notable species at Newline included a **Speckled Warbler** and a **Diamond Firetail**. Two **Golden-headed Cisticolas** called strongly from perches on dried seed stalks among the African lovegrass. **Common Blackbirds** were recorded at three sites. It



Feathers'n'Friends

Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

Feathers'n'Friends cottage is fully self-contained with extensive facilities to ensure guests can enjoy short or extended stays.

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Common Blackbird

Stuart Harris

is lambing time and two dead ewes had attracted both **Australian** and **Little Ravens**. The only raptors for the morning were **Nankeen Kestrel** and **Peregrine Falcon**, the latter sitting in a dead tree being shrieked at by 5 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and 2 **Little Corellas** before a brave **Noisy Miner** drove it off. The total species count for the morning was 36.

Red Hill NR

Harvey Perkins and Stuart Harris surveyed on Sunday 28 June, a foggy, cold and damp morning, though the fog lifted over the course of the survey with the first patches of blue sky emerging about 10:00 am. There was little activity to begin with and diversity would have been well below average, even for winter, had it not been for a mixed feeding flock moving about at the last two sites. This added some interesting birds including a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, **Speckled Warbler**, and a few young **Golden Whistlers** and **Grey Shrike-thrushes**. Other less commonly recorded birds included a female **Common Bronzewing** (the 8th record over 67 surveys), and a **White-plumed Honeyeater** (only the 4th record, all in winter). Also of interest were the **Australian Wood Ducks**, 7 of them, all up in trees calling conspicuously. Several **Eastern Spinebills** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** further represented the winter honeyeaters for the site, along with the odd **Red Wattlebird**.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French surveyed the woodland patch on Monday 29 June, in pretty good weather, sunny, still and no fog (unusual for there). Small flocks of birds were scarce, but most of the usual species were around, **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **Striated Thornbills**, a couple of **Speckled Warblers** and a few honeyeaters: a flock of **Brown-headed**, a small number of **White-naped**, **White-eared** and one **White-plumed Honeyeater**. Interesting birds were 2 **Tree Martins**, and a large flock of **Welcome Swallows** hawking around. The species of the morning was **Flame Robins** on the grasslands edge feeding amongst the short grasses, and then flying up to the fence to perch - four birds were seen, 1 male in full plumage and 3 brown birds, one of which had a bit of russet/red on the breast. There were no raptors around and no **Golden Whistler** (unusual for winter survey). 35 species was a good total for winter, similar to last year.

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.

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Callum Brae NR/Symonston sites

Sandra Henderson surveyed on 19 June in cold and windy conditions. A total of 33 species were seen, 19 of them within the six survey sites. The more interesting birds were a **Grey Currawong** close to the large pylons and a party of **Wood Ducks** near one of the central dams. Outside sites, a **Common Bronzewing** was an uncommon find in this reserve, and a single **Wedge-tailed Eagle** was circling above the entrance. The smallest dam, dry a few weeks ago, now has water. No **Flame Robins** were located - most unusual for Callum Brae in winter. The other Symonston sites outside the reserve were surveyed in very cold conditions on 20 June. The most surprising find was a group of six **Common Bronzewings** close to the road. The second site, in an open woodland area, had a mixed flock of **Weebills**, **thornbills**, **pardalotes**, **Superb Fairy-Wrens**, **Speckled Warblers**, **White-throated Treecreepers**, **Grey Shrike-Thrushes** and a **White-eared Honeyeater**. A separate mixed flock near the road included most of these as well as **Red-browed Finches** and **Scarlet Robins**.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Friday 26 June. It was clear and cold, with an occasional light breeze. It was surprisingly active for this time of the year, with four sites having between 8 and 11 species. **Scarlet Robins** were seen at a couple of spots and there were several **White-eared Honeyeaters** about. The **Rainbow Lorikeet** seems to have made itself at home at site 2. The highlight of the morning was a small mixed feeding flock which included all of the common thornbills and a **Speckled Warbler**, at sub-site 7, which doesn't often have much activity. 24 species were observed during surveys, with a further nine elsewhere on The Hill.

Rural leasehold property near Tharwa

David McDonald conducted the winter survey on Sunday 21 June. It was very cold, with low cloud. Only 15 species were recorded in the sites, with three additional species between them. Abundance was low, with five of the nine sites having four or fewer species. The most widespread species were **Galah** and **Australian Magpie**, both observed at six sites. The most abundant were **White-winged Chough** (55), **Australian Raven** (28), **Australian Magpie** (16) and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** (13). Species of interest included a single **Brown Treecreeper**, two **Noisy Miners** (a species rarely recorded at this location) and a fully white-backed **Australian Magpie**, the first time David can recall seeing one there. Honeyeaters (other than the Noisy Miner) and small bush birds such as thornbills and fairy-wrens were absent. Across the site the Blakely's Red Gums, both young and old, were almost completely defoliated.

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.



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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

Naas Valley rural leasehold (near Mt Tennant)

Julie McGuiness did the winter survey on Sunday 21 June, a lovely cold, clear and calm morning after a heavy frost. It was fairly quiet, with 18 species observed within the various sites and another 4 species added outside the sites. Species of note were **Jacky Winter** (5), **Varied Sittella** (2), **Scarlet Robin** (2), and **Diamond Firetail** (5). Only **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Weebill** and **Common Starling** were in any numbers, and, more than usual, very vocal Australian Ravens.



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Noisy Miners attack Spotted Pardalote

John Bundock

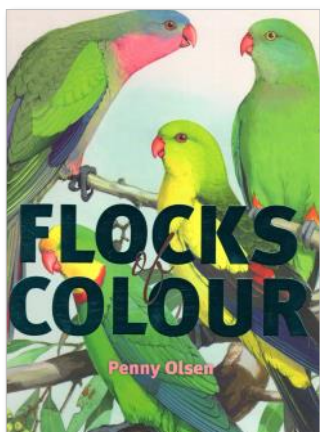
Publications for sale

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

Stocktake sale! 50% off a range of books

**Below are a few bargains.
More to be found at the meeting.**

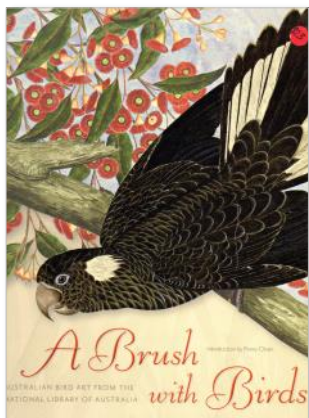


Flocks of Colour

Penny Olsen

With introductory essays by ornithologist Penny Olsen, *Flocks of Colour* covers two and a quarter centuries of discovery and illustration of Australia's avifauna.

SALE price \$22



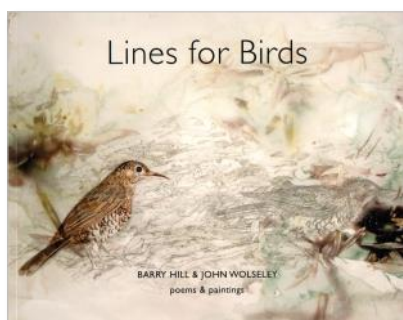
A Brush with Birds

Australian Bird Art from the National Library of Australia

Penny Olsen

This book is lavishly illustrated with vibrant and luscious art and it includes the stories of the artists behind the paintings.

SALE price \$12



Lines for Birds: poems and paintings

Barry Hill, John Wolseley

This is a dazzling book, a conversation between two venerable artists in love with birds.

SALE price \$21

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:

C Cooper, Holder
C Byrne, Jerrabomberra
T Lovett, Kambah
J Carr, Belconnen
J Birkbeck, Julatten, Qld
S Dutton, Red Hill
J Bissett, Greenleigh
(rejoining)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for September 2015 edition

Wednesday 26 August 2015

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG E-mail Discussion List

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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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COG library

For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on 6254 6520

