



Gang-gang

JUNE 2017

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING

Wednesday 14 June 2017

7.30 pm.

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

The short talk will be given by GBS coordinator **Duncan McCaskill** on "**A short overview of the Garden Bird Survey**"- which is about to enter its 37th year of operation – "**what it is, a reminder of the rules for participants and a few interesting results from it**".

The main presentation will be by **Matt Herring** of Murray Wildlife on "**Bitterns in Rice Project: Five years On**".

With five rice seasons under its belt, the Bitterns in Rice Project has garnered much support for the marriage of farming and conservation in the New South Wales Riverina. It has uncovered some well-guarded secrets of the globally endangered Australasian Bittern and challenged the pervasive dichotomy of water resources, which posits agriculture

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

The weather for the four-week period from 27 April covered by this column has continued to be very mild and dry, with only a slight drop in maximum temperatures (indeed, as for April, it seemed to be warmest towards the end), and with little rain except for a significant overnight fall on the last weekend of the period.

It has been the quietest reporting period for some time, and in my (slightly biased) view the most remarkable observations have been of the very large flocks of birds posted by Ryu Callaway, especially on their evening roost flights. The most significant of these have been of **Silver Gulls** over or close to his home, with in one case his estimate being of 614 birds. He has now witnessed this on five occasions and, while it is expected they emanate from the Mugga Lane landfill, Ryu is unclear where they are going to. While they are heading for Lake Tuggeranong he has never seen gulls roosting there and in fact he has never seen more than a few dozen gulls there. So please watch out for these if you are in

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Azure kingfisher, Giralang

Duncan McCaskill

Everyone welcome

JUNE MEETING *continued...*

and the environment in opposition. Matt will detail the latest population monitoring results, with new insights into breeding ecology, and discuss bittern-friendly rice growing incentives, including the role of industry, government and consumers. There will also be an update on the satellite tracking work, which is helping to identify the network of wetlands that the bitterns depend on between rice seasons.



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

David Cook

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

that area close to dusk; you may be able to help him solve the puzzle.

Mid-month, Ryu also counted **Common Starlings** as they arrived to roost in the reeds at Point Hut Pond, and approximately 3200 gathered from the paddocks extending out towards Tidbinbilla. They came over in several flocks about 7 minutes from sunset, with the 2 largest flocks probably about 250 m wide on the front and extending 25 m back. This is something I have witnessed many years ago over my GBS site in Chapman, where only a few small flocks come through these days. Ryu has also shown me a photo taken from his back deck of ibis (many **Australian White Ibis**, and likely also coming from the tip) roosting individually in the Fadden pines. What is remarkable is that they can be so easily seen roosting individually towards the outside of the branches, different from my experience with other species that like to get inside for presumed greater protection from predators.

There have been a number of chatline postings of flocks of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, with again Ryu reporting the largest one of 140 birds down from Scrivener Dam where the Molonglo River meets Yarralumla Creek. On the same day, Ryu saw a large flock of 65 **Crested Pigeons** on the Melrose High School Oval, equal to the biggest flock reported outside the GBS in the 2015-2016 Annual Bird Report. However, Martin Butterfield posted the highest number of **Little Ravens** with 264 counted feeding in two separate flocks in recently cultivated land in the Hoskinstown area. In keeping with the drier times large numbers of waterbirds have also been reported, the most notable being over 150 **Pink-eared Duck** at Kelly Swamp/Fyshwick Sewerage Ponds on 28 April.

Readers will have seen the flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and (mainly) **Little Corellas** starting to feed on ovals, road verges and median strips, etc, so keep an eye out for and report any large single species flocks of birds

(especially on their roost flights), as well as for any mixed feeding flocks (MFF) which will continue to form until the new breeding season starts in a month or so.

Speaking of flocks of birds, the honeyeater migration season continued well into May, from memory the first time for quite a while, with Lindsay Hansch posting there were still plenty of them on the Tralee Flyway over Jerrabomberra on the morning of 3 May. Photos established the flock composition and 87% were **White-naped** and the remainder **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, as would be expected late in the season. On 10 May Jean Casburn posted that both species were still coming through the Murrumbidgee Golf Course, along with some **Red Wattlebirds**, 15 of which passed through my GBS site on 6 May, and with higher numbers continuing there (and elsewhere) due to the flowering ironbarks. A few of the former species may also be expected to stay over winter. However, one partial migrant that currently seems to be in very low numbers in my local patch of Chapman, Cooleman Ridge and Narrabundah Hill is the **Striated Pardalote**.

While the last **Dusky Woodswallow** record that I can find is of 17 birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands over 10 days ago on 13 May, it is too early to be clear on whether or not any will over-winter this year. So, watch out for them, especially near water which they seem to favour in winter. The other species which stay over winter in small numbers, the **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Fantail**, were still reported over the last weekend of the reporting period. However, there have been no further reports of the earlier leaving migrants mentioned in last month's column, except for the **Superb Parrot**, **Tree Martin**, **Mistletoebird** and **Australian Reed-Warbler**, which were all still observed on the last weekend of the reporting period. Similarly the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, our least migratory cuckoo species, was also still reported then.

Of the later arriving altitudinal migrants, on 1 May eight **Flame Robins** (only one single male which often seem to arrive later) had returned to the only spot outside of my normal range on the SW side of Cooleman Ridge where I can still reliably find them. However, the numbers in other open peri-urban areas around Canberra is not yet clear. **Rose Robins** are still being observed from the ANBG, from where a **Pink Robin** was last reported on 5 May. As far as I can tell **Crescent** and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** have not yet been reported from urban Canberra, though there was a report of a single **Swift Parrot** on Mt Ainslie/Campbell Park on 1 May. A sometimes winter visitor to the ANBG (for reasons which are unclear) is the **Brown Gerygone**, with a single bird reported from there on 14 May.

So keep an eye out for them as well as the **Restless Flycatcher** which is often also a winter visitor, again for unclear reasons. On 19 May Marnix Zwankhuisen posted that one was back at his work that morning in Tuggeranong, where a bird has spent the colder months in previous years. He noted that, surprisingly, it was at the bike shed amid the asphalted car park some 150 metres from any suitable habitat. Interestingly the bird seen by the COG Wednesday walkers at West Belconnen Ponds on 17 May was also near the parked cars. On 23 May Jean Casburn reported one at Narrabundah Hill, the first time I can recall one being in this area for over 5 years.

As might be expected from a quiet reporting period there have been limited reports of "unusual" species, the most notable being an **Azure Kingfisher** reported by Duncan McCaskill on Ginninderra Creek in Giralang on 9 May. This bird does not seem to have stayed around unlike the **Great-crested Grebe** at Yerrabi Pond, which was still reported on 19 May, though there was limited chatline discussion about it after the first week of the month. On 21 May Shorty reported two **Musk Lorikeets** from Callum Brae, and on 23 May Sandra Henderson reported two feeding in flowering ironbarks in Wanniasa, at a spot they are known to favour.



Musk Lorikeet, Callum Brae

Shorty



Australian Ornithological Services

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South Yarra 3141
Victoria

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enquiries@philipmaher.com

Good birding, good food ...

2017 tours

Queensland's Gulf Country
Cairns to Mt Isa and Winton
26 June to 13 July
Two days added for Rusty Grasswren.

Atherton Tablelands FNQ
17 to 22 July

Iron Range NP FNQ
22 to 30 July. One place left

New Caledonia
includes Lifou an Ouvéa Islands
5 to 12 August

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2017
2 & 3 December 2017

Some 2018 tours

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

Alice Springs birding tour
21 April

Top End birding tour incl. Kakadu NP,
Kununurra and Mitchell Plateau
29 May to 9 June

New Caledonia birding tour
includes Lifou an Ouvéa Islands
4 to 11 August

Strzelecki Track Outback tour
2 to 21 September

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

There was still some breeding reported during May, including a report by Jean Casburn on 4 May of a male **Australasian Darter** on a nest with pink-headed frail young at the known breeding area on the lower Molonglo River. A **Little Pied Cormorant** was also on a nest with 3 pink – headed nestlings. This is a very early stage of the breeding cycle even taking into account they are autumn breeding species; most records would be expected to be like the immature Darter also seen begging to be fed. On 9 May Tonya Haff noticed some **Noisy Miners** in Ainslie collecting nesting material, which was interesting as Martin Butterfield pointed out the graph in the COG Bird Info page on our web site for this species shows nest building in every month **except** May. On two occasions during May I've seen dependent young **Gang-gang Cockatoos** being fed by their parents in my local patch. Young of the cockatoo species often seem to remain dependent for a long time after fledging, so watch out for them, as well as any other signs of breeding during June.

So please keep up the reports of the spring/summer migrants staying over winter, of those species that are still to 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, and 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



Great Crested Grebe meets Coot

Steve Wallace



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

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

contact@tourtheloire.com

Request for Little Eagle observations

We seek the help of COG members and others to support research on Little Eagles by reporting sightings from the ACT region. Some explanation about the research follows.

Recent news

Many of you will be aware from previous posts and media coverage of the male Little Eagle from Riverview whose tracker shows he has been near Daly Waters (NT) for several weeks. The media release [here](#) includes photos and a map, and a request for observations.

This is his second winter foray away from our region since the tracker was attached. Based on the previous year, we hope to see him back at Riverview in September in time for the 2017 breeding season.

What information is required about this species?

Little Eagles are one of the most poorly known birds of prey, so there is much to learn. The Action Plan for the Little Eagle makes it a priority to obtain information about habitat use and movement patterns. A knowledge of year-round population movements will assist conservation of the eagles in the ACT and beyond. Such information will also improve the understanding of habitat use, breeding, feeding and threats. Movements are expected to vary with age, sex and seasonal conditions. Tracking and banding will eventually yield information on age of first breeding, longevity, nest fidelity and mate fidelity.

Multi-agency collaborative research

The study initiated in 2015 to look at the movements of the Riverview pair has been a helpful start. The behaviour of the Riverview male is fascinating but information from multiple birds is essential. It is time now to broaden the research to look at the local population of Little Eagles. With this in mind, a new coalition of researchers and developers has formed, including Government, CSIRO, universities and Ginninderry Joint Venture. The group will be ready to attach tracking packs to more eagles in time for the coming breeding season.

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Female of 1st Inner North pair



Female of 2nd Belconnen pair



Male of 2nd Belconnen pair

Photos by Don Fletcher

Request for Little Eagle observations *Continued...*

Tracking backpack design

The tracker is a 22g solar-powered backpack which the manufacturer expects to work for 18-36 months. The \$4,200 tracker records its GPS position at scheduled times each day and transfers these coordinates to the researcher the next day via satellites and the internet. The harness is designed to break after several years, releasing the eagle from the backpack. The backpack also transmits a radio pulse for a brief time each day and this enables it to be located manually.



Tracking pack visible on male of
1st Belconnen pair *John Bundock*

Leg bands

Because this is a long-lived species, it seems likely that tracked individuals will remain in, or continue returning to, the ACT region for years after their tracking packs have dropped off. For that reason, coloured leg bands with large numbers will also be fitted which will enable researchers and COG members to identify individuals flying overhead using powerful cameras. Telescopic observation of perched birds is potentially another way to read the bands although the feathered 'boots' may obscure the band during perching. Long-term observations of identifiable birds could contribute to solving questions about mate fidelity, nest fidelity, longevity and age of first breeding. We will give information about banding in a future email.

Nest cameras

Recording prey brought to the nest with automatic cameras will be an adjunct to conventional diet analysis of regurgitated pellets and prey remains.

Local breeding territories

For the research to proceed it is essential to have a pool of nesting pairs to work with. Four were found in 2016 but we became increasingly aware how well a breeding pair can remain undetected. As well as checking the territories that were active in 2016, in 2017 we will make targeted searches in other places where Little Eagles have been sighted.

Two Belconnen pairs and two Inner-North pairs commenced nesting in 2016. (The exact locations are not revealed.) One pair abandoned but at least two others fledged one young. It seems that there are more breeding pairs and active nests to be found by careful observation during the 2017 season. Areas of particular interest will be (a) south of the Molonglo, (b) the area to the west of a line from Narrabundah Hill to Mt Stromlo, and (c) nearby NSW, additional to the nest on Sutton Rd, which also produced a fledgling in 2016.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FROM COG MEMBERS

[We will email separately about August-November observations closer to the time.](#)

Right now (June-July) there are a few Little Eagles remaining in Canberra such as the one reported on this chatline which was regularly roosting on Red Hill during April. No one knows what proportion of these are (a) adults remaining on their summer territories, (b) adults relocated, (c) juveniles, or (d) adults from elsewhere possibly in transit through the ACT. We are keen to find out more about these 'winter eagles' and would appreciate being told of any sightings of Little Eagles so we can identify locations where a bird is being seen repeatedly. Simply report your sightings to us as well as to the chatline.

Michael Mulvaney and Don Fletcher

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 30 April – Murrumbateman TSRs and reserves

A perfect autumn day saw 13 COG members and friends meet the leader Bill Graham at Hall where we carpoled and headed off to the Nanima TSR along the Murrumbateman-Gundaroo Road. The open grassy-woodland, 12 ha TSR needed a good burn or crash graze but we managed 29 species. Of note was the **Jacky Winter** in full song as we arrived and the 20 **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, 45 **Dusky Woodswallows** hawking and bathing high up in the wet leaves whilst 2 **Scarlet Robins** were kind enough to give us their occasional song. Some of the Eucalypts were in flower which the **Yellow-faced**, **White-eared** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** much appreciated.

After an hour we moved on to McLeods Nature Reserve on the Gundaroo-Collector Road where we concentrated our activities on the drier Brittle Gum/Stringybark/Red Box section of the Reserve. The area was quiet but we managed 16 species, with the only honeyeater the **White-eared Honeyeater** and four species of **Thornbill**, **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped**, **Striated and Brown** of note. Surprising to me were the 2 **Mistletoebirds**.

We then moved on for a snack at the Gundaroo Cemetery where there was more interest in the headstones than the birds but we recorded 14 species with a single **White-naped Honeyeater** and 3 **Little Ravens** of note.

Our final stop was at the Bedulluck TSR. We spent most of the time in a treed corridor planted some time ago by the Yass Pasture Protection Board along the side of the Barton Highway where, despite it being early afternoon, we recorded 8 species including a **Common Blackbird** and the usual **Grey Shrike-thrush**. A great day out and thanks to the leader, with a total of 35 species for the outing.

Chris Davey

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Jacky Winter, Murrumbateman

Ryu Callaway



Mistletoebird

Geoffrey Dabb



White-naped honeyeater

Geoffrey Dabb

Sunday 14 May – Yass Gorge

Twenty members met in Hall to carpool and drive to Yass, where we joined members of the Yass Gorge Landcare Group, as well as members of the public. Damon Oliver, from the Queanbeyan office of the NSW Dept of Environment and Heritage, addressed the group before we set off on a leisurely stroll along the southern bank of the Yass River, from the Warrambalulah St crossing to the weir and back. The landcare group has been working very hard over the last couple of years to clear out the weeds and already their hard work is starting to pay off, with native vegetation beginning to emerge.

A total of forty-two species was observed. Flocks of **Silvereye**, including some from Tasmania, streamed along the river, totalling about 60 in all. Other highlights were **Yellow Thornbill** and a **Collared Sparrowhawk**, which was seen at the very last minute. Members of the group heard **Speckled Warblers** and a **Scarlet Robin**, but they were not seen. As we approached the weir it started to drizzle, so we wasted no time in returning to the cars, stopping only to have a look at the Tree of Significance, a large River Red Gum, on the northern side of the river. Thank you to Sue Lashko and coordinators from Yass for arranging and leading this outing.

Lia Battisson



White-faced heron, Yass Gorge

Ryu Callaway



Australasian Shoveler

Geoffrey Dabb

Wednesday 17 May – West Belconnen Pond

A very pleasant morning greeted 28 members and guests in Dunlop. The core element of the outing was a counter-clockwise walk around the pond.

Waterbirds were evident from the start including a group of 5 ducks with a significant Mallard element in their ancestry. Early sightings also included both small local grebes, **Black Swans**, **Hardhead**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australasian Shovelers** and **Grey Teal**. **Eurasian Coot**, **Australasian Swamphe**n and **Dusky Moorhen** were also seen, with three independent juveniles of the last species investigating a large drainpipe. The array of waterbirds was finished with a flying **White-faced Heron** and one each of **Straw-necked** and **Australian White Ibis**.

A fair collection of common urban land birds were seen, including a **Nankeen Kestrel**, 15 **Red-rumped Parrots**, 6 **Red Wattlebirds** in a single party (but not appearing to be hurrying to foreign parts) and 12 **Double-barred Finches**. The passerine highlight occurred after most people had left when a **Restless Flycatcher** was seen near the remaining



Restless Flycatcher, West Belconnen Pond

Duncan McCaskill

parked cars. It was still around and photographed on our return from the grassland.

We decided to explore the Dunlop Grassland as it was nearby. It was well grazed and as a result few birds were seen. We added **Flame Robin** (2 brown birds) and **Brown Falcon** to our day list.

In total we recorded 40 species.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 21 May – Mt Taylor

On a frosty but clear late autumn morning, a group of ten COG members met at the Waldock Street car-park entrance to Mt Taylor Nature Reserve. Before commencing the walk it was interesting to hear a little bit of history about the Indigenous areas of significance in the nature reserve from local park care member Kathy Eyles. We were fortunate to be greeted by the iconic **Gang-gang Cockatoo** before setting out to explore, with a flock of five birds briefly perching in a large eucalypt above our heads.

As the morning warmed to a comfortable temperature we strolled through the lower north-west slopes, noting the changes to the vegetation in the years since the 2003 fire. Of particular note was the increased density of the Drooping Casuarina. There is now a large food source here for the Glossy Black Cockatoo, so something to look out for in the future. With the sounds of **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Eastern Rosella** and **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater** around us, we visited one of the dams of the reserve to see a **Little Pied Cormorant** perched in a tree. A **Grey Butcherbird** was heard calling in the distance, as was the **Rainbow Lorikeet**, a bird that appears to be more common in Canberra as time goes on. A **Scarlet Robin** was heard calling from the distance and was only seen by a small number of the group towards the end of the walk. Of the smaller birds there were plenty of **Weebills** and **Yellow-rumped, Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** as well as a couple of **Brown Thornbills**.

A total of 34 species was seen during the morning. My thanks to Sandra Henderson for once again recording all the observations and entering them on eBird, and to Duncan McCaskill for sharing his photos in the same location. Hopefully COG can make a return visit to Mt Taylor next year.

Matthew Frawley



Gang-gang Cockatoo

Stuart Harris



Speckled Warbler, Mt Taylor

Duncan McCaskill



Yellow-rumped Thornbill

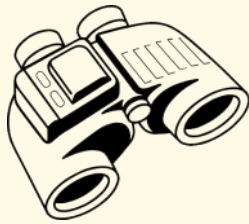
Duncan McCaskill

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

Renew Your COG Membership

Now is the time to renew your COG membership. Fees remain the same for this year at \$40 for an individual and \$45 for family membership.

The simplest way to do this is to complete and submit the online membership renewal form (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/joining-cog-and-renewing/>) and pay using electronic funds transfer. You can still also renew in person at a meeting (there will be someone taking memberships at the June meeting), or you can send your renewal by mail with a cheque.

If you still receive Gang-gang and/or Canberra Bird Notes by mail please consider whether this is necessary. As has been pointed out in recent annual financial reports, the costs of providing direct member services exceed the amount collected in subscription fees, so every member who elects to read the electronic versions instead of receiving a print copy reduces costs to COG. The online versions include colour photos, and notification of their availability is usually sent out several days before the print version is posted.



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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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 4 June – Brooks Reserve, near Bungendore

Brooks Hill Reserve is on the Kings Highway. Often passed, but less frequently visited, the reserve car-park is located on the right hand side at the bottom of the last hill before the flat stretch leading to Bungendore.

We'll plan to walk back up the old highway and then through the bush, which is fairly open, and not especially uneven ground, back to the car-park. We'll be out for about 2 to 3 hours, depending on how many birds are around, so those that need a mid-morning snack should bring one, as well as water, sunscreen and appropriate clothing.

Meet Michael Robbins (mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au) at 8.00am at Spotlight, Queanbeyan for carpooling, or 8.30am at the reserve parking area.

Sunday 18 June – Superb Lyrebird surveys at Tidbinbilla NR

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning's survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours. This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004.

If interested and for further details please contact Chris Davey by email chris_davey@aapt.net.au or MOB 0418 679 847.

Wednesday 21 June – Callum Brae

Meet at 9.00am on Narrabundah Lane, parking on the same side of the road as the Reserve.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 25 June – Wanniasa Hills and Fadden Pond

Arrive by 8.00am at Fadden Hills Pond located on the corner of Bugden Ave and Nicklin Cres. There are no proper parking arrangements in the area - note that the gravel parking near the tennis courts is for tennis club members only. I suggest you park along Stopford Cres or Nicklin Cres out of the way, and carpool if possible. We will spend some time loitering around the pond. A **Spotless Crane** was recorded last year although it is unlikely now due to work completed early this year to remove excess silt. The tree-lined **creek** occasionally presents some nice birds like **Rose Robin**, and there is a new bird mural to admire on the pump station.

We will then walk through Wanniasa Hills NR, doing a loop of the SW section before checking out a small dam. Mixed feeding flocks abound here over winter, and we can expect to get some very close-up views of **Golden Whistler**, **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Scarlet Robin**, pardalotes and a range of thornbills. Be prepared for some mildly steep and rocky sections; the exact route will depend on the movement of these flocks. We will return via the southernmost peak (the smallest but also with the best views). This may be a good opportunity for a quick snack while taking in the breathtaking views of Tuggeranong and the Brindabellas, with the possibility of a raptor or two. The whole morning should take about 3 hours, give or take an hour.

Ryu Callaway

Sunday 2 July – Bungendore area

Michael Robbins

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

Sunday 23 July – Tuggeranong Hill

Meet at Kambah Village at 9.00am 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 0412788791 or liabattisson@grapevine.com.au if you need further information.

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 7.00am 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, shirmx2931@gmail.com

This is the second 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.

#2 eBird checklist comments

It happens to most eBird users sooner or later. As you enter a list of bird sightings, you get an automated request to 'add comments' about an unusual bird or a high species total; or, on the smart phone app, you find a simple checkbox against the species (high count) or a checkbox indicating RARE.

For eBird reviewers, the comments provided by an observer are the difference between validating a record without question or starting an email chain with the observer to request additional details. All too often, the comments provided by observers are not helpful to reviewers. Comments such as 'best view ever!', 'two birds observed', 'lifer!!!', 'seen by six observers' or 'identified by Mark Cerise' provide nothing to the reviewer. Indeed these beg the question, 'just what was observed or identified?'

eBirders can make the reviewer's job much easier by entering appropriate remarks in the comments field.

There are two fields for comments in eBird.

Visit comments field - appears at the top of the list of species - is for general comments relating to the list as a whole. This is best used to describe your visit such as habitat, weather conditions and birding companions. This is where your comments like the ones above are appropriate.

Species comments field - the comment box next to each species that has to be filled in if you're entering a rare bird or a high count (in other words, a species that has triggered a filter). The most important and necessary information for reviewers is that you describe the field marks that enabled you to identify the bird and eliminate other species.

When describing a bird's appearance, it is best to start with how you identified to a group, and then describe the bird in detail, including notes on behaviour or voice. Include any media as an image or sound file are worth a thousand words, and save typing!

For high counts, useful comments include 'exact count', 'cumulative total' (for an exact count over time) or 'estimate' including comments on how you made the estimate such as 'counted by 10s'. Counts with repeating digits may lead to queries about whether they are typos; is that 2000 supposed to be 200, and was 111 Magpie-larks really 11 – or even 1? Entering comments such as 'number as recorded' and 'number double-checked' help answer that question. If you trigger a filter based on an estimate, then reconsider your estimate.

If a reviewer does ask for additional information, then please provide this expeditiously as your record sits in the review queue until finalised.

You may sometimes wonder why your record has triggered the filter. Sometimes filters are set low to catch possible misidentifications (eg flycatchers), early or late migrants, or to ensure the report is seen by others. Setting the filters low notifies local birders and subscribers to eBird regional rarities. In the ACT we have very fine filters because we have a relatively small geographical region and a very good understanding of abundance. Each time you trip a filter based on count, be proud that you are contributing to our knowledge of local avian abundance.

For more on how to estimate numbers, see these excellent eBird articles:

[Bird Counting 101](#)

[Bird Counting 201](#)

If you have any comments or would like the eBird reviewers to provide guidance or advice on a particular eBird topic, please get in touch.

Alastair Smith

ACT eBird reviewer and hotspot editor

berigora (at) gmail.com

This article is based on an original contribution to eBird Australia by Frank Antram.

Seeking Volunteer to assist with Woodland Surveys - Mt Majura Nature Park

COG has an important, long-term woodland bird survey at 15 locations around the ACT, including the woodland footslopes of Mt Majura (sites are off Antill St, Watson and Rivett St, Hackett).

The current site coordinators, Kathy Walter and John Goldie, are looking for someone to assist them to survey the sites, when they are away, possibly up to twice a year. The surveys are done quarterly, at the end of March, June, September and end November/early December, and there is flexibility to survey within a window of around a couple of weeks. John and Kathy often survey the 9 sites/plots over a couple of morning walks, but the survey can be done over one morning, several hours. We are looking for a confident birder, familiar with local bird species including a range of bird calls. Familiarisation with the sites and the woodland survey protocols will be provided.

Please get in touch with Jenny Bounds (Woodland Project Coordinator) to discuss: ph 6288 7802, or email cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au. Jenny will also be at the COG monthly meetings if anyone wants more details or to discuss further.



Mt Majura woodland

ACT Government Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate website



Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

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

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

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

Discounts available for Birdlife Australia members.

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

www.feathersnfriends.com.au

Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871
Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE—MALLACOOTA

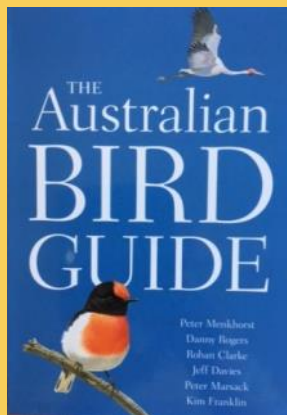
Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental. It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra).

10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town.

It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

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

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.

Orders taken now will only be available in **July/August**, because the sales team will be away through May and June.

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

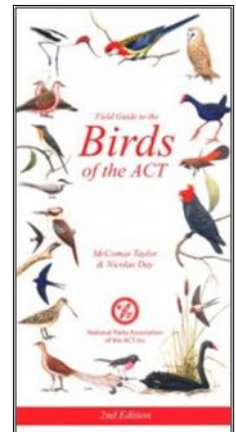
NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

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

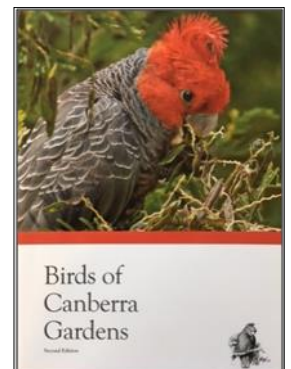


Birds of Canberra Gardens

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

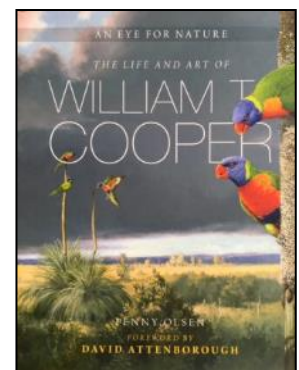


An Eye for Nature – The Life and Art of William Cooper

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:

D Weaver
B Carroll
E Guarracino
A Gavin

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for July 2017 edition

Wednesday 28 June 2017

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG E-mail Discussion List

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'CanberraBirds'.

Join (subscribe to) the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

To unsubscribe, either permanently or temporarily, send an email message to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@canberrabirds.org.au.

If you wish to re-subscribe after being unsubscribed temporarily, simply follow the 'subscribe' instructions above.

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Gang-gang

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