



# Gang-gang

**OCTOBER 2017**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## OCTOBER MEETING

**Wednesday 11 October 2017**

**7.30 pm.**

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

The first presentation will be a "supercharged BOM" (bird of the month) talk by **Geoffrey Dabb** entitled: *Are you absolutely certain which raven that is? Some thoughts on our two local ravens, with observations on: how the books have treated them; the identification problem; and the limitations of the field guide.*

The background story of how we have come to perceive our raven species extends from Gould to Toganmain Station to Trucking Yard Lane. Apart from the historical story, separating our two local species (Australian and Little Raven) in the field can be quite a challenge. However, today, the relative ease of capturing photographic images helps throw some more light on the finer points. It also draws attention to the problem that field guide authors have in trying to be helpful.

The main presentation will be by **Debbie Saunders**, a Post-doctoral Researcher at the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society on "Saving Our Swift Parrots".

This presentation will provide an overview of the NSW Environmental Trust "Saving Our Swift Parrots and

*Continued Page 2*

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

The weather since 28 August, ie slightly over four weeks since last month's column was written, has been of two roughly equal parts, the first remaining very cold and wintry and then seeming to go through a very compressed fortnight's spring straight into summer with a September record maximum of 30°C in the last weekend of the reporting period. Despite this change in temperatures, it has remained very dry and often also very windy. Coupled with the very dry inland where the crops are failing, this has had a profound effect on bird activity in the COG area of interest (Aoi). At first there was a very slow arrival of some of the earlier returning spring/summer migrants, then a rush of them from mid-month as the weather started to warm up, and then, in the four days after the record maximum, an avalanche of species, many of which I hadn't warned readers to keep an eye out.

*Continued Page 2*



Red-backed Kingfisher

*Kym Bradley*

**Everyone welcome**

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## September Meeting ... continued .....

Other Threatened Woodland Species” project, as well as provide the latest information on Swift Parrots within their breeding range. The recent results from the first radio-tracking study of Swift Parrots within their winter range will also be discussed.

The objective of the NSW Environmental Trust project is to improve the long-term viability of the critically endangered Swift Parrot population in New South Wales, as well as a diversity of co-occurring threatened woodland species and endangered ecological communities. We aim to achieve this by identifying priority sites, empowering established community networks and land managers to implement habitat rehabilitation and restoration works at these sites, and securing their long-term management, monitoring and protection.

We will also contribute to the ongoing state-wide volunteer survey coordination for monitoring Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters, and identify future state-wide habitat management requirements for Swift Parrots under climate change to enable long-term adaptive management for this dynamic migratory species. The project will be implemented across a diversity of tenures within two priority regions of NSW (south west slopes and central coast), where Swift Parrots have been repeatedly recorded over the past 18 years.

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

The first of these was the **Brown Songlark**, reported by Harvey Perkins at the National Arboretum on 22 September, where the next day 2 were reported and subsequently seen and admired by many. This is a grassland species that is usually present in the ACT only in very small numbers, one of the latest to arrive (often late October or even November) and the earliest to depart in January or early February, so it is clearly a sign of the parched inland. Interestingly, the related **Rufous Songlark** which I had mentioned and based on other species mentioned below might be expected to have arrived and to be established by now, was not reported until Jean Casburn observed a quiet bird on Narrabundah Hill on 26 September.

The second such species was the **White-browed Woodswallow**, at least 30 of which were first reported on the COG chatline by Bill Graham up high over Rowes Lagoon NE of Collector on 23 September. On the same day Steve Holliday reported on eBird a similar number flying over Mt Ainslie, but probably many, many more passing through, as he could often hear but not see them (the next day he reported 8 having landed at Goorooyarroo), with Kim Larmour also reporting 7 flying high over Cook. So please keep an eye out for the above species, as well as the **Masked Woodswallow** which often accompanies the closely related last named species, and sometimes outnumbers them. Indeed Michael Lenz reported a lone male in a tree on Lyneham Ridge on 26 September.

A fourth species not mentioned in my previous column was the **Eastern Koel** for which Neil Hermes announced the first arrival at the COG meeting on 13 September based on a report of a male calling in East Queanbeyan. There has been just the single further report to date on eBird of one in



**Brown Songlark**

*Julie Clark*

Watson on 18 September. The fifth species was a **Red-backed Kingfisher** reported by Kym Bradley by a COG chatline post (with lovely diagnostic images) on 26 September.

A sixth species not mentioned, partly because it isn't considered to be a spring/summer migrant, was the **Red-capped Robin**, for which there seems to have been an unprecedented influx, again very likely due to the very dry inland (the Annual Bird Report notes it as “a resident of inland woodlands, sometimes visiting the local region”). Over the past month 1 or 2 birds (about an equal mix of the highly coloured males and brown birds) reported from at least 18 different spots within the ACT (including 2 for the first time in my local patch of Cooleman Ridge), most recently at the National Library, as well as Carwoola and Yass Gorge. So please keep an eye or better an ear out for them,

their presence often being given away by their persistent old fashioned telephone ringing call.

Other species also first recorded earlier predicted have included the **White-winged Triller**, two of which were first reported by John Harris at his GBS site in Nichols on 3 September followed by one at the nearby Mulligans Flat NR by Cedric Bear on 11 September. Particularly towards and after the hot last weekend of the month, the number of sightings increased to include at least 9 other different locations, with Jean Casburn reporting at least 8 at Narrabundah Hill on 26 September. Likewise the **Sacred Kingfisher** was first reported early by John Harris in Nichols on 1 September as well as by Kym Bradley to the south of the ACT on 2 September, with sightings increasing from the middle of the month to 5 different spots. The **Rainbow Bee-eater** also seems to have arrived early, with the first reports being of 4 birds at the ANBG by Lindell Emerton on 13 September followed by the same number on the COG field trip to Gigerline (usually a good spot to find them) on 17 September. Interestingly I can't find any reports of them since, so these might have been passing through, with the birds that come here to breed still to arrive.

In contrast, a species that usually arrives in September, the **Leaden Flycatcher**, was not first recorded until Philip Veerman reported one on 26 September at Tuggeranong near the archery club. This is perhaps because it has a more coastal/eastern range rather than inland distribution, and has not been as affected by the very dry inland as have all the species above. However, another spring/summer migrant with an easterly distribution, the **White-throated Gerygone** was first reported to eBird by John Harris from his Nicholls GBS site on 3 September, followed by a report to me by Jo Whitten from the Pinnacle on 7 September. From mid-month it has been observed more widely from at least 14 different locations. Surprisingly, the **Western Gerygone**, with the more inland distribution, seems to have been less reported so far (from 6 different



Red-capped Robin

Julie Clark



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Good birding, good food ...

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

**Alice Springs & MacDonnell**  
**Ranges birding tour. Includes Sandhill**  
**Grasswren**  
21 to 28 April 2018

**Top End birding tour includes Kakadu NP,**  
**Kunnunurra & Mitchell Plateau**  
23 May to 6 June 2018

**Gulf of Carpentaria, Cairns, Karumba,**  
**Cloncurry, Mt Isa, Winton & Atherton**  
**Tablelands. Includes Rusty Grasswren**  
2 to 20 July 2018

**Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range**  
26 July to 8 August 2018 parts i & ii

**New Caledonia birding tour**  
**includes Lifou an Ouvéa Islands**  
18 to 25 August 2018

**Strzelecki Track Outback tour**  
2 to 21 September  
40 th tour!

**Plains-wanderer weekends**  
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](http://www.philipmaher.com)

locations), with most of them coming from Mulligans Flat NR, from where 2 were first reported on 9 September.

Most of the species that had arrived before the start of the reporting period were also well established by the end of the month, even if they were slow to arrive at the start. An exception seems to be the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** for which I can find reports from only 6 locations, with a number of subscribers to the COG chatline noting their relative absence so far. As noted in my previous column, this is a coastal/eastern species and thus not as affected by the dry inland as opposed to the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Pallid Cuckoo**, both of which from the many reports (including the former in Jean Casburn's Duffy GBS site) are clearly present in much higher numbers this year than in the past few, as seems to be the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**.

The **Noisy Friarbird** was also slow to arrive in numbers until about mid-September; for example, Ryu Callaway noted that they arrived in force to Fadden on 18 September, after having seen none around before that. Similarly there were few reports of the **Rufous Whistler** until mid-month, after which it has been widely observed. In contrast the **Dusky Woodswallow** didn't wait for the warmer weather, with John Leonard recording about 250 of them in the woodland south of the Namadgi Visitors Centre on 3 September. He noted that around 15:00-15:30 when the wind became very fierce they all landed in the trees lined up and close together. The following wet, cold and windy afternoon during the COG bus trip reccie, there was a big flock on the Tidbinbilla Rd just before Tracking Station turnoff.

Numbers of returning **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** also seemed to increase from mid-month, including a number of cases where they were seen migrating above tree top height in a similar fashion to that which is more noticeable in autumn. Many **Grey Fantails** were also observed returning once the weather warmed up with Steve Holliday counting at least 35 of them at Goorooyaroo on 24 September. In contrast, there seem to have been relatively few **Fuscous Honeyeater** or **Mistletoebird** reported so far so look out for these, as well as the last remaining spring/summer migrants still to arrive, the **Dollarbird**, **Channel-billed Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bushlark** (one seen east of Lake George by Kim Larmour on 25 September). Look out as well for the passage migrants the **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail**, **Brush Cuckoo** and **Cicadabird**, as they pass through Canberra on their way to breed in the mountains. After the past four days who knows what else may arrive; conditions seem suitable for the **Black**, **Painted** or perhaps even the **Pied Honeyeater** to come this year.

Of the altitudinal migrants that return to the mountains after over-wintering locally, based on the eBird map, the **Scarlet Robin** seems to have moved out from central Canberra during September but is still present in the peri-urban reserves such as Narrabundah Hill where it is breeding. For the **Flame Robin** many of the more central



Scarlet Honeyeater

Kym Bradley

reports on eBird for the past month may reflect birds remaining there longer than usual before moving to the mountains until the weather warms up, as the large numbers at Tidbinbilla seemed to be doing on the COG bus trip on 6 September (see the report elsewhere in this issue). There have been further reports of the often passage migrants the **Rose Robins** in central and northern Canberra, the most recent being of a female at Goorooyaroo by Steve Holliday on 24 September. In contrast there have been no reports of the other species that come to Canberra in winter, the **Pink Robin**, **Swift Parrot** or **Brown Gerygone** in September.

Local records of the **Crescent Honeyeater** during September seem to be restricted to four spots close to the Murrumbidgee and Cotter Rivers, including from two COG field trips (see reports elsewhere in this issue). Interestingly this is also the case for the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** observed on the COG outing to Gigerline (the northern end of their most favoured ACT distribution) on 17 September. For the **Restless Flycatcher** there have only been a couple of reports, both on Mountain Creek Rd on 10 September. Finally there still have been widespread records of both the **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler** over the reporting period, though this may reflect them having stayed for the first half of the month before the weather warmed up. However, Steve Holliday still recorded at least 9 of the latter at Goorooyaroo on 24 September; as noted previously this species is often present until early October.

As might be expected with the dry conditions, waterfowl usually preferring the inland, continue to be present with Alistair and Carmen Drake still counting 134 **Freckled Ducks** at the large "pond" on Lake Road on 9 September. Frank Antram counted 100 **Pink-eared Ducks** there on 24 September, though interestingly only 3 of the former, a possible indication that conditions may be becoming too dry locally and they have moved on. On 23 September Martin Butterfield counted 28 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** at the Trucking Yard Lane dam at Bungendore, though my interrogation of the eBird database indicates numbers of

**Australian Shelducks** seen together in the area were all below 10. **Hardhead** have been much more widely reported, but it appears in similar low numbers.

Of the reports of “unusual” species, the most interesting was on 10 September by Kym Bradley of a male **Scarlet Honeyeater** (*Myzomela*) at the left-hand side end of the Tharwa bridge heading to Tharwa. Despite clear directions and lovely photos of it in the white blossoms, it appears no-one else was able to locate this seventh species I hadn't mentioned in my previous column. However, on 25 September Mikayla Burke first heard an adult male **Scarlet Honeyeater** singing at the ANBG, which was then seen feeding (and photographed) in a tall tree. She saw another male later on, but presumed it to be the same bird. This time there were follow up reports of its presence there the following day.

The young **Olive Whistler** at the ANBG last reported there on 12 August was again seen by Jenny Bounds while leading the Friends ‘wake up with the birds walk’ there on 24 September. On 17 September Shorty had heard one in the Woodstock Nature Reserve, about 20 m down from the Fairlight Road entrance, confirmed by Mark Clayton from the sound recording he put on the chatline. As this didn't seem prime habitat for them, I thought at the time this may have been the ANBG one moving back to the high country, though this is now clearly not the case with reports of it also on 26 September.

Two further species which I didn't predict were **Whiskered Terns**, 6 of which were seen by Martin Butterfield at the North Weston ponds and 3 by Con Boekel at Kelly Swamp on the morning of 26 September. On the same day Mikayla Burke photographed a **Little Bittern** at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. There have also been continuing reports of the **Musk Lorikeet** south of the lake, as well as of a single **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** at Ainslie on 23 September, and a further report of a **Grey Goshawk**, at the ANBG on 19 September, but no further reports of the **Apostlebird** at Watson. A **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** was also reported by Tim Bonnet on the north-eastern edge of O'Connor Ridge Nature Reserve on 17 September.

There have been no reports of the **Powerful Owl** at the ANBG since 25 August, so perhaps it has moved on or found a more concealed spot to roost well away from all the attention it was attracting. In contrast, **Barn Owls** were seen being mobbed at Ainslie by Robin Hide on 25 September, and by Tun Pin Ong at the Tuggeranong Town Park on 27 September. Also I understand four more were taken into care in the past week. This has made me revise my prediction in last month's column that they had moved in due to an impending mouse plague in spring; rather they will have moved here as there are no mice for them inland, and they are being picked up in a starving condition. This is supported by Alastair Smith, the ACT moderator for eBird Australia, pointing out to me that there have been so few

records of the **Black-shouldered Kite** in the ACT so far this year (only 23 records by early September compared with 229 records to the same date last year). This is another species that specialises in feeding on mice, suggesting little of its favoured food is available and it has gone looking for them elsewhere, so please keep an eye out for them.

The cold and then warmer but continuing dry conditions seems to have had some effect on the breeding season, as shown by the **Australian Magpies** in my local area of NW Chapman and Cooleman Ridge as well as the southern end of Narrabundah Hill where, in surveys over the past week, I have been able to find only one bird sitting on a nest. One of the threesome in my GBS site has only been adding material to last year's nest, and while it is now substantial no bird is yet sitting. In addition Stuart Rae and Martin Butterfield have noted that many of their **Tawny Frogmouths** have delayed nesting. However, my pair at Chapman seem to have started to brood earlier than last year; perhaps using the same nest site has sped up proceedings.

Nevertheless, there have been reports of **Hooded Robins** passing food to each other, of **Southern Whiteface** nest



Whiskered Tern

Con Boekel

building, of **Fairy Martins** with nests under construction under a bridge, of **White-winged Choughs** on the nest, of **Australian Wood Ducklings**, of **Australian Ravens** producing 2 flying young, noted as the usual timing for this winter-nesting species, and of **Red Wattlebird** (another known early breeder) fledglings. More details for some other reports are worth including as follows:

- At the end of August Martin Butterfield observed 2 **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** hopping around on the ground

and getting assailed by 3 **Flame Robins** at Carwoola. He noted that according to HANZAB they are a known host of the cuckoos. The robins kept up the attack/defence for quite some distance across bare ground. Martin was hoping this was an indication of local breeding but unfortunately they moved on, as they did at another site where there were some signs of potential breeding activity.

- Around the same time the 3 **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** that Steve Read spotted at Narrabundah Hill were in the company of a brown **Flame Robin**. All were perching on a fence-line within a metre of so of each other, dropping down to pick up caterpillars and returning to the wire to eat them. Steve noted no assailing was happening – the robin appeared to be ignoring the cuckoos. My records show it has not been found there recently and was clearly just passing through.

- In contrast a few days later Jean Casburn saw a male **Scarlet Robin** there very swiftly chasing off a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** in the near vicinity of his mate which was seen gathering spider web and returning back and forth to a potential nest site.

- Mid-month Steve Wallace located a pair of **Striated Thornbills** building a nest near Hall. The nest was just being started and consisted of a bundle of material on a twig, barely visible with binoculars. Four days later the nest was much larger (about its final size), but still being blown around in the wind because of its location in the very fine branches at the very top of a medium sized eucalypt, quite a ride for any bird in the nest on windy days. He also noted that for a relatively common species, how few nest building records there are in the COG database, less than 1 a year on average, possibly explained by how difficult this nest was to locate.

- A week later, after many hours over several days near Hall attempting to capture more than a couple of seconds of video of **Yellow Thornbills**, Steve was convinced they were nesting but had not seen them carrying nesting material or food. Then he saw them defending a very small area of a Cootamundra Wattle and took a closer look. After some time he got a glimpse of a nest in the top of one. Again he noted there are very few records of Yellow Thornbill nests in the COG database (only 5 nest building records in the period 1982-2013) and given the location and the secretive way the birds approached the nest, he could understand why.

Finally Bill Hall forwarded an image of a **Common Bronzewing** sitting on a nest in an old **White-winged Chough** nest at Campbell Park taken on 24 September by a friend, Allen Bills. Unfortunately I expect the breeding event will probably be over when I run the Nest Workshop at Campbell Park on 11 November, though we often have found Common Bronzewings nesting there around that time. In past years there have been **Tawny Frogmouths** photographed using chough nests but unfortunately the young fledged just before the COG outing.

So please keep up the reports for any late arriving summer migrants or unexpected arrivals from the parched inland, for the last departing altitudinal migrants mentioned above, and for further 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 Email Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia website (my sincere thanks again for Ryu Callaway's help in allowing me to undertake a more in depth analysis for the COG Aol, which is improving with every column), 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*

## COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2017

Just a reminder to those who haven't adopted a site – please do so, soon, to [blitz@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:blitz@canberrabirds.org.au). Many desirable locations are still unclaimed: Mt Majura, Yerrabi Pond, Gungahlin Hill, ANBG, Black Mtn, Aranda Bushland, Kama, Red Hill, North Weston ponds, Casuarina Sands, Old Boboyan Rd, Square Rock, Yankee Hat, and especially anywhere in the Brindabellas – to mention just a few. Check out the COG website for the full list. If your preferred birding location is already spoken for, feel free to survey it as well – the more folk who take on an area, the more likely we are to achieve optimum coverage. But think about tackling somewhere else as well – it could be a pleasant surprise. Though please limit yourself to the ACT, for this one weekend. I'm particularly keen to hear from the semi-regular blitzers who haven't indicated their availability for this year yet.

Barbara Allan, blitz coordinator

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# Field Trip Reports

## Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 September – Eden pelagics

COG members and visitors boarded the *Connemara* at Eden on September 2 for the first of the spring pelagic trips, with skipper Richard and deckhand Richie. The weather was fine and as a few **Shy Albatross** appeared as we motored out it appeared we were in for a good day. It wasn't too long before the first Humpback Whales appeared. During the day we saw around a dozen, including a number which came to the surface only metres from the boat, giving us fantastic views of these magnificent animals. Some large mixed groups of **Fluttering** and **Hutton's Shearwaters** were seen on the way to the shelf, as was a single **Brown Skua**. After a slow start at the shelf, quite a number of **Shy Albatross** appeared, then a very obliging **Black-browed Albatross**. A single **Campbells Albatross** flew in, giving us excellent views of the distinguishing underwing pattern. The sole **Wandering Albatross (Gibsons)** of the day settled on the water some distance from the boat. Other species of note included **White-headed Petrel**, **Grey-faced Petrel**, **White-faced Storm-Petrel** and a **Northern Giant Petrel**.



The Sunday pelagic trip was cancelled by the charter company with the weather forecast of strong winds and high seas making it too risky to venture out. Since most of the participants were in Eden already, most of us decided to instead drive down to Green Cape on the Sunday morning. The very strong winds and rough seas, as well as scattered showers visible out at sea, made us glad we were still on solid ground! There were few birds off the cape, but a pair of **White-bellied Sea-eagles** floated above us for some time. A **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, a first for some, was sighted and photographed as we left the cape.

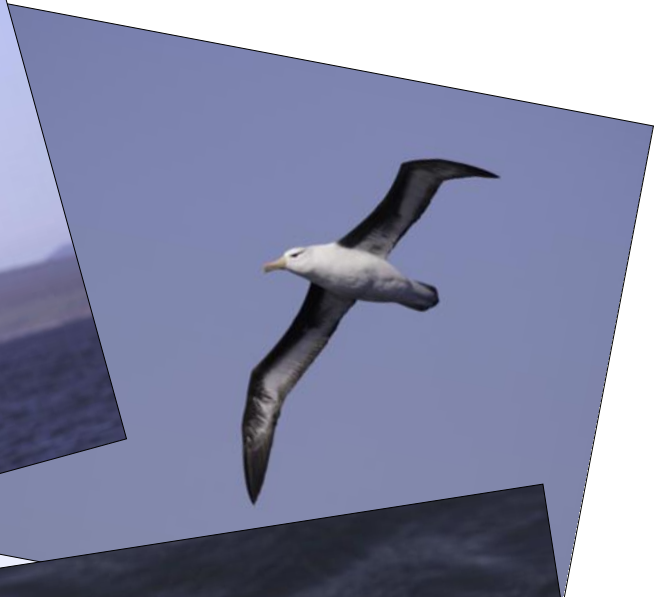
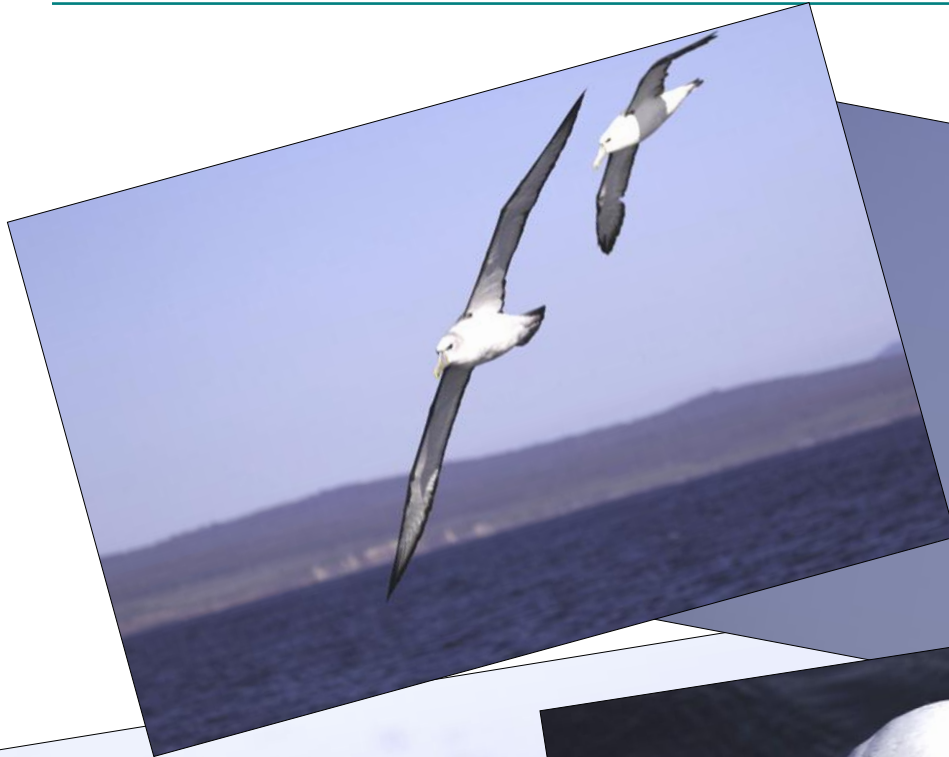
Sandra Henderson

## Wednesday 6 September - Early Spring Mystery mid-week bus trip

Jenny Bounds and I moved this trip back from its recent late August time to ensure we would both enjoy warmer weather and also see more spring/summer migrant species. However, the weather for the week could hardly have been more wintry, in particular the very strong and cold winds on the day before. Nevertheless, twenty participants braved the less than promising conditions and joined us on this annual COG event. In keeping with a “mystery” tour our itinerary was not announced and, as we headed towards the mountains covered with lots of new snow, some participants wondered out loud if it would be a “birds in the snow” trip.

Our first stop was at Casuarina Sands; there had been a belated compromise decision to go there first as it was relatively sheltered and also one of the few places where we had been able to find numbers of birds during our reccies. Our decision was rewarded by the sight of lots of birds as we drove into the carpark. In the end we spent longer than planned picking up 43 species seen or heard (not always by the whole group) by the end of morning tea there. Highlights included a flock of around 50 **Red-browed Finches** feeding on the ground with **Red-rumped Parrots** and **Eastern Rosellas** amongst them, a **Peregrine Falcon** flying high overhead, and later 2 **Brown Falcon** circling high over the river bank. The **Crescent Honeyeater** which had been reported there and was one of our target species was only briefly seen by Jenny and Michael. Some of us thought briefly that there was one in the flowering grevillea in front of the morning tea benches, but it turned out to be a **New Holland Honeyeater** that for a short time sat up well in a bare bush.

Newly arrived (or just arriving) spring migrants were represented by **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** feeding in the trees and bushes, lots of **Grey Fantails** flitting about and a couple of flocks of **Dusky Woodswallows** moving over/through and were not seen to land. Breeding was



Previous page: **Crested Tern**. This page, clockwise: **Shy Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Humpback Whale, Shy Albatross, Grey-faced Petrel,**  
*Gerard Jenkins*

represented by a couple of **Grey Currawongs** feeding young in a nest high in a river oak; one of the pair was later found gathering food and was very tame allowing a very close approach and many photographs. A surprise bird was a single female **Flame Robin** resting on a stump, a **Scarlet Robin** was also heard but only managed to be photographed by John Bundock, and was not able to be found again despite the effort of the “Red-capped Robbins” trying to flush it.

When going through the Cotter Reserve, a couple of **Emus** and a pair of **Masked Lapwings** with 4 small runners (chicks) could be seen near the road through the bus windows. At Tidbinbilla our first stop was about a kilometre past the Visitors Centre to view many **Flame Robins** in the open grassed area. We counted around 30 of them, with slightly more highly coloured males than females, on the ground or doing perch-pounces from Aaron’s rods, etc, and moving around with some of them approaching very close. When we drove on further to the Flints parking and picnic area, where Jenny and I had similarly seen close to 40 of them on our reccie 2 days earlier, there were only a few of them well away from the parking area. On our next check they were much closer and, going past there on our way home, there were many more in the open area across the road. There were certainly lots of them at Tidbinbilla; presumably their movement further into the mountains was being delayed by the wintry conditions. Appropriately when we stopped briefly at the Cotter Bend picnic area on our way home, there was another male perched on a low bush.

A walk around the open area at Flints did find several **Scarlet Robins**, but again they proved to be quite elusive. Another highlight there was a male **Satin Bowerbird** carrying a very large (for its size) blue object which he deposited in the shrubby area under an argyle apple tree. Despite the presence of a couple of female/immature birds there we could not find any trace of the bower we suspected. We then moved on to the Black Flats parking area hoping to find the **Crested Shrike-tits** feeding in amongst the *Eucalyptus viminalis* (ribbon gums), where Jenny and I had seen four on our first reccie 12 days beforehand. Despite listening and searching we were not able to find them, as for our final reccie 2 days before. We did get good views of **White-naped Honeyeaters** (mainly heard moving through at Casuarina Sands) and our only **Eastern Yellow Robin** for the day as we walked to the Black Flats Dam. Here we were able to view 2 platypus regularly coming to the surface, at one point within a couple of metres of each other. Unfortunately a third was dead in the water next to the bank, which we reported at the Visitors Centre on our way home.

Our departure from our lunch spot at the main picnic area was delayed as we searched for a **Tawny Frogmouth** that we could hear calling intermittently, but this eventually turned out to be from a bird songs recording emanating from the children’s playground. We therefore made the decision not to go to our last planned stop but to return to the parking area at the eucalypt forest for a final effort to find the shrike-tits in amongst



New Holland Honeyeater

John Bundock



Grey Currawong

Duncan McCaskill



Flame Robin

Duncan McCaskill



Emu

Michael Agnew

the ribbon gums there. However, the lure of the Koalas in the enclosure, including two very cute young ones, proved too strong, aided by several of the re-introduced Long-nosed Potoroos running around underneath them. Also admired in there were a number of rather tame Swamp Wallabies.

The agreed total for the day was 62 species, which includes those seen along the Tidbinbilla Road and the three **Wedge-tailed Eagles** seen at Bibaringa on the way back. A surprise was so few spring migrants seen, only four species, and for 3 of those at least some birds had overwintered. Also there was very little breeding observed. Despite the cold (never above 8°C, I estimate) and occasionally strong winds and light drizzle, participants had a very enjoyable day. My very sincere thanks again to Jenny Bounds for her considerable help in planning and leading on the day, and for driving the second bus.

Jack Holland



Platypus

John Bundock

### Saturday 9 September – Mt Rogers

We had a very enjoyable Mt Rogers walk lasting just over two hours. It was Tee who provided the probable highlight by spotting a pair of roosting **Tawny Frogmouths**. **Speckled Warblers** were also seen gathering nesting material. Right at the end, a flock of thirty **Australian White Ibis** circled and thermalled high over the reserve and then Melba against a peerless blue sky. A total of 27 species was recorded.

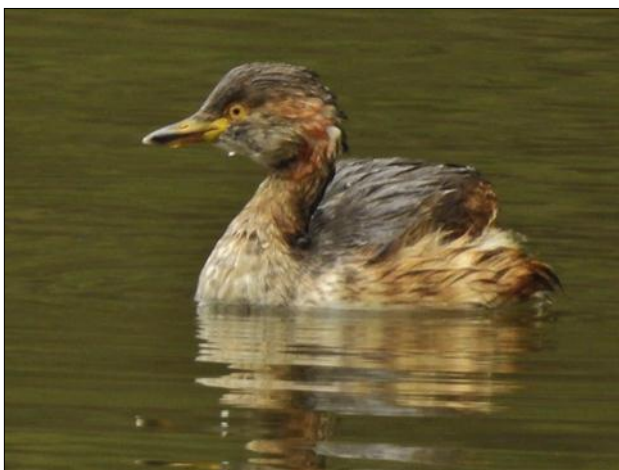
Congratulations to Angharad on a successful leadership role!

Rosemary Blemings

### Sunday 17 September – Gigerline

Ten COG members gathered at the Monaro Highway at Williamsdale on a perfect spring morning. The sun shone brightly and quickly melted the little light frost that persisted in some shady spots. The 10 headed off down the trail through pleasant woodland towards the Murrumbidgee, observing many well-known local birds. A keen-eyed member spotted a **Grey Butcherbird** on a nest and an **Olive-backed Oriole** called nearby, without making itself seen. When approaching the steep descent to the river, the party had excellent views of several **Rainbow Bee-eaters**. The party reached the small green clearing next to the river, to be greeted by three very energetic **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**. The party saw and heard many **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, including some in large groups. On the return leg, the Oriole presented himself on a branch, and patiently obliged the photographers. A wonderful morning, with the whole party observing 50 species and some members individually spotting several more species.

David Dendenczuk



Australasian Grebe

John Bundock

## Wednesday 20 September – Cotter Reserve

Thirty members and guests came along to this walk, in glorious weather, and for many it was the first visit to the Reserve since the opening of the new dam. We started with a wander around the short loop walk in the riverside grevillea area, where lots of **Grey Fantails** and **Eastern Spinebills** were very active. A male **Golden Whistler** showed himself nicely.

The first **Emus** were spotted as we started up the track to the dam. Quite a few others, including a male with a group of five youngsters, were seen later in the walk. Part way up the track the distinctive "ringing telephone" call of a **Red-capped Robin** was heard, and the bird finally appeared as those at the back of the group came along.

Although there were few birds on the water, Duncan managed to find a **Great Crested Grebe** some distance away, and two **Great Cormorants** were sitting on the boom. A **Wedge-tailed Eagle** was flying above the Bullen Range, and a **Nankeen Kestrel** was peering out from a thick pine tree. As we approached the old Pierces Creek settlement site, a pair of **Australian Hobbies** flew over, and a number of **Common Bronzewing**s were flushed from the more open area. Many thanks to John Bundock for leading the outing.

The full list is available at <http://ebird.org/ebird/australia/view/checklist/S39293118>

Sandra Henderson

## Sunday 24 September - Numeralla

Twelve members and guests met at very windy Hume to carpool to Numeralla. On arrival we were met by Mark and Jim, interested birders from the Numeralla area.

Our first stop was the Numeralla River on Jacobs Lane where, despite the very blustery conditions, some hardy **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** were sighted. A **Pallid Cuckoo** could be heard, and was finally tracked down, clinging to a wire. A robin along the riverside track was eventually identified as a female **Hooded Robin**, and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** was seen by some members of the group.

We then moved on to the Badja River Reserve in the township, only briefly detained by a male **Hooded Robin** not far from the cemetery. The wind was continuing to gain strength as we arrived at the Reserve, where two **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** were perched on wires in the back garden of the house next to the reserve. A short walk along the river near the bridge allowed good views of **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Red-rumped Parrots** (which the locals said were not all that common around Numeralla) and some **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**.

The windy conditions meant we did not call into North Ridge in Cooma, opting instead for the Swainsona Reserve in Royalla. Here we found a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** at a tree hollow, with the female sitting at the entrance for much of the time. Other birds of note in the same reserve were another **Pallid Cuckoo** and an **Olive-backed Oriole**.

Sandra Henderson

## 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](http://www.binoculars4u.com.au) is regularly updated but is no substitute for personal service and recommendation which is always on hand.

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



## Canberra NatureArt Lab

Canberra NatureArt Lab is a natural history art school, based at M16 Artspace in Griffith, which is a good central location. The school is fully equipped with microscopes and a natural history reference collection.

Canberra NatureArt Lab's Term Four program includes courses and workshops bringing together art, scientific expertise and conservation principles. The program begins on Monday 9 October and there are still places available for booking. Full details are available at <https://www.natureartlab.com.au/>

Courses include bird illustration with internationally recognised Canberra artist Peter Marsack; he is also teaching Wildlife Drawing and Observation skills course and a Nature Studies—Create a Valuable Sketchbook course.

### Special offer for COG members:

I'd like to offer COG members a 20% discount for the Nature Studies course as an introductory offer. Bookings must be received by 5 October to be eligible for the discounted rate. There are 14 places available. People wishing to book this course and take advantage of this offer can contact me at: [info@natureartlab.com.au](mailto:info@natureartlab.com.au)

Julia Landford  
Founding Director  
Canberra NatureArt Lab



## 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](http://www.tourtheloire.com)

[loirevalleytours.naturewalks](http://loirevalleytours.naturewalks)

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

[contact@tourtheloire.com](mailto:contact@tourtheloire.com)

## COG Trips

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

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

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

[canberrabirds.org.au/](http://canberrabirds.org.au/)  
then select 'Our Activities' and 'Field Trips'.

and on the COG chat-line at:

[bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2015-08/](http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2015-08/)

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

## Future Field Trips

### Sunday 8 October – K2C surveys, Bredbo area

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws **before Wednesday 4 October**. Email: [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com) or 0408 210736.

### Monday 9 to Friday 13 October – Green Cape – accommodated

For some time now, COG has visited Green Cape every second year to stay in the former lighthouse keepers' cottages and enjoy the wonderful wildlife watching (birds and whales, in particular) in Ben Boyd National Park and in the surrounding seas. There are only 14 places available for this trip. The commitment is for a 4-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. Accommodation costs will be finalised once numbers are known. There is also a \$7 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival. An alternative is a single park pass which costs \$22 and is available online.

To register, email [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com). As with all COG trips, preference will be given to COG members. More detailed information will be sent to participants. **Note: this trip is now full but you are welcome to go on a waiting list in case of late withdrawals.**

Sue Lashko and Peter Fullagar

### Friday 13 to Sunday 22 October (approx.) – Northern NSW – extended camping trip

We will spend 3 full days in the Pilliga and then stay on a property near Moree, close to Gwydir Wetlands from the afternoon of Tues 17 to Sat 21. Participants can camp or stay in the shearers' huts at Moree. If you are interested please contact me by email [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com)

Sue Lashko

### Sunday 15 October – Berrabangalo TSR (Gunning), Wet Lagoon (Breadalbane) and Collector Reserve and TSR- day outing

Bill Graham will lead this trip to lesser known spots north of Canberra. Target species include **Pied Butcherbird**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Whistling Kite**, **Glossy Ibis** and **Southern Whiteface**. Meet at 8.00 am in the carpark opposite the Sutton Bakery for carpooling. Suggested contribution to driver from each passenger: \$10. Bring morning tea, lunch and drinks.

Registration for this trip is essential: please phone Bill Graham on 0466 874 723 or email [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

Bill Graham

### Sunday 22 October-Gossan Hill Nature Reserve

Meet at 8:00 am, Mugglestone Place, Bruce off the road near 7 Bruce Gardens for a couple of hours stroll through the Reserve. The going will be easy but usual bush attire and water will be necessary. No bookings required. For further information contact me on 0418 679 847.

Chris Davey

### Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 October – Bird Blitz

(see notice elsewhere in Gang-gang)

### Sunday 5 November – Braidwood landcare surveys

The Braidwood Landcare group contacted COG in 2011 to see if we would be interested in surveying the birds on five to six properties where some revegetation has been done. These surveys were repeated in 2013 and 2015 and will again be carried out in 2017. We will not only survey the revegetation sites, but also remnants and riverine areas. Ten to 12 surveyors are required, beginning at 7.30am, and must be sufficiently experienced to undertake the survey. Please contact Sue Lashko on 62514485 or [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com) if you are interested and to receive further details.

### Sunday 12 November — Campbell Park, morning nest workshop

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past thirteen years. As usual it will be a very informal outing which has been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual very short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, with participants looking for breeding behaviour, signs of nesting etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunities for bird watching. This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced

members and repeat customers are also very welcome. While every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs. If you want to participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840) or by email on [jandaholland@bigpond.com](mailto:jandaholland@bigpond.com).

Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting around it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the Campbell Park map on the COG website under the Maps, Forms and Lists button. Please remember to take morning tea which we will have out in the field.

### Tuesday 14 to Thursday 16 November – campout on private property near Tallaganda NP

This is an opportunity to camp on the beautiful property of one of our members at Harold's Cross, near Tallaganda NP. There is a wealth of birds on the property and visits will also be made to the national park. **I am looking for a volunteer to assist with the organisation of this campout. Please contact me on 62514485 or [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com) if you can assist.**

### Sunday 19 November - Mulligans Flat NR

This will be a morning walk through woodlands and grasslands where we may see species such as **Superb Parrot, Speckled Warbler, Rufous Whistler** and other woodland birds.

It should be a fairly easy walk over flat to undulating ground, and we may stop along the walk to look at whatever wildflowers, butterflies and other wildlife might be out. Please bring appropriate sun protection, some water and some morning tea.

There is no need to register for this walk. Meet at 8am at the carpark on Amy Ackman Dr (opposite Cleggett St), Forde. Please contact Suzi Bond ([chowchilla29@yahoo.com](mailto:chowchilla29@yahoo.com)) for further information.



### MUDBRICK COTTAGE—MALLACOOTA

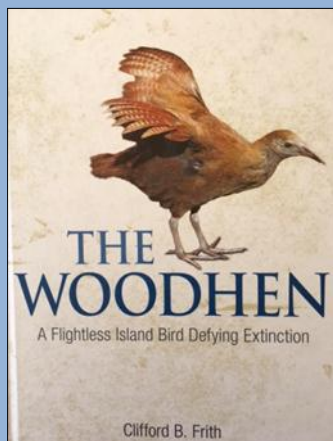
Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental. It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra).

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](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com)

## BOOK OF THE MONTH



### The Woodhen A flightless island bird defying extinction

*Clifford B. Frith*

*Tells the fascinating success story of the saving of the globally significant, iconic, flightless Woodhen of Lord Howe Island.*

This book tells the fascinating success story of saving the flightless Woodhen of Lord Howe Island. This unique large rail, an iconic and highly endangered Australian bird, was at the very brink of extinction with just 15 individuals found in 1980, when bold and risky actions were taken to save it.

**Members' Price \$40.**

## 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](mailto:sales@canberrabirds.org.au)

### NEW BOOKS IN STOCK

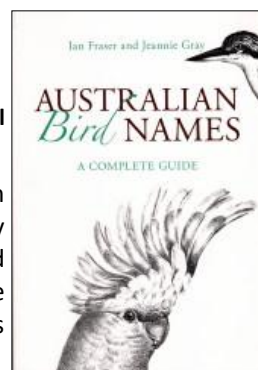
#### Australian Bird Names

*Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray*

**2013 Whitley Award Commendation for Zoological Resource.**

This book is aimed at anyone with an interest in birds, words, or the history of Australian biology and bird-watching. It discusses common and scientific names of every Australian bird, to tease out the meanings, which may be useful, useless or downright misleading!

**Members' price \$35**

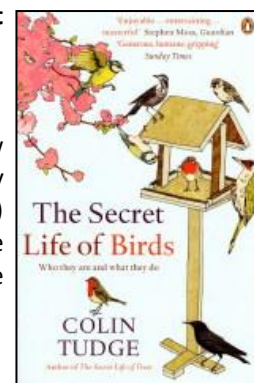


#### The Secret Life of Birds: who they are and what they do

*Colin Tudge*

Revealing everything from why birds sing to how they fly, think, bond and survive, from how they evolved (and whether it really is from dinosaurs) to why, in so many ways, they are very much like us, this rich, evocative book will make you love and admire the birds that are all around you.

**Members' price \$22**

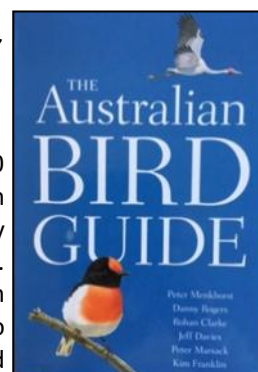


#### The Australian Bird Guide

*Peter Menkhurst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin*

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.

**Members' price \$38**



## 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 Woolerton  
A Ewers  
M Edvarsson  
G Austin  
S Eggins  
M Southwell-Keelay

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for November 2017 edition:**

**Wednesday 25 October 2017**

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

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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.

## COG information

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0413 828 045

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**Treasurer:** Lia Battison

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**Secretary:**

Bill Graham

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### Address for correspondence

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### Canberra Bird Notes

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### COG Webmaster

Julian Robinson

[cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au)

### COG library

### Membership Enquiries & Updates:

[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:membership@canberrabirds.org.au)

for change of address or other details.

### Gang-gang Newsletter

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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](mailto: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](mailto: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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