



Gang-gang

December 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JANUARY MEETING

Wednesday 11 January 2016

7.30 pm.

*Jerrabomberra Wetlands Office
2 Dairy Road, Fyshwick*

**Lori Gould and Chris Davey -
Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature
Reserve - Past, Present and Future**

Please note due to the unavailability of the usual venue the 11 January meeting will be held at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands (details below).

A joint presentation will be given by **Lori Gould** (Program Manager, Woodlands and Wetlands Trust) and **Chris Davey** (Founding Member of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Management Committee) who has been associated with the Reserve over many years.

Lori will discuss her role at the Wetlands and the management structure she works within. She will also provide an overview of the Wetlands to highlight the interesting and varied place that it is. This includes its many natural values despite being classified as a 'novel' ecosystem, the

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

The five week period to the end of November that is covered by this column has seen quite a change in the pattern of spring/summer migrants present in the COG area of interest (AoI) this year. The relatively dry (only 15 mm rain at my place) and increasingly warmer 4 weeks from 10 October seem to have dried out the inland enough, particularly in the north of NSW where press reports indicate drought conditions are being experienced, so that the migrants which were not present or only in very small numbers moved here towards the end of this period. The regular but perhaps local rain (over 50 mm) since does not seem to have affected this.

Perhaps most notable of these species has been the **Rufous Songlark**, for which in my previous column I could find only one record. On 11 November Jean Casburn reported the first one from Narrabundah Hill and, after a trickle of observations, Wayne Gregson reported on 21 November that they were back on the Uriarra and Cotter Roads where he hadn't been able to find

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COG December BBQ

Black Mountain Peninsula

6.00pm Wednesday 14 December 2016

**Bring a salad or dessert to share, and serving utensils
BYO plates, cutlery, glasses, table and chairs**

Sausages, beer, wine and soft drink provided

Lucky door prize; usual monthly raffle

**Theme: wear your favourite bird shirt, hat
or other bird-related attire!**

Everyone welcome

challenging and sometimes conflicting management issues with so many neighbours and stakeholders, the pressures of development and catchment management affecting water quality, and the balance between human and natural uses. Lori will also discuss programmes and projects being carried out at the Wetlands including the Latham's Snipe project.

Since the filling of Lake Burley Griffin in 1964, local ornithologists have been documenting the birds in the area. In addition, systematic monthly surveys by the ACT Government on the waterbirds of the area were conducted between August 1980 and September 1997. Since July 2012, COG has run quarterly surveys of all bird species throughout the Reserve.

Chris will provide a brief history of COG's association with the Reserve and changes in bird richness and abundance since 1964. Management issues associated with the bird life using the Reserve in relation to surrounding land uses will also be discussed.

The Jerrabomberra Wetlands Offices are at 2 Dairy Rd Fyshwick. Dairy Road is an extension of Newcastle St as it goes under the Monaro Highway at Fyshwick. Continue along past the Wetland Foreshores complex next door (2 entrances – do not go in either of these!), go through a traffic calming device, over a speed hump until you get to a gate on your left, a green mail box and a blue sign saying "Jerrabomberra Wetlands Offices". The critical point is not to turn into the complex next door.

Please note that parking inside the gate is limited, so it's best to park along the road, with the east side, (ie turning around and facing back towards Fyshwick), offering the best shoulder on which to park.



Scarlet Honeyeater, immature

Steve Wallace

them a fortnight earlier. These and Narrabundah Hill seem to be among their favourite places in the ACT.

It has been a very similar story with the **White-winged Triller**. While there had been a few present previously, Con Boekel reported an influx into Campbell Park around 10 November, where they were already starting to breed with nest building observed at the Nest Workshop on 13 November (see separate report). The above two species typically come to the ACT only to breed and leave soon after this has finished, but whether they have arrived too late to breed this season is unclear. Certainly their calling was remarkably muted when I did my monthly survey at the western boundary of Narrabundah Hill on 24 November, with 2 of the 5 male trillers seen being silent, and the other 3 calling only intermittently.

So please watch and listen carefully to see whether they successfully breed and stay longer than the end of January 2017, the time when most of them would have normally departed. Of the other migrants that spend only a short time in the COG Aol and may breed, the **Brown Songlark** was first reported at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, also on 11 November. There have been a couple of further reports of this grassland species east of Lake George and in Bonner, but I can find only a single report of the **Horsfield's Bushlark** by Steve Wallace at Parkwood on 10 November. Likewise, the only report I can find of the **White-browed Woodswallow** is of 2 birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 13 November.

So, with the exception of the **Masked Woodswallow**, usually present in lower numbers than the White-browed, noting also those discussed below, all the usual spring/summer migrants have been recorded this season. The period 10-13 November was an important time for the last of these to arrive. Ironically it was just as we started to get more rain again (over 40 mm at my place in the 4 days), though whether this influenced the arrival of more of the species still reported in very low numbers is unclear. Some other species also seem to be present in lower numbers this season, notably the **Superb Parrot** (as confirmed by expert Adrian Manning at the November COG meeting). Towards the end of November there seemed to be more reports of them, including the return to their post-breeding areas.

Another species that (again) seems to be present only in low numbers this season is the **Pallid Cuckoo**, and also relatively few **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** seem to have been reported. In contrast the **Brush Cuckoo** was first recorded at Mulligan's Flat during the Blitz on 30 October. This species, which normally goes to the mountains to breed, has been present there in previous years, but has since also been reported from other peri-urban parts of Canberra such as Mount Majura and the Jerrabomberra

Wetlands. There have also been a few further reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** scattered throughout the 5 week period covered by this column.

I'm a bit unclear as to the status of the **Eastern Koel** this season. After reporting the early activity in Rivett in my November column, I heard only the single call in my local patch for over 3 weeks. At the same time others reported normal, or more usually, lower activity in their local areas. However, early on the morning of 18 November I traced some calling to the same silky oak in Croton St Rivett where I first recorded a male on 23 October. This time there were 2 males and 2 females in close proximity, moving around only slightly despite the harassment by **Pied Currawongs**. That afternoon, after both male and female calls closer to home, 6 birds, at least 3 females by call, were frantically calling and chasing each other in my GBS site for about 5 minutes. These in turn were harassed by **Noisy Friarbirds** (which I hadn't recorded in my GBS for at least a month), **Red Wattlebirds** and **Pied Currawongs**, all potential hosts, as is the **Magpie-lark** seen harassing them later.

Similar behaviour by up to 4 birds was witnessed over the next few days after which activity seemed to settle down, and at least a male and female have been mostly present close to an area where I have found fledglings over the past two years. Certainly it's the highest activity I've ever recorded locally despite having observed 2 or 3 fledglings in January-February over the past 3 years, and I'm keeping an ear out for very early fledglings this December.

Of the species whose presence also seemed to be delayed by the cool weather up to the end of October, the **Leaden Flycatcher** is well established and breeding, as it was during the Nest Workshop (see separate report), by now. There were still some urban/peri-urban reports of the related **Satin Flycatcher** up to 11 November, but I expect all will be breeding in the mountains, as would be the **Rufous Fantail**, last reported on Lyneham Ridge on 10 November (but for which there was a very late report from Forde on 29 November!).



Little Friarbird

Julie Clark



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Good birding, good food ...

2017 tours

**Alice Springs & the West
MacDonnell Ranges tour**
22 to 30 April

One day added for Sandhill Grasswren

Top End

22 May to 7 June

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

Cairns to Mt Isa and Winton
Two days added for Rusty Grasswren.

Atherton Tablelands FNQ
17 to 22 July
Iron Range NP FNQ
22 to 30 July

New Caledonia
5 to 12 August

includes Lifou and Ouvéa Islands

Strzelecki Track Outback
3 to 22 September

38th tour and celebrating 30 years.
4 states & 5 spp. of grasswren

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2017

Amended dates
21 & 22 October, 18 & 19 November
2 & 3 December 2017

Tasmania 2018
3 to 10 February

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com



Golden Whistler was still observed at North Lyneham Ridge on 25 November, further confirming its reputation as the last winter altitudinal migrant to leave Canberra.

There have been few “unusuals” reported during the past 5 weeks, all waterbirds except for the **Scarlet Honeyeaters** observed at the Botanic Gardens on 3 and 8 November [the 2014-2015 Annual Bird Report (ABR) indicates no sightings since 2013-2014], and the **Little Friarbird** at the Casey Wetlands on 25 November, for which the ABR usually records only a few per year. Interestingly the former is a coastal as opposed to the latter being an inland species, so there is no clear effect from the weather conditions. Meanwhile the **Apostlebird** was still reported from the North Watson Wetlands on 28 November; from the reports it seems so tame it’s hard to believe it isn’t a cage bird or even a former family pet.

There have also been unusuals seen on Lake George, (which according to reports is already drying out), most notably a **Bar-tailed Godwit** on 13 November (noted in the ABR as a seldom-seen vagrant), and on 6 November some more **Banded Lapwings**, as well as **Red-necked Avocets** and **Whiskered Terns**. According to the ABR the presence of all of these is not that unusual there; the last two were also recorded on the Hoskinstown Plain on 10 and 13 November, respectively. Some high numbers of waterbirds have also been reported, with close to 200 **Australian Shelducks** seen on Lake George on 10 November, and 83 **Cattle Egrets** in breeding plumage observed at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 29 October.



Hooded Robin, two juveniles
Hooded Robin, male, juvenile, female

Kym Bradley

I can find only one peri-urban record for the other mountain breeder, the **Cicadabird**, on Mt Ainslie on 29 October, which co-incidentally also was the date of the only mountain record so far (perhaps due to the Blitz). Finally the **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** seems to have been slow to move to the mountains to breed this year, and I’m still hearing them locally including in my GBS. Likewise the

Despite very few **Eurasian Coots** still being observed on the waters of COG’s Aol, reports of their breeding have continued most notably through Julie Clark’s efforts during the Blitz when she found 2 broods at the Casey, 3 at the North Watson and 1 at the Forde Wetlands. At the same time John Harris reported three pairs with chicks in Gungahlin Pond as well as two breeding pairs in the Valley Ponds, and at the same time Harvey Perkins reported a pair and their 6 small young at the Murrumbidgee Golf Course in Kambah.

This totals a remarkable 9 broods, far more than for **Dusky Moorhens** or **Purple Swamphens** (3 and 1 respectively) reported at the same time. Compared with September and October, smaller numbers of broods of other waterfowl such as the **Grey Teal** (2), **Pacific Black Duck** (2), **Australian Wood Duck** (a total of 21 very small ducklings reported by Julie Clark at the Dickson Wetlands) and **Black Swan** (2). Interestingly almost all this waterbird breeding was reported in late October, with only single reports of **Hoary-headed** and **Australian Grebes** in November on nests and two lots with young, respectively. Also reported in November has been a **Spotless Crake** chick at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

In respect of bush birds breeding, despite my conclusion from the Nest Workshop (see separate report) that it was an

average rather than the very good year I had been expecting, many reports have been posted on the COG chatline, most notably by Con Boekel who had posted a summary of breeding at Campbell Park to date beforehand. This involved 21 breeding species, a number of which we didn't find but interestingly we found at least 3 additional ones. Once again many thanks to Con for this great help.

Earlier Harvey Perkins also posted his Blitz tally of 81 species, 18 of which had been recorded breeding, with the highlight for me a **White-fronted Chat** nest with young (only 1 breeding record in the 2014-2015 ABR). He also recorded a trifecta of Hirundines (**Welcome Swallow**, **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**) breeding. Likewise Jean Casburn's blitzing effort at Narrabundah Hill rewarded her with 14 of the 49 species breeding, the highlights being the **Southern Whiteface** on the known nest, and the dependent young **Scarlet Robins** known to have fledged earlier.

The last-named species was also recorded breeding at Mulligans Flat during the blitz, and with one new record after that and signs (male feeding female) at Narrabundah Hill that a second attempt may be on the way. The **Flame Robin** has also been recorded breeding in a burnt area at Gibraltar Peak during the Blitz, as well as young observed fledging from a nest on a property towards the end of the month. The related **Jacky Winter** also was on a nest and **Hooded Robin** chicks fledged successfully from a nest on this property. Very interestingly at the same time Steve Wallace reported to me that the pair we saw at the start of the East-west Road on the COG bus trip on 28 August was feeding a juvenile.

Other highlights from the many breeding reports include a rarely reported **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** nest (again no breeding records in the 2014-2015 ABR) found in the Naas Valley by Lindsay Hansch and Stuart Harris during the Blitz. Kym Bradley has also reported **Diamond Firetails** nesting in the base of her Wedge-tailed Eagle nest; HANZAB mentions they sometimes nest in the base of stick nests of raptors including this species. Many young **Tawny Frogmouths** also appear to have fledged during November, often a bit later than usual, and as Stuart Rae has indicated to me, in quite a few cases only the single chick, both of which was the case with the nests on Cooleman Ridge I've been watching.

On 31 October Steve Wallace reported two active **White-faced Heron** nests in the Ginninderra Creek catchment, one with four young, some near to fledging, and the other with a brooding bird. Both nests were well hidden. Steve noted that in most years only a few active White-faced Heron nests are reported within the ACT (none in the 2014-2015 ABR, and a total of 23, two with eggs and 21 with young for the 32 years from 1982-2013), so he thought locating two in one day may indicate it was a good breeding season for them.

A couple of nests of the **Grey Butcherbird** have also been reported, including one found by me on NW Cooleman

Ridge. What alerted me to the nest building, as for the one nearby last year, was hearing calling like a dependent young magpie, which the adults do to each other. HANZAB notes "Female often begs for food from male, both before nesting and when incubating and brooding. When begging female quivers wings and utters soft or loud begging calls (similar to those of begging young)". On writing this column young were being fed in the nest which hopefully will be successful this year as opposed to being abandoned last year.

So please watch out for further breeding activity; with continuing good conditions I expect there will still be quite a bit of breeding happening. However, if it dries out there may be more spring/summer migrants arriving. So please look out for them, and particularly for any further signs of their breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

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 eBird Australia website, as well as some direct correspondence to me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this comprehensive column together.

Jack Holland



Tawny Frogmouth, juvenile

Lach Read

2016 STEVE WILSON MEDALS

At the 2016 AGM, Jack Holland and David McDonald (two outstanding and long-serving COG members) were awarded Steve Wilson Medals following assessment by the Steve Wilson Medal Committee (Alison Russell-French, Neil Hermes and Bruce Lindenmayer).

Jack Holland was Secretary of COG for several years in the late 1980s and President for 4 years from 2003. He became President through the difficult few years after the 2003 Canberra bushfire which destroyed his Chapman family home, moving to rented accommodation and then rebuilding on the old site. During much of that time, Jack was also Field Trips organiser. He still leads popular COG outings, including the annual boat trip on East Basin (with Jenny Bounds), the bus trip (with Jenny Bounds) and the springtime nest workshop at Campbell Park.

For the past decade, Jack has written his expert monthly column for *Gang-gang*, pointing out notable bird sightings and what to look for over the coming month.

Over the same decade, Jack has organised speakers for the short and long talks at monthly meetings and the annual members' night, having developed a wide range of contacts with birders, researchers and students locally and interstate.

David Mc Donald joined COG as soon as he arrived in Canberra in 1986, and within three years was elected as Secretary after being on the Committee during the previous years. In 1999, with the support of the COG Committee, David established the Canberra Birds Email Discussion List, and has maintained it ever since. On occasions that has been an onerous task, but one appreciated by more than 350 subscribers.

David was the inaugural Convenor of the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund as a tax-deductible charity providing grants to students and researchers working on approved bird projects. He has maintained that role to date, facilitating the work of the Fund's Committee of Management.

David's other contributions to COG include guiding the process of updating the Annotated Checklist of Birds of the ACT, leading field trips over the last two decades, contributing to COG's work on data management and supporting COG's webmaster. David is a prolific contributor to COG's database of bird observations from the Canberra region.



Alison Russell-French, Jack Holland, David McDonald and Bruce Lindenmayer

Photo: Lia Battison

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 6 November – Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve

Eleven COG members met in sunny, mild and windy conditions at the Rocks carpark on Horse Park Drive. We tallied 51 species for the morning despite the reserve being a little quieter than usual in many places. Birding highlights included **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo**, **Varied Sittella**, **Mistletoebird**, **Grey Currawong**, **Tree Martins** and **Fairy Martins**, with good views of **Superb Parrot**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Leadend Flycatcher**. Later on the walk in the sky above us we observed four **Wedge-tailed Eagles** and (separately) a flock of **Straw-necked Ibis** on the move. We were surprised not to record **Speckled Warbler** or **Scarlet Robin** during the walk. Breeding observations included dependent young for **Australian Magpie** and **Grey Butcherbird**, a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** nest-building, a **Western Gerygone** on a nest, and a **Tawny Frogmouth** sitting on a nest with a fluffy chick beside it.

In addition to the birds, we saw an assortment of wildflowers including Sun Orchids, Billy Buttons, Sundew and Fairy Aprons (also lots of Capeweed and Paterson's Curse in flower). The butterflies mainly consisted of Australian Painted Lady, Meadow Argus, Caper White, Chequered Copper and Common Grass-blue; and the mammals consisted of European Hare, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Swamp Wallaby and Red-necked Wallaby.

Suzi Bond

Sunday 13 November – Campbell Park nest workshop

With numbers boosted by some late interest 28 members and guests joined me for the 14th running of this annual and continuing popular event. Again the e-mailing of the notes beforehand allowed me to largely dispense with the short spiel at the start, and we soon headed fairly directly to beyond the horse gate where an inspection in the week before and other intelligence had revealed most of the breeding activity was taking place.

About half way there we found the cup-shaped nest of a **Noisy Miner** surprisingly high in a medium sized tree, with an adult sitting. This species increasingly seems to be the main factor responsible for the lack of smaller birds up to the horse gate; in fact we even saw a few miners beyond this feature. We also observed a pair of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** busy trying to make a hollow, a **Pacific Black Duck** in a tree, and heard a booming **Common Bronzewing**, before a short but sharp rain shower forced us to seek shelter for a few minutes.

This seemed to have the effect of quietening the birds and it was pretty slow going around the erosion gully until we found a **Dusky Woodswallow** on a nest at the bottom of a half-split vertical spout. This was followed by a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** nest; when it left some minutes later, participants could see the shallowness of the nest, typically built into a horizontal fork. Four **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** landed in a nearby tree, a first record for this workshop, and though we could hear a young bird

calling it was difficult to see which one it actually was. However, by carefully watching a **Grey Fantail** which was flitting about, we found it was feeding 3 small dependent young huddled together on a branch of a small tree.

We also disturbed a couple of **Red-browed Finches** in a small dense green shrub close to a smallish pipe-like nest which they didn't seem to approach, so we were unsure if it was being used for breeding or roosting. We then moved to where the creek crosses the track trying to follow up the calling we could hear there, with little success until we found a female **Magpie-lark** sitting on its mud nest, with a much larger one of the **White-winged Chough** in the same tree. We thought the young had fledged from the latter until half a dozen birds came to bring food to the still quite small young, while the assembled participants watched. Shortly after the former bird left the nest and soon returned to feed young, confirming the stage of both nests.

We had been frustrated by **Leadend Flycatchers** calling but seeming to be on the move, until a different call above us alerted us to a pair building a nest in a not quite typical spot of a thin dead branch with a live one almost perpendicular above/behind it. Both birds allowed great views while adding to the half-formed nest. Not long after we found another pair sitting (and swapping over) on a nearby nest, also not quite in the typical position. This was after we had enjoyed watching a **Willie Wagtail** on a nest brooding two young. However, the find of the day was a pair of **White-winged Trillers** nest building. Ryu had photographed the nest site earlier and once we located it, both came to the nest with the female building and the male very close by with wings held out but with his back to her, as described in HANZAB.

A **Weebill** busily collecting food was also seen nearby, but could not be traced to its nest. However, this was certainly the "hot spot" of the day, with 6 species observed breeding in close proximity. The only dome-shaped nest we then found was that of a **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, typically placed against the tree trunk behind some peeled off bark. While calling and seen a number of times, we were not able to find the dome-shaped nest of the **White-throated Gerygone**, except for a known one that had been predated. Towards the end of the morning we got good views of a surprisingly quiet **Olive-backed Oriole**. Also seen during the morning were several largely silent **Noisy Friarbirds** and, though **Rufous Whistlers** occasionally called loudly, neither of these three species showed any clear signs of breeding activity.

A total of 45 species was seen on the day, a relatively low number for this outing with some species seen/heard on the mid-week reccie such as **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Dollarbird** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** not observed. However, 17 species were recorded breeding at some level, higher than in the past couple of years, but unfortunately again including **Common Mynas** seen entering or examining several nest holes. While again much breeding activity was taking place in a small space almost all of it was on the other side (N) of the creek with the two small ponds about 100 m past the horse gate, the first time it has been so far to the NE of the area.

My thanks again to Mark Clayton, Reg Johnson and Lindell Emerton for providing details of breeding species and their sites in response to my request on the COG chatline, and in particular to Con Boekel for posting detailed information there on this season's

breeding at Campbell Park, and for providing me with an annotated Google Earth map which made seeking out the best areas to search so much easier.

Jack Holland

Wednesday 16 November – Namadgi Visitors' Centre

Seventeen members gathered at the Visitors' Centre just south of Tharwa on a beautiful morning. We headed off to do the Woodland Loop trail, beginning by crossing the wall of the small dam. Several **Australian Reed-Warblers** were calling in the dense reeds and a single **Australasian Grebe** in breeding plumage was in the water. A good collection of returned migrants were breeding: **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-throated Gerygone** (occupied nest), **Dusky Woodswallow** (recently fledged young, and agitated behaviour in chasing off a **Grey Butcherbird**). Other breeding records were **Australian Magpie** (recently fledged young), **Magpie-lark** (recently fledged young) and **Common Starling** (visiting probable nest site). Moving down to the Gudgenby River we added a few standard species plus the first **Rainbow Bee-eater** for the day. We totalled 36 species for the site.

Moving to Tharwa Sandwash, we started with an unsuccessful search for the Tawny Frogmouths, concluding by looking across the Murrumbidgee. Two **Black-fronted Dotterels** foraged on the waterline while a **Nankeen Kestrel** perched on a large dead tree opposite. A **Dollarbird** appeared and disappeared into a hollow. After some discussion of the time it spent in the hollow, this was rated as an occupied nest rather than inspecting the hollow. Another dead tree caused us to log (sorry) **Tree Martins** inspecting a hollow. A **Laughing Kookaburra** excited us as it was carrying a snake – estimated as 50cm in length -as it flew to a tree and subsequently across the river. We totalled 30 species at this site, despite the lack of Red-rumped Parrots, Red-browed finches and several other expected species.

Across the 2 sites we recorded a respectable total of 47 species.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 20 November – Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve

Twenty birdwatchers had a very happy and productive walk through Mulligans Flat in perfect conditions. Highlights included **White-winged Choughs**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Magpie-larks** and **Leaden Flycatchers** all sitting on nests. Long, patient pursuits through the bush resulted in good views of a very vocal **Olive-backed Oriole** and a **White-throated Gerygone**. The birding highlight was a family of four **Tawny Frogmouths** packed on to a branch very close to carpark. Special thanks for Duncan McCaskill for spotting them. A particular pleasure for me was meeting graduates of the birdwatching courses I had run in the 1990s. We all agreed that we should visit Mulligans Flat again soon.

McComas Taylor



From Top: **White-winged Chough**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Noisy Miner**
Australasian Grebe family
Duncan McCaskill
Julie Clark

Sunday 27 November – Kama Nature Reserve

Twenty-four members and friends met at the car park at 08:00 on a perfect spring morning. Although the grass was higher than an elephant's eye there was plenty to see. The morning started quietly but once we entered the Reserve numbers picked up with good views of the more usual species- **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosella**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** and **Red-rumped Parrot**, all associated with nesting hollows. Highlights include **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Dusky Woodswallow** harassing a lone Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, four **Superb Parrots** flying through, **Varied Sittella** feeding young and a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles**. The sighting of the morning was a single **Owlet-nightjar** perched at the entrance to a tree hollow.

As is often the case with this Reserve, it was those birds that were not recorded which was of interest: no **gerygones**, **robins** or **flycatchers** and no **Common Myna** or **Noisy Miner**. Despite the Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) being in flower, we were short on honeyeaters which, although evident, were recorded in small numbers.

After the three-hour walk we ended up with a total of 40 species, a good count for a woodland site with very little water about.

Chris Davey



Owlet –nightjar

Duncan McCaskill



Tawny Frogmouth family

Duncan McCaskill



Yellow-tufted Honeyeater

Stuart Harris



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.

The secluded lodging is surrounded by tropical rainforest and beautiful gardens with varying habitats and a large variety of birds and wildlife.

Activities in the area include birdwatching at nearby Mt Lewis and other birdwatching locations, as well as Daintree River nature tours and other attractions.

Discounts available for Birdlife Australia members.

Check our website for comprehensive details, rates, and bookings:

www.feathersnfriends.com.au

Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

COG's Bird Blitz 2016

A huge thank you to all participants and a plea to those who have not as yet submitted their data – please do so asap or contact me to make arrangements. You are holding up data analysis. It is complicated enough this year with records coming via eBird, Birddata, hard copy and a variety of independent means. At this stage we are hoping to have a wrap-up and prize presentation at the February COG meeting. Coverage was not quite as good as I had hoped, but most habitats were surveyed at least once. So far we have recorded one new species for the blitz – the famed North Watson **Apostlebird**. Some migrant species which are occasionally missed, either because they are late arriving or simply not observed, were recorded this year, including **Cicadabird** and **Rufous Fantail**. **Red-browed Treecreepers** put in an appearance but other “specials” did not. And, most pleasingly, we had a few unusual breeding records, especially the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** in the Naas Valley.

Barbara Allan

FOR SALE

Kowa Spotting Scope

This Kowa scope is ideal as a first telescope for keen birdwatchers. If you are interested in getting a better view of birds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands or waders down at the coast, this scope and tripod are small, incredibly light weight and easily carried.

Scope: Kowa TS 501, 20-40 magnification

Tripod: FanCier, Aluminium

Price: \$110

Contact: John, 0428 824 673

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

Future Field Trips

Sunday 11 December – Australian National Botanic Gardens

The ANBG is a favourite birding spot for lots of Canberrans, so we are going for a visit. Meet at the bus stop between the bookshop and the cafe at 8:00 am. Remember that you need to pay for parking. When the day starts getting hot we will retreat to the rainforest, and we will go to the café for morning tea so bring some small change. There is no need to book for this outing. For any enquiries contact Lia Battisson on 0412 788 791 or liabattisson@grapevine.com.au

Sunday 18 December – Aranda Bushland

Meet at 8 am on Bindubi Street beside the second gate (when travelling north) where the Powerline Track begins. There is plenty of parking well off the road but do not park on the walking/cycle track.

We will visit the section of the reserve where there was plenty of breeding activity in 2015 (see articles in February and March Gang-gang) and, if time permits, we may also walk through the Frost Hollow, also known as the Snowgums Reserve. Bring morning tea.

Sue Lashko

Wednesday 21 December – Uriarra East

Meet at Uriarra East at 8:30 to canvass the picnic area and perhaps Stoney Creek NR if it isn't too hot.

Martin Butterfield

There is no January Gang-gang so below are the outings for January and February 2017. Note that early registration is required for the two extended trips.

Sunday 15 January – Uriarra

The meeting point for COG's annual outing will again be next to Uriarra Homestead big dam, close to the T-intersection of Uriarra and Brindabella Roads at 8.30 am. We will spend some time looking at birds on and around the dam, then come back to Uriarra Crossing and then Uriarra East for lunch. We are likely to see quite a few unusual birds and migrants including **Nankeen Night-Heron**, woodswallows, **Dollarbird** and **Rainbow Bee-eater**. There are good picnic and toilet facilities at both Uriarra Crossing venues. Please bring lunch and water.

Getting there is a bit complicated, following rapid urban development in Molonglo. OLD STREET DIRECTORIES ARE LIKELY TO BE UNHELPFUL! Starting at the intersection of Cotter Road and Streeton Drive, travelling out of Canberra, Cotter Road becomes John Gorton Drive. Follow John Gorton Drive. YOU NOW HAVE TWO POSSIBLE ROUTES.

ROUTE 1. Travelling along John Gorton Drive you will (again) come to an intersection with Cotter Road. Turn left and follow this for about 15km past Mt Stromlo and the Cotter Reserve to the T-intersection with Uriarra Road. Turn right and the big dam is on your right.

ROUTE 2. In John Gorton Drive go on until you come to Opperman Avenue. Turn left and follow on straight to the roundabout near Stromlo Forest Park, where you turn right to Uriarra Road. Follow Uriarra Road over the Uriarra Crossing, turn left up the hill until you come to the big dam on your right. It is slightly shorter than ROUTE 1. if coming from Belconnen.

Bruce Lindenmayer

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.

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.

Saturday 21 January – Forde Ponds

Meet at 8.00am.

Directions: Turn off Horse Park Road into Mulligans Flat Road between Forde and Bonner (ignoring any signs saying Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve). Go into the actual, new Mulligans Flat Road). Turn right into Handbury Way. Immediately to your right is the smallish Linear Park. We will meet there. Park in Foy St or Volpato St.

John Harris

Sunday 29 January – Murrumbidgee River Walk

Meet at 8am at the Pine Island North car park (turn right at first junction when entering on Pine Island Road and follow to the end). Note that the Pine Island gates are opened at 8am, so you won't be able to arrive earlier by car.

The walk will explore the Murrumbidgee River Corridor between Pine Island and Tuggeranong Creek and will take 2-3 hours. Bring plenty of water, sunscreen and morning tea. If there is a total fire ban declared on the day, the outing will not go ahead. Numbers are not limited so no requirement to register. Contact Matthew Frawley at frawley.matthew@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Sunday 5 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

To celebrate World Wetlands Day (2 February), during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope. Meet at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick. No booking required.

Sue Lashko

Tuesday 7 to Friday 10 February – Shoalhaven Heads

This mid-week trip is designed to give participants the opportunity to visit several birding spots in the Shoalhaven area. Further details will be developed closer to February, depending on bird migration and weather.

Registration is essential at smlashko@gmail.com. The trip will be limited to 14 people and accommodation or camping will be at Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Park, located between the Shoalhaven River and Seven Mile Beach – see <http://www.shoalhaventouristpark.com.au/>. Participants will be asked to book their own accommodation, but any wishing to share cabins will be matched up if possible. Booking is recommended after registering, to ensure the best accommodation.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 12 February – Molonglo Reach boat trip

This outing/cruise will be on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River Reach, where late summer/early autumn is usually the peak time for nesting, with darters as well as three species of cormorant known to breed there. The area also has a variety of water birds, and a range of land birds can be seen on the banks.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. This year we will again be travelling in the electric boat "MV Gull" which can carry around 22 people. The boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas difficult to get to from the land. **The point of departure will again be from Kingston Harbour using the wharf at the end of Giles Street.** There is plenty of all day free weekend parking close by, particularly in

Eastlake Parade. Alternatively participants can park their cars in the SE corner of the Glass Works/Bus Depot Markets car park, which will involve about a 200 m walk.

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com).

Sunday 19 February – Woods Reserve

Meet at 7:30 at the Kambah Shops car park (cnr Marconi and Drakeford). From there we will car pool and head to Woods Reserve in Corin Rd. Numbers will be limited to the first 16. Please bring morning tea and water. A hat, sunblock and sunglasses are also recommended. Interesting bush birds are likely to be seen and heard. David Dedenczuk 0417 222 154

Monday 20 to Fri 24 February – Cape Conran Coastal Park, Victoria – camping

This is a mid-week campout. The Park is an easy (all bitumen) drive of about 350 km from Canberra, via Cooma, Bombala and Cann River. The camp sites are among mahogany gums in banksia woodland with heathland on one side and ocean and beaches on the other. Facilities include flushing toilets, tables, cold showers and bore water on tap. BYO drinking water. Gas cooking is recommended at this time of year. The website: <http://www.conran.net.au/> gives more details of the camping options and facilities.

Numbers are limited to 16 people. Contact Martyn Moffat (mp.moff@bigpond.com) before end of January 2017 to register.

Sunday 26 February – Yerrabi Track

After a successful birding trip in 2016, this walk will be repeated to this lovely spot in 2017. This is a moderate walk of 4 km return (about 2-3 hours). The walk descends from the carpark through peppermint forest to a swamp, and then ascends through mountain gum/snow gum forest to a rocky summit with fantastic views.

The birds we're likely to encounter are the typical montane forest species such as **Superb Lyrebird, Grey Currawong, White-naped, White-eared, Yellow-faced and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Scarlet, Eastern Yellow and Flame Robins, White-throated Treecreeper, Satin Flycatcher, Fan-tailed and Brush Cuckoos, Grey Shrike-thrush and Grey Fantail**. In addition, at this time of year there are often good highland butterflies and wildflowers in the swamp section of the walk, and small reptiles in the peppermint forest section of the walk, so if people are interested we will have time to stop and look at these.

Please note it can be quite windy and exposed at the summit, so please remember to bring wind and rain gear, and the track can be narrow, steep and rocky in parts so wear sturdy footwear. Bring some morning tea and plenty of water.

The carpark for the walk is located 35 kms south of the Namadgi Visitors Centre on the unsealed Boboyan Rd, but we will organise to meet and carpool from Lanyon Marketplace. We will meet at Lanyon Marketplace at 7am, and it will take us approx an hour to drive in convoy to the carpark for the start of the walk on Boboyan Rd.

Please contact me if you wish to attend (chowchilla29@yahoo.com).

Suzi Bond



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

loirevalleytours.naturewalks

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

contact@tourtheloire.com

Woodland surveys report

Part 2 spring survey round – compiled by Jenny Bounds

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds managed to do a delayed survey on 3 November, after the track into the woodland area had dried and vehicle access was possible. Weather conditions were perfect, and although the survey was a few weeks later than usual, there were still early spring conditions on the ground and the bird mix was similar to an early spring survey (except for **Dollarbird** which is not usually recorded in October survey). The highlight was a pair of **Varied Sittellas** building a nest in a dead fork of a large Blakely's Red Gum in the site on the grassland edge. A pair of **Dusky Woodswallows** was also in this area. Also of interest were a **Dollarbird** at site 5 deep in the woodland and also a couple of small flocks of migrating **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** which seemed a bit late. There were the usual spring migrants, **Sacred Kingfisher**, both species of gerygone, **Rufous Whistler**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, and **Tree Martin**, as well as quite a few Little Corellas. **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** were heard briefly. 48 bird species were recorded, a little above average for a spring survey. There were a few absentees, in particular, no White-winged Trillers this season, (most likely due to good conditions further inland, similar to other sites such as Mulligans Flat), and no raptors recorded.

Red Hill Nature Reserve

Harvey Perkins surveyed these sites under perfect conditions, mild and calm, on 24 September. The whole site was quite active, and 37 species were recorded (26 or 70% of them within sites), above the average of 33.9 over 17 surveys. Although larger birds again dominated, especially cockatoos and parrots, and magpies, currawongs and ravens, there was a smattering of smaller bush birds including both pardalotes and three thornbill species, a couple of **Golden Whistlers** and a pair of **Rufous Whistlers**, and a residue of **Grey Fantails**. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were evident with several small groups of 2-6 birds moving through, even before the 7:00 am start. **Olive-backed Orioles** also heralded the spring weather, with 6 recorded (the highest number recorded to date during these surveys), and a **Sacred Kingfisher** was heard over towards the golf course. **Magpie-larks** also topped their recorded numbers with 17, as did **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** with 13 recorded. Only **Crimson Rosellas**, **Eastern Rosellas** and **Noisy Miners** showed any inclination towards nesting. Sadly, White-throated Treecreepers appear to have disappeared from the site – they were regular from the first survey (September 1998) through to autumn 2010, but since then there has only been a single record, on 29 March 2015.



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Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

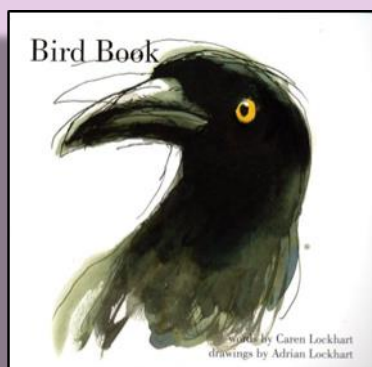
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BOOK OF THE MONTH



Bird Book is a 70 Page softcover book of poems and drawings

by Caren Lockhart and Adrian Lockhart.

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.



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

GREAT CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS

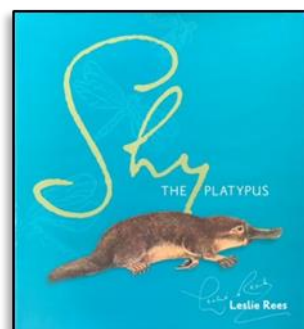
Shy The Platypus

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.

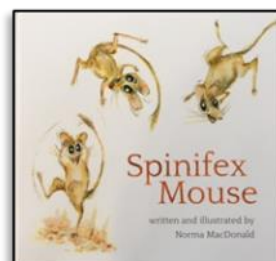


Spinifex Mouse

Norma Macdonald

Spinifex Mouse is the heart warming tale of Cheeky, a spinifex hopping mouse, which lives in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Cheeky is an adventurous little mouse who loves to leap high into the air and practice acrobatic tricks. Every morning, when his family have returned to their burrow to sleep after a night's foraging, Cheeky sneaks out to look for more food and practise his flips. Each day, he ventures a little further from the burrow. One morning, when Cheeky is far from home, he shows off his clever tricks in front of a hungry snake and becomes swept up in a heart-stopping and very risky adventure.

Members' price \$18.



Rare birds: the extraordinary tale of the Bermuda Petrel and the man who brought it back from extinction.

Elizabeth Gehrman

The inspiring story of David Wingate, a living legend among birders, who brought the Bermuda Petrel back from presumed extinction. *Rare Birds* is a tale of obsession, of hope, of fighting for redemption against incredible odds.

Members' price \$23



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

2016-2017 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

N Biginell
A Hastings
C Munera
N Lim

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for February 2017 edition

Wednesday 25 January 2017

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

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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