



Gang-gang

JULY 2017

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

Wednesday 12 July 2017

7.30 pm.

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

The short talk will be a “**Little Eagle Research Update**” given by **Don Fletcher**. Not much is known about **Little Eagles** (*Heiraaetus morphnoides*) because there has been little research. The *Action Plan* identifies research on movements as a conservation priority. A first stage of current research commenced in late 2015 and has been completed.

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The main presentation will be by well-known photographer and author **David Hollands**, on “**CRANES, HERONS and STORKS of Australia**”.

This is the title of David’s latest book. The project took him 15 years, long enough to see and learn a lot about our 17 species and to photograph them all, both at and away from the nest. He had quite a few adventures along the way and will cover some of those as well.

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

The weather for the five week period from 24 May covered by this column continued to be very mild for the time of the year, with only a slow slide to the maximum temperatures expected for winter, and with very little rain (<10 mm in total). Despite this, bird activity has often been very quiet as noted by COG woodland bird surveyors, perhaps due to the number of moderate frosts experienced, and also the foggy conditions.

The weather does not seem to have been to the **Dusky Woodswallows’** liking with the last record that I can find still being the 17 birds reported by Alastair Smith at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 13 May. It’s not clear to me why so few of this species have stayed over winter for the past few years compared with those previously. However, the other species which overwinter, the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Fantail** were still being reported in small numbers, most of them at least up to the last weekend of the reporting period. **White-naped**, **Yellow-faced** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were also still recorded over this last weekend.

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Superb parrot, Yerrabi Pond

Julie Clark

Everyone welcome

JULY MEETING *Short talk, continued from page 1*

It focussed on the **Little Eagle** pair in the Ginninderry/Riverview development area. A diet study was completed and the male was fitted with a satellite-GPS tracking pack. A new and enlarged research team has been preparing for Stage Two involving a larger sample of eagles. To help find additional nests, COG members are encouraged to submit their **Little Eagle** observations to eBird or the Canberra Nature Map as well as mentioning them on the chatline, particularly during August and September and especially if two eagles are seen.



Flame robin

Harvey Perkins

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for this month —continued from Page 1

There have also been a number of recent reports of the **Mistletoebird**, one species which seems to be overwintering more so than in previous years. There also seem to be good numbers of **Superb Parrots** overwintering, including up to 8 reported south of the lake in Wanniasa/Kambah. Southside sightings seem to be slowly increasing, but I have yet to see them in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge/Narrabundah Hill. However, there have been no further reports of **Tree Martin**, and **Australian Reed-Warbler**, though there was a report by Bron and Daryl King of a very late **Sacred Kingfisher** at Ginninderra Creek, Melba on 23 May (this was reported shortly after I sent last month's column to the editor).

Of the later arriving altitudinal migrants, **Flame Robins** (again only the single male) were still present mid-month on the SW side of Mt Arawang, the only spot near my local patch where I can reliably find them. However, they have also been recently reported not far away at Bibaringa on the Cotter Rd, and mid-month 10 were reported at Callum Brae, as well as a small flock busy amongst the grape vines off Stockdill Drive, Holt. So they do seem to have moved into the open peri-urban areas around Canberra. In contrast, there seem only to have been a few reports of **Rose Robins**, the most recent one I can find being on 12 June at Gungahlin Hill Nature Park, and with no reports of **Pink Robins** since 5 May.

My first **Crescent Honeyeater** for the winter season, a male typically at one of my water baths in my Chapman GBS site, was on 25 May. It wasn't calling, but it did briefly but loudly later in the day and has been calling similarly for a few minutes in the area on about a weekly basis since, usually within my GBS site. I'm not aware of any other urban/peri-urban sightings, and it appears there have been none of **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** anywhere in the ACT during the reporting period [recorded on Lyrebird survey—ed!]. There have also been no further reports of **Swift Parrot** since the single one at Mt Ainslie/Campbell Park on 1 May, or of

Brown Gerygone since a single bird was reported from the ANBG on 14 May. However, there have been some further reports of **Restless Flycatcher**, often also a winter visitor.

As might be expected, the dry conditions have led to an influx of waterbirds particularly in the Bungendore area where at the large "pond" on Lake Road there were over 50 **Freckled Ducks** (at least 2 with some red bill colour breeding plumage, and at least one brownish young bird), and very large numbers of **Pink-eared Ducks** and **Grey Teal** were reported early in the month. At the dam on Trucking Yard Lane up to 40 **Australian Shelducks** and 29 **Plumed Whistling Ducks**, as well as hundreds of **Pacific Black Ducks** and **Grey Teal** were reported at the same time. So keep an eye out for any further increase in these species, particularly if it remains dry.

The quiet reporting period has resulted in limited, if any, reports of "unusual" species, though there have been a number of reports of uncommon species, perhaps the most interesting being that of an **Olive Whistler** at the ANBG by Ken Crawley on 21 June. The 2015-2016 Annual Bird Report (ABR) notes that it is a bird of the ranges, though altitudinal migration occurs, and I recall that it has been recorded there before, possibly because (at least for temporary purposes) reasonably suitable habitat occurs there. Other uncommon birds have been two dark morph **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** reported on the Lake Ginninderra Peninsula by Tony Willis, with possibly a third bird which resembled more the related **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. Again the ABR notes that the patchy continental distribution of this nomadic species means that it is only occasionally recorded in the Canberra region.

On 24 June Steve Read flushed a **Painted Button-quail** at Bluett's Block between Mt Stromlo and the Molonglo River. Again the ABR indicates that it generally inhabits the higher forests with leaf litter, but sometimes strays to lower

altitudes in nature parks around Canberra. A **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet**, which according to the ABR occasionally strays from coastal areas in the Illawarra region, or escapes from local aviaries, was recorded by Christine D at the Erindale College playing fields on 12 June. Small numbers of **Musk Lorikeets** continue to be reported from nearby Wanniasa where Chris Hastir reported a **White-headed Pigeon** in her garden on 6 June. The ABR reports the latter as visitors presumably from populations on the coastal plains and ranges to the east. In contrast the **Great-crested Grebe** has not been reported at Yerrabi Pond since 19 May, and the **Apostlebird** not from North Watson since 4 June. I expect the former has moved on but it is unclear whether the latter has, or is simply no longer "reportable".

The most significant report of breeding during the period has been of a female **Hooded Robin** photographed by Kym Bradley collecting nest material on 16 June. The photo shows it taking bark from a dead tree, so building appears to have been well advanced. Other reports of breeding are limited to **Australian Wood Ducklings** at the Fadden Pond mid-month, as well as a number of reports of adults checking out likely trees towards the end of June. This is as expected as the ABR notes that in 2015-2016 there were reports of breeding (most frequently being dependent young) in all months except (surprisingly) July.



Hooded robin, collecting nest material

Kym Bradley

That the breeding season is yet to start in earnest is underlined by the reports of continuing mixed feeding flocks (MFFs), mostly in the second half of June and more so than in May. Flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas** have been very obvious feeding on road verges and median strips, etc. As noted elsewhere in this issue the COG Wednesday walkers found them roosting in trees just inside the Callum Brae Reserve, with the birds gradually departing in flocks of about 50 birds heading for their feeding grounds. Bill Graham reports there have been swarms of **Common Starlings** roosting in the reed beds in Bonner. He estimated the group to be about 3,000 and noted they have been roosting there for a few months.

Another species known to roost and to undertake roost flights is the **Satin Bowerbird**. After a sudden influx of this species into my GBS site



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Good birding, good food ...

2017 Strzelecki Outback tour

3 to 22 September 2017

One place available

Tasmania bird & mammal tour Bruny Island, Melaleuca, pelagic trip 3 to 10 February 2018

Alice Springs birding tour

21 to 28 April 2018

Top End birding tour incl. Kakadu NP, Kununurra and Mitchell Plateau 23 May to 6 June 2018

Gulf of Carpentaria Cairns

Karumba, Cloncurry, Mt Isa, Winton
2 to 20 July 2018

Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range

26 July to 8 August 2018 part i & ii

New Caledonia birding tour

18 to 25 August 2018

includes Lifou and Ouvéa Islands

Strzelecki Track Outback tour

2 to 21 September 2018

Plains-wanderer weekends

2 & 3 December 2017

20 & 21 October 2018

3 & 4 November 2018

17 & 18 November 2018

1 & 2 December 2018

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website.

www.philipmaher.com

over the past month I have observed signs of up to 20 of them undertaking roost flights. This was on a very similar route (though in the reverse direction as they flew towards Cooleman Ridge in the evening) to my **Red-rumped Parrots** from March to May 2017 (as recently published in CBN). Finally Ryu Callaway still hasn't been able to locate the roost site for the **Silver Gulls** he has been observing on their evening roost flights over his house.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoos on lawns in front of Old Parliament House

Wendy Whitham

So please keep up the reports of the spring/summer migrants staying over winter, of those rarer species that come down from the mountains into Canberra to spend the winter here, for large single species flocks and MFFs, for roost flights and roosting behaviour, as well as for any winter breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database. Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, postings on the COG E-mail Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia web site, as well as some direct correspondence to me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Jack Holland



Bush Stone-Curlew, Mulligan's Flat

Julie Clark



LOIRE VALLEY TIME TRAVEL

The Loire Valley is riddled with caves. They are not natural but the result of over 2000 years of limestone quarrying. In the winter they provide a perfect habitat for hibernating bats, but their constant humidity and temperature also provide perfect habitat for winemakers.

A visit to a small family run winemaker here can be a fascinating experience. The area excels in light tannic reds, crisp fruity whites and vintage sparkling wine. If you have ever wondered if the French concept of terroir really exists, a visit to any of our carefully chosen winery partners will convince you. Equally impressive is how open and honest the winemakers are. Ask a question about winemaking and vineyard management and you will get a direct and detailed answer.

Winemakers are very aware of their heritage, but are also open to improving their wine by adopting new practices. We highly recommend including a tasting on your itinerary with us.

Susan & Simon

www.tourtheloire.com

[loirevalleytours nature walks](http://loirevalleytours.com/nature-walks)

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

contact@tourtheloire.com

Seeking Roosting Site Data

I am currently compiling data on roost sites of communally roosting species around Canberra. Communally roosting species refers to those species for which dispersed individuals of one or more species gather to roost together overnight. Some examples of communally roosting species include, but are by no means limited to, cockatoos, corellas, starlings, ibis and cormorants. Data is being gathered for any and all such species.

It is intended that this will feed into a proposed annual roost census starting next year, which will aim to have all known roosts of select species surveyed simultaneously by COG members and fellow birders to gain a better idea of the population of those birds in Canberra. The data being sought is as follows:

Roost Flight Observations

By combining roost flight observations from multiple observers, a fairly good idea can be obtained of where unidentified roosts in less frequented locations may occur. Some species are also easier to count on their roost flight.

Roost flights generally take place in the evening or at dusk as birds head for their roost site, and can consist of one or few very large flocks moving purposefully in a set direction, or constant movement of individuals and small groups in a consistent direction over a duration of time. You can expect to see similar movement repeated on differing days.

Please supply the following details:

- **Species**
- **Coordinates or address** of the location from which you made your observations
 - If birds are not flying directly overhead or through the immediate vicinity, please *also* provide an approximate location or landmark over which they are likely to be flying
 - ✦ Eg. If your observations are of birds moving in the valley as viewed from the top of a hill, or of distant high-flying flocks.
- **Direction of flight** (the direction in which they are heading, such as E or NW, although obvious landmarks that birds are headed for are also okay)
- **Contact details** of observer (name and email)
- Any other useful **notes** (timing of flight (eg. 40 to 15 minutes before last light), the sort of flight, rough flock size or the number of flocks etc.)

Roost Site Observations

Roost sites are locations where communally roosting birds gather to sleep overnight.

Please supply the following details:

- **Species**
- **Location** (coordinates, along with a description or map to identify the expanse of area would be appreciated)
- Rough indication of the **number of birds** (are we talking a few dozen, a few hundred, or thousands?)
- **Direction of arrival** (If known: do birds fly in from all directions, or perhaps only from the southern and eastern aspects?)
- **Seasonality** (If known: is this roost used all year, seasonally, sporadically, or temporarily?)
- **Contact details** of observer (name and email)
- Any other useful **notes** (timing of arrival (time before last light), etc.)

If multiple species share the roost site, please make a note of that and supply details for each species if they differ.

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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

Figure 1



Decimal coordinates are preferred. This can easily be obtained through clicking on the location in satellite view on Google Maps, and copying the coordinates (see Fig 1).

Please keep an eye out for roost flights and roost sites over the coming weeks and months, and email these ob-

servations, along with details of any communal roost sites that you may already know of, directly to me or via roostcensus@canberrabirds.org.au

Ryu Callaway



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

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Field Trip Reports

Sunday 4 June – Brooks Hill Nature Reserve near Bungendore

Seventeen stalwart COG members assembled in the fog at the Brooks Hill Nature Reserve carpark, and immediately recorded a **Pied Currawong** (the only one for the day!!). The leader suggested reversing the planned route to increase the probability of being in the sun. A good idea but the fog didn't comply. Some of the mistletoe was flowering so we studied it closely, but an **Eastern Spinebill** was all we noted using it. However, we got a good view of a **White-eared Honeyeater** perched at the top of a dead tree. We then didn't see or hear much else until a mysterious call had us in hot pursuit. After chasing various calls we finally saw the caller, a **Brown Thornbill** doing good mimicry of White-browed Scrubwren, Buff-rumped Thornbill and what was probably a whistler call. Soon after this, near the top of the hill, and with a patch of weak sun, we scored: a flock of **Varied Sittella**, one of which was kind enough to feed in clear view so that all the new birders got a good look, along with **Scarlet Robin** (male and female), several **White-throated Treecreeper**, some **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Striated Thornbill**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Golden Whistler** (female) and **Grey Shrike-thrush** to add to our list. This was the most productive birding we had during the morning although, on our return down the old road, we did add **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Grey Fantail** and **Australian Magpie**.

Michael Robbins

Sunday 18 June – Superb Lyrebird survey at Tidbinbilla NR

The fourteenth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird** was run under perfect conditions with a cool morning, no wind and clear skies. The survey is designed to provide an index of population numbers within the Reserve since the 2003 bushfires. This survey was dedicated to the memory of Ed Slater whose images and sound recordings greatly improved our knowledge of the Lyrebirds in the Reserve.

Eighteen COG members and friends were assembled at the car park by 8.00 am and after breaking up into teams we soon started to survey the five main walking trails. In addition, because of the number of volunteers, it was possible to survey the Lyrebird Trail. The trail is not part of the original five because it was not until sometime after the 2003 fire that the trail was reopened.

Taking a minimum count, 26 individual **Superb Lyrebirds** were recorded within the Reserve (Gibraltar Rocks-1, Devil's



White-eared Honeyeater

Graham Stephenson



Superb Lyrebird

David Cook

Gap-0, Fishing Gap-5, Ashbrook-0, Camel Back-20); see Figure 1. Although no birds were recorded on the Ashbrook Trail there was a single bird calling past the end of the trail and allocated to the Camel Back observations. Seven birds were recorded from the Lyrebird/Cascades Trail, of which five were also recorded from the Camel Back Trail. In addition, the same bird that was allocated from the Ashbrook Trail was also recorded from the Lyrebird/Cascades Trail leaving a single sighting allocated to the Lyrebird/Cascades Trail and not included in the totals. On the Camel Back Trail there were 18 locations at which Lyrebirds were recorded. At one location three birds were recorded giving a total of 20 birds. On Friday 23 June the Camel Back was surveyed by Chris Davey over the same time, distance and weather conditions and a count of 16 Lyrebirds from 16 locations confirmed a larger number than usual in the area.

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During the Sunday survey 35 bird species were recorded with the number seen depending very much on the trail walked; Gibraltar Rocks-28, Devil's Gap-24, Fishing Gap-15, Ashbrook-12, and Camel Back-11 with 12 species reported from the Lyrebird Trail. There was an increase in the total number of species from 29 last year with an increase from all trails apart from the similar number from the Camel Back Trail. As usual, a greater number of species were recorded from the dryer western-facing slopes.

A reduction in the number of **Superb Lyrebirds** records from the dryer western-facing slopes with an increase in the Camel Back-Lyrebird/Cascades area may be an indication that the latter area is increasingly becoming favoured as the understory thins out after the 2003 bushfires. Only time will tell.

There were five species reported from the six trails: **Crimson Rosella, White-throated Treecreeper, White-browed Scrubwren, Striated Thornbill and Brown Thornbill**, with the **Grey Shrike-thrush** being recorded from all trails apart from the Lyrebird Trail.

Species seen from one track only included the **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Satin Bowerbird, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Little Raven, and Pied and Grey Currawong**. Interestingly, two **Eastern Whipbirds** were recorded along Mountain Creek, a species reported from this area recently by others and so they may be establishing themselves within the Reserve.

Many thanks to the participants and to the authorities for waiving the entry fees.



White-browed Scrubwren

David Cook



Satin Bowerbird

Julian Robinson

Chris Davey

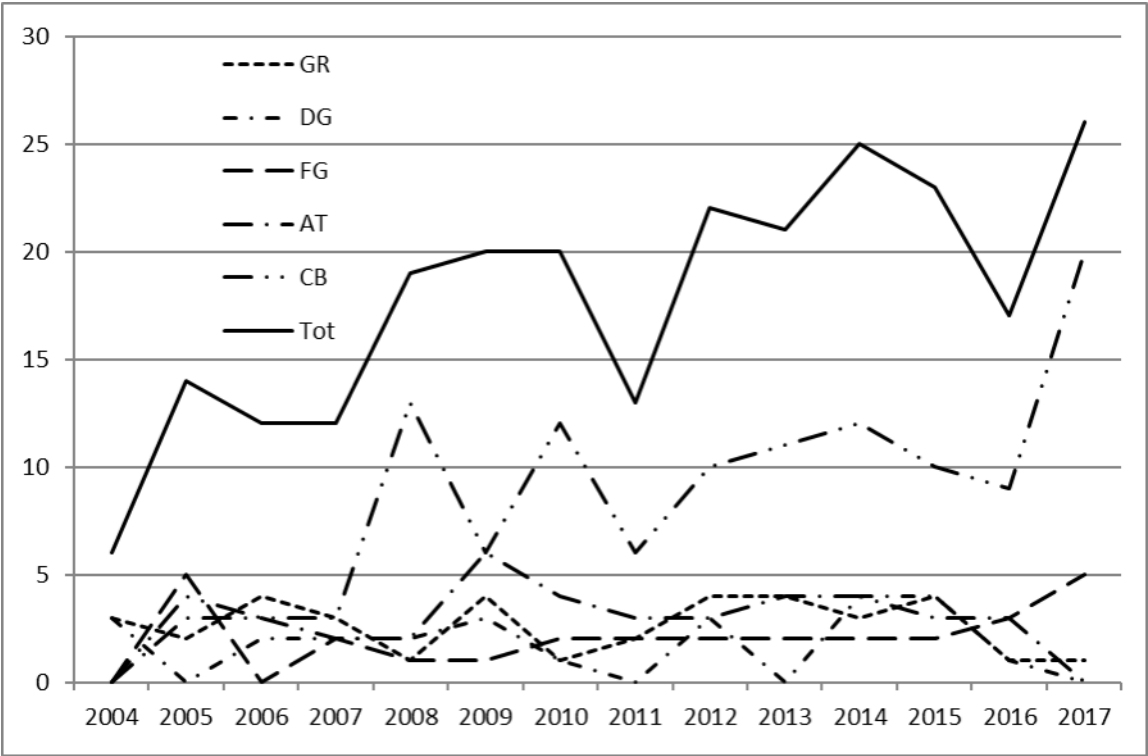


Figure 1. Numbers of Superb Lyrebirds recorded from walking trails at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, 2004-2017. GR- Gibraltar Rocks, DG-Devils Gap, FG-Fishing Gap, AT- Ashbrook Trail, CB-Camel Back, Tot- Total number of birds.

Wednesday 21 June - Callum Brae NR

A cold and very foggy scene greeted the 20 members who gathered on Narrabundah Lane at 9am. Dimly visible through the vapour were about 200 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and 150 **Little Corellas**, roosting in trees just inside the Reserve. The birds were gradually departing in flocks of about 50 birds (and 100+ decibels) heading for their feeding grounds on the lawns and nature strips of the urban area.

It was somewhat surprising in view of the temperature to find **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and female **Rufous Whistler**. These are all usually regarded as summer migrants. Of the few species which come to the ACT for winter the only sighting was a male **Golden Whistler**. To the surprise of those attending we saw no Flame Robins.

The first mixed flock encountered, near the quarry fence line as the fog lifted, included 2 **Speckled Warblers**, 4 **Superb Fairy-wrens**, 10 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and the first pair of **Scarlet Robins**. We met at least 4 pairs of **Scarlet Robins** in total during the walk.

The final large flock was approximately 50 **Welcome Swallows** near the entrance to Callum Brae homestead. Two further flocks of approximately 20 birds each were seen in the latter stages of the walk.

We totalled 35 species and a full list can be found on [eBird](#).

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 25 June – Wanniasa Hills and Fadden Pond

Fourteen COG members assembled at the ridiculously early hour of 8am on the coldest morning of the year to date (-5.5), where, surprisingly, the skies were clear and there was no fog. The immature **Purple Swamphens** at Fadden Hills Pond were still being babied by their parents and being fed, and 3 **Australian Wood Duck** ducklings had survived the cold. We admired the bird mural on the pump station, which depicted more birds than the real birds we saw elsewhere in the uncharacteristically quiet gully, perhaps due to it still being shaded by the hills to the east. Even so, we recorded 19 species around the pond.

We then walked up Wanniasa Hills, where the sun was shining. The first mixed feeding flock consisted of a healthy mix of species including **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **Golden Whistler**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Brown** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Striated Pardalotes**, and many **Spotted Pardalotes** and **Weebills**. Then came the highlight of the morning, an **Australian Hobby**. It streaked over us before landing in a nearby eucalypt, where some **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and a **Galah** put on a show trying to scare it away while the Hobby held its ground.



Australian Hobby being harassed by Galah and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Wanniasa Hills
Ryu Callaway



Australian Hobby, Wanniasa Hills

Ryu Callaway

The next gully, below the dam that was still covered with a thin sheet of ice, yielded further **Scarlet Robins** as well as a **Willie Wagtail**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, 2 **Grey Shrike-thrush**, and pleasantly, 2 **Speckled Warblers**. Heading up to the smaller trig, 3 pairs of **Red-rumped Parrots** posed for photos on their nesting tree in spectacular light, and an amusing mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos all lay down in exactly the same orientation and posture. After cherishing the beautiful fog-free views of the Tuggeranong Valley, the morning was wrapped up nicely with an easy downhill stroll, where some late morning **Australian White Ibis** were observed on their return roost flight in the distance, making 31 species for the reserve.

We collectively recorded a total of 39 species for the morning.

Thanks to Lia for managing the species list.

Ryu Callaway

Future Field Trips

Each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form at the start of each trip, and before proceeding on the trip, which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An Emergency Contact Name and Number are required.

"I declare that I am capable of undertaking the 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 that I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group."

Changes to trips are notified on the COG chatline

<http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>

and on the trips page of the COG website.

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.

Sunday 2 July – Orroral Valley (instead of Bungendore area)

Meet at Kambah Village at 8.30am for carpooling. We will drive to the old Orroral Tracking Station site stopping at least twice along the way with the aim of seeing a range of grassland, bush and water birds. Bring morning tea.

Contact Michael Robbins

mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au if you need further information.

Sunday 16 July – West Hume

For about 18 months I have been visiting the developing West Hume industrial area, and been surprised by the variety of birds in this very unlikely area. This walk will take in some of the areas I visit, including wetlands, a heritage-listed old homestead and some woodland. Meet at 9.00am on Tralee St - turn right at the roundabout and park along the road. No need to book.

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 19 July – Tidbinbilla NR

Meet in the car park at Tidbinbilla NR at 9:00am. It is intended to do the 3km Birrigai Time Trail Walk with particular hopes of sundry Robins! The walk is rated as "easy".

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 23 July – Tuggeranong Hill

Meet at Kambah Village at 9 am for carpooling. Then we will drive to Callister Cres, Theodore, and walk through the nature reserve to Conder. Bring morning tea.

Contact Lia Battisson on 0412 788 791

or liabattisson@grapevine.com.au if you need further information.

Saturday 5 August – Lake Ginninderra beginners outing

This is the second of our bird walks for 2017 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 0419 202 155 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close

Park - see Yellow Pages Map 38, ref A9).

We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide.

Tuesday 8 to Friday 11 August — Wonga at Bawley Point

The last August visit to Bawley Pt. was very successful because the milder, early spring weather featured blossom-laden trees with a profusion of honeyeaters including photo opportunities for **Scarlet Honeyeaters** right on the doorstep. Other target species are **Bassian Thrush, Hooded Plovers, Black-faced Monarchs** and **Topknot Pigeons**.

Very comfortable and reasonably priced accommodation is available, with limited camping also allowed for the more rugged types. Carpooling from Canberra is an option.

This trip is restricted to 14 persons. Contact Terry Bell for bookings and further details by email (preferred) terrybellbird@gmail.com or mobile 0427 292 298.

Sunday 20 August – Monga National Park – day outing

David McDonald will lead a day outing to this area of wet forest just before the escarpment around 20 km east of Braidwood off the Kings Highway. Target species include the **Black-faced Monarch, Pilotbird, Olive Whistler, Bassian Thrush** and **Pink and Rose Robins**.

Meet at 8.00 am in the Spotlight carpark in Queanbeyan, for carpooling. Suggested contribution to drivers from each passenger: \$10. Bring lunch and drinks. Comprehensive information about the National Park and its birds is found in the wonderful book, Steller, R (ed.) 2005, *Monga intacta: a celebration of the Monga Forest and its protection*, the author, Braidwood, N.S.W.

Registration for this trip is essential: please phone David McDonald on 0416 231 890 or email monga2017@canberrabirds.org.au.

David McDonald

Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 September - Eden pelagics

COG will run two pelagic trips over the first weekend in September. At this stage I am seeking expressions of interest for these trips. The cost will be \$110 per day, and the trips start from the Eden wharf at 7am each day. Please contact me to put your name on the list if you've not

already done so. I will confirm your attendance and request payment closer to the time.

After many years as our resident expert, Anthony Overs will no longer be undertaking the pelagic trips. His expertise, enthusiasm and willingness to educate us about seabirds have been much appreciated. Tobias Hayashi has agreed to take over this role.

Sandra Henderson, shirmax2931@gmail.com

Wednesday 6 September – mid-week Early Spring Mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Some aspects are expected to be the same as previous trips; ie cost of \$20 for transport by two 12-seater buses, starting at 8 am, and running until mid-afternoon (please bring morning tea and lunch). However, as it's a week day it allows consideration of destinations which would not normally be visited on a weekend bus trip.

The point of departure will also be different and we've been looking at relatively central places accessible by public transport and where the all day parking is free. Current places being investigated include adjacent to Cooleman Court on the western side of Liardet St Weston that abuts Streeton Drive, or the part of the Curtin shops car park adjacent to the Statesman Hotel.

To keep it fresh we are again looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we again plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and will be able to see some interesting birds. The final itinerary (and point of departure/parking) will depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating in this usually popular outing, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 H or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com) to book your seats.

Could you please advise when booking if you will be using public transport to get to the meeting point, and from where?

Jack Hollands and Jenny Bounds

Woodland Surveys - winter survey round

Compiled by Jenny Bounds
(Part 1, other sites' reports next month)

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 25 June, in fine and clear conditions, with not much frost and some light breeze. Bird numbers at some sites were a bit on the low side (4 of the 24 sites had nil within the 50 metres survey plot), but we still managed 46 species total, which is reasonable for winter. Highlights were a flock of 25 **Varied Sittellas** moving through site 24 (a fairly open site with scattered trees), 3 **Superb Parrots** on the western ridge near Forde edge, and 3 in the large dam environs, an **Australian Hobby**, 3 **Freckled Ducks** and 5 **Pink-eared Ducks** on the large dam and an overwintering **Grey Fantail** at site 17 (a sheltered site with good tree cover). There were **Scarlet Robins** recorded at 7 sites across the reserve, and a few **Golden Whistlers** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** spending the winter there. **Speckled Warblers** were at 2 sites and 2 **King Parrots** recorded on the western ridge. Interestingly no Common Starlings or Silvereyes were recorded.

Goorooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the winter survey on Sunday 18 June, in cool but sunny conditions. Birding was very slow at most sites – the total species count was eventually 36, although just 24 of these were recorded during the 10 minutes counts – probably an all time low. Only a single small mixed flock was found, at site 2, which included **Brown, Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, and the only **Golden Whistler** for the morning, **Weebills** and **Superb Fairy-wrens**. A **Yellow Thornbill** (uncommon in the reserve) was also heard here after the survey time. Elsewhere, there was a **White-throated Treecreeper** calling at site 5 – a species that is only rarely recorded in the surveys, **Scarlet Robins** in a few places, and a couple of sightings of **Wedge-tailed Eagles**. A few species were in larger numbers than usual, including **Starlings** (150+), **Red-rumped Parrots** (30+) and **Welcome Swallows** (50+). The highlight was an **Australian Hobby** attacking **Starlings** perched in a large Blakely's Red Gum; it managed to grab one but the **Starling** escaped a few seconds later.

Majura Field Firing Range

With Paul Fennell confined to driving the vehicle (following some surgery), the survey sites were done by Barbara Allan and Paul's wife, Elsa. The first site surveyed, the Grenade Range (not far from the airport), was shrouded in fog, and produced only 5 species, including 60 **Common Starlings** and a **Grey Butcherbird** (not common in that area) with 3 of the usual suspects, **Magpie**, **Magpie-lark** and **Noisy Miner**. The next site (Site 2, normally a fairly interesting area) produced a **White-eared Honeyeater** as the only bird observed within the plot, with 4 others heard out of the 50 metres radius, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Red Wattlebird** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**.

The next site (Site 10), adjacent to a small dam at the far south of the Firing Range, and normally producing very few species was slightly better, with 2 **Pacific Black Ducks** on the dam, plus a **Scarlet Robin** and **Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** on site. Site 3 normally produces a reasonable range of birds (and some years ago recorded Hooded Robins) but on this day there were only 2 **Magpies** on site, and 2 **Noisy Miners** heard off site. Site 4 produced 3 species on site, **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Magpie** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, and half a dozen **White-winged Choughs** outside.

At the northern end of the Range, now into mid-morning, the haul was a little better. A mob of about 50 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** was seen at Site 7, and they probably moved to Mick's Dam (Site 8) to be recorded there also. There were 16 **White-winged Choughs** seen, a **Laughing Kookaburra** and a **White-eared Honeyeater** heard, plus 8 other species (nothing unusual for the site). A large mob of choughs (about 30) and quite a lot of **Crimson Rosellas** were seen when driving between sites.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz surveyed the lower slopes on the eastern side of Mt Ainslie on 25 June. The morning was crisp but fine, with only light wind. Species numbers ranged from 0 to 8 at the 9 sites, with an average of 4.9 species. Small bush birds were absent or present in only small numbers at most of the sites. A mixed feeding flock was encountered between sites consisting of 6 species, and a smaller one of 4 species at the last site. Both mixed flocks included **Speckled Warbler** (1 and 2 birds respectively). **Common Bronzewing** was recorded at 2 sites and later 8 birds flew into the woodland from the eastern paddocks. One **Mistletoebird** was heard and a group of 6 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** was present. The only other honeyeaters were **Noisy Miners** (at 7 sites). The species total at sites was 21 and a further 9 between sites.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on Saturday 24 June, a sunny morning with a cool, light breeze. A flock of 43 **Red-browed Finches** obligingly flying off the side of the dirt track into Site 1 was a good start - but that was one of the very few highpoints of the day. Apart from **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas** and **Noisy Miners**, bird numbers were very low in all sites and between sites. **Southern Whiteface** and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** were welcome sights and the absence of Common Starlings was a pleasant surprise. The species total of 21 must be the lowest ever for a Newline survey.

Symonston: Callum Brae NR/Isaacs Ridge NR

Sandra Henderson surveyed the sites in Callum Brae NR on 13 June, a non-foggy morning. Thirty-six species in total were recorded, with the majority in one or more of the survey sites. The most notable change from previous surveys was the presence of **Common Starlings** in a couple of sites. While these are not uncommon at Callum Brae, they are not usually within the survey sites, so they appear to be expanding within the reserve. **Australian Wood Ducks** were checking out likely trees, as were **Crimson Rosellas**. Five **Speckled Warblers** were seen, including three in a mixed flock near the trig close to the quarry fence. Well over 100 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were still present in roost trees near the entrance. A **Grey Butcherbird** ensured it was counted by swooping on an insect about a metre from Sandra's feet in one site.

The sites in Isaacs Ridge NR were surveyed on 19 June, another rare non-foggy morning. The species count was low (22), with the highlights being eight **Gang-gang Cockatoos** which flew into the first site from the quarry across the road, and two male **Mistletoebirds**. A **Wedge-tailed Eagle** flew into the first site well after the count at that site, and sat in a dead tree for some time.

Naas Valley rural leasehold

Julie McGuinness surveyed on Sunday 18 June, under a clear blue sky, with a fresh SE breeze moderately strong at times. This survey was probably the quietest on record. Only 14 species were recorded in the survey sites; most in very small numbers. Highest numbers were **Australian Wood Duck** (15) and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** (10). The sole mixed feeding flock was within a site: **Southern Whiteface** (2), **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** (10), **Diamond Firetail** (3), **Jacky Winter** (2) and **Scarlet Robin** (1). Between the survey sites, only five extra species were seen, including 24 **Red-rumped Parrots**. One bright thing - this survey was the first time in memory that no Common Starlings were seen.



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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barbdebruine@hotmail.com

This is the third of what we hope will be an ongoing series of articles for Gang-gang providing locals with tips, tricks and advice for effectively using eBird.

#3 eBird incidental records versus stationary and travelling counts

Incidental Observations are used primarily for bird observations made when birding was not your primary purpose.

According to eBird, of all the ways to count birds, 'incidental observations' are the least valuable in terms of analysis. Furthermore, in [How to Make Your Checklists More Valuable](#), eBird states 'the importance of using Incidental Observations only as a last resort cannot be over overstated'.

You may already have worked out that incidental observations are recorded differently in eBird; they are not recorded as a checklist.

So how do we get around this and add more value to our observations? The most obvious way is to spend some time recording all the birds in the location, rather than just that species that piqued your interest. By spending that time, you can answer 'yes' to the important question, 'was birding your primary purpose?' If you can answer yes, then record your observations as a 'stationary count' if you stayed within 30m or a 'travelling count' if you moved further.

This begs the question, what is the minimum amount of time required for a stationary count? It was a question that was discussed on the international eBird reviewers forum and one of the many considered responses was:

'...a 5-minute stationary count will often include a very large proportion of the species regularly frequenting that location. I will also note that the standard source of information on status of North American birds, the North American Breeding Bird Survey, is based on 3-minute counts, so [there] is ample evidence in my eyes that complete stationary counts shorter than 5 minutes in duration are also a rich and valuable source of information.'

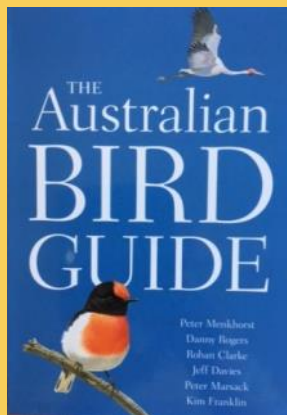
So our advice is, next time you are tempted to submit an incidental observation of a single species, consider spending a minimum of three minutes observing and also counting all the other birds in that location. Then you have a stationary count rather than an incidental observation.

Alastair Smith

ACT eBird reviewer and hotspot editor

This article is based on the author's contribution to eBird Australia 26 October 2015

BOOK OF THE MONTH



The Australian Bird Guide

Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin

The most comprehensive and beautifully illustrated field guide to Australia's unique birdlife.

The Australian Bird Guide is the most comprehensive field guide to Australian birds ever seen. The guide features around 4700 colour illustrations, with particular emphasis on providing the fine detail required to identify difficult groups and distinctive plumages. Comprehensive species accounts have been written by a dedicated team of ornithologists to ensure identification details, distribution and status are current and accurate.

The Australian Bird Guide sets a new standard in field guides, providing an indispensable reference for all birders and naturalists looking to explore Australia's magnificent and unique birdlife.

If you would like to order a copy, email: sales@canberrabirds.org.au.

Members' Price \$35.

Publications for sale

COG provides a range of bird watching 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

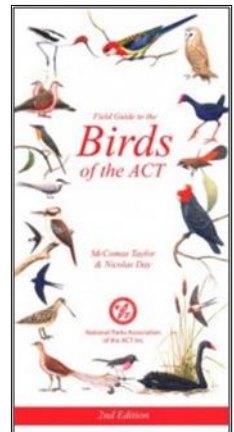
sales@canberrabirds.org.au

NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT
McComas Taylor & Nicolas Day

Sized to fit in your pocket, this compact field guide describes 207 birds seen in the ACT. An ideal bird guide for the local area.

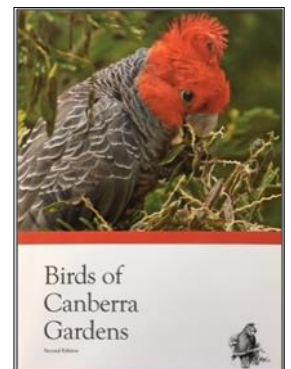
Members' price: \$20



Birds of Canberra Gardens
Canberra Ornithologists Group

This book is based on the observation of more than 200 bird species in and around Canberra suburban gardens and in adjacent Canberra parks and open spaces. It describes the abundance and distribution of birds, and discusses how the birds are likely to be found at different times throughout the year, and in different places. The book also provides some ideas on how your garden may be made more attractive to native birds.

Members' price: \$20

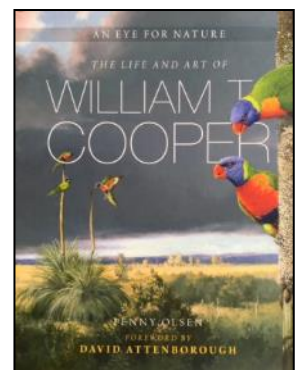


An Eye for Nature – The Life and Art of William Cooper

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



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

2017-2018 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

K Murphy
P Wilkinson
K Zwahlen & T McElroy
J Bulmer
T Clark

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for August 2017 edition

Wednesday 26 July 2017

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG E-mail Discussion List

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