



Gang-gang

February 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday 10 February 2016

7.30 pm.

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

First up COG President **Alison Russell-French** will repeat the short presentation she gave in November 2015 during the finals of the **Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities National Award for Environmental Education**. This helped COG win this award.

Next will be a short presentation by **Geoffrey Dabb** on "**An Introduction to Werribee**". This talk aims to show why the Western Treatment Plant is one of Australia's famous birdwatching sites. It draws on visits Geoffrey has made there over several years.

The longer presentation will be by **Trevor Murray**, a Ph D student at the ANU Research School of Biology, on "**The alarming flights of the Crested Pigeon**".

Animal alarm signals are often unreliable despite the huge pressure of predation. However, newly discovered acoustic alarms produced by the fleeing of several species of pigeons and doves are suggested to be

(Continued on page 2)

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

The two month period to Australia Day 2016 has been characterised by some very hot weather, and was very dry for the first month. While there has been at least a weekly rain event since Boxing Day, this generally dried out very quickly and did not affect the already well set pattern for the birds of this summer. 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 chat line") and the Eremaea eBird web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. Without this information it would not be possible to put this column together.

During this period there have been some further sightings of unusual birds, with one species, the **White-cheeked Honeyeater**, seen for a few days in mid-December at the Jerrabomberra wetlands, a new one for the ACT bird list. Also very unusual was the **Bar-shouldered Dove** observed in Christine D's Flynn garden, initially seen on the same day as the above, but staying there for over a week. Both species do not currently have an entry for them in the Annual Bird Report (ABR), but for the latter Steve Wilson's book *Birds of the ACT: Two*



Bar-shouldered Dove

Noel Luff

Everyone welcome

February Meeting - *continued*

innately reliable. It is not yet known how these alarm sounds are produced, or if they are signals, let alone whether they are innately reliable. Trevor used the fleeing sounds of the Crested Pigeon to answer these questions. He not only demonstrated that these fleeing sounds are produced non-vocally, but found evidence that they are signals since their feathers appear to have evolved for sound production. Finally he showed that these alarms are reliable, since these pigeons cannot flee to safety without warning their neighbours.

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

Centuries of Change notes a single previous record endorsed by the Rarities Panel of a solitary bird near Mt Clear in southern Namadgi NP in late June 1992. *Eremaea* eBird contains at least a third record in January 2016 at Bibaringa on the Cotter Road, where the related **Peaceful** and **Diamond Doves** are also known to occur, and were observed around the same time.

There have also been an unprecedented number of reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**. I'm aware of at least 14 records, the first from Aranda on 5 December and the last in North Lyneham on 10 January, the only 2016 record so far. All have been from the north side of the ACT, as well as from Bywong, and three of these have been of two birds together around Christmas time. I thought it might be more records than the combined totals previously but the 2013-2014 ABR indicates it was first reported in 1995 and in most years since then, with between 1 and 3 sightings each year, with 7 sightings in 2012 and 6 in 2011. So will it be the next species to increase its numbers significantly and breed in the ACT, similar to what the Eastern Koel has done?

However, the presence of none of these three species could be confidently attributed to the dry inland, with in particular the honeyeater being very much a coastal species, at least in the Eastern States. The cuckoo and the dove are also mainly coastal species though they do range inland a bit, in particular into NSW and Qld for the latter. This is even more the case for the **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, for which there were at least 3 more sightings in December on the north side of Canberra. The only record I'm aware of during the 2 month period of the well-known inland species, the **White-browed Woodswallow**, was of 2 pairs by Michael Lenz at Gundaroo in late December, although he says there was no sign of breeding (except for one time of courtship feeding of one female). There seem to have been no further records of the related **Masked Woodswallow**, or of the **Red-backed Kingfisher** and **Black-eared Cuckoo**.



Spotless Crake

Julie Clark

The excellent breeding season seems to have continued despite the dry hot conditions in the second half of November and in December, as judged from the reports from Campbell Park in January, first from Elizabeth Compston and then from Con Boekel. On 20 January he observed breeding records of over 20 species there, mainly of dependent young, but with **Weebills** still on a nest and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and **Dusky Woodswallows** disputing over the same nest. There have been many other reports and my thanks to all those who have posted these on the chat line, as well as my apologies that I have not been able to include many of them in the write up below, which contains only some highlights of particular note.

- Two records of breeding **Hoary-headed Grebes** for which Bird Info on the COG web site shows surprisingly little breeding on the COG database since about 1997. The first of these was for a nest with three eggs and subsequently 3 dependent young at Casey Pond, and the second of 2 dependent young on a small wetland at Hume. The surprise to me is how this deep open water species has bred on



Hoary-headed Grebe with chick

Julie Clark

small ponds/wetlands, the usual domain of the related **Australasian Grebe** which also built a nest on the Casey Pond;

- A record of the **Spotless Crake** with at least two very young chicks at the Fadden Hills Pond by Sandra Henderson. These were only seen for a very short period and their fate is unknown (there were also dependent young **Purple Swamphens** on the pond). Again the surprise to me is that there are quite a few more records in the COG database for this species than the related **Australian Spotted Crake**, which at least in the 1980s and 1990s was by far the more commonly observed bird;
- Steve Read's record of a pair of **Grey Teal** with small four ducklings at Kelly's Swamp, a species for which there are again surprisingly few records on the COG database since 1998, though wildlife carer Margaret Peachey indicates she has taken a few such ducklings into care recently;
- A record of a juvenile **Brush Cuckoo** at Mulligan's Flat by Julie Clark. This was in the company of a pair of **Leaden Flycatchers**. Though it was not confirmed they were the actual foster parents HANZAB notes the latter species is one of the main hosts in southern Australia, after the **Grey Fantail**. This species usually breeds in the higher country but readers may recall the number of sightings of adults here in October/November, which continued for the remainder of the latter month with then further sightings at Campbell Park and East Mount Ainslie in December;
- Many reports of dependent young **Superb Parrots** being brought into the suburbs to feed. While this has been observed for the past few years of special interest has been a number of records south of the lake including a rare breeding record at Wanniasa by Sandra Henderson/John Bundock, where up to eight birds have been seen together; Sandra noted that they were now one of the most common birds in her GBS site;
- Several reports of young **Dollarbirds** in peri-urban Canberra including a photo by Ann Eldridge of a very loudly begging one at the nest hollow entrance at the Murrumbidgee golf course. This species usually breeds



Common Bronzewing sitting on the used nest of a Tawny Frogmouth

Matthew Higgins



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Good birding, good food ...

2016 tours

Tasmania birds & mammals

30 January – 6 February 2016
includes Melaleuca flight & pelagic

Alice Springs & the West

MacDonnell Ranges tour
25 April – 2 May 2016

Top End tour

22 May – 6 June 2016
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine &
Kununurra. Mitchell Plateau optional

Queensland's Gulf Country tour

22 June – 9 July 2016
Two days added for Rusty Grasswren

Iron Range & Atherton

Tablelands tour
12 – 25 July 2016 (Tablelands optional)

New Caledonia birding tour

14-21 August 2016

Strzelecki Track Outback tour

2 – 21 September 2016
37th tour! Covering 4 states &
5 species of grasswren

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2016

15 & 16 October 2016
12 & 13 November 2016
26 & 27 November 2016

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com



Dollarbird

Ann Eldridge

outside the suburbs but family parties move into them for about a month from the last week of January, so keep an eye/ear out for them;

- Other interesting breeding records include further reports for the **Sacred Kingfisher** (including an observer being swooped by an adult after watching it feeding a young bird); several more nests of the **Satin Bowerbird**, and a **Common Bronzewing** sitting on the used nest of a Tawny Frogmouth;

- Last, but certainly not least, is the number of **Eastern Koel** fledglings already reported from as early as 14 December, much earlier than last year, and probably related to them having arrived about a fortnight earlier this year. This includes a chick photographed in a **Red Wattlebird's** nest by Nathanael Coyne in Macquarie, only the third time this has been observed in Canberra. This fledged and by the end of first week in January Virginia Abernathy informs me that up to 12 different fledglings had been observed, compared with only 1 by then in the 2014-2015 breeding season;

Interestingly it was then over another fortnight before the next one was reported in Philip Veerman's garden in Kambah on 24 January. A number of chat line reports noted an increase in adult Koel activity in their local area just before then. In my experience this can be a sign of fledglings in the area, so I kept a close watch after up to five birds suddenly became very conspicuous locally a week ago. This was rewarded just as this column was being completed, with a fledgling found in exactly the same spot to where one was discovered last year.

So please keep an eye/ear out, as I'm expecting the next wave of them. We're more than half way already to last year's total of over 25 reported fledglings, which I am certain was a severe underestimate. So if you hear any strange begging noises in your local area with Red Wattlebirds in attendance please pay special attention and report any breeding activity (young in nests even better) to the COG chat line and to Virginia on Virginia.abernathy@anu.edu.au.

Please also keep an eye out for the presence of those species such as the **White-winged Triller** and the **Rufous Songlark** which depart Canberra soon after completing their breeding. The former seems to have had a good breeding season, but I can find only the single carrying food record for the latter. The majority of these two species will have departed by the end of January, though both were still being reported up to the time this column went to the editors. Please keep an eye out as well for any lingering **Horsfield's Bushlark** or **Brown Songlark**. The former may have already left, the last record on Eremaea eBird being at Parkwood on 9 January, but the latter was still present at the Jerrabomberra wetlands on 24 January. There are very few breeding records for either species in the ACT, with the 2013-2014 ABR noting 3 and 4, respectively, in over the past 30 years.

The last **Brush Cuckoo** is usually also reported in February but also keep an eye out for the **White-throated Needletail** and the related **Fork-tailed Swift** which are mostly seen from January to March on their return migration. There have been reports of small numbers of both over the past two months, and one of a much larger flock of 100+ over Weston by Alison Mackerras while a storm front was moving through.

February is the last month before the significant movement begins - So please keep up the reports for the last records of the spring/summer migrants that leave the COG Aol early, and in particular for further breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Terry Mun-

Eastern Koel

Gang-gang project seeking further data required on hollow inspecting and breeding success

Note: this survey will finish at the end of February 2016

An analysis of the survey has provided 150 records from 50 observers of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** hollow inspecting. From these sites only one appears to have produced young although it is unknown how frequently any of the sites were revisited. To obtain further information on the breeding of Gang-gangs within the COG Area of Interest we would like to obtain further details on hollow inspecting during this coming breeding season.

For any sightings of Gang-gangs showing interest in potential nest hollow sites or any other indications of breeding, could you please fill in an online form to be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/incidental-record-form/> and provide information on the location, number of birds and their activity, then if possible regularly return to the site and record any further activity. If there is no activity please still fill in the form and enter a zero for numbers with the words 'This is a zero Gang-gang report' in the notes section.



The project team will also be contacting survey participants who submitted observations about nesting and breeding behaviour to invite them to record observations over this breeding season.

For any enquiries please email ggquery@canberrabirds.org.au. If unable to access the online site then please just send an email to the above address with the details. Note that all locations will remain confidential. Of interest, one site has already been reported for August.

Chris Davey and Kathy Eyles (The GG team)

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2015

Over 300 datasheets were completed as part of COG's 11th bird blitz on the weekend of 24-25 October 2015. A great effort, and many thanks to all participants. Highlights included a blitz "first" of a **Powerful Owl**, though we suspect it may have been present for at least the previous blitz, undetected. A full report on the blitz should appear in the June 2016 issue of Canberra Bird Notes.

At the December COG meeting, prizes were awarded in various categories. "Best bird" lucky draw, a bottle of wine kindly donated by Stuart Harris, went to John Bissett for his **Spotted Quail-thrush** on Smokers Trail. Best breeding record lucky draw, another bottle from Stuart, went to Kevin Windle for the **Peregrine Falcons** at Red Rocks Gorge – again! The prize for recording a threatened species, Penny Olsen's book on Bill Cooper, the designer of COG's Gang-gang logo, went to Alastair Smith. The "special effort" prize, for birding behind locked gates or submitting more than 10 datasheets, was a bottle of wine donated by Alison Russell-French and was drawn and won by Jenny Bounds, who had brought the bottle along for Alison. The "participated in every blitz" prize, wine donated by Shirley Kral, went to Tony Willis. And finally, David Hollands' Owl book was awarded to Terry Munro, the finder of "Powl", while Powl's faithful ongoing recorder Terry Bird was awarded a guided visit to the Walcott garden. All blitz participants present on the night were entitled to select a book or cards from amongst those donated by Sandra Henderson, Susan Robertson, Alison Mackerras, Sue Robertson, Steve Stephinson, Julie McGuinness, Terry Bell and others.

Blitz 12 will be held on 29-30 October 2016. Pencil that weekend in your diaries NOW and think about nominating your preferred survey sites asap to blitz@canberrabirds.org.au or directly to me.

Barbara Allan, blitz organiser.

Field Trip Reports

28 November 2015 - Gungahlin Cemetery and Crematorium

Nine members met at 8 am in the carpark at the Crematorium in Gungahlin, where the parking is easier, then walked over to the cemetery. We had a leisurely stroll in an anti-clockwise direction around the cemetery, starting at the dam. **Dusky Woodswallows** flitted about overhead and briefly settled in the trees. There were juveniles amongst them, as evidenced by their mottled plumage. **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Red-rumped Parrots** were prolific and demanded a lot of attention. On the edge alongside Hoskins St, Mitchell, we were elated to have good views of a **Crested Shrike-tit**. Nearby there were also several **Superb Fairy-wrens**, which included five blue males, in an area no more than 25 square metres. In the north-east corner we saw three **Tawny Frogmouth**, including one very cute fluffy youngster. The only raptors seen were two **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, way up high.

We crossed back over to the crematorium and took a short break for morning tea, then did a short loop around the very peaceful and attractive grounds, with little nooks and crannies at every turn. **Sacred Kingfisher** were heard nearby, whilst we saw **Dollarbird** and **Rufous Songlark** amongst other things.

Breeding records included **Common Starling** carrying food, **Galah** and **Common Myna** entering hollows, **Magpie Lark** and **Red Wattlebird** with dependent young, **Crested Pigeon**, **Welcome Swallow** visiting nests with young, **Red-browed Finch** carrying nesting material and **Pied Currawong** and **White-faced Heron** on nest. The latter was a surprise to some of us, who had never seen a **White-faced Heron** on a nest.

A total of 47 species was observed. Thank you to Bill Graham and Angela for arranging and leading this outing.

Lia Battisson

Sunday 13 December – Tharwa Sandwash

On a fine summer's morning a group of 14 keen-eyed COG members and guests gathered at the Sandwash. There was considerable bird activity among the tall Ribbon Gums at the carpark – including recently fledged **Tawny Frogmouths** and a **Willie Wagtail** on nest. After enjoying this display for some minutes, the party slowly made their way southwards along the western bank of the steadily flowing Murrumbidgee. Among the Acacias and Kunzeas, there were numerous small birds to be seen including **Brown Thornbills**. The real highlights were the periodic views towards the Murrumbidgee and the far banks, where some notable birds were to be seen, including the **Nankeen Night-heron** and **Rainbow Bee-eaters**. The group proceeded for approximately a kilometre along the bank until the track terminated among the rocky ramparts not far from the Gigerline Gorge. We then returned to the carpark in increasingly warm and sunny conditions, having seen some 46 species. The full list of species seen is published at Eremaea.ebird.

David Dedenczuk

Wednesday 16 December – London Bridge

Twenty-five members and guests gathered on a fine and mild morning, and indeed so it continued throughout the event.

The dominant bird at the start was **Noisy Miner**, although possibly the **Australian Hobby** seen by some late arrivals calmed them down a bit.

As we progressed along the track towards the Homestead several small flocks of rosellas were noted and once out of the trees the calls of smaller passerines became evident. A **Fuscous Honeyeater** was recorded and **White-winged Trillers**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, and **Rufous Whistlers** were clearly heard. **Dusky Woodswallows** were reasonably numerous hawking off dead branches and a flock of **Tree Martins** was seen on the skyline. A small number of **Welcome Swallows** were hawking above the grass (far more were hanging out at the Homestead).

On arrival at the Homestead the first group of **Southern Whiteface** (including a dependent young) was seen. It was difficult to count numbers as there appeared to be several groups and we eventually agreed that 8 birds was a conservative count. A **Brown Treecreeper** was both heard and seen in a large tree behind the homestead. Two 'brown' **Flame Robins** and a **Speckled Warbler** were seen in this area.

We then followed a mown trail beside the River, passing through the edge of the bush. A number of bush birds were added to the list, including **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and at least 2 more **Brown Treecreepers**. Two **Nankeen Kestrels** were hunting in the grass around the Bridge and 4 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** soared overhead.

We totalled 51 species for the walk.

Martin Butterfield

Wednesday 20 January - Mulligan's Flat and Forde Pond

Thirty-nine members and guests gathered in Forde on a morning where the overcast was keeping the temperature under control.

The group strung out along the main track up the hill to the gate into the Sanctuary. Apart from the tuneless noises of **Noisy Miners** the main excitement was an immature **Grey Butcherbird** displaying independence by battering a moth against a rock. We followed the western boundary of the Sanctuary with most members achieving sightings of a male **White-winged Triller** and some lucky folk getting definite views of a **Jacky Winter**. Two **Dollarbirds** visited one another in a dead tree before flying off into the heart of the Reserve.

The Big Dam still has a good level of water and waterbirds in good diversity albeit generally low numbers. Not that one should sneer at 11 **Freckled Duck**! Other less common species of duck were 12 **Pink-eared Duck** and 2 **Australasian Shovelers** with **Hardhead** and **Grey Teal** adding to the mix. Despite determined peering, no **Pacific Black Ducks** or **Australian Wood Ducks** were evident. A **White-faced Heron** flew over and 6 **Australian White Ibis** and one **Royal Spoonbill** were seen on the far side of the dam. Shorebirds were represented by 4 **Masked Lapwing**, 1 **Black-fronted Dotterel** and a flushed **Latham's Snipe**.

We travelled back via a slightly different route to the gate out of the Sanctuary. Several small flocks of **Eastern Rosellas** were seen, but to my surprise I didn't note down any **Crimson Rosellas**. Arriving back at the small dams close to the shearing shed a nice mixed flock of the usual thornbills was noted. Some entertainment was gained by counting and recounting and recounting a flock of **White-winged Choughs**: the eventual total was 22 birds in three groups of 9, 7 and 6 birds.

Arriving back at the car park most members headed home, but about 9 of us dropped down to the Mulligan's Flat Rd ponds to see if we could hunt up some crakes or rails. The best we managed in that regard was a family of **Eurasian Coots** with feeding observed giving a breeding record. It was delightful to see **Fairy Martins** flying into a group of nests in an underpass on Mulligan's Flat Road. It was now getting rather hot!

We totalled up 61 species, of which 5 were added on the ponds segment, meaning that the 'official' part of the walk scored a very healthy 56 species.

Martin Butterfield



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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barbdebruine@hotmail.com

NORFOLK ISLAND EXCURSION 2015

A group of 32 COG members and partners participated in a field excursion to Norfolk Island from 30 November to 7 December 2015. This visit was the first official visit by a COG group since December 1978 when, as a Branch of the RAOU (now Birdlife Australia), our group hosted the annual RAOU Congress and field outing on Norfolk Island. That trip was attended by 69 birders and partners from across Australia and New Zealand and resulted in the publication of an atlas of birds of the island (written by the then President of COG, Dick Schodde, and others in 1983). Five participants in the 1978 atlas survey were present in 2015 (Peter Fullagar, Peter Davidson, Alistair Drake, Neil Hermes and, from Norfolk, Beryl Evans (Photo 1).



Photo 1

Our 2015 excursion to Norfolk Island was a great opportunity for COG members to enjoy the great birding on Norfolk especially the tame bush endemics and many easy to see seabirds. Opportunities were also taken by some to visit the historic penal period buildings, explore the coral reef and photograph and record butterflies.

In the spirit of the atlas work completed in 1977, it was decided that COG would do some survey work while such a large team of skilled and interested volunteers were on the island. Two important surveys, one on **Tasman Parakeet (or Norfolk Island Green Parrot)** and one on Phillip Island,



Photo 2



Photo 3

were done and coordinated by Chris Davey with assistance from Peter Fullagar and Neil Hermes. These projects are reported on separately below.

Most birding was done by COG members independently since we all had access to rental cars but there were also a number of organised tours including pelagic trips (Photos 2 and 3) and a trek on Phillip Island. Features for many were the **Grey Ternlets**, **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** and plentiful **Tasman Masked Booby**. Particular thanks go to our experienced boatmen including Darren Bates who safely negotiated the often dangerous Norfolk waters.

Local naturalist and bird expert Margaret Christian (author of "*Norfolk Island: the Birds*") lead many excursions on the island, particularly in the Norfolk Island National Park, and also took the entire group to her cliff top home. Here she has created a safe oasis, particularly secure from cats and human interference, for seabirds to return to nest on the main island. COG members were able to appreciate her hard work and see, close-up, **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** and **Black-winged Petrels**. She is a bird tour guide and operates as GreenEyes Bird Tours.

Peter Davidson, a founding member of COG, and current Norfolk resident, lead some of the group on a tour of Hundred Acres Reserve and gave great insights into the history and current issues concerning land management in public reserves on Norfolk.

The group was very fortunate to be hosted to a reception at Government House by the Administrator Gary Hargrave.

We were appreciative of the support of the National Parks staff particularly Craig Doolan who is an active birder, and the rest of his staff. They assisted with surveys and access to Phillip Island.

Norfolk Island Travel Centre provided a wonderful service organising the logistics with special thanks to Rebecca Christian and her team, particularly Joyce Judd. I recommend them for anyone considering a visit to the island.



Incidentally, there have been recent discussions on the COG chatline of the value of bird tourism. I understand that not all of the desire to go to Norfolk Island on this trip by all participants was to see birds but it was the most significant motivation that made the trip happen. The amount paid by participants to the Norfolk Island agent for this trip was about \$42,000. Of this, the money for cars, accommodation and tours was all paid directly into the Norfolk Island economy. This does not include amounts paid by the group on food and incidentals on the island and travel to Sydney etc. Allowing for all these amounts, the total spent by the group would have been close to \$60,000. It would be interesting to know how much members of COG spend on bird touring locally, in Australia and overseas in a typical year.

The trip finished with a very enjoyable dinner at the Paradise Hotel where a photo was taken of the whole group (Photo 4).

Neil Hermes

The Mt. Pitt Green Parrot survey required an early morning start. Initially there was much confusion over the time for it had recently been determined by some greater power that Norfolk Island should abide by Sydney time. Sunrise was just before 5:00am, much too early for most COG participants. After an initial evening meeting within the reserve and with the help of parrots flying overhead we all became familiar with the calls of the Green Parrot. Starting at 6:00am, for a couple of hours over three mornings various teams of two observers recorded the locations of Green Parrots seen or heard along the tracks in and around the reserve. The largest number recorded was 33 with an additional 27 birds recorded outside the reserve on 7 December. Further analysis will be required to assess the likely number of Green Parrot in and around Mt. Pitt. Overall 19 COG members were involved at one time or another with this survey.

The Phillip Island survey required two boat trips to ferry the 10 COG members and three Parks and Wildlife personnel over to the island, having been assured that after a relatively easy wet landing and climb to the plateau, the going would be flat and easy with visibility to at least 100m from all designated sites except one. A cunning plot was therefore developed with the island divided into four sectors. Each sector was surveyed by a team of three observers: a team leader, an observer who had been to the island previously and one other. Within each sector 12 survey sites had been selected from aerial photos to represent the different vegetation types and each site was surveyed by each team member in

turn. Due to the lack of GPS units it was necessary that team members were visible to each other at all times.

The survey started off on the wrong foot when our intrepid outing's leader had to pull out at the last minute due to illness. On reaching the plateau it was realised that the climb to the top had not been relatively easy, the plateau was not flat and at virtually all sites observers were not visible to each other. Six sites could not be visited because they were perched precariously on or below cliff edges but, thanks to the determination of the four teams, the remaining 42 sites were surveyed somewhere within their intended positions. Most teams took about 5 hours to cover their 12 sites. It was agreed that the survey was much harder to conduct than expected and went beyond the call of duty but the effort was well worthwhile and provided a wonderful opportunity to explore such a unique island.

The island had been surveyed for birds in 1978 and again in 2005. Not all of the island had been covered and species had been recorded as present/absent in 500 x 500m grid squares only. The COG survey was the first to cover all of the accessible parts of the island with the protocol designed to take into account the different vegetation types with replicated plot counts to provide distribution and abundance. The following birds were recorded during the survey: **Red-tailed Tropicbird, Rock Dove, Little Shearwater** (heard calling from burrow), **Kermadec Petrel, Black-winged Petrel, Tasman Masked Booby, White-faced Heron, Nankeen Kestrel, Purple Swamphen, Common Noddy, Black Noddy, White Tern, Grey Ternlet, Sooty Tern, Sacred Kingfisher, Silveryeye, Welcome Swallow, Common Blackbird, Common Starling, House Sparrow and Common Greenfinch.**

Reports will be prepared on the Green Parrot and the Phillip Island surveys. Many thanks to the 10 COG members who participated in the Phillip Island survey and to those on the island who made it happen.

Chris Davey

My Patch

My second attempt at retirement, in November 2015, has given me time for a daily walk of what started out as about an hour and, as Aranda Bushland is within 10 minutes' walk of my door, it has become my destination of choice. Then, participation in Jack Holland's excellent nest workshop at Campbell Park that same month inspired me to combine my daily exercise with observation of what birds were breeding in the western third of Aranda Bushland. Little did I realise that before long I would be leaving home after breakfast and not returning until lunchtime!

The upper part of Aranda Bushland Nature Reserve consists of a stringybark-dominated ridge with not much understorey and is therefore not very "birdy" but the lower section south of the Powerline Track has a greater mix of eucalypts and more understorey as well as a verdant flat area in the southwest corner. This was the hotbed of breeding activity. Throughout my walking route, since mid-November, I have recorded 26 species of birds showing some evidence of breeding. Clearly that could result in a very long article, so for Part 1, I will focus on **Leaden Flycatchers**.

It was very easy to find the first nests as **Leaden Flycatchers** make no attempt to hide their presence during the nest-building phase. They call constantly as they dash back and forth gathering cobwebs to construct their little cup nest. As is the norm, the three nests I observed were each built on a branch which had another branch directly and closely above it (Fig 1), presumably to make the nest invisible to predators looking from above and perhaps to give some protection



Fig 1. Typical nest site for the Leaden Flycatcher *Julian Robinson*

from rain. As well, for all three nests there was a broken twig protruding from the nest branch and this formed part of the foundation of the nest. It is a very slow process over about two weeks as the nest grows from a flat layer of cobwebs that are extended from one side of the branch, across the top and down the other side (Fig 2) to anchor the construction. The cup slowly grows and as it gets taller, the



Fig 2. Leaden Flycatcher on nest.

Sue Lashko

birds take turns sitting inside and wriggling around to get the perfect shape. Tiny twigs, lichen, bark and leaves are woven in with the cobwebs to add strength to the nest. Even when I thought each of the nests was complete, there would be several more days of adding finishing touches, a twig here, a cobweb there and a bit more sitting and wriggling.

Finally, on 22 November egg-laying occurred for two nests (Nest 1 and 2), with the third nest (Nest 3) on 21 December. Only one nest (Nest 3) was low enough for me to see the 3 eggs but the other two hatched 3 (Nest 1) and 2 (Nest 2) chicks so that may or may not have been the clutch size. Once the eggs are laid, the parents take turns sitting and nothing shifts them except, on one occasion only, a **Pied Currawong** that came too close. Two of the three nests (Nests 1 and 3) were built within 2 metres of a fire trail with a constant stream of runners, cyclists and walkers, many with dogs (the good folk of Aranda largely obey the dogs on leash rule). This did not disturb the sitting parents at all. Interestingly, 5 nests of 3 different species were over or within 2 metres of fire trails within the bushland or the adjacent cycle path along Bindubi Street. One suggestion as to why this is so is that the constant human traffic provided protection to the nesting birds as the passersby disturb the bird species that are likely to predate nests.

Nests 1 and 2 hatched on 11 and 12 December, with 3 and 2 chicks respectively. December 12 was only 26°C but as Nest 2 was in full sun when I visited in the afternoon, the parents took turns sitting either on the chicks or on the edge of the nest with one wing angled up to give shade. This latter behaviour was also observed on 19 December when it was 36°C. The parents were kept busy feeding the growing chicks until the chicks didn't all fit in the nest anymore and for the last 3 days before fledging, the larger chicks were on the edge of the nest or out on the branch (Fig 3). Each clutch had one slightly smaller and less adventurous chick.



Fig 3. Leaden Flycatcher chicks ready to fledge *Sue Lashko*

The three chicks from Nest 1 fledged on 22 December and over the next 6 days they were observed being fed within about 50 metres of the nest and were gradually becoming more accomplished flyers. This has been an exceptional season for butterflies, particularly Common Brown, as well as small grasshoppers, so the parents have only had to fly very short distances to catch food for their offspring. Unfortunately, by New Year's Day, only two chicks could be found and as I write (15 January) these chicks are doing well, still being fed but also catching their own food (Fig 5). Presumably the other chick was predated by the resident **Pied** or **Grey Currawongs**, **Grey Butcherbird** or **Brown Goshawk**.



Fig 5. Leaden Flycatcher 10 days old *Sue Lashko*

The Nest 2 chicks also fledged on 22 December but proved to be much less adventurous than the nest 1 chicks, perhaps because there is safety in numbers (Fig 4). After 4 days, only one chick could be found and by New Year's Day, that chick too was nowhere to be seen.

Nest 3 was built 15 metres from Nest 1 on the opposite side of the fire trail. This led to some spectacular aerial disputes between the two males who would at times confront each other in hummingbird style hovering with bodies held vertically as they went chest-to-chest, all the while calling loudly. The 3 eggs were laid about 21 December and hatched on 8 January. By 13 January, it was possible to see one tiny beak but there may have been more chicks. By the following day, the nest was empty, perhaps predated by the aforementioned species or the local **White-winged Chough** extended family of 15.



Fig 4. Newly fledged chicks *Sue Lashko*

So, what have I learnt about Leaden Flycatcher breeding: nest building takes at least a fortnight, eggs hatch after 18 or 19 days, chicks fledge in 10 to 11 days and, of 8 eggs laid in three nests, only two chicks currently survive. It was a lot of hard work for the two pairs with nothing to show for it.

Sue Lashko

COG Trips

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

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

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LATEST UPDATES AND CHANGES TO TRIPS are notified on the trips page of the COG website:

canberrabirds.org.au/
then select 'Our Activities' and 'Field Trips'.

and on the COG chat-line at:

bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2015-08/

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

Future Field Trips

Sunday 14 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 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 AH or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com). At the cut-off for the February Gang-gang the boat was over half full, so please make contact early if you want to ensure your place.

Jack Holland

Sunday 28 February - Yerrabi Track to Boboyan Trig in southern Namadgi

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

Sunday 6 March – Crace Wetlands

Meet at 9.00am near the children's playground on Narden Street Crace - parking is available on Narden Street. Likely species include the usual common water birds, plus **Grey Teal** and **Hardhead**, grebes, **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **Little Grassbirds**, **Australian Reed-Warblers**, and possibly **Golden-headed Cisticola**. There are a few coffee shops close by which people may want to go to afterwards.

Fleur Leary

Tuesday 8-Friday 11 March – Wonga at Bawley Point

We have again obtained special permission to bring a group of about 15 people to this delightful bush/coastal location of 50 acres with abundant bird life, previously visited by COG in August 2015. The two comfortable, well-equipped cottages contain three bedrooms with double beds, plus additional singles and trundles with a possible maximum capacity of 10 persons. For COG, approval has been granted for limited camping and, for the sake of convenience and avoidance of congestion, we shall provide our own long-drop toilet facility. Some of the Illawarra region birds we expect to see are **Scarlet** and **Lewin's Honeyeater**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Bassian Thrush** and of course **Hooded Plover**. As the accommodation arrangements are flexible, subject to personal preferences of participants, it is recommended that you secure places early to avoid disappointment. Further enquiries to the leader at terrybellbird@gmail.com or 61619093 or mobile 0427292298.

Terry Bell

Sunday 13 March – Mulligans Flat North

Meet Bill Graham (m. 0466 874 723) at North Mulligans carpark at 0800h. Turn off Horse Park Drive at Mulligans Flat Rd. and go 2km north to the carpark. Allow 3 hours for the boundary track walk of about 5km. There is a steep section so bring sturdy walking boots, water and morning tea. There are great views north into New South Wales and south over the city. This is dry woodland, mainly Red Stringybark, with 106 species reported. Highlights include **Brown Goshawk**, **Little Eagle**, **Diamond Firetail** and **Speckled Warbler**.

Bill Graham

Sunday 20 March – Eden pelagic

In 2016 COG will run its usual September pelagics, and is also running a single March pelagic. The outing will leave from Eden Harbour at 7am, and return mid-afternoon. The boat can accommodate 12 people, and the cost per person per trip will be \$100.

Organising travel and accommodation will be each individual's responsibility but there may be opportunities for car-pooling and an informal get-together for dinner/drinks in Eden on the Saturday evening.

Bookings will be confirmed only when full payment is received. Payment must be made by February 15. These trips need to be fully subscribed to ensure COG does not make a loss, and as is the case with all paid trips, preference is given to COG members. Once you've booked and paid, no refunds can be given unless a replacement can be found. No places will be made available to non-members unless the trips are not fully subscribed by COG members by mid-February.

As with all boating activities the trip will be weather dependent and rough seas could lead to the cancellation or postponement of the trip.

Please book with Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com). Payment by direct deposit to COG's bank account is preferred – details will be sent to those who express interest. These trips often fill up fast, so if interested please book early.

Sandra Henderson

Easter Saturday 26 March – Narrabundah Hill

Those members who will be staying at home this Easter and/or will have visiting birder friends are welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. This is a repeat of the April 2015 walk but about a week earlier. Hopefully it will be third time lucky and this time we'll be able to see the honeyeaters migrating, with the northern fence line one of the few currently known local migration routes. We will walk along this boundary as well as along most of the western border and

either return by the same or a different path, looking for other autumn birds such as the **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as gerygones.

Meet Jack Holland (62887840 or jandaholland@bigpond.com) at 8:30 am at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. **Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care.**

There is no need to book but an indication of your intentions would be appreciated to get a rough idea of numbers. Please bring your morning tea to have on the track.

Jack Holland

Friday 25 to Monday 28 March – Easter campout at Willandra NP

*I've shore at Burrabogie, and I've shore at Toganmain,
I've shore at Big Willandra and upon the old Coleraine...*

Like 'Flash Jack from Gundagai' we are about to explore Big Willandra Station! While this trip focuses on birdwatching in the wetland, woodlands, saltbush plains and open grasslands, Willandra has a rich history with plenty to interest people from the early wool industry and station life in the early 1900s.

There is a campground as well as accommodation in the shearers' quarters and Willandra cottage. The campground doesn't take bookings. If you want accommodation, make your own bookings through the Griffith National Parks office on (02) 6966 8100.

Possible highlights include: **Inland Dotterel, Banded Lapwing, Ground Cuckooshrike, Black Falcon and Barn Owl.**

Note: The road into Willandra can quickly become impassable during wet weather. If they get rain before the trip there is a chance we will need to relocate or cancel.

Shops and service stations may well be closed on Good Friday and fruit and vegetables can't be carried from Canberra into the fruit-fly restriction zone. Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie on 6241 7639 or email walter.goldie@gmail.com. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed information will be provided to participants.

Sunday 10 April – K2C Surveys

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin and Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws by **Wednesday 6 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or ph.0408 210736.

Nature Lodge Optics

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

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

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

Major brands such as Steiner, Zeiss,



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

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

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

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

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

**We welcome customers new and old to call us on
02 4441 7770**

Woodland Surveys

spring/early summer survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 29 November in fine and mild conditions. Emily from the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust came along for some experience in bird surveys. The total species count was 69, only one less than the September survey, on the high end of usual seasonal counts. Small bird activity (thornbills, **Weebills**) was very quiet at some sites, and only one raptor was seen, a **Brown Goshawk** near the large dam. The large dam was again the star with 32 species, large numbers of **Hardhead** and **Grey Teal**, 5 **Freckled Ducks** (species on all surveys this year), 2 species of **Dotterells** (8 **Red-kneed**), **Latham's Snipe**, **Hoary-headed Grebes**, a few **Pink-eared Ducks**, 3 **Great Egrets**, 2 species of cormorants, 2 species of ibis, herons and **Little Ravens**, to name a few. Away from the large dam, highlights were: a **Brush Cuckoo** at the northern end of the reserve), **Common Bronzewing** and **Dusky Woodswallows** in the western ridge area, **Dollarbirds**, **Varied Sittellas**, **Scarlet Robins**, a **Red-capped Robin** and quite a few **Olive-backed Orioles** (one at a nest). **Bush Stone-curlews** were heard on one of the circuits. A lowlight was a **Spotted Dove** around the Woolshed area, a spot they have been reported from a number of times.

Goorooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the final survey for the year on 6 December in good conditions, although it was getting hot by the end of the survey. Some sites were very quiet but they still totalled 51 species for the morning, with 44 being recorded during 10 minutes counts. The reserve was looking pretty dry and the wildflowers that were a feature of the spring survey were mostly finished. The formerly productive site 3 (nearest the Horse Park Drive carpark) again turned up very few small birds; there have always been **Noisy Miners** in this area but perhaps they have increased to the point where they are starting to exclude some other species.

The highlight was a **Pied Butcherbird** heard. Other sightings of interest included having 4 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** visible at once, presumably the resident pair with this season's young, a couple of **Nankeen Kestrels**, a **Common Bronzewing**, **Mistletoebirds** at several sites, and **Shining** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos**, and **Pallid Cuckoo**. Other summer migrants recorded included **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Whistler**, both gerygones, **Tree Martins** and **Olive-backed Oriole**. Amongst the honeyeaters were **Eastern**

Spinebill, **Brown-headed** (at several sites), and **White-plumed Honeyeater**. Breeding was recorded for **Noisy Friarbird** (active nest), **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** (carrying food) and dependent young **Magpies** and **Australian Ravens**. Eight species of butterfly were noted, including hundreds of **Common Browns**, as well as **Two-spotted Line-blue**, **Amethyst** and **Stencilled Hairstreaks**, and a **Spotted Jezebel**.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie completed the surveys over a couple of warm sunny days in early December, recording 30 species overall. Relatively few small birds were seen, but there were good numbers of parrots. Highlights included 1 **Superb Parrot** seen in two sites (the same bird) and feeding on **Yellow Box** flowers along with both species of **Rosella**. A recently fledged **Mistletoebird** was seen hiding in an **Exocarpus**, constantly begging. **Leaden Flycatcher** was heard and 3 **Speckled Warblers** found at one site. A **Kookaburra** in a nest hollow was of interest, with another seen carrying food not far away. There were lots of **Noisy Friarbirds** just outside of a survey area, hanging round **Mistletoe** that only seemed to have buds on it (no actual flowers) and in the **Exocarpus** where they seemed to be feeding on berries. Lots of forbs were flowering, with good numbers of **Common Brown** butterflies. Disappointingly a **Rock Dove** (pure white) was recorded at one of the sites, which is probably a first for these sites.

Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan reported a wonderful morning's birding on Monday 30 November, in great weather conditions, with the range looking lush and wildflowers everywhere. Overall, 33 species were recorded on sites, and 12 off sites, the latter including **Australian Pipit**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Grey Teal**, **Hardhead**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **White-faced Heron**. There were **Rufous Whistlers** and **White-throated Gerygones** at nearly every site, and **Western Gerygones** were seen at 2 sites, one carrying food. **Olive-backed Orioles** were heard near a few of the sites. There were only a few honeyeaters about, one **Noisy Friarbird**, a couple of **Red Wattlebirds**, one **White-eared Honeyeater** still hanging around, and some **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, while there seemed to be fewer **Noisy Miners** than usual. A highlight was the sighting of two dark **Wedge-tailed Eagles** soaring just off-site at Mick's Dam near the northern boundary. Other species recorded were **Masked Lapwing**,

Pallid Cuckoo, Common Bronzewing and White-winged Chough. Tree Martins were recorded at the Grenade Range site near the airport, with the usual representation of cockatoos and parrots including **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Galah and Red-rumped Parrots.**

Campbell Park/Mt Ainslie NR

Michael Lenz surveyed on 10 December on a partly overcast, calm morning. The area was in much better condition than at the time of the spring survey, with a notable recovery of many eucalypts and mistletoes, but the spread of weeds continues unabated. Significant number of Grey Kangaroos were present through the area, and at the northern part high numbers of younger grasshopper stages. Fifty-one species were recorded. Most widespread were **Australian Magpie, Noisy Miner, Noisy Friarbird and Crimson Rosella.** The most common species was the **White-winged Chough** with 33 individuals, followed by **Noisy Miner (22), Red Wattlebird (17) and Crimson Rosella and Australian Magpie (14 each).**

Species of interest included 2 **Brown Goshawks, Varied Sittella, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Speckled Warbler** and 1 **Brush Cuckoo**. Many small birds were rather quiet and hence more difficult to detect, if at all. Most migratory species for the area were still present (**Dollarbird, White-winged Triller, Rufous Whistler, White-throated Gerygone, Leaden Flycatcher**). Breeding records were 2 **Laughing Kookaburra very recently fledged, Willie Wagtail** at nest with small young, and **Dusky Woodswallow** with fledglings.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on 2 December, with lots of breeding activity, lots of birds and a rather gruesome death! The highlight of the morning was seeing 6 **Southern Whiteface** which have been uncommon in recent years. In one site a **Whistling Kite** was mobbed by 14 **Rainbow Lorikeets**, as well as **Noisy Miners**, and one each of **Red Wattlebird, Grey Butcherbird and Magpie-lark**, while a **Dollarbird** looked on. The latter were recorded in 3 sites, with a bird carrying food in the front paddock. A pair of **Western Gerygones** were putting the finishing touches to a nest in the front paddock, where an amazing 23 species were recorded in the 10 minute survey, including **White-throated Gerygone, Varied Sittella** and **White-winged Triller.** However, the most dramatic moment was when an adult **Pacific Black Duck** launched itself from a tree, followed a moment later by a single duckling. Unfortunately one of the 3 **Laughing Kookaburras** in a neighbouring tree espied it scuttling through the grass and pounced on it. The sight of the Kookaburra back on its roost with its catch was a very graphic illustration of CF! (see photo) The species count for the morning was a very pleasing 51.

Jerrabomberra West NR

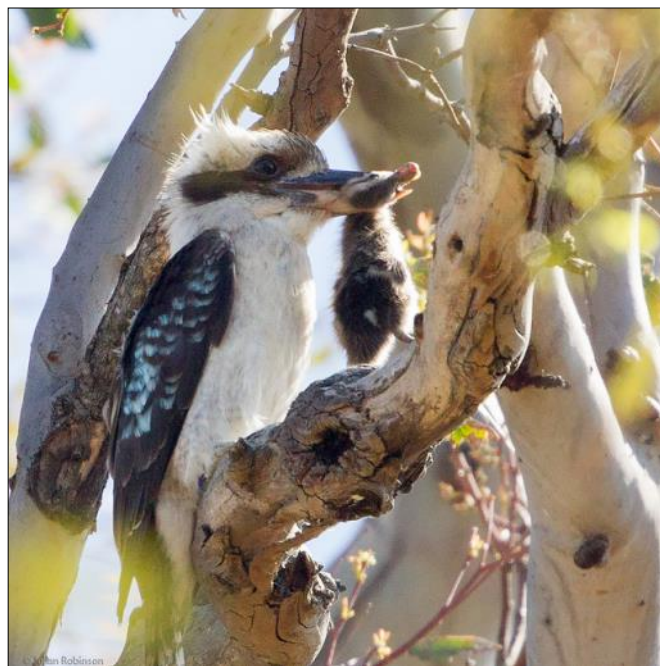
Jenny Bounds started the survey very early on 1 December to avoid expected hot conditions. There was a lot of calling activity, especially **White-winged Trillers. Dusky Woodswallows, Rufous Songlarks and Common Mynas** were recorded in the Blakely's Red Gum woodland. A pair of **Pallid Cuckoos** were calling early, and there were a few **Noisy Friarbirds** around, as well as single sightings of **Varied Sittella, Olive-backed Oriole and Sacred Kingfisher.** The best record was a pair of **Dollarbirds.** Smaller birds included **Superb Fairy-wrens, Buff-rumped Thornbills, Weebills, Grey Fantails** and one **Speckled Warbler.** The total species count of 39 was a little below the December average.

With nearly 10 years of surveys at the site, the following notes compare the first survey in December 2006 with the December 2015 survey (for species of interest, decliners, on threatened lists). This does not include Flame or Scarlet Robins which tend to be autumn/winter records only:

Brown Treecreeper – not recorded Dec 2006 or Dec 2015; became locally extinct 2006/07; recorded a couple of times, mostly on Woden house block, when setting up the surveys;

Crested Shrike-tit – only record is Dec 2006, not recorded since (very rare now around local woodlands);

Dollarbird – Dec 2006 recorded at 3 sites, Dec 2015 near one site; irregular over the years, always Dec records; absent since 2012:



Laughing Kookaburra with Pacific Black Duck duckling

Julian Robinson

White-winged Triller – Dec 2006, similar numbers and sites as Dec 2015; recorded most years spring/summer, absent during the very wet years 09/10

Dusky Woodswallow – Dec 2006 at one site only, Dec 2015 several pairs around site 2 (same area as most of the Trillers) – mostly Blakely's Red gums;

Diamond Firetail – Dec 2006 at one site only, not recorded Dec 2015; occasional records at sites which about private leaseholds;

Speckled Warbler – Dec 2006 not recorded, recorded Dec 2015; resident in low numbers, recorded 80% of surveys

Southern Whiteface - Dec 2006 at site 2 only, not recorded Dec 2015; small numbers recorded 40% of surveys, particularly near site 2; recorded nearly all surveys 2006 to 2010/11, less frequent since; present in higher numbers before 2006;

Varied Sittella – Dec 2006 at 2 sites, Dec 2015 1 site; recorded 30% of surveys, sites vary (it's a highly mobile species).

Symonston: Callum Brae NR/Isaacs Ridge NR

Sandra Henderson surveyed on 27 and 28 November recording 42 species in total, with the usual range of larger birds such as **Little Corella**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Noisy Miner**, and a large number of **Australian White Ibis**. Other sightings included **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Dollarbirds**. The **Nankeen Kestrels** were carrying food. At the sites in Isaacs Ridge NR off Mugga Lane, a **Common Bronzewing** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** were good records, having been recorded on the spring survey as well.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on 4 December, on a warm, sunny and still morning. Breeding records included **Noisy Friarbird** with two dependent young, **Common Starling** carrying food into a hollow, **Australian Magpie** with dependent young, Galahs feeding dependent young and a **Pied Currawong** carrying food. The highlight of the day was seeing a **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** behind the electricity substation in Theodore. A total of 31 species was observed.

Rural leasehold property near Tharwa

David McDonald surveyed on 16 December, in overcast and warming conditions, noting the continuing dieback and many dead trees. Very few small bush birds, such as the foliage gleaners and shrubby dwellers, were around. Species diversity was fair, 30 in all, the most widespread species being **Rufous Whistler**, observed at 6 sites, followed by **Grey Fantail**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Rufous Songlark** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, each observed at 5 sites. Breeding records were obtained for 5 species: nests with young for **Noisy Friarbird** and **Dusky Woodswallow**, dependent young for **Common Starling**

and **Red-rumped Parrot**, and carrying food for **Rufous Songlark**. Most of the migrants were still present, including **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Dollarbird**, **Rufous Songlark**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygone**, **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. Species of special interest included the breeding **Red-rumped Parrots**, decades ago a resident but not observed there for many years until the spring survey this year, and one **Speckled Warbler** observed between sites. Disappointingly, no **Brown Treecreepers** were seen on this survey.

Naas Valley rural leasehold (near Mt Tennant)

Julie McGuiness surveyed on 28 November. 39 species were recorded, in and between the sites. It was reasonably busy in most sites, especially the southernmost two, where **White-winged Chough**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Noisy Friarbird** nests were seen, with a nestling seen in each nest. A dependent young **Kookaburra** was also seen. A good range of migrants were about: **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Rufous Songlark**, both Gerygones, **White-winged Triller** and **Dollarbird** (rarely seen at this location). One **Speckled Warbler** was recorded for the first time in a while, but no robins or finches, and only a few thornbills. A few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were around, but none of the usual small number of resident **White-plumed Honeyeaters**.



Lewin's Rail

Julie Clark

Jerrabomberra Wetlands Bird Surveys

Since July 2012 COG has undertaken bird surveys at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on behalf of the ACT Woodlands and Wetlands Trust. The surveys aim to cover the entire Wetlands from the Molonglo River to the north and across the Jerrabomberra Creek to the south. The survey goes as far as the interface with Lake Burley Griffin to the west and to the end of the Wetlands virtually bordering Fyshwick. In addition, the Fyshwick Sewage Ponds are also covered with special permission being obtained from ICON Water. Observations are sent to ICON Water and to the ecologist responsible for bird issues at the Canberra Airport.

All species are counted and to date 130 species have been recorded. The survey is designed to replicate surveys conducted in the 1980s. This is not entirely possible because in the early days access to some areas was by boat. In addition only waterbirds were surveyed.

The surveys are run four times a year over a morning starting just after sunrise. The recent survey was conducted on 13 January and included COG members, members of the Friends of the Wetlands, the Ranger, Michael Maconachie, and four members of the Green Army (see photo below). In this case the turnout was so good that we split into three teams; one to cover Kelly Swamp, Silt Trap, Billabongs and Sewage Ponds, one to cover Dairy Road, Molonglo River and the paleo-channels to the west, and the third team to cover the grasslands, peninsula and woodlands to the south of Jerrabomberra Creek. Seventy-five species were counted, the highlights being seven **Pied Cormorant**, **Brown Songlark**, **Freckled Duck**, **Baillon's Crake** and 27 **Latham's Snipe** in various parts of the Wetlands. Also of interest were 85 **Pink-eared Ducks** and an additional five **Latham's Snipe** on the Sewage Ponds.

Any COG member interested in participating in the survey please contact me at chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Chris Davey

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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.

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

Bird Calendars for 2016

ON SALE!!



2016 Australia's Colourful Birds

\$11

size: A4, 210mm x 297mm

From parrots to finches, kingfishers to doves, of the most spectacular sights in Australian parks, gardens and bush are the brightly coloured birds. This calendar features some of the most striking.

2016 Australian Parrots and Cockatoos

\$11

size: A4, 210mm x 297mm

Frequently referred to as the Land of Parrots, Australia is famous for its abundant, diverse and splendid parrots and cockatoos. This calendar features a selection of some of the most interesting and beautiful, many of which can be seen in our region.

The Photographer

Martin Willis is a well-published wildlife photographer with a passion for the natural environment. With wife Sam, he is located in Malanda, Far North Queensland, an area known for its natural beauty and diverse fauna and flora.

Publications for sale

COG provides a range of birdwatching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices (around 10-30% off RRP).

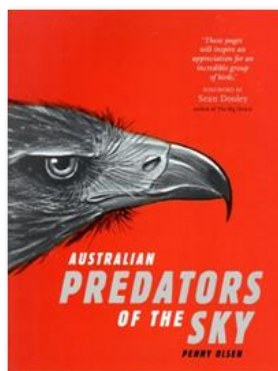
Below are highlighted a sample of popular publications available from the sales desk at COG meetings. We get new books in all the time and sometimes popular books sell out, but they can easily be re-ordered. If you are looking for a particular book, talk to the sales desk team at the meeting, as they can look at ordering it for you or contact Kathy on

sales@canberrabirds.org.au

NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

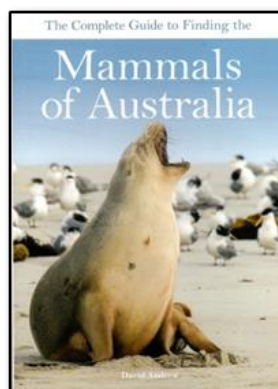
Australian Predators of the Sky

Penny Olsen



This new book from Olsen comprises over 200 striking paintings, lithographs and engravings of all 34 Australian species—25 diurnal birds of prey and nine owls. For each species, a distribution map is provided, as well as the origins of its scientific name. Several full-colour illustrations of the species by various artists are accompanied by intriguing notes about the bird.

Member's price \$28

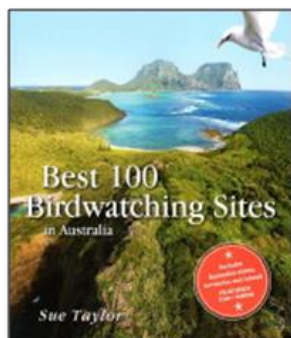


Finding mammals in Australia

David Andrew

For the first time ever, *The Complete Guide to Finding the Mammals of Australia* advises interested amateurs and professionals where to locate many of Australia's mammals. The book describes Australia's best mammal-watching sites state-by-state.

Member's price \$35



Best 100 Birdwatching Sites in Australia

Sue Taylor

Inside this illustrated guide you'll discover some of Australia's better birdwatching sites.

Member's price \$28 SALE PRICE \$24

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG membership

2015-2016 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

D Laing
K Wust
B Gibson
A Fulker
C Molesworth
P Cohen
A Kimberlee
A Kiełtyka
C MacGregor
P Colmer

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for March 2016 edition

Wednesday 24 February 2016

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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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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