



Gang-gang

September 2016

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 14 September 2016

7.30 pm.

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

The first presentation will be by long time COG member **Stuart Harris** who will screen the film **Maratus** produced by award winning local film maker, Simon Cunich. This is a documentary about two men and a spider illustrating the power of citizen science to reveal nature's most extraordinary and well-hidden wonders.

The main presentation will be by **Alastair Smith** and is entitled "**eBird and you, the Canberra birder**".

Cornell Lab of Ornithology's 'eBird' is more than just a 5 letter word. eBird is a real-time, online checklist program, that has revolutionised the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds.

Alastair's presentation is aimed at all birders, whether or not you use eBird. If you don't use eBird, then he will demonstrate some of the many uses for eBird in planning trips or answering those questions about bird presence/absence and abundance. If you do use eBird, he will talk about how to be a better eBirder.

Continued Page 2

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

Except for a few warmer days around 18 August when there seemed to be an increase in bird activity, or at least reporting, the weather over the 5 week period from 28 July to 31 August that this report covers has continued to be mainly cloudy, though perhaps a bit warmer and less wet and windy than it was in July. As I write this column there have been no signs that a major influx of spring/summer migrants in the COG area of interest (AoI) has started. However, there still has been plenty of activity to report.

In particular there has been a considerable amount of (almost all new season) breeding activity for a wide range of species reported for the last month of winter. This is summarised below in roughly the order as August progressed:

- the copulating **Wedge-tailed Eagles** reported in July were now incubating;
- a begging **Rainbow Lorikeet** appearing to get fed by its parent at the Fadden Hills pond;
- several pairs of **Masked Lapwings** vigorously protecting small chicks;

Continued Page 2

John Bundock

Wedge-tailed Eagle



Everyone welcome

AUGUST MEETING *continued ...*

Specifically the talk will cover the following topics:

- eBird participation - worldwide, but with particular reference to the ACT
- Data entry - using the web and mobile devices
- Exploring eBird data - look at some of the tools that all birders can access
- eBird data quality - how data quality is maintained
- eBird data analysis – some examples of how data are used at the landscape level

How to be a better eBirder – tips and tricks to make your data more meaningful.

Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 12 November 2016, 7.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc. will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 12 November 2016, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Crescent and Melbourne Avenue, Deakin.

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2015 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of President's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2016-2017
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members
10. Other matters for which notice has been given
11. Close of meeting.



John Bundock

White-fronted Chat

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

- a pair of **Black Swans** (a year round breeder) with two little cygnets on Sullivan's Creek, as well as one on a nest very close to the edge of the footpath at Yerrabi Pond late in the month;
- a **White Fronted Chat** photographed with nesting material at the Hume pond. This is a very interesting development as Sandra Henderson first saw them there only at the beginning of August, and also because there are few recent breeding records for this species in the ACT;
- a pair of **Black-shouldered Kites** mating in the dead pine trees at Jerrabomberra Wetlands;
- A **Southern Whiteface** carrying a fluffy white feather into a hole in a log at Mullangarri Grasslands, where a pair were hanging about earlier;
- **Tawny Frogmouths** commencing nest building in mid-August when according to Stuart Rae some had been on site for a few weeks and a few had well-built nests;
- a pair of **White-faced Herons** actively nest-building in a casuarina at the water's edge at Isabella Pond



Ryu Callaway

Eurasian Coot, chick

- at the Fadden Hills pond an **Eurasian Coot** on a nest and **Purple Swamphens** with four very young chicks which Ryu Callaway suspected had hatched overnight. One bird was sitting on nest the whole time and the other bird coming every 10 or so minutes with a worm to feed the chicks, which would scurry to the edge of the nest whenever food came, becoming more confident and coming out further as the morning went on;
- Ryu also noted **Magpie-larks** collecting mud from the pond for nest building nearby; a pair near my GBS site have also built and were sitting at the end of the month;

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

- A **White-winged Chough** on a nest at Uriarra Crossing West; and last but not least

a pair of **Australian Shelduck** with 3 small young at a wet ephemeral marsh on the Hoskintown Plain, as well as a **Hoary-headed Grebe** sitting on a nest for some time.

This is the breeding that has come to my attention, but I suspect much more occurred during August. In my local area I have observed a pair of **Australian Wood Duck** with eight young ducklings and **Australian Ravens** with a nest in which they're feeding young. **Australian Magpies** are also sitting in nests, with the one in my GBS site first recorded sitting on 13 August some six weeks after nest building/shaping activity was first noticed. Unfortunately the only report I have for the **Scarlet Robins** is of a pair courtship feeding at the Pinnacle early in August. So please watch out for further breeding activity, in particular for this species; if it warms up but remains wet we could be in for a very good breeding season.

Despite all this early breeding activity there have still been mixed feeding flocks reported; there was still a small one at Narrabundah Hill when I did my surveys there on 29 August. Of more note are some very interesting reports of large single species flocks, with Bill Graham posting that he saw a mob of **Red-rumped Parrots** feeding on Bonner School Oval and counted 170 in one large group, with another 10 and 8 further away. He wondered whether anyone else had observed these numbers before. The highest number at the time on eBird Australia were 117 by Michael Lenz at the Aspinall St parklands in Watson in June, just eclipsing the 114 in COG's 2014-2015 Annual Bird Report. Megan Spears informed me that her highest count from her nearby house was 88 on their roost flight in June, which compares well with my maximum of around 90 birds doing the same since the January 2003 fires.

In a number of posts on the COG chatline subscribers have noted **Rainbow Lorikeets** in their suburbs for the first time, including



Rose Robin

Julie Clark



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Good birding, good food ...

2017 tours

Tasmania birds & mammals

28 January — 4 February 2017 includes
Melaleuca flight & pelagic

Alice Springs & the West MacDonnell Ranges tour

22 to 30 April 2017
One day added for Sandhill Grasswren

Top End tour 2017

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

Queensland's Gulf Country 26 June to 13 July 2017

Two days added for Rusty Grasswren.

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

New Caledonia birding tour Early August 2017

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

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

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Watson, Downer and Isaacs, to becoming much more established such as in Dickson and at Amaroo in Gungahlin. At the end of the month Marnix Zwankhuizen reported his first record of **Australia King-Parrots** in Forde in the five years he has lived in Gungahlin. This species, once mainly present south of the lake, also seems to be expanding its range within Canberra. There were also several posts of observing a “charm” of around 50 **European Goldfinches** which led to the suggestion that their numbers were increasing. A number of us “old timers” noted that they were much more common in the 1970s, which is supported by the COG database with peaks in 1986 and 1989 (it only starts in 1983) and with much lower levels from 1993.

On 11 August Michael Lenz posted that over the last 10 days **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** had visited every pine tree in North Lyneham, with Lyneham Ridge serving as a roost site for some days (which has occasionally happened before). The highest number he recorded departing the roost was 182 on 4 August. Numbers had declined since, with 64 on 6 August and just 11 birds on 10 August.

Of the spring/summer migrants of which a few often stay in the COG AoI during winter, the **Dusky Woodswallow** has continued to be reported mainly from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands during August, and again has not been reported on the COG chatline. This is in contrast to the **Olive-backed Oriole** which has been regularly reported, with Sicheng Wang posting having seen three in Campbell Park on 6 August. **Fuscous**, **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** also have continued to be reported in small numbers, with an indication from the COG bus trip (see separate report) that at least some of the first-named were starting to return. From the chatline posts this also seems to be the case for the **Superb Parrot**, including some further reports from south of the lake. The **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Grey Fantail** have also continued being reported in small numbers, with no real sign yet of numbers increasing. However, there have been only a few reports of the **Mistletoebird** during August.



Flame Robin

Sandra Henderson

As noted in my August column an unexpected species staying over winter was the **Tree Martin**, which is also the species which seems to have returned in the highest numbers, with Jenny Bounds and me seeing many at Uriarra Crossing on 25 and 27 August during our reccies for the COG bus trip. An increased number of **Silvereyes** has also been noted during August. Small numbers of **Fairy Martins** also returned during August, as is the case for the **Rufous Whistler**, surprisingly not reported in June or July. Small numbers of the **Noisy Friarbird** also returned from mid-August, as did the **Australian Reed-Warbler** and the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory of the local cuckoos but not reported in May to close to mid-July.

On 18 August Martin Butterfield reported two **Pallid Cuckoos** calling on the Hoskintown Plain/Carwoola, but these are the only reports of this species I can find so far for this coming season. Wayne Gregson reported hearing a very early **White-winged Triller** on Aranda Hill on 8 August, but again there have been no further reports of this species. A few other species not reported in winter have recently returned, including the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**. However, the species that has surprised me with its early return (I didn't even mention it in my August column) has been the **Latham's Snipe**, first reported on 15 August, with further birds reported during the Latham's Snipe survey on 20-21 August. Perhaps the increased focus has led to the earlier reporting, with on 30 August Kathy and David Cook posting that they flushed their first two for the season from their well-vegetated paddock dam in Wamboin.

So please keep a lookout for the first clear signs of an influx of the above species, as well as species that usually return during September, such as the other **cuckoo species** and the **Leaden Flycatcher**, and perhaps towards the end of the month, the **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark**. Given that it is relatively wet inland, I'm not expecting large numbers of the latter two this spring/summer. I'm also not expecting the **Sacred Kingfisher** and **Rainbow Bee-eater** to have arrived until towards the end of September, as they sometimes do.

Of the species that come to Canberra for winter, the **Flame Robin** continued to be reported in small numbers during August, though I suspect that most have now moved away. However, it's not clear if the up to 20 birds found on Warks Road during the COG bus trip (see separate report) were on the move as they were present there for at least 4 days. A number of **Rose Robins** have been reported during August, with an increase in reports for the last week as some of the species, which used to be thought of solely as a passage migrant in autumn and spring, returned. There don't seem to have been any new reports of the **Pink Robin** or of the **Swift Parrot** and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**. There have still been a few reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** in urban/peri-urban Canberra during August, but the last one



Restless Flycatcher

Sandra Henderson

in my GBS site was of a quiet male sitting in a bare bush on 6 August. The **Restless Flycatcher** was still present at Callum Brae during August, with further reports from the Hume wetland and from Bungendore.

So please keep an eye out for the above species which will all move out of the Canberra area in the first half of September, as will the **Scarlet Robin** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. The former seems to have moved out of my local area from mid-August, and again I've only once recorded the latter in August, in line with my experience that this species pretty much stops calling for the last couple of months of its time here. However, I have had a few sightings of the **Golden Whistler**, which is often present until early October.

There have been very few sightings of "unusual" birds during August. The **White-cheeked Honeyeater** continues to be present at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The **Grey Goshawk** has also still been reported, but John Bundock has not been able to find the **Powerful Owl** since 29 July, when it had a sugar glider in its talons. So it may have finally exhausted its food supply and moved on, perhaps to find a mate, or has found a better spot to roost. However, John has been around the area at dusk as it usually hoots before taking off, but nothing was heard, so he's pretty sure it's not in the same area. The **Plumed Whistling Ducks** are still around the dams at Bungendore with David McDonald counting 60, with 22 at the Burrows Lane Dam and 38 at the Trucking Yard Dam, the first time that he had seen them split over two dams. There were also up to 30 recorded during July, which Martin Butterfield noted is the first year they have been recorded there in that month.

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 web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. As usual I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Once the weather finally warms up I'm predicting a more noticeable influx of spring/summer migrants. So please look

out for them, as well as the last departing altitudinal migrants mentioned above, for roosts and roost flights, and for further signs of breeding as well as the last mixed or single species feeding flocks. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland

COG's Bird Blitz 29-30 October 2016

The dates for COG's twelfth annual bird blitz are fast approaching so if you haven't already indicated you plan to "adopt" one or more sites to survey over that weekend, think about doing so now. Check out the COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au for details of the blitz and an updated list of adopted sites and let the organiser know where you'll survey.

Barbara's contact address is blitz@canberrabirds.org.au - or if you want to discuss options, come and see her at the next COG meeting.

Some of the as-yet unloved sites include Hall and environs, Yerrabi Pond, ANBG, the Arboretum, Newline paddocks, Stromlo, Black Mtn, Mt Majura, Mt Ainslie, Woodstock NR, Kambah Pool and Murrumbidgee River corridor more generally, Callum Brae, Urambi Hills, Wanniasa Hills, Tuggeranong Hill, Cotter Reserve, Square Rock, or chose your own unlisted location within the ACT. Please join in to make our twelfth blitz the most complete coverage yet!

Visit CSIRO's Australian National Wildlife Collection

COG members have been invited to tour CSIRO's Australian Wildlife Collection, especially the bird vault, escorted by their director and curator. The tour date is Monday 19 September with a 10.30 am start and numbers limited to 24. Applications must be in before 12 Sept. 2016. Applicants will be selected in order of receipt of request, with COG members given priority. Successful applicants will be notified. Reply to graham.br63@grapevine.com.au or phone 0466874723.

Where have all the female fairy-wrens gone?

Help required for a long-term study of Superb Fairy-wrens.

Prizes available!

In November this year the ANU study of the fairy-wrens at the Australian National Botanic Gardens will have been running for 30 years, and has become one of the largest studies ever carried out on a natural population of birds. For all that time we have conducted weekly censuses of our birds, most of which we follow from hatching to the grave, which can take as long as 12 years. Fairy-wrens are famous for their infidelity, and we have used forensic DNA-based methods to determine the true father of well over 7000 birds, enabling us to build a picture of the costs and benefits that males and females and their young helpers gain from the bizarre and complex lives they lead.

There is one big hole in our accountancy. While males usually live their lives and die only a few metres from the nest in which they were reared, all females must move at least once to gain a breeding vacancy. Many hundreds of young females that we banded in the nest have successfully settled within our Botanic Gardens study population, but we also know that many of the young females gain vacancies outside the study area. Our birds are easy to recognise because they all have leg rings with unique colour combinations. Over the last couple of years we have had records of our birds from as far afield as Aranda Bushland, the Curtin horse paddocks, and the Mount Majura Nature Reserve near Hackett.

We think that these reports are just a small proportion of the banded birds that are out there, and we are extremely interested in acquiring further records. While we are sampling some of the nature reserves ourselves, the heavy controlled burning over the last few years has reduced the number of wrens living in the reserves, and we expect suburban areas and parks may be a rich source of extra records. We are therefore hoping to enlist the help of as many COG members and Gang-Gang readers as possible in the search for dispersing females.

How can you help?

There are numerous ways to help.

At a minimum, it would be great for people who have fairy-wrens in their garden or larger GBS sites to check whether any of those birds have rings on their legs. Ideally, this check would be done every six months (in December and June). Note that it is very difficult for untrained observers to read the colour rings, which are prone to wear and fading. In the absence of a photograph, we would always come and check which bird has been detected. We will then provide you with full details of the soap opera life of that bird (see below for an example from 2015*- ed!). We would need to know the site location and whether the birds there have bands (an address, a latitude and longitude, or a GPS easting and northing are all useful ways of providing the information).

The next step would be to extend your observations to check the legs of fairy-wrens in your regular bird-watching patches or on birding excursions within a radius of 10 km of the Botanic Gardens. Please note that we know all the birds in the ANBG, CSIRO grounds and the rest of Black Mountain, so records from these areas do not provide any new information. In addition, our colleague Naomi Langmore has banded birds in Campbell Park, and the areas round Mt Ainslie and Mt Majura, so we have that area covered as well.

The third step would be to become one of our regular observers who agrees to take on a patch of Canberra and survey it for regular wrens (this might be a small area of a suburb, a park, or a larger area). We will schedule a meeting to provide further information on this in October, and will contact everybody who registers about the time and location of that meeting.

To provide information or to express further interest in participating please send an email to Professor Andrew Cockburn at andrew.cockburn@anu.edu.au (please use the header **Fairy-wren dispersal**).

We have the opportunity to provide some incentives for participation. The first of these will be for the greatest number of banded birds located each year



Superb Fairy-wren

Graham Stephenson

outside the areas listed above, and will be a \$100 book voucher at the Botanical Bookshop at the Botanic Gardens. There will be more prizes next year for the registered observers. Unfortunately these prizes are not available to staff at the ANU.

Professor Andrew Cockburn
Division of Evolution, Ecology & Genetics
The Australian National University
andrew.cockburn@anu.edu.au

*Last spring, Julian Robinson and I found a nesting female in Aranda Bushland; Julian photographed it and sent the details to Andrew and here is Andrew's reply with the story of "our" female, GGBw:

"Yes, this is one of ours – thank you very much. We call her GGBw. This female was banded as a 7-day old baby in the Botanic Gardens in a nest at the top of the rockery. She fledged on the 15 December 2014, and left the Gardens on about 15 Feb 2015, and we have not seen her since. Young females fledged early enough in the breeding season usually move to spend the winter with a foreign group. They then compete for a vacancy the following breeding season. The youngsters fledged later in the season overwinter in their natal territory and have a much harder time gaining a permanent vacancy.

Remarkably, one of GGBw's two nest-mates also undertook successful early dispersal, but within the Gardens. She overwintered by the back toilet block then picked up a vacancy near the glasshouses by the Red Centre. She has already fledged a couple of babies this year, which were sadly eaten shortly thereafter. Having two successful dispersals from one nest is quite an achievement for their mother, OAA."

Sue Lashko

THE RANKINS SPRINGS BIRDS OF THE BUSH FESTIVAL
10th ANNIVERSARY - 2016
FRIDAY 7th OCTOBER
GRAND CHAMPAGNE OPENING

6pm to 8pm - Prizes awarded at 7pm
Over 18 \$10 (includes nibbles & 2 complimentary drinks) Under 18 \$5
BBQ dinner available from 8pm. \$10 adult and secondary, \$5 primary school
.....BAR WILL BE OPERATING UNTIL 10PM ONLY..... (BYO after 10pm)

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION / EXHIBITION
Entries close Wed 5th October 2016 at 4pm (Ellen 06 6966 1270 or kalang@activ8.net.au)
Entry forms available at www.birdsofthebush.com

SPECIAL GUEST: TIM LOW author of
"Where Song Began" From 8:30pm
SATURDAY 8th OCTOBER
BIRD WATCHING DAY TRIP \$60pp
Local guides, Jim & MD + Tim Low are a part of this trip
Leaves the Hall at 6am SHARP!! Must book - Andrea 02 6966 1220
MUSIC IN THE PARK
From 12 noon until 8pm BYO alcohol, picnic rug & chair
Entry cost: 18yrs & over \$20, Under 18 to Kinder \$15 & Under 5 \$5

Our Special Guest, Tim Low will speak again from 3pm to 3.30pm near the stage in the hall
ANTHONY McDONALD Marissa N The Guitar Man poppycock Kyle Jones DOLLHOUSE
Local poets Jonathan & Alan Vagg will entertain between music acts
Includes all day access to jumping castle, face painting, laser tag, Lions train & other children's activities
Available all day: food, nibbles platters & soft drink

SUNDAY 9th OCTOBER
BIRD WATCHING TRIP \$20 pp
IF NUMBERS PERMIT.....BOOKINGS Andrea 02 6966 1220
Guided Bird & Local Historical Tours throughout the weekend - bookings essential by 1st October 2016
For more information, bookings for all tours, dinners etc phone Andrea (02) 6966 1220 or visit website www.birdsofthebush.com
or email: selbyorganics@bluemaxx.com.au (subject box: birds of the bush festival)
Banking details: Birds of the Bush BSB: 325-185 Account: 01011463
NO ATM OR ALCOHOL AVAILABLE IN RANKINS SPRINGS

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Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

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

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

Field Trip Reports

Saturday 6 August – Lake Ginninderra Beginners' Outing

A very small group joined Anthony and myself for a stroll at Diddams Close. Among the highlights were a very obliging female **Darter** drying her wings at the water's edge, a **Great Cormorant** fishing in the lake, a number of **Red-rumped Parrots**, and **Superb Fairy-Wrens** showing off the female, male eclipse and male coloured plumages. A pair of **Scarlet Robins** were a nice finale. Thirty-three species in total were seen or heard. Full list is at <http://ebird.org/ebird/australia/view/checklist/S30987847>

Sandra Henderson



Saturday 13 August – Percival Hill

Delightful weather and company made for a terrific morning of birding at Percival Hill for about a dozen COG members and friends. John Harris's local knowledge combined perfectly with Sue Lashko's and Sandra Henderson's birding expertise to help us identify 42 species. A **Collared Sparrowhawk**, **Little Eagle**, some **Scarlet Robins** and a pair of **Striated Pardalotes** exploring a nesting hollow were just a few of the highlights. We had the pleasure of two visitors - Alison from the Central Coast Group of Birding NSW and Hillary from the US Embassy. The Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory Andrews, who is a member of COG, particularly enjoyed raptor identification tips from Sue and Duncan. Something quirky that we noticed was an absence of the almost universally ubiquitous **Willie Wagtail** and an abundance of **Grey Fantails**. The spectacular and bracing view from the top of Percival Hill demonstrated the biodiversity connectivity values of Canberra's bush corridors but also the higher building densities and lower levels of suitable bird habitat in Canberra's newer suburbs.

Gregory Andrews



Wednesday 17 August – Callum Brae Nature Reserve

On a pleasantly mild morning 30 members and guests assembled on Narrabundah Lane.

In comparison with past outings two things were evident:

We couldn't get into the old zoo site because of a new fence which might have caused some species (Southern Whiteface and Speckled Warbler come to mind) to be absent from the list.

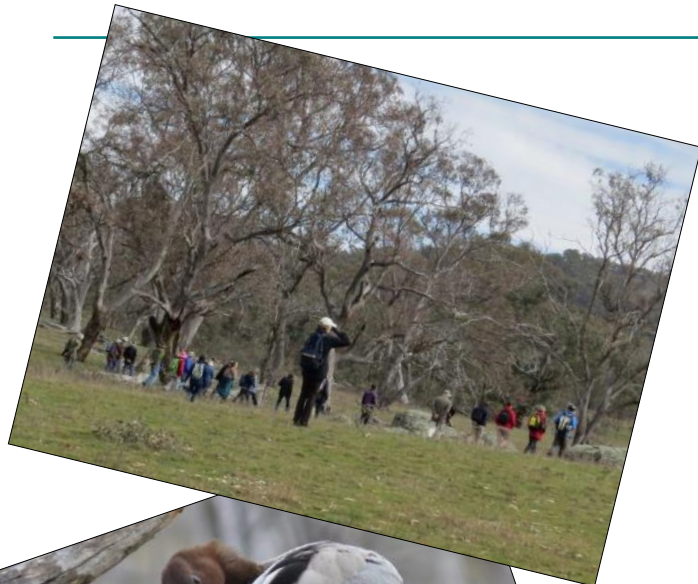
In the later stages of the walk we had open paddocks to walk, whereas on the last WW in this area, some years ago, we were in single file through chest-high Saffron Thistles (*Carthamus lanatus*).

In view of the time of year it is of interest that we recorded four breeding observations. An **Australian Magpie** was on a nest, **Striated Pardalotes** were displaying and **Crimson Rosellas** were inspecting a hollow. **Australian Wood Ducks** were perching in trees making enticing soft quacks and at least one observer did



From Top: **Darter** (Sandra Henderson), **Spotted Pardalote** (Duncan McCaskill), **Australian Wood Duck** (Duncan McCaskill)

Next Page: **COG members and friends** (John Bundock), **Australian Wood Duck** (John Bundock), **Scarlet Robin** (John Bundock), **Wombat** (John Bundock), **Fuscous Honeyeater** (Ryu Callaway)



see a duck emerge from a hollow. **Little Corellas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** seemed to be hanging around trees-with-hollows but again didn't make any form of committed action that could be rated as inspecting a hollow.

It is also the start of the period when migrants could be moving to their summer locations. Two species, described unequivocally in the Annual Bird Report as summer migrants, were observed. Two **Olive-backed Orioles** were chasing each other through the canopy and an estimated 10 **Tree Martins** were foraging over a grassy patch with a similar number of **Welcome Swallows**. Four species with more complicated, partial migration status, **Red Wattlebird**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Grey Fantail** and **Scarlet Robin** were also recorded.

The least common bird observed was **Restless Flycatcher** with two birds observed and one photographed to resolve any debate over what had been seen.

Thank you to Duncan for entering the list of 36 species and to Sandra for leading us around the patch.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 21 August – London Bridge

On a cool morning, eleven hardy birders met at London Bridge carpark. On the way in, while opening the gate on the road, we'd heard a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. After checking the dams near the carpark we proceeded over London Bridge and walked a short distance downstream. We then walked upstream to the London Bridge homestead, crossed Burra Creek and strolled back to the carpark with 43 species sighted on this section of the walk. Highlights were a **Southern Whiteface** and a **Brown Treecreeper**, both at the homestead, and 2 wombats. Ten of us then drove from London Bridge carpark to Tin Hut Dam where we spotted 4 more of Googong's diurnal wombats and 19 bird species, including a **Musk Duck** on the dam and a flock of over 50 **Australian Magpies** flying over the river. A very good morning's birding for a walk at this time of the year.

John Bundock

Sunday 28 August - Late Winter Mystery bus trip

Twenty two participants filling two buses joined Jenny Bounds and me on this annual COG event. In keeping with a "mystery" tour, our itinerary was not announced, and as we went up Mountain Creek Road not many participants were aware that we were heading towards TSR 57. This is a former COG trip destination that seems to have fallen out of favour and which, until the reccie a couple of weeks before, I had never visited, and nor had anyone else apart from Jenny and Sandra.

As soon as we stepped out of the buses we could hear **Fuscous Honeyeaters**. While they continued calling including in the trees around us they were very active and hard to get a good look at, as were some of the other honeyeaters present such as the **White-naped Honeyeater**. While we recorded over 30 species, in

general the birds were not particularly confiding and also unlike the reccie's activity it was much quieter once we moved away from the parked buses into the TSR. However, we recorded a total of 8 honeyeater species there including the recently arrived **Noisy Friarbird**.

We returned down the road back to Uriarra Crossing West for morning tea, stopping briefly on the way to look at three **Cattle Egrets** around a big dam. This spot was also not as active as when we did reccies, highlights being **Yellow Thornbill** at the top of the casuarinas and thus hard to see, an immature **Golden Whistler**, and a **White-winged Chough** on a mud nest. Only a few of the many **Tree Martins** going up and down the river only days before were still present.

We next drove up Brindabella Road to the corner of East-West Road where Jenny and I hoped to pick up the **Hooded Robin** of which we had seen either the male or the female on our reccies. We were soon rewarded by good views of both, in particular the male which sat out on a branch in front of us. We had been very surprised at picking up this species there, as, at least for the Southern Tablelands, it looks very unlikely Hooded Robin habitat.

Our next destination was a spot about 1 km up Warks Road, where we were very pleased to be able to find again the flock of **Flame Robins** we had seen during the reccies. Everyone had very good views of at least several of the beautifully coloured males together, and many of the group saw a cloud of about 20 of them rise up from the ground, as well as a pair of **Scarlet Robins** as an added bonus.

Blue Range Hut where we stopped for lunch was very quiet, the highlight being at least two **Eastern Whipbirds** calling, the first time I can remember picking up this species in the ACT for many years. Our final stop was Casuarina Sands where there was quite a bit of activity and where we managed to pick up the **Satin Bowerbird** and **Speckled Warbler** that had eluded us at TSR 57, with our final birds being two quiet **Grey Currawongs**.

The agreed total for the day was 70 species, which includes those seen during the entire trip starting from the National Library when we were boarding the buses. A surprise was so few spring migrants apart from those where some overwinter. Also there was very little breeding observed, only the choughs mentioned above and an **Australian Magpie** on a nest at Casuarina Sands. Nevertheless participants had a very enjoyable day, in good company as well as visiting some spots they were not familiar with and seeing a range of birds. My very sincere thanks again to Jenny Bounds for her considerable help in planning and leading on the day, and for driving the second bus.

Jack Holland



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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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 18 September – Flemington Road and Mitchell Ponds

Note change of date from 24 July.

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

Bill Graham

Tuesday 20 to Thursday 22 September – private property near Young

There will be a 2 night campout on private property 10 km from Young – no facilities so take everything you need including water. Spring migrants should have arrived so we will survey the property and hope to gain access to another property as well as visit a TSR. The dates may change slightly closer to the time if wet weather is forecast. Numbers will be limited. Register with Sue Lashko (smlashko@gmail.com).

Wednesday 21 September – West Belconnen Pond

Meet at 9am at Percy Begg Circuit, Dunlop. A mud map will be put on the Trips page of the COG website in due course.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 25 September – Tidbinbilla

This is a survey in two parts, each requiring about an hour and a bit walking. The first part will be a gentle walk around the Sanctuary. This area has ponds with waterbirds. The second part will be a slightly less gentle walk around the Lyrebird track. This area has some wet eucalypt forest, and some different birds. Bring some morning tea to have in the break between the two parts. Meet at the carpark in front of the Tidbinbilla Visitors Centre at 0830. For any enquiries contact David Dedenczuk on 0417222154 or ddedentz@bigpond.net.au.

Saturday 1 to Monday 3 October – Buddigower Nature Reserve

For anyone interested in attending the COG outing to see the bird banding at Buddigower NR near West Wyalong could they please contact me (chollop7@bigpond.com) for directions to the site. Please note that I will be away from Canberra from late August until September 15 and won't have access to email until I return. It will be a camping trip with NO facilities – it is take everything in, take (almost) everything out. For those who don't wish to camp, there are numerous motels and caravan parks in West Wyalong which is only about 15 km from the reserve.

Mark Clayton

Sunday 9 October – K2C Surveys - Bredbo region

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken

in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws **before Wednesday 5 October**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210736.
Nicki Taws

Sunday 16 October – Yerrabi Pond

Meet at 8.00am at the Wunderlich St carpark in Gungahlin. The eBird list has 97 species recorded here. Yerrabi Pond is a high use public park and has little in the way of understorey or significant reedbeds. Despite this, it supports a good mix of waterbirds including **Musk Duck** and **Eastern Great Egret**. The most common honeyeaters are **Noisy Miner** and **White-plumed Honeyeater**. **Superb Parrots** move through from Mulligans Flat and other migrants pass through in spring and autumn.

Bill Graham

Sunday 23 October Bird photography workshop at Jerrabomberra Wetlands

Meet in the carpark at 7.30 am. This workshop is suitable for people who are in the early stages of using DSLR equipment for bird photography. **Registration is essential**. There will be a limit of 12 with first in best dressed. Registrations are to be sent to my email address con@boekel.com.au. The format will be a brief presentation, followed by field photography, followed by a wrap-up.

Con Boekel

Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 October – Bird Blitz

See separate notice on Page 5.



Nankeen Kestrel (Ryu Callaway),
Spotted Pardalote (Ryu Callaway),
White-fronted Chat (Sandra
Henderson)



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Woodland Surveys- winter survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 26 June, with a very cold, still and frosty start, and becoming overcast as the morning went on. Overall, numbers of birds were on the low end, but 46 species total was average for a winter survey. Dams were full of water after recent rains, and the usual common ducks were around, as well as 40 **Straw-necked Ibis** on the south-east side. Highlights were several species overwintering, including 1 **Tree Martin**, 1 **Olive-backed Oriole** and 1 **Superb Parrot** (flying over the eastern side of the reserve). **Scarlet Robins** were recorded at 5 sites, not as many as usual in winter. **Speckled Warblers** were around the woolshed area and on the eastern side. One **Little Raven** was an interesting record. There was the usual assortment of small mixed flocks of several thornbill species and weebills as well as 1 **White-plumed Honeyeater** on the western ridge near Forde, (used to be found more widely at Mulligans), a few **White-eared**, a couple of **Yellow-faced** and a couple of small flocks of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. No **Golden Whistlers** were recorded, a usual autumn/winter species.

Goorooyarroo North NR

Nicki Taws surveyed the northern section of the reserve on Sunday 26 June. The reserve was well-saturated with creeks flowing, if not frozen. Bird activity was quiet. Only 15 species were recorded within the sites and a further 12 between sites. **Magpies**, **Noisy Miners**, cockatoos and two large groups of **White-winged Choughs** were the most vocal birds. The typical mixed feeding flock of winter was found at only one site but added about 10 species of small birds to the list. **Speckled Warbler** and **Scarlet Robin** were recorded at two sites. An uncommon record was of a Common **Bronzewing**. The only **honeyeater** was a single **White-eared**, and a couple of **Red Wattlebirds**. No **Golden Whistlers** were recorded.

Goorooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley surveyed on 19 June under heavy grey skies, but managed to finish just before rain. Creeks were flowing, a rare treat, and dams that had been dry for a long time had plenty of water. 37 species were recorded during site counts and 41 overall. Site 1 was probably the standout, with at least 8 **Red-browed Finches** (the first for the surveys in a long time), 3 **Diamond Firetails**, **Southern Whiteface** (heard), a reddish **Brown Falcon** and a good number of other species of small birds. Elsewhere there were **Scarlet Robins** at 4 sites, **Speckled Warblers** also at 4 sites, and a couple more **Diamond Firetails** between sites. Mixed flocks featured in a few places with **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **Yellow-rumped**, **Brown**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, both pardalotes, **Weebills**, **Scarlet Robins**, **Golden Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** present in some or most of these flocks. **Mistletoebirds** were heard and seen in a few places as were **Grey Currawongs**.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie conducted the surveys over the long weekend of 12/13 June, with 38 species overall. Some quite different species were seen in some sites, with **Starlings** in a couple of sites, 6 ravens in one site eating the remains of possibly a rabbit, **Gang-gang Cockatoos** in a number of sites (not common there) and a couple of sites with **Grey Currawongs**, also not common in a survey. Only one site had a mixed flock of small birds including **Speckled Warbler**, **Scarlet Robin**, and **Striated**, **Brown** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**.

Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell reported on the survey on 30 June, with a cracking frost to start and a light wind up later. Small birds were notably absent at nearly all sites. The usual suspects were about, **Crimson Rosellas**, **Common Starlings**, a few **Noisy Miners**, **Kookaburras**, and a solitary **Scarlet Robin**. A couple of **Wood Ducks** were inspecting real estate. It was encouraging to see 27 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** flying through one site, and 28 **White-winged Choughs** at another; choughs were at several sites and at a couple of points in between. At the last site, there was a fleeting glimpse of a mystery bird, possibly a **Painted Button-quail**, but it disappeared before it could be identified.

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Contact: Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531, or
barbdebruine@hotmail.com

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz surveyed the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 23 June. The sky was largely overcast, with a light to moderate wind. Activity at sites was very low, with small bush birds largely missing. The morning was saved by a mixed flock at the last site, comprising 8 species including 1 **Speckled Warbler**, **Noisy Miner** (at 8 sites), **Crimson Rosella** (7 sites) and **Maggie** (6 sites) were the most widespread species. Of note were **Mistletoebird** at 2 sites, several pairs of **Australian Wood Duck** in eucalypts, looking at hollows, and **Noisy Miners** chasing single **Striated Pardalotes**. Most activity was away from the survey sites along the border of the woodland/grassland with 2 groups of **Flame Robins**, around 60 **Welcome Swallows** over a dam, 14 **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** passing and a group of 8 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. Also feeding in the paddocks was a flock of 110 **Feral Pigeons** and at least 1100 **Eastern Grey Kangaroos**. A total of 22 species was recorded in sites with an additional 13 outside sites.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on 22 June, on a cloudy, cold and still morning. The most noticeable feature was the spread of **Common Starlings** right through the paddocks from the road to the quarry. A fox was not enjoying being swooped by 3 **Australian Magpies** at one site. Raptors included a **Brown Goshawk** flushed from low in a boxthorn and a **Nankeen Kestrel**. Most sites were very quiet with the exception of Site 4 near the concrete dump. Here, a mixed flock included **Scarlet Robin**, **Yellow-faced**, **White-eared** and **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **Eastern Spinebill**, **Golden Whistler**, **Brown Thornbill** and **White-browed Scrubwren**. As well, at least 70 **Superb Fairy-wrens** were very actively feeding on the ground between the lovegrass clumps or perched in boxthorns. A modest total of 34 species was no doubt a reflection of the rather grim weather.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey on 28 June, in fine, sunny but cold conditions. It was very quiet overall in terms of small birds, with only 27 species total (on the low end for winter counts which can range up to 35 species). The usual rosellas and large parrots were around. The best sighting was late in the morning, 5 **Varied Sittellas** in a small mixed flock with an overwintering **Grey Fantail** and **Weebills**. One male **Scarlet Robin** was foraging on the grasslands interface. An **Eastern Spinebill** at one site within the woodland was interesting, with the only other record in April 2004 and at the same site – maybe attracted by mistletoe in that site. There was quite a large group of **Australian Ravens** around and actively calling, and a **Brown Falcon** over the site which caused some commotion. There were no **Flame Robins** around the grasslands edge.

Symonston: Callum Brae NR/Isaacs Ridge NR

Sandra Henderson reported on the surveys in very cold conditions on 13 June. Near the main entrance to Callum Brae the roosting **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Straw-necked Ibis** were trying to catch the early sun before moving off. In most survey sites there

was little activity, apart from good numbers of rosellas. Between sites, and particularly along the quarry fence and at nursery corner, there were several feeding flocks, with **Weebills** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** in good numbers. Both **Flame** (1M) and **Scarlet Robins** (1M,1F) were along the quarry fence, as was a **Speckled Warbler**. Three more of the latter were seen close to the farm fence in the top corner. Two **Grey Currawongs** flew into the reserve from the quarry, calling loudly. A large group of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** was feeding on dead thistles at nursery corner, and the long-established **Little Corella/Long-billed Corella** pair were investigating a hollow. There were several groups of **Crested Pigeons** sighted, but the most numerous bird of the morning was **Eastern Rosella**, with over 50 counted, including several squabbling groups of a dozen or so birds. A total of 40 species was seen for the morning.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on 21 June. The morning started out overcast, cold and windy, warming a little but remaining cloudy. It was one of the quietest surveys conducted on The Hill, with a total of only 13 species during surveys and a further 12 between sites. A pair of **Rainbow Lorikeets** was inside the spout of a hollow with another two seen soon after. Site 3 also had a **Grey Currawong**, and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** circling overhead. One small mixed feeding flock including 12 **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, a **Scarlet Robin**, a **White-throated Treecreeper** and a **Speckled Warbler** added some interest to an otherwise ordinary survey.

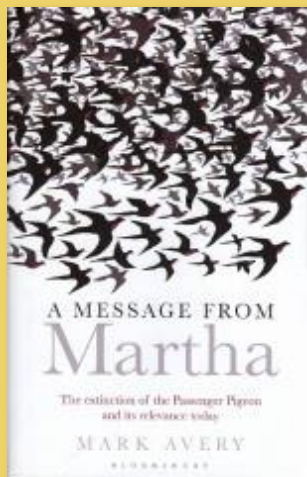
Rural leasehold property near Tharwa

David McDonald conducted the survey on 26 June, starting later in the morning than usual, hoping that the birds would be more active, but they certainly were not, with very low abundance and species diversity. Only 15 species were observed, including 9 inside the sites and 6 outside but within the survey periods. The number of species at the sites ranged from 0 to 5, with the most widespread being the **Galah**, **Striated Thornbill** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**. The most abundant was **White-winged Chough**, with a flock of about 40 – apparently 3 family groups coalesced. The small passerines usually common in grassy box woodland were almost entirely absent. No breeding was observed and the vulnerable species that are usually found at this site were not observed. Pleasingly, the **Noisy Miners** observed at this location in the March survey were absent this time.

Naas Valley rural leasehold

Julie McGuinness did the survey on 25 June, a beautiful cold, clear and calm morning. Similar to the Tharwa area property, it was extremely quiet, with 15 species in total on the sites, and only another two observed when walking between them. Parrots were well represented with **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, **Galahs** and **Red-rumped Parrots**. There were hardly any small birds, and only one very small mixed feeding flock of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Jacky Winters** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**.

A message from Martha!



**A message from Martha:
the extinction of the Passenger
Pigeon and its relevance today**

Mark Avery

September 1st, 2014 sees the centenary of one of the best-documented extinctions in history—the demise of the Passenger Pigeon. From being the commonest bird on the planet 50 years earlier, the species became extinct when Martha, the last of her kind, died at the Cincinnati Zoo. Built around the framework of a visit to Cincinnati and the pigeon's former haunts in North America's east coast, by author Mark Avery, it tells the tale of the pigeon, and of Martha, and explores the largely untold story of the ecological annihilation of this part of America in the years between the end of the US Civil War and 1900.

Members' Price \$28

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

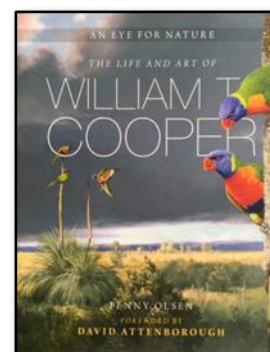
NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

An Eye for Nature – The Life and Art of William Cooper

Penny Olsen

William T. Cooper's paintings of birds which set him apart—his raucous cockatoos, colourful parrots, animated turacos and flamboyantly displaying birds of paradise. Often placed in meticulously studied landscapes, these intricate bird portraits reveal Cooper's close observation not only of his subjects' appearance, but their habits, poses and behaviour.

Members' price \$37

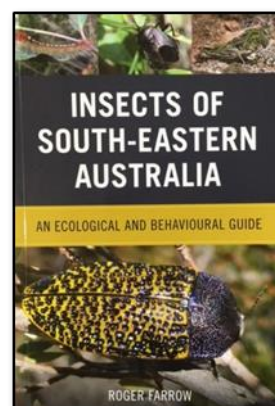


Insects of South-Eastern Australia

Roger Farrow

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

Members' Price \$34 (RRP \$45)

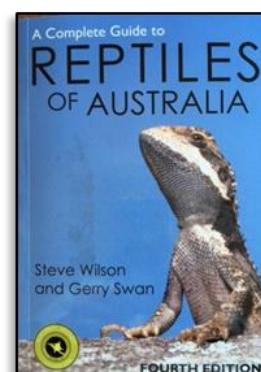


Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia

Steve Wilson and Gerry Swan

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

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



Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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

COG membership

2015-2016 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

R McConchie
L Murray
J Dunn

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for October 2016 edition

Wednesday 28 September 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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