



Gang-gang

April 2018

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday 11 April 2018

7.30 pm

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

The short presentation will be **"Where do Noisy Friarbirds go to sleep?...more pieces of the puzzle are fitting together..."** by Michael Lenz.

While in our region and not breeding, Noisy Friarbirds sleep at communal roosts. Observations to support this claim will be presented.

The main presentation will be by Professor **Rob Heinsohn** of the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the ANU, on **"Tool-assisted rhythmic drumming in Cape York Palm Cockatoos"**.

Palm Cockatoos are large, charismatic and emblematic birds of northern Australia and New Guinea, but sadly our research suggests they are in steep decline due to large scale habitat loss from mining, changed fire regimes and low reproductive success. Members of our team have been researching their

Continued Page 2

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

Again it has been very dry for the slightly over 4 weeks since 26 February, with many areas of the COG area of interest (Aoi) receiving very little rain, and others just some more from local storms. Perhaps this is the reason why it has again been a month of surprises, and why it appears some species have been delaying their departures.

The biggest surprise to me was the report by Christine D of 5 **White-browed Woodswallows** at the Yankee Hat car park and track on 16 March, in particular that a male was feeding a still very striped juvenile. The Bird Info printout on the COG website shows very few records in March, though surprisingly still shows nests with young, or dependent young, for February. This highly nomadic species is well known to suddenly appear and breed if conditions suit, but whether they were suitable to have actually bred nearby is unclear. If it was on the move, it is another example of how well relatively recently fledged young can travel.

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Brown-headed Honeyeater

Kym Bradley

Everyone welcome

APRIL MEETING

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conservation biology since 1999. Palm Cockatoos are also the only non-human species that manufactures and uses a sound tool. The males make drumsticks by breaking off a branch, stripping the foliage and trimming to an appropriate length. They then grasp the drumsticks in one foot and beat them against a hollow trunk as part of their display to females. Our project explores this remarkable behaviour and the aspects of intelligence required to make and use tools in such a human-like fashion.



Restless Flycatcher

Kym Bradley

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

As far as I can tell no-one else found these birds, as is the case for the **Painted Honeyeater** observed with **White-naped** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** in the sanctuary at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on 12 March, a somewhat unexpected spot to find them, though I understand sufficient notes were taken to allow the sighting to be confirmed. Again the Bird Info printout on the COG website shows no records in February or March, but a few in April. The eBird database shows the most recent previous record being in December 2014, so it was indeed a rare observation, though it is a species that I might have expected in this very dry spring and summer.

Not really an “unusual” species, but a declining one that seems to continue to slip under the radar, is the **Restless Flycatcher** for which 3 birds were initially seen by Kumiko Callaway in the horse gate area of Campbell Park on 3 March. In my experience 3 is a big number together and it was possibly a family party, though the lemon colour on the throat/breast which at least one had is still the subject of some debate. The Australian Bird Guide notes that a first year immature always has some orange-buff on the breast, but that the female has this only in fresh plumage, so breeding may have been some time ago. While this species was subsequently sighted and reported by many observers, there was a maximum of only two seen together initially, and later two well separated. Where these birds came from and why they were not observed before is a mystery to me; at the time the closest known record in the month before was at Stranger Pond in Tuggeranong. This may also be from where Kym Bradley posted some lovely photos of one, with very extensive orange-buff on its chest, bathing in some very open water on 24 March.

No more **Horsfield’s Bushlarks**, **Brown Songlarks**, **Cicadabirds**, or **Black-eared** or **Channel-billed Cuckoos** have been reported in the past month. Three **Rufous Songlarks** were still observed at Mulligans Flat on 4 March, and **White-winged Trillers** were still reported from 4 locations during March, the most recent being from the Namadgi Visitors Centre on 24 March. The **Brush Cuckoo** also seems to have been slow to leave this year, and was last reported at Majura Nature Park on 15 March, but was still in its summer habitat on the Nursery Swamp Track in Namadgi National Park on 12 March. Likewise the **Dollarbird** was still reported from 4 locations during March, the most recent being at the Hall Travelling Stock Reserve on 16 March. The usually slightly earlier leaving **Rainbow Bee-eater** was still observed from around a dozen locations in the past month, the most recent being at Ainslie on 20 March, and the bit later leaving **Sacred Kingfisher** from double that number to at least 25 March.

The delayed departures are supported by species usually leaving during March, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Latham’s Snipe** (an unusually late report from the West Belconnen Pond on 23 March), **Australian Reed-Warbler**, **Pallid Cuckoo** (but with only 2 other reports in March), and **Horsfield’s** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** all still being reported in the week before drafting this column. The exceptions seem to be **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, last reported on 18 and 6 March, respectively, the latter being the only report in March. Compared with the past couple of months the **White-throated Needletail** has been more widely reported from over 10 locations, most recently 25 on 25 March. The related but usually less common **Fork-tailed Swift** has been reported 3 times over the past month, the most recent being 3 at two well separated locations on 18 March.



Restless Flycatcher

Kym Bradley



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Good birding, good food

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

Mitchell Plateau charter for black grasswren open to non-tour birders.

Atherton Tablelands

13 to 18 June 2018

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

Atherton Tablelands

26 to 31 July 2018

New Caledonia birding tour

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includes Lifou and Ouvéa Islands

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Four states. 39th tour!

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20 & 21 October 2018
3 & 4 November 2018
17 & 18 November 2018
1 & 2 December 2018

2019

Tasmanian bird and mammal tour
Includes Melaleuca and pelagic
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Please see itineraries, checklists and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

So please keep out an eye/ear for all the above species, most of which will have left the COG Aol by the time this newsletter arrives. Keep an eye/ear out as well for the **Eastern Koel** for which the last two reports were for an injured juvenile collected in Giralang on 23 March, as well as another in Kaleen on 26 March. By my current count this makes it 79 fledglings/juveniles for the season. Watch out also for any late "passage migrants", the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail**. The last of the former was reported by Christine D still in its summer habitat on the Boboyan Road woodland on 16 March, but the former was still reported at the ANBG on 24 March, with quite a few seen moving through Canberra around 10 March.

In keeping with the delayed departures this season, very few migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** have been reported so far. This is due to the continuing warm weather, especially overnight, as cold, clear conditions are the best triggers for migration, though after a while the urge to migrate overcomes the less than ideal conditions. So watch out for flocks of these; watch out too for the **White-naped Honeyeaters** that will join them from about mid-month, and gradually become the dominant bird in the flocks towards the end of April. There have also been few reports to date of the partial migrant, the **Red Wattlebird**, which sometimes joins these flocks or more often migrates separately in pure flocks of up to about 100 birds. In contrast, up to 20 **Noisy Friarbirds** have been reported moving through or into areas. Also 190 of the partial migrant, the **Spotted Pardalote**, were reported migrating on Lyneham Ridge by Michael Lenz on 28 February, with the largest flock comprising 140 birds. Flocks consisting of up to 30, totalling 165 over around half an hour, were observed on the COG outing to McQuoid's Hill on 10 March.

The **Noisy Friarbird** will leave during April as will other species that are still being reported including the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, and most of the **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** (as often is the case, many of the latter were observed moving through in the second half of March). A number of the last two species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and the **Superb Parrot**.

Of the altitudinal migrants that move from the mountains but stay here, **Golden Whistlers** were reported back in Canberra early in March, and

the **White-eared Honeyeater** from mid-March. In contrast the **Scarlet Robin** seems to have been fairly slow to return to their known peri-urban spots such as Narrabundah Hill, where they have not been present this summer.

Of the usually later altitudinal migrants still to arrive in urban or peri-urban Canberra, watch out for the **Flame Robin** moving into the open areas around Canberra (I'm not aware of any reports so far), and the **Rose** (a single report from the ANBG on 10 March) and **Pink Robins** (no reports since 5 May 2017). Watch out as well as for the **Crescent** (an early report of a female by Michael Lenz at West Belconnen Pond on 20 March) and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, which are usually first seen during late April or early May. The first reports of **Swift Parrots** migrating from Tasmania were by Kathy Walter and John Goldie of around 12 birds at Mt Majura on 22 March. These have stayed around at least until the completion of this column, with a maximum of 15 seen, so keep an eye out for them in your area, especially if the gums are flowering well.

Some of this spring/summer's "unusual" birds have continued to be reported, with Michael Lenz observing another **Black Honeyeater** in the Gundaroo area on 7 March. In the same area he also reported a male **Scarlet Honeyeater** feeding in mistletoe on 23 March, adding to Alastair Smith's sighting of one at Campbell Park on 1 March. A **Black Kite** was also reported during the Latham's Snipe survey at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 1 March, and from the nearby Newline by Steve Read on 18 March. In addition a **Barn Owl** was reported from the ANU by Kevin Windle on 23 March, the first reported since the one at Lake Tuggeranong on 28 September 2017. Also notable was a banded **Superb Fairy-wren** observed by Matthew Larkin in Aranda mid-month. This was one banded at the ANBG in 2016, and for which the whole family history could be traced back to the foundation of Andrew Cockburn's study over 30 years ago. So if you live or bird watch within about 5 km from the ANBG, please look out for any bands on this species.

While it has been the first month of autumn following a pretty dry summer, there has still been some breeding activity reported. Apart from the **White-browed Woodswallow** and **Eastern Koel** noted above, and some juvenile **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** photographed by Kym Bradley, the following are worth mentioning in some more detail:

- A video was posted by Kym Bradley on 4 March of **Hoary-headed Grebes** nest building in a shopping trolley at Upper Stranger Pond. Kym noted that such trolleys make good restraints to build nests in case of rough weather, but also provide spots for cormorants to perch. The grebes would circle the cormorants, then splash and leave on repeated numerous times. After they left the grebes got back to business.

- On 20 March Sandra Henderson reported two **Great-crested Grebes** on the Cotter Dam, one of which was a juvenile with a still stripey head. The Bird Info printout on the COG website shows very limited breeding in the COG Aol with the last record in 1997, but supports that dependent young are found between February to April.

- On 4 March Martin Butterfield posted that two nests on a pontoon at the Queanbeyan Sewage Farm were occupied by **Great Cormorants**, making this another spot where they still breed.

- The Yerrabi Pond **Red-capped Robins** were still there at the beginning of March with Steve Wallace posting a photo of a juvenile with a spider just given to it by the male. They are so tame that on 1 March he posted a photo of one that had landed on Lyndon Howe's cap.

Little roost or roost flight observations seem to have been posted during March. However, there have been quite a few reports of mixed feeding flocks (MFF), particularly in the second half of March, though the large cockie/galah flocks do not yet seem to have noticeably formed.

April is the last of the more than 3 month period when there is significant bird movement in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants which usually leave in this month as mentioned above, for the remaining arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species FF, roost sites and flights, and for any further breeding activity. 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 database, 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



Swift Parrot

Ash Allnutt



Hard-copy of the *Gang-gang* newsletter to cease from 1 July 2018

Over recent years, COG's income has not covered its outgoings, and COG has an on-going annual deficit. At its regular monthly meeting on 22 March, the COG Committee considered options for reducing this shortfall. After much discussion, a decision was made to cease the printing and distribution of hard-copies of the *Gang-gang* newsletter.

The Committee values the newsletter and all contributions to it, and is committed to continuing its production. *Gang-gang* will continue to be available on the COG website, as a colour pdf that can be downloaded and printed if you wish. The majority of the membership already access *Gang-gang* on the website, and some have been doing so for many years.

This move will result in a considerable saving and will mean that membership fees will not need to increase this year. The Committee also considered that cessation of printing was an environmentally responsible thing to do.

Please ensure that the Memberships Officer, Sandra Henderson, has current details of your email address, so that she can notify you by email when the newsletter is available on the website. These emails contain a hyperlink to the *Gang-gang* webpage (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/gang-gang-newsletter/>), for easy access. Sandra's email address is: membership@canberrabirds.org.au.

If you have any questions or other thoughts that you would like to address to the committee, please send them to the Secretary, Bill Graham, at cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au.

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, and the COG preferred method 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 April, May and June meetings), or you can send your renewal by mail with a cheque.

As mentioned above, *Gang-gang* will be available only in electronic form from July 2018. If you still receive 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.

Little Eagles in the ACT and nearby NSW in 2017/18

A brief summary from the Little Eagle Research Group

The Little Eagle Research Group (LERG) are pleased to report that they confirmed a minimum of nine nesting pairs of **Little Eagles** in the ACT in the 2017-2018 breeding season. Six of the pairs laid eggs and four chicks were reared, one from each of two nests and two from another. At two other locations, pairs were observed by members of the group, and the public reported five further potential locations in the ACT; however, these have not been included as breeding birds in 2017 because time ran out to ascertain their breeding status. Two additional nests were located just over the border in NSW.

One pair incubated an infertile egg for a month longer than the usual incubation period before they abandoned their effort and another pair lost their egg to a predator, possibly a raven. There was no known reason why the third pair failed to rear a chick. Of the two nesting pairs in nearby NSW; one fledged a chick, and the other pair hatched a chick, but it died due to unknown causes while still small. All these known nesting areas and other possible locations will be monitored in future years to build a more comprehensive understanding of the status and breeding ecology of **Little Eagles** in the ACT and surrounding NSW.

Two live webcams were installed above one of the nests to record the eagles' nesting habits and collect data on breeding behaviour. The cameras were installed in late winter, at a time when the birds were known not to be present at the site, on 20 July 2017. The nest chosen for this was one used by a pair of eagles which successfully reared a chick in 2016/17. The male of that pair was the bird which had been tagged and tracked via satellite to the Northern Territory. He returned to the nesting territory in August, but was never seen at the nest. Another male was subsequently seen with a female at that nest, but it is not known what became of the tagged male.

The cameras were successful and many people saw the eagles live, worldwide. The birds took possession of the nest, added fresh material, mated there and the male brought food to the female on the nest. Evidently, they accepted the cameras. However, as many eagles of various species do, this pair switched nests to lay their eggs about 2 km away. Unfortunately, they failed to rear a chick, with the cause unknown, and the female was last seen and left undisturbed on the nest in October. It was not clear at the time why the birds changed nests, but a **Pied Currawong** was seen feeding on something in the base of the original nest and video footage later demonstrated that the nest was infested by beetle larvae. The eagles possibly detected these earlier, which could explain why they moved.

Non-live cameras were also set up in advance of the breeding season at two other nest sites. One was at another alternative nest site to the pair where the webcam was set and was not used by the birds, although they were recorded mating on it. The eagles whose territory held the third nest camera elected to use another nest about 200m away and successfully reared a chick.

A tracking-tag was fitted to a female chick when she was large and almost fully feathered, allowing her to be followed via satellite after she fledged in December. She moved increasing distances from the nest as she grew older and stronger, flying over urban areas and visiting several urban nature reserves of the ACT, flying up to 7 km from her nest area and to more than 1400 m altitude, 800 m above street level. Then on 11 March, she left the ACT and was last recorded in Queensland, north-west of Brisbane, having travelled over 1000 km (data accessed 22 March 2018).

The Little Eagle Research Group is an informal, collaborative study group which aims to monitor and assess the status and ecology of the Little Eagle in the ACT and nearby NSW. This is being done part-time, with the combined knowledge, expertise and resources of: Michael Mulvaney, Claire Wimpenny and Renee Brawata (Conservation Research Unit, ACT Government); Jacqui Stol and Micah Davies (CSIRO); David Roberts (Ginninderry); Don Fletcher, Stuart Rae and Penny Olsen (Australian National University); and Stephen Debus (University of New England). The group is grateful to COG members and the general public for generously sharing sightings and other information; and to property owners and managers for access to sites and care for the birds.

Stuart Rae



Little Eagle

Stuart Rae

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 4 March – Lanyon

A very good attendance of 30 members was attracted to this combined historical, scenic and birdwatching activity, blessed by pleasant early autumn weather. Feedback on completion and later was very positive to the extent that another visit will be planned for 2019, hopefully to coincide with the annual honeyeater migration across the picturesque Murrumbidgee River.

Worthy of mention is the fact that four new members were on their first outing and they received a very warm welcome to the COG family.

The bird count was about 48, average for this time of the year with some notable exceptions. Some highlights were close viewings of a small flock of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, one **Collared Sparrowhawk**, one juvenile **Golden Whistler** and the enigmatic **Brown Falcon**.

Many thanks to our vivacious guide, in the personage of Cally Earnshaw, a senior Lanyon staff member, who provided non-stop information throughout the tour.

Terry Bell

Sunday 11 March – McQuoids Hill

On a sunny morning the **Spotted Pardalotes** which flew from west to east over McQuoids Hill numbered approximately 10 times the number of COG members watching. The official list will suggest 50 plus as a very conservative estimate. A young diligent member of our party counted in excess of 160. Given the COG members who made it to the top of McQuoids Hill counted 26 pardalote flying over in a single flock, the higher number seems highly likely, even allowing that there were some **Striated Pardalote** around. We also noted about 10 each of **Red Wattlebird** flying roughly west to east, and **Noisy Friarbird**. We only saw 1 **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, and only three members saw the 1 female **Speckled Warbler**.

While we saw/heard a reasonable number of species (40), we were surprised by seeing few thornbills, just 3 **Buff-rumped** and 2 **Brown Thornbill**. We also saw no finches, possibly because much of our walk was through the more treed and rocky areas of the reserve, although that is maybe why an **Eastern Yellow Robin** made it onto the list, along with the **White-throated Treecreeper**. We did see both **Australian** and **Little Raven**, the later in the horse paddock just outside the reserve. The **Common Myna** and **Noisy Miner** were also outside the reserve.

Michael Robbins



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Wednesday 21 March – Point Hut to Pine Island return

Seventeen members and guests gathered at the Point Hutt picnic area for a walk to Pine Island and back. The wisdom of doing the walk in that direction was indicated by piles of automotive glass at Pine Island.

When suggesting this outing I had wondered if we might see the start of honeyeater migration and it is possible that we did with 12 **Red Wattlebirds** (one group of 6) being seen moving down the Murrumbidgee. Five **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were seen but they did not seem to be moving on, while the 6 **White-eared Honeyeaters** may have moved out of the ranges. No **Noisy Friarbirds** were recorded.

Eight **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were recorded: 2 groups of 3 birds and one of two birds. Raptors were reasonably well represented with 3 **Nankeen Kestrels** (2 of which were males and had a right hard aerial battle), 2 **Brown Falcons** and 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles**.

The bird of the day appeared when we were almost back at the Point Hutt picnic area, with an **Azure Kingfisher** seen flitting amongst the bushes just out from the shoreline.

In total we recorded 45 species for the day.

Martin Butterfield

Renewed call for Sulphur-crested Cockatoo & Little Corella roost site data

I will be continuing to accept observations for **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas** for the next few months.

The following map shows locations already reported.

Please report the location and direction of any roost flights (regular movement of birds to/from their roost site in the early morning or dusk), and locations of any yet-to-be reported roost sites to roostcensus@canberrabirds.org.au

It would also be good if anyone could confirm whether the following historical roosting records are still current - Uriarra Crossing, Telopea Park, Fern Hill Park (AIS), and Royal Canberra Golf Course.

Thanks to all those who have contributed their observations, and the few who have actively sought out new sites.

I intend to organise a weekend of simultaneous surveys in late Autumn / early Winter. Volunteers will be sought to 'adopt' sites for the survey when the dates and roost site locations are confirmed.

Ryu Callaway

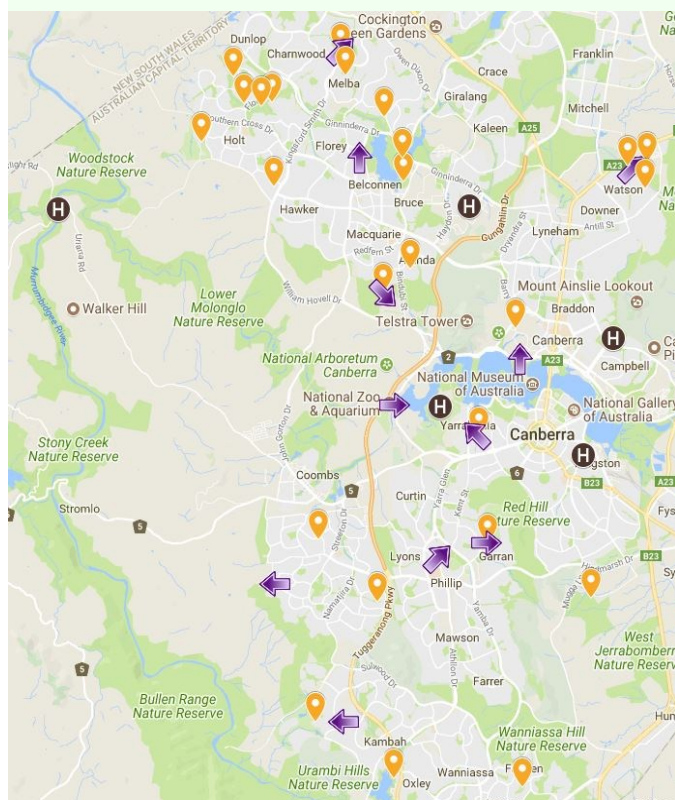
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Contact: Barbara de Bruine (02) 6258 3531, or barbdebruine@hotmail.com



Woodland Surveys- Autumn (late March/early April) 2018 survey round– Part 1

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 25 March, again challenged by possible weather interference, with threatening grey skies, wind rising and a few rain drops around by mid-morning. Low numbers of birds were reported at most sites, with a total species count of 51 (down on the usual autumn total nearer 60). A few of the summer migrants were still around, both gerygones, a couple of **Rufous Whistlers** and one record of **Leaden Flycatcher**. There were quite a few **Grey Fantails** moving through but no honeyeater migration, with only one **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** recorded. A **Golden Whistler** was at site 19, (on the quartz ridge running through Mulligans), there were 3 sightings of **Scarlet Robin**, 2 of **Speckled Warbler**, and several sightings of **Superb Parrots**, including 12 around the main entry road on the reserve edge with Forde. A **Common Bronzewing** on the western ridge at site 10 in the north of the reserve was unexpected. The water level in the large dam was low, but there were still 8 **Pink-eared Ducks** amongst a few other ducks, 3 **Hoary-headed Grebes** and 6 **Black-fronted Dotterels**. The team doing the large dam circuit also recorded 2 **White-throated Needletails** overhead while at one of the sites. Thanks to all who helped with this survey. The next Mulligans survey is Sunday 24 June.

Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook, surveyed on Sunday 18 March. Conditions were good to start but predicted strong winds made the latter part of the survey rather unproductive with a total of 38 species recorded, possibly an all time low for autumn. The reserve was looking rather overgrazed and dry despite the heavy rain three weeks ago, and signs of construction of the new predator proof fence to extend the Sanctuary area were very obvious.

There was very little small bird activity at most sites and, unusually for autumn, no mixed feeding flocks, except for the tail end of one at site 7. This gave the only **Spotted Pardalotes** and **White-throated Gerygone** for the day and a few **Grey Fantails**. (Regulars such as Yellow-rumped and Buff-rumped Thornbills, Scarlet Robins, White-eared and Brown-headed Honeyeaters were all AWOL.) Amongst the more interesting records were a female **Brown Goshawk** at site 4, a couple of **Grey Currawongs**, a few **Superb Parrots**, 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** riding the wind over Old Joe Hill, and 2 **Jacky Winters** seen by David at site 1 (southern end of the reserve), a species for which there are few records and none recent. There was no sign of winter visitors such as Golden Whistler. A few summer visitors were still present in ones and twos – **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**. **Red Wattlebirds** and **Noisy Friarbirds** were in reasonable numbers, with 2 flocks (6 and 14 birds) of the latter seen heading north.

A nice selection of early autumn butterflies was reported – Imperial and Spotted Jezebels around the flowering mistletoes (and a Mistletoe Moth), Meadow Argus, Common and Shouldered Browns, Amethyst Hairstreak, Cabbage White and Common Grass-blue.

Mt Majura NR

The surveys were conducted on Thursday 22 March by Kathy Walter, John Goldie and Duncan McCaskill. Most sites were fairly quiet in terms of smaller birds, with highlights being a **Scarlet Robin** and **Varied Sittellas** in one site. A large mixed feeding flock was spotted just outside this site which had many small species not recorded in the site itself. No Speckled Warblers were found, which is a bit unusual. However, the real highlight of the morning were **Swift Parrots**. Three birds were initially spotted while doing a site count and were chased off by **Noisy Miners**. After a search in between sites, a group of at least 12 **Swift Parrots** were found feeding on a flowering eucalypt near a small dam.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

The survey of the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie was undertaken on 21 March by Michael Lenz. The morning was mostly overcast, with light wind, increasing towards the end of the survey to 25 km/h. All grassed areas were heavily overgrazed by kangaroos with many of the grazers present throughout much of the area. Species numbers per site (of 9) ranged from 1 to 9 (average 4.7). Notably small bush birds were largely absent at sites. However, towards the northern end with a better understorey 2 larger mixed feeding flocks were encountered (but not within survey sites). One of those included 14 species. The most widespread species were **Crimson Rosella** and **Noisy Miner** (each at 6 sites). Species of interest included **Little Eagle**, **Australian Hobby**, 3 **White-throated Gerygones**, 2 **Western Gerygones**, 1 **Varied Sittella**, 1 **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and several **Rufous Whistlers**. The **Restless Flycatcher** was still present. Speckled Warbler was not recorded.

Newline

The survey was done by Sue Lashko on 24 March, a fine and still morning that was initially cool. Despite the dry summer, the weeds were rampant and birds were gorging themselves on the red rosehips of the many briar rose bushes. There were a few summer migrants around including both **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones** which called from adjacent trees and obligingly showed themselves. Others included **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and a few **Noisy Friarbirds**. **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Noisy Miners** now dominate more sites to the detriment of small birds; ironically these are the sites with the fewest blackberries and briar roses. No raptors were recorded in the total of 37 species.

Symonston area sites

Sandra Henderson surveyed Callum Brae NR on 20 March. The reserve was very dry, with two of the six dams dry. Some of the blackberry patches are about to be tackled by authorities, to make it easier to get to some of the rabbit warrens. Very large numbers of rabbits were seen. A total of 42 species was recorded for the day, with the most interesting being two **Scarlet Robins**, two **Speckled Warblers**, five **Dusky Woodswallows**, two **Olive-backed Orioles** (neither calling) and three **White-throated Gerygones**. No finches were seen.

The sites in Isaacs Ridge NR were surveyed on 22 March, very dry like Callum Brae with the only good dam in the survey area a muddy puddle. It was a very quiet day in terms of species seen, perhaps due to the large numbers of **Noisy Friarbirds** (22) and **Red Wattlebirds** (8) present. Five **Common Bronzewing**s were seen, although they are usually seen outside the official survey sites. A total of 20 species was recorded. There is very limited public access/parking and there has been a lot of planting and placement of habitat logs since this site became part of the nature reserve, so the general area should become more interesting with time.



COG 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](http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html)

and trips page of 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.

Future Field Trips

Sunday 8 April – 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 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210736.

Sunday 15 April – Nursery Swamp

On this trip we will visit one of the most delightful spots in Namadgi National Park to ascertain which birds may be found in the high country in mid-autumn, and to obtain records of them. We will drive to the Orroral Valley. The first part of the walk is 2 km uphill on a fairly steep track, then we continue along a valley through Black Saltees to Nursery Swamp, a fen at 1,100 metres altitude containing peat that has been dated to 10,000 years BP. Walking distance about 10 km round trip. The area is of great significance to Aboriginal people, containing both rock art and tool-making sites. Meet at the Kambah Village shopping centre car park (cnr Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent) at 8.30 am for carpooling. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10. We will return in the early afternoon, so bring morning tea, lunch and water, and be prepared for changeable weather as we will be at altitude. Registration for this trip is essential; numbers are limited. To register, or to obtain further information, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at telephone (02) 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, or email ns2018@canberrabirds.org.au.

Wednesday 18 April – O'Connor Ridge

Meet at 9:00am on Dryandra St, about 100m past the entrance to the tourist park. We will walk on O'Connor Ridge, with an extension to the eastern portion of Bruce Ridge possible if time and enthusiasm permit.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 29 April – Bluetts Block, Uriarra Road

The walk will start at 8am. There is no need to book.

Bluetts is a densely forested reserve with extensive heath in much of the understory. A fire trail leads up a steep hill from the entrance gate and there are some pleasing views across Denman Prospect towards Black Mountain. Bird and flower species vary throughout the year, and the forest rings with birdcalls. **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** are known to breed here.

The walk will also traverse some grassland off track. Sturdy boots or shoes are suggested because stones on the slope of the fire trail can be slippery.

How to get to Bluetts: from the Stromlo Forest Park roundabout, travel about 2.5km along Uriarra Road to where a bicycle path enters the roadside on the left hand side of the road. Park near the gateway on the left hand side of the road. Be careful if turning across the road at this point as traffic flows swiftly.

Jean Casburn

Saturday 5 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens beginners' outing

This morning walk will be the first for 2018 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours. Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter. Registration is essential. Please book your place with Anthony (0419202155, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide.

15 to 17 May 2018 - Jenolan Caves Lyrebirds

Six people have expressed interest in joining me (Michael Robbins) on my May 2018 break at Caves House, Jenolan.

The plan for May 15 to 17 is firming up, although numbers will remain uncertain until close to 14 May. Some people have already decided they'll stay an extra day, so we'll wait until about the beginning of May to firm up car sharing arrangements.

The refurbishment of the Bistro will be finished and lunches and breakfast can be bought there. Chisholm Restaurant, which is the only place to eat dinner unless you drive into Oberon, will be operating in May but seating maybe in the function room if refurbishment of the grand dining room has started by 14/5/18.

We'll aim to leave Canberra at about 9 am on Tuesday 15/5/18, the exact time we get away will depend on car sharing arrangements, and we'll plan to stop at a couple of places on the way to Jenolan Caves, including a lunch stop.

We'll spend all of Wednesday the 16th doing walks around the Jenolan Caves area. If anyone would rather do a cave tour than join a walk that's fine. One walk will definitely be to the old playing fields and beyond, but as it will be an out and back walk, if anyone wanted to stop at the old playing fields and wait for us there that will be fine. On Thursday 17th the plan is to visit Kangangra Walls with probably one other stop on the way back to Canberra.

It is highly unlikely we'll have a large enough group for a group booking. Therefore it will be up to individuals to book their choice of accommodation from one of the three levels of room in Caves House, or a bed in the backpacker 'lodge' or a room in the motel style unit. Please make sure to let Michael (mrobbins at home.netspeed.com.au) know if you're interested in joining him and haven't already done so.

Sunday 20 May - Bird Watching by Bike – Mulligan's Flat & Goorooyarroo

Come and explore Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo by bike. You will need your own dirt-road capable bike (mountain bike or similar) and a moderate level of fitness. Cycling in the reserves is limited to a few vehicular management trails which are mostly in good condition and gently sloping although there are a few short steeper sections. There will be some walking involved as well.

Nature Lodge Optics

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

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

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



Birdwatching products.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meet at the car park at the main entrance to Mulligan's Flat, Amy Ackman St, Forde at 8:30am.

To participate, please contact Duncan McCaskill by email at: duncan.mccaskill@gmail.com. Booking are essential. Numbers will be limited.

Sunday 27 May - Late autumn mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Aspects are expected to be the same as previous weekend trips of this kind, ie cost of \$20 for transport by two 12-seater buses, the point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am, and it will run until mid-afternoon (please bring morning tea and lunch). To continue to keep it fresh we are again looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and will be able to see some interesting birds. The final itinerary will depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 H or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com). Please don't delay booking your seats if you are intending to participate in this very popular outing.

Sunday 3 June - Hall Village and property on Wallaroo Road

Meet for carpooling at Hall Recreation Reserve, Gladstone St, Hall (on LHS from Canberra) at 9.00 am. We will travel west along Wallaroo Road into McCarthy Road to a private property which has Murrumbidgee River frontage. Later we will visit Hall Common. Bring morning tea and lunch, warm clothing and strong boots.

Contact Bill Graham on 0466874723 or cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Saturday 23 June - Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve- Superb Lyrebird survey

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 at the Reserve car park 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. For previous survey results see *Gang-gang* p8, July 2017.

Note the change of date for this outing.

Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

Saturday 14 July - Cooma Cottage and Yass Gorge

Meet for carpooling at Hall Recreation Reserve, Gladstone St, Hall (on LHS from Canberra) at 8.00 am. We will visit the grounds and gardens of Cooma Cottage on the Yass Valley Way, Marchmont. It is a National Trust property of 100 acres which has Yass River frontage. Later we will visit Yass Gorge. Bring morning tea and lunch, warm clothes and suitable footwear. Easy walking.

Contact Bill Graham on 0466874723 or cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Sunday 22 July Rowes Lagoon and Collector TSR

Meet for carpooling at Bywong St, Sutton, in the Sutton Primary School car park at 9.00 am. The circuit of Rowes Lagoon Circuit is 3.5 km and takes almost 2 hours. Collector TSR is on the Breadalbane Road north of Collector. Bring morning tea and lunch. Wear strong boots with gaiters or rubber boots as it is tiger snake habitat.

Contact Bill Graham on 0466874723 or cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

My goal for this year – a new spot every week!

More highlights from my endeavours to go to at least one new place each week.

26 February– 4 March -Tumut area

On 27 February I spent the morning in the Tumut area, with COG member Les Main who does Birdlife Australia surveys in BA's Australian Alps Key Biodiversity Area. We visited a number of his regular sites, many of them in the Kosciusko National Park, and all of them new to me. The very first site was a small farm wetland just off the Snowy Mountains Highway. As we arrived an **Australian Pelican** flew off, but a group of seven **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** flew in, which was a nice surprise. They perched in the tops of some large dead trees. Another site, where we walked a couple of hundred metres up a walking track, resulted in two **Wonga Pigeons** flushing close to the track, the first Les had seen during his surveys in this spot. The start of the Cumberland Trail was overrun with **Crimson Rosellas** – we estimated 30 in the first 200m. The highlight here was a **Black-eared Cuckoo**, with a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** also next to the track, enjoying whatever delicacy is currently attracting the cuckoos. A slight diversion into Talbingo produced a **Great Crested Grebe** on the Jounama Pondage. We had great views of **Superb Lyrebirds** along the highway, with one calmly strolling across the road right in front of the car. I will try to organise a trip to the area for COG next year.

5–11 March - Mount Alexandra Reserve, Mittagong

I spent a few days in Mittagong, where my son and his family are now living. Lake Alexandra and Mount Alexandra looked likely spots, and are within walking distance of his house, so I spent a morning exploring. Lake Alexandra proved rather disappointing, with lots of domestic ducks, but Mount Alexandra Reserve is much more interesting. Some reports indicated Spotted Quail Thrush could be found there, although I didn't see any. I did find a pair of **Rufous Fantails** in a damp gully, which made the walk worthwhile. The local tourist information centre couldn't provide a map of the myriad of walking trails (which meant I didn't venture very far into the reserve), but a friendly local pointed out a good loop track, where I had a close encounter with a good-sized red-bellied black snake. More exploration of that reserve to come. The tourist info centre did provide some information on other places to go birdwatching in the future....

12-18 March - Yankee Hat

I'm rather ashamed to admit that, although I've lived in Canberra for 45 years, I've never walked out to the Aboriginal rock art site at Yankee Hat, although I have birded around the carpark. The trip to the carpark produced a **Painted Button-quail** wandering on Boboyan Road, although a couple of motorcyclists frightened it off into the bush before I could photograph it. Along the track to the carpark there were a couple of large flocks of **Little Ravens**, as well as a family of **Nankeen Kestrels** and an **Australian Hobby**. At the carpark at Yankee Hat, it took quite a while to get onto the track itself, because the very first birds I saw at the carpark (after the **Masked Lapwings** at the entry) were a little group of **Diamond Firetails**. There were numerous **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, a male **Scarlet Robin**, and quite a few **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** foraging low in fallen timber. Along the walking track, a single female **Scarlet Robin** was sitting quietly in a solitary tree, many **Tree Martins** were hawking above the swampy areas, and each little patch of woodland had several species. At the rock art site two **Leaden Flycatchers**, three juvenile **Scarlet Robins**, a few **Dusky Woodswallows** and many pardalotes were active, despite the quite windy conditions at that stage.

19-25 March -Justice Robert Hope Park, Watson

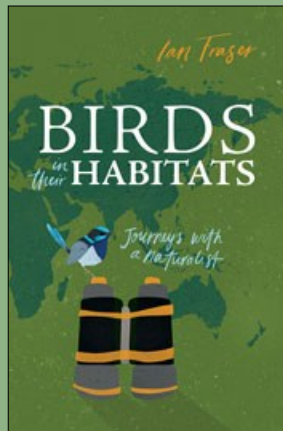
After seeing Justice Robert Hope Park popping up in eBird lists, it went on my list of new places to visit. I found it something of a disappointment, with very large numbers of **Noisy Miners** the dominant species. There is quite a bit of planting going on, and perhaps there'll be a better understory in the future, to both deter the Miners and attract some more small birds.

26 March-1 April -unnamed woodland patch, Namatjira Drive, Fisher

I've driven past this patch, just near the BMX track, dozens of times, but never stopped. It's much larger than I first thought, and is worth a repeat visit. Twenty-two species were seen, including many groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** passing over. A **Gang-gang Cockatoo** was heard early on, but seemed very far away. I found the bird in a eucalypt near the dam, which is quite large but not very bird-friendly, with no fringing vegetation at all. The birdiest section was around the entry gate close to Namatjira Drive. An acacia next to a low, open water tank contained seven **Red Wattlebirds**, which were taking turns drinking and bathing at the tank.

Sandra Henderson

NEW PUBLICATION



Birds in their Habitats: Journeys with a Naturalist

Ian Fraser

Everywhere we go there are birds, and they all have mysteries to be unravelled. These mysteries include the way they look, from bizarre to apparently mundane, why they live where they live, and the things they do, many of which are far too incredible ever to be imagined as fiction.

Birds in Their Habitats is a collection of stories and experiences, which introduce fascinating aspects of birdlife, ecology and behaviour.

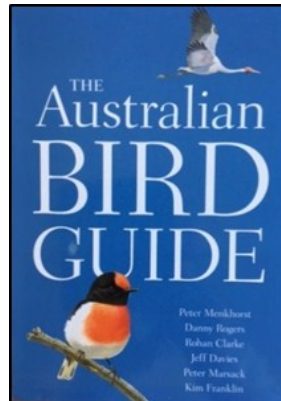
Informed by a wealth of historical and contemporary research, Ian Fraser takes the reader on a journey through four continents: from places as unfamiliar as the Chonos Archipelago of southern Chile and the arid Sahel woodlands of northern Cameroon to those as familiar as a suburban backyard. This is a book of discovery of birds and the places they live. And with humour and personal insight, it is a book about the sometimes strange world of the people who spend a life absorbed in birds.

Members' Price \$33.

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

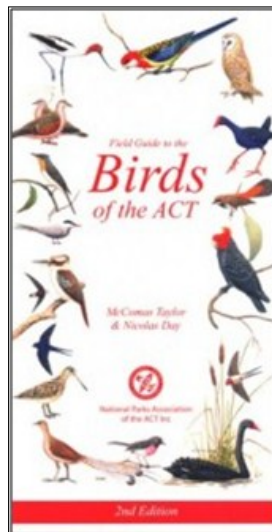


The Australian Bird Guide

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

The most comprehensive field guide to Australian birds ever seen and winner of the 2017 Whitley Medal. 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.

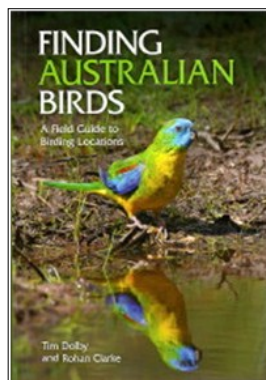


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

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



Finding Australian Birds: A Field Guide to Birding Locations

Tim Dolby, Rohan Clarke

This book covers over 400 Australian bird watching sites conveniently grouped into the best birding areas, from one end of the country to the other.

Member's price \$35

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:

P Smith

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2018 edition:

Wednesday 26 April 2018

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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