



Gang-gang

March 2018

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MARCH MEETING

Wednesday 14 March 2018

7.30 pm

The short presentation will be **"How do avocets preen?"** by **Steve Wallace**

The main presentation will be by **Nicholas Carlile**, Acting Principal Scientist, Ecosystem Management Science, NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, on the **"Gould's Petrel: 29 years of research and monitoring."**

Gould's Petrel, *Pterodroma leucoptera*, is nationally listed as Vulnerable and was downlisted in NSW from Endangered to Vulnerable in 2008 as a direct consequence of active conservation. This was achieved through management of threatening processes on Cabbage Tree Island NSW (30 ha, the primary breeding site for the species in Australia with 850-1,000 pairs), and the establishment of a second breeding population on the neighbouring Boondelbah Island (15 ha; 40 pairs), which was seeded through translocation. This work commenced with surveys in 1989-90 (by Chris Davey) and has continued annually since. Significant research was undertaken by David Priddel and Nicholas Carlile of NPWS (now NSW Office of Environment and Heritage)

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

Apart from the substantial and widespread rain on 25 February, the day this column was being finalised (and too late for its impact to be clear), it was very dry and hot for the first 3 ½ weeks of the month covered by this column, with many areas not receiving any rain at all. This has had a definite impact on some of the bird activity in the COG area of interest (Aoi), in particular the reporting of some species which I had alerted readers in my spring columns to look out for in the expected upcoming dry summer, but due to the wet December in particular had thought no longer likely.

One of these was a single **Black-eared Cuckoo** reported from 3 different spots, the most notable being from the elm trees near the Bimbi Beach end of Diddam's Close, Lake Ginninderra. It was initially located there on 7 February by Lindell Emerton and Martyn Moffat during a U3A bird walk. It was subsequently enjoyed, photographed and reported by many other observers up to 10 February, often observed eating the elm beetle larvae. These larvae had also attracted 3 other cuckoo species, the **Fan-tailed**

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Black-eared Cuckoo, Lake Ginninderra

Lindell Emerton

Everyone welcome

MARCH MEETING

Continued

throughout the 1990s into the ecology and management of the species, resulting in the downlisting. Several PhDs and a Science Masters project have also been conducted on Gould's Petrel. Since this time the species has expanded to several islands along the NSW coast. In recent seasons the number of nesting pairs of this long-lived seabird has also fallen by 33% on long-term averages, without showing substantial recovery. Instigation of specific research is now required to understand what new threatening processes are impacting on Australia's rarest endemic seabird.



Red-necked Avocet, Lake Ginninderra

Steve Wallace

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

—continued from Page 1

Cuckoo, as well as the **Shining** and **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoos**, with a juvenile of the last-named species causing identification difficulties for some observers. However, the first sighting of the Black-eared was of a bird in a eucalypt by Alastair Smith at Callum Brae on 30 January, which was also there on 5 and 13 February. The third bird was reported by Steve Read foraging low down in a eucalypt near the Glendale Depot, Namadgi NP, on 4 February.

Interestingly, the last one seems to have been the only sighting from where they typically spend much of their time, sitting quietly low in a bush. By chance, Stentoreus' column in the latest edition of Canberra Bird Notes devoted over 3 pages to this species, including discussing its range, noting from the 2014-2015 COG Annual Bird report (ABR) that Canberra is on the fringe of its usual dry inland preferred habitat. The 2015-2016 ABR lists it as a rare, non-breeding visitor, but notably with 5 records from that year all seeming to come from Mulligins Flat NR between 24 and 31 October.

A second species which I predicted in spring was the **Black Honeyeater** for which Michael Lenz reported 3 birds (at least 2 males) feeding in flowering mistletoes in the Gundaroo area on 21 February. This is also listed in the 2015-2016 ABR as a non-breeding vagrant from inland and has been recorded in only 4 years since 1982, the last being 12 records in 2013-2014. Michael also reported a pair of **White-browed Woodswallows** from the same area feeding between the trees and closer to the ground, likely also due to the very dry conditions. There were also earlier reports for this species, for which there are usually few records in the New Year; with 3 and 4 birds respectively on 8 and 12 February by Alastair Smith and John Martinet at the Uriarra Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR), as well as 2 birds at Mt Ginini

on the latter date by Matthew Frawley. In contrast I can find no records for the closely related **Masked Woodswallow** this summer.

Up to 8 **Horsfield's Bushlarks** were last reported from Wallaroo Road, Parkwood, by Shorty on 1 February, and earlier on 28 January Michael Lenz reported 10 from the eastern side of Lake George. Both are very high numbers for this species, which usually has left the COG Aol by the end of January, so this was perhaps also due to the dry conditions, or possibly they were gathering together before leaving our area? However, there have been no records I can find for the **Brown Songlark** in February, the last report being of a single bird by Ash Allnutt from Parkwood on 31 January. **Rufous Songlarks** were still reported in 3 locations during February, the most recent being 2 from the Hall TSR by Cedric Bear on 23 February. In contrast to January, the **White-winged Triller** has been reported from more (10) locations, the last report being by Martin Butterfield from Brindabella Road of two birds at the corner of East West Road on 24 February.

So it appears all of the above species, except for the **White-winged Triller** and perhaps the **Black Honeyeater**, will by now have left the COG Aol. In the first week of February the **Brush Cuckoo** was reported from 3 locations still in its summer habitat of the mountains, and then a single bird, presumably on its way north, was observed at the Nelanglo TSR near Gundaroo on 17 February. However, there was a late report from the Scrivener Dam by Alastair Smith on 23 February. So please watch out for any further of the above species, as well as the **Cicadabird** and the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, neither of which have been reported in February.

The **Dollarbird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, and **Sacred Kingfisher** all usually leave by mid-March, in that order (all 3 were still being reported at the time of writing). Other birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April include **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (often very quiet this month), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, **Pallid Cuckoo** (again there were reports from only 5 locations during February, the most recent being at Mulligans Flat on 19 February) and **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**. Also continue to keep an eye out for the **White-throated Needletail** and the related **Fork-tailed Swift**. Probably due to the hot dry weather, there have been only 2 reports so far in February (the most recent 4 over the Brindabellas on 18 February), and it appears none of the latter this month following the sightings in January. So please keep an eye out for these two species until early April.

The **Eastern Koel** will also move out of the COG Aol by the end of March. This species has had a long and very successful breeding season. While the rate of reporting seemed to quieten several times during February, there were bursts of reporting fledglings up to and including 25 February, and I'm now aware of about 71 of them, a significantly higher number than last year. Based on previous patterns I'm expecting up to 10 more by mid-March. So please keep an eye out, or particularly listen for, this species and report to me any late fledglings (you will be alerted by their loud, monotonous begging call) you observe, or other interesting adult behaviour.

Some species will be seen in Canberra during March as "passage migrants" as they move north from their breeding sites in the mountains. These include the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail**. Look out also for the first migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**; this movement usually starts in the last week of March. In February there have been reports already of **Red Wattlebirds** moving, possibly just locally, and the **Silvereye** has moved into gardens from mid-month.

Other species move from the mountains but will stay here, so watch out for the first altitudinal migrants, the **Scarlet Robin** (on 21 February Jean Casburn reported her first pair from Narrabundah Hill after being absent there since 2 October 2017), **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared**



Golden Whistler, Micalong Swamp

Kevin Murray



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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

18 to 25 August 2018

includes Lifou and Ouvéa Islands

Strzelecki Track Outback tour

2 to 21 September 2018

Four states. 39th tour!

Plains-wanderer weekends

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

2 to 9 February 2019

Please see itineraries, checklists and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Honeyeater in Canberra's suburbs and peri-urban areas in March.

There have been a few more "unusual" birds reported in February, not necessarily related to the dry weather. On 7 February, Graeme Clifton observed a single **Spangled Drongo** in and around his house yard at Carwoola. The 2015-2016 ABR notes this is a coastal species not often recorded in the ACT, with none for the previous 3 years following the increasing records in the prior decade. On the morning of 13 February, Steve Wallace reported that a group of six **Red-necked Avocets** were at Bimbi Beach, Lake Ginninderra. Remarkably this is the same place as the Black-eared Cuckoo above, but these birds typically did not hang around and were last reported by Sue Lashko at Nengi Bamir beach on the opposite side of Lake Ginninderra Peninsula that evening. However, on 15 February Martin Butterfield recorded 2 at Foxlow Lagoon, closer to Lakes George and Bathurst from where they are mostly reported.

The lone **Apostlebird** continues to be reported from Watson, now so tame that children have been observed feeding it. On 4 February a further **Scarlet Honeyeater** was reported from the Namadgi Visitors Centre. There has also been a further report of the **Great Crested Grebe**, this time on the Cotter Dam, an area which is difficult to survey and I expect may hold significant numbers of other waterbirds such as darters and/or cormorants. Finally, single **Peaceful Doves** were recorded from both the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the Murrumbidgee Golf Club in Gleneagles, both well away from their usual spot at Bibaringa on the Cotter Road.

While it has been the last month of a pretty dry summer, breeding activity has continued. Apart from the **Eastern Koel** above and that reported elsewhere in this issue from the COG boat trip and in particular the COG Wednesday Walk on 21 February, the following notable reports (including a couple of delayed reports) are worth mentioning in some more detail:

- Most remarkable is Julie Clark's report that the Yerrabi Pond **Red-capped Robins** have produced a third brood in February, this time two juveniles are each being exclusively fed by one of the parents. While HANZAB indicates this species is multi-brooded and can make up to 10 nesting attempts per season, and rear up to 4 broods, I am not aware of any evidence of this happening in the ACT. This is probably due to the limited breeding information, with the 2015-2016 ABR noting that breeding has only been reported for 9 of the past 30 years. It appears that a fifth bird still in the area may be the juvenile of the second brood. HANZAB mentions that fledged young can stay in the natal territory for up to 1.5 months, but that both parents drive the young from the territories. This would be consistent with Julie's observations of the male trying to chase it away.

- Close behind is the report of a young **Pied Butcherbird** at the East Uriarra Reserve with 2 adults by Ryu Callaway and Sue Lashko on 14 January. David Dedunczuk observed an immature bird there on 17 February, so it appears to have survived. This is a rare breeding record, with the 2015-2016 ABR containing only the 3rd breeding record in the COG Aol. At least to me breeding is not unexpected given the increase in records over the past few years as shown in the ABR, and with some now seeming to have established territories, such as the above, where they can be reliably found;

- To me it raises the question - will they take a parallel path around 30 years later to the **Grey Butcherbird** which is now common and breeding in the COG Aol? There were 14 separate records for this latter species in the 2015-2016 ABR. From August to December 2017 there was an example of a successful successive breeding by the same pair in Rivett, apparently very rare and which has been written up and accepted for publication in CBN;

- On 2 February Mark Clayton was surprised to see a "green" **Satin Bowerbird** in his Kaleen garden, the first time in over 40 years of living there that he had recorded the species locally. Later in the day he reported that there were actually 2, one an obvious juvenile bird bred in the past breeding season, the other a probable adult female. This too is a very remarkable first record being a breeding one and poses the question as to where the bower and the nest may have been. In my experience, including in papers I have published in CBN, especially the former could be some distance away. Also in my experience the dependent young are very quiet and you have to look very carefully to actually see them being fed, probably due to the female having to do all the nest building, brooding and feeding/defending of the fledglings herself. Unusually one seen in my garden later in the month could audibly be seen and heard begging as it was pursuing its mother. This species is continuing its spread throughout Canberra and reports of breeding continue to rise with 40 noted in the 2015-2016 ABR. I have also been made aware of dependent young in Duffy, Rivett and Narrabundah, including possible interactions with the **Eastern Koel**.

- Steve Read reported a brightly patterned juvenile **Pallid Cuckoo** being fed by much smaller **Fuscous Honeyeaters** at the Glendale Depot on 4 February. The bird was old enough to forage on the ground, but when it perched in the scrub the honeyeaters delivered a constant stream of insects. In contrast to the **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** mentioned last month, the Fuscous does not seem to be one of the more common hosts for this cuckoo species, though it is mentioned in HANZAB;

Last, and certainly least, I have had two **Spotted Doves** in my local area since before Christmas, and they were observed displaying a number of times in February. The local

Common Mynas also seem to have had a very good breeding season with a flock of up to 45 birds containing many immatures noisily flying around, including raiding my neighbour's figs, and with a roost on the edge of my GBS site.

Autumn is also the time when the shorter mornings and evenings make it easier to watch roost flights and find roost sites. On 21 February John Layton posted on the chatline that he had watched a large flock of **House Sparrows** (easily exceeding 100, perhaps 150) coming together after 1900 in his garden then moving on. Consensus was that it was most likely post-breeding movement to a roost site, as they will often come together in small numbers from a wider area on their way to a roost, which tends to be in deciduous trees.

Finally autumn is also the time of the Mixed Feeding Flock (MFF) phenomenon. These often are already reported in February and could have been expected to have been this month given that there may be advantages for birds feeding together in the very dry conditions. Surprisingly the first report of a MFF I'm aware of is from Jean Casburn at Narrabundah Hill on 23 February. So please watch out for them as they can have unusual or unexpected compositions. As I've mentioned many times before, nothing in bird watching gives me a bigger thrill than a MFF and looking out for the unexpected species lurking quietly in amongst all that activity.

March is in the middle 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 March as mentioned above, for the first arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species FFs, 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 E-mail 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

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 map below shows locations already reported.

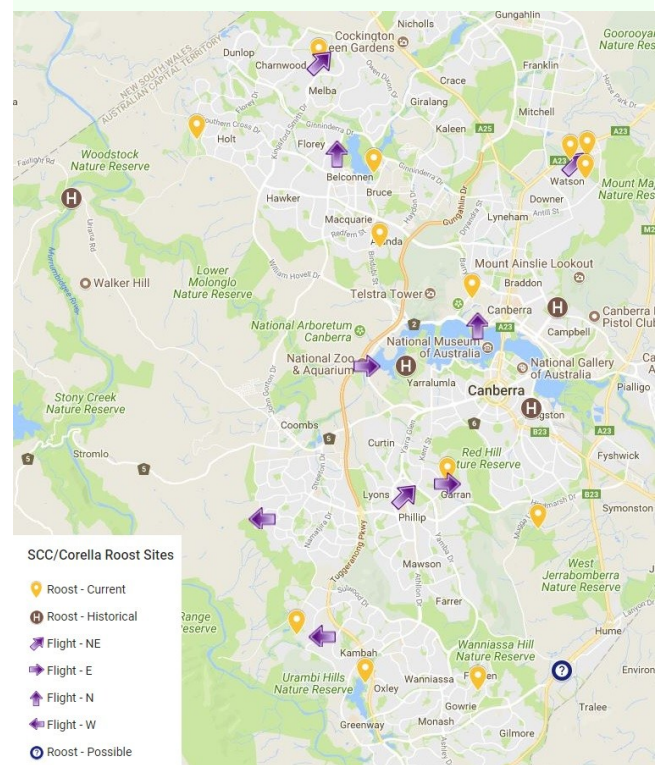
Please report the location and direction of any roost flights (regular movement of birds to/from their roost site in the early morning or dusk), and locations of any yet-to-be reported roost sites to roostcensus@canberrabirds.org.au

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



COG'S Bird Blitz 2017

At the February meeting, there was a brief resume of last October's bird blitz. More details will be published in a future Canberra Bird Notes. 179 bird species were recorded, with 80 of them breeding. There were 89 named participants plus an uncertain number of supporting persons. We managed to survey in 99 grid cells across the ACT.

Highlights included two new species for the blitz: the Scarlet Honeyeaters at the ANBG and Musk Lorikeets in both Gleneagles and Fadden. All vulnerable species except the Glossy Black-Cockatoo were recorded. Pied Butcherbirds are no longer a surprise, though a lone Spotted Harrier was. And in the mountains we recorded Pilotbird, Spotted Quail-thrush, Wonga Pigeon, Eastern Whipbird and Rufous Fantail.

The lucky draw winners were as follows.

"Best bird" – Pilotbird, in the Brindabellas - Kim Farley-Larmour and Paul Fennell (Prize: "Birds in the Australian High Country", donated by author Neil Hermes)

"Best bird breeding" – Collared Sparrowhawk on nest, Uriarra East Reserve – Duncan McCaskill (Prize: "Birds in the Australian High Country", donated by photographer Geoffrey Dabb)

"Special effort" (defined as >10 datasheets, >10 hours or blitzing behind locked gates) – Sue Lashko (Prize: "Cranes, Herons and Storks of Australia" by David Hollands – donated by the author)

"Blitzed every year prize" – Darryl Beaumont (Prize: a bottle of wine donated by Trevor and Joan Lipscombe)

"Vulnerable species prize" – Harvey Perkins, for a Scarlet Robin (Prize: a bottle of wine donated by Shirley Kral).

All blitz participants present were able to select a book, a plant or a pack of cards kindly donated by, variously, Sandra Henderson, Sue Lashko, Michael Lenz, Alison Mackerras and "Steve" Stephinson.

Particular thanks go to ACT Parks and Conservation Service for their assistance in facilitating birding behind locked gates; to Jaron Bailey, for the heroic and ongoing task of drawing together the data; and to Julian Robinson and David McDonald, for help with the website postings.

Barbara Allan



Scarlet Honeyeater

Con Boekel

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 4 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, COG held its annual outing, attended by 16 participants, many of whom were relatively new to birding. The theme for 2018 was 'Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future' emphasising that wetlands are prized land, not wasteland, and they make cities liveable. This certainly seems very pertinent in relation to Jerrabomberra Wetlands, which is undoubtedly the most visited birdwatching destination in the ACT.

While still in the carpark, we had a flypast by 28 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**. We then spent most of our time in the hides, enjoying the cool morning and the perfect light. The highlight for most participants was seeing (a new bird for several people) 6 **Latham's Snipe**, some very close, with 2 having what appeared to be a minor territorial dispute. One bird faced away from us, revealing the strong rufous colour in its tail including in close-up scope views. None of the birds had flags or bands.

Duck numbers and variety were low but it was pleasing to see one male **Chestnut Teal**. A **Royal Spoonbill** demonstrated its distinctive feeding technique and its impressive plumes. **Australasian Swamphen** and **Dusky Moorhen** with large offspring enabled close up looks of differing bill colours compared to adult birds, and **Eurasian Coots** obligingly stood out of the water so we could see their weird lobed toes. At least 3 **Black-fronted Dotterel** put in an appearance.

Also seen from Ardea hide were 3 perched juvenile **Dollarbirds**, with no sign of the adults.

We then circled the wetlands, adding a number of bush and grassland birds. One observer saw a **European Greenfinch** before it quickly disappeared. A pair of **Golden-headed Cisticola** put on a great show, perching on various treetops, allowing great scope views as well as photographic opportunities; again, this was a new bird for several people. A large begging young **Australian Reed-Warbler** sitting low in a Casuarina was periodically fed by its parents.

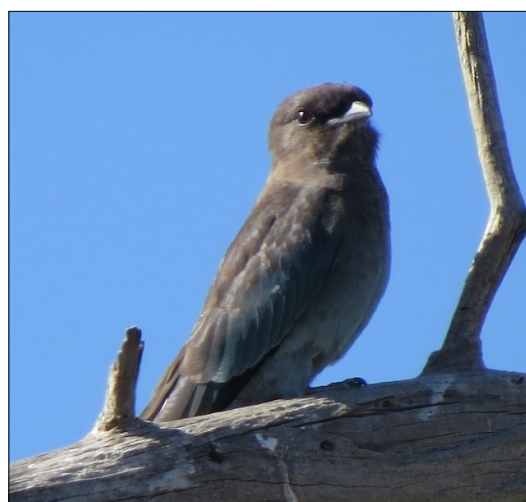
The total species count was 57.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 11 February - East Basin/Molonglo Reach - electric boat cruise

Under clear and very warm conditions (too warm for those out in the open until a light breeze picked up), 23 members and guests joined me on what was my nineteenth time since we started in 2003 for this now annual trip to view the water and land birds of this area. We left from Kingston Harbour on the electric boat, the EL Gull, first venturing about 500 m into the navigable part of Jerrabomberra Creek and then along the east bank of East Basin, into Molonglo Reach and along the south bank to the newest bridge, before tracing our route back.

Compared to last year **Australasian Darters** were present in both the Creek and along the Reach. The 14 birds counted there were fairly evenly split between males (with limited red on the neck so not in breeding plumage), females (with clear white breasts and black napes)



Silvereye, Dollarbird (juvenile), Jerrabomberra Wetlands
Sandra Henderson

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

and immatures identified by their dirtier white and lighter black plumage. A very buff bird was possibly a juvenile. We also saw two **Great Cormorants** resting along the bank of the Creek, one of which had a very dark grey upper body, so possibly also a juvenile/immature. We saw no **Little Black** or **Little Pied Cormorants** this year, but on our return we recorded 3 **Pied Cormorants** at the creek mouth, though we only had reasonable views of the one which flew past low and then settled in the water.

This is now the third year that no darter/cormorant breeding could be confirmed, though we did see a couple of older nests in a previously favoured spot which may have been last season's. It is further evidence that the more than 10 years of these species breeding there are over. As discussed in last year's report, the reasons for this remain unclear.

The main breeding area in the ACT now appears to be along the Molonglo River west of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass for about a kilometre downstream. On 4 February Jean Casburn attempted an accurate count as she waded through the overgrowth down to the river on the eastern side, and her counts follow:

Little Pied Cormorant: 51 birds, 15 nests - 5 nests were in one tree. Chick size varied from very small to fledged.

Great Cormorant: 5 birds, 2 nests - 2 adult birds and 3 immatures were seen. Possibly more were not visible.

Little Black Cormorant: 5 birds, one nest amongst 7 other nests.

Australasian Darter: 53 birds. Best estimate from counting, 10 nests containing juvenile and immature birds. Adult birds located in close proximity to or on nests. Chick sizes varied from almost without feathers to creamy fluffy down and larger dependent young.

These are very typical of the numbers that were once found on the boat trip. Willows are being cleared from this area too, so it is a question as to how long breeding on this site will continue. In the following week Chris Davey posted on the COG chatline that there was **Little Pied** and **Great Cormorant** breeding on the northern of the three islands at Gungahlin Pond, but that one needs to get to the island for a decent count which is not really possible from the western shore. However, the COG Wednesday Walkers were unable to confirm this; of the 20 **Little Pied Cormorants** and 30 **Little Black Cormorants** seen, the only breeding indication was one doing a fly-by carrying a stick (see the report elsewhere in this newsletter).

Other waterbird activity continued to be very low, with the highlights being two **White-necked Heron** circling about 400 to 500 metres away, 3 perched **White-faced Heron**, one of which was noticeably smaller and possibly an immature, and a **Great Egret** seen in the Creek by only a few of the participants at the end of the trip. Other than that, there were only **Black Swan**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Pacific Black Duck**, a single **Silver Gull** and a half dozen or so **Purple**

Swamphens (in one case there was a much smaller juvenile standing next to its parent on a rock), **Dusky Moorhens**, **Eurasian Coot**, plus a couple of **Masked Lapwings** recorded.

Also seen about 75 m away on the bank were 16 **Greylag Geese**, completely unafraid of the canoeists, etc., walking past them. During the COG Bird Blitz, Rod MacKay counted 15 goslings being fiercely protected by 1 white and 3 grey geese, but all were now fully grown. We had seen the 4 adults on our 12 February 2017 trip. Interestingly all except the original 3 birds are white, so there has possibly been some cross breeding with a domestic goose. The implications for this significant increase in numbers are unclear.

Of the land birds, three species were seen for the first time, the first a female **Eastern Koel** which flew across the water and landed in a tree allowing reasonable if brief views to most participants. After this a male could be heard ko-elling nearby, somewhat surprising in the presence of a conspecific. This species was not unexpected following its relatively recent move into the wetlands, with Michael Lenz finding 3 fledglings there the week before. The second was a **Little Raven**, identified by a very experienced participant as "definitely not a *coronoides*". The last was the **Spotted Dove**, 3 of which were seen perched separately along the south bank of the Reach.

Nine **Dollarbirds**, mostly immatures by their dull bills, were spread along both banks of the Reach, and two **Sacred Kingfishers** were seen, one a likely juvenile based on its very dull plumage. The largest numbers ever for a single species recorded on this trip was the estimate of 410 **Common Starlings** in two large flocks on power lines, plus some smaller groups.

At 51, the total number of species was about average, and a good number given the lack of several expected species. Despite the complete lack of darter/cormorant breeding, participants again enjoyed the trip which remains a popular and very pleasant late summer outing. A very pleasing aspect was the presence of younger participants, about half of them, including 5 still at high school. Many thanks to Lia Battison for doing the bird list, allowing me to concentrate more on these as well as the higher number than usual of relative newcomers to birding. Many thanks also to Michael Maconachie, Senior Ranger ACT Parks and Conservation, for allowing us to access the lower parts of Jerrabomberra Creek which always provides some interesting species.

Jack Holland

Saturday 17 February - Walk to Forde Creek and Ponds

Nine enthusiastic people were willing to get up and get to Forde by 7.30 am for a walk led by John Harris. They were well rewarded.

The first part of the walk was along Forde Creek itself, a small reed-filled creek which rises in Mulligans Flat and flows down the western edge of Forde. Rough concrete barrages slow the creek at intervals and these create small pools, ideal for the elusive, smaller waterbirds to 'skulk' in the reeds and come out warily to feed in and around the ponds. The group walked from Linear Park to the Jesse Street underpass and back. There were two excellent and sustained views of **Spotted Crakes** while another highlight was a pair of **Black-fronted Dotterels** with two dependant young. Other notable observations were a **Pink-eared Duck**, five **Superb Parrots** and three pairs of **Australasian Swamphens** with a total of six dependant young. Moorhens were also breeding. A total of 42 species was recorded.

The second part of the walk was along the ponds in the Lyell Gillespie Corridor which divides the eastern section of Forde. **Australian Reed Warblers**, although not warbling, were very evident here, as they had also been in Forde Creek. The group encountered at least four pairs breeding, readily identified by the begging hatchlings. One adult was seen carrying a caterpillar into the reeds where the nest was located. The highlight of this section of the walk was a flyover of 18 **Superb Parrots** (now a feature of Gungahlin!). At the lower end of the corridor is a stand of old growth forest with many nesting hollows. It was disappointing to see so many hollows occupied by **Common Mynas** and **Starlings** (although cockatoos and parrots had bred there earlier in the season). There were, however, large numbers of **Striated Pardalotes** in the remnant forest which are able to utilise much smaller nesting holes. It was disappointing to see so many **Rock Doves** in Forde, relatively recent arrivals in Gungahlin. All told a total of 32 species was noted on this section of the walk.

It was a very pleasant early morning walk. In 4 years of walks, Forde Creek has not yet failed to produce crakes and/or rails early in the year and must be regarded as one of the prime sites readily accessible in the ACT.

John Harris

Wednesday 21 February – Yerrabi Pond

Twenty-five members gathered on the shores of Yerrabi Pond with the intention of heading to the western end but departure was slightly delayed by the appearance of 5 **Superb Parrots**.

Counting of **Eurasian Coots** began as soon as we could see water and, by the time we turned for home, the total was up to 470. Bill Graham advised that at peak he had assessed 800 Coots here, but he agreed there were many less today.

On the shore we spotted a **Red-rumped Parrot** being fed by an adult female. A little further along some members were busy observing a young **Pacific Koel**. A few metres back from this a similar ruckus was audible, which was not surprising as there was a second Koel, both attended by **Red Wattlebirds**. The breeding activity was completed by **Maggie-lark** and **Australian Reed Warbler** feeding young. With a good array of other waterbirds and bush birds we recorded 41 species at this site <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43050703>.



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Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au



Red-rumped Parrot (feeding young), Yerrabi Pond

Sandra Henderson

Then it was on to Gungahlin Pond. Here we recorded 350 **Eurasian Coot**, 20 **Black Swan**, 20 **Little Pied Cormorant** and 30 **Little Black Cormorant**, one of which did a fly-by carrying a stick which was interpreted as nest building.

The main business here was the activity on the three small islands in the middle of the pond. The most obvious were an estimated 80 **Australian White Ibis** of which several were ON (Occupied Nests). A few **Straw-necked Ibis** were hanging around in the trees and the addition of a flight of 19 gave a total of 23 for this species.

The excitement of the day, however, was the leader thinking that he saw a **Royal Spoonbill** on a nest containing two fluffballs. After quite a few minutes peering by everyone with a telescope or long lens it was confirmed that a pair of **Royal Spoonbills** were raising chicks in that nest. I think that is the third ACT breeding event for that species.

Allowing for other species seen we recorded 23 species for this site <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43050708>. The total for the day was 45 species.

Martin Butterfield



Pacific Koel, juvenile, Yerrabi Pond Sandra Henderson

Sunday 25 February – Micalong Swamp

10 intrepid COG members drove in a convoy of three SUVs across the misty Brindabellas and through wonderful forest to the little-visited Micalong Swamp. The party parked at the intersection of the trail and Micalong Road, just as a 'clearing shower' arrived. When the shower subsided, the party proceeded through woodland towards the swamp. The birds were energised by the rain and were in good voice, meaning that the party proceeded slowly. The party heard probable **Cicadabirds**, and saw numerous small birds including **Grey Fantails**, **Brown Thornbills** and both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**.

As we skirted the western side of the swamp, we encountered several **Sacred Kingfishers**, one female **Red-capped Robin** and a vocal pair of **Eastern Whipbirds**. On approaching Chinaman's Creek, the showers returned with a vengeance, forcing an early return on the party. The damp party cheerfully departed, after snacking on blackberries next to the track, and with a goodly haul of 36 species.

David Dedenczuk



Eastern Yellow Robin , Micalong Swamp
Kevin Murray



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/](http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/)

[canberrabirds/2012-03/](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 11 March – McQuoids Hill

Map 27 D14 (UBD). Park at step-through access gate on the right hand side of the Kambah Pool Road. This is about 700 m from the roundabout where the Kambah Pool Rd crosses Allchin Cct/Barrett St, Kambah. The gate is opposite the start of the golf club driving range and about 400 m before the entry to the golf club.

Depending on the size, fitness and ability of the group, we'll either walk the perimeter track with short excursions into the bush, or we'll climb the hill and spend a little more time in the bushy bits. However, even if we do the latter, we'll spend time in the grassy areas in hopes of seeing **Double-barred Finch** and/or **Diamond Firetail** and/or **Red-browed Finch**. Whichever route we take, we'll try to find **Speckled Warbler**, and keep an eye out for raptors and any of the migrants which may still be around.

Remember to bring water, and sunscreen and a hat. No booking required. If you have any questions contact:

Michael Robbins (mrobbins at [home.netspeed.com.au](mailto:mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au))

Wednesday 21 March – Point Hutt Crossing to Pine Island

Meet at 8:30am at Point Hutt Crossing with the aim of walking to Pine Island and back. This is about 4.5km of fairly level walking on a formed track. The expectation is that the honeyeater migration might have started.

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 25 March – Eden pelagic

This trip is booked out but there may be late cancellations, so if you would like to go on the waiting list, contact Sandra Henderson at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Friday 30 March to Monday 2 April – Easter campout – Deniliquin area

The camp this year will be on a private property at Wanganella near Deniliquin. The property has some old shearers' quarters which will provide for a few people to have bunks in the quarters, and all of us to have use of very basic kitchen facilities if needed and a lounge room with an open fire if it's chilly. More details will be available once I've had a chance to visit and check it out. There are plenty of places to visit – a couple of places around the Wanganella area, the island sanctuary and forest in Deniliquin, the Mathoura reed beds and Gulpa Forest/Gulpa Creek. The property owner is a keen birder so may have other suggestions – he's already thinking about organising access to a swamp on a neighbouring property, and a reserve accessible through his paddocks. It MAY also be possible to do some spotlighting (on foot) in an area known to have some Plains Wanderers.

Bookings are essential. Detailed information will be provided closer to the date to those coming to the camp. If you want a bed in one of the three bedrooms at the shearers' quarters please let me know asap.

Sandra Henderson – shirmax2931@gmail.com

Easter Saturday 31 March – Narrabundah Hill

Those members who will be staying at home this Easter and/or will have visiting birder friends are welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. The walk has been timed for the honeyeater migration season, with the northern and western boundaries of the reserve having some of the few currently known local migration routes. We will walk along these two boundaries and either return by the same or a different path. We will also look for other autumn birds such as the **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as the gerygones.

This walk will start at 9:00 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning at the end of March/early April (it is also the last day of daylight savings). Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 or jandaholland@bigpond.com) at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. **Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care.**

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 Salles 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.

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

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.

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

Do you go past spots of bush, or see a water body in your travels, and think, “I wonder if there are birds in there”, or look at eBird lists and see places you don’t know? I decided that I’d go somewhere new at least once a week this year (not necessarily in the ACT).

January Week One – Old Bar (NSW) – an easy one, when Sue L decided to twitch the **Aleutian Terns** at Old Bar near Taree. Sue, Lia and I set off to find the terns (which we did) and we also did bird lists at a few places along the way. We had no trouble finding the terns, despite the strong winds and glare, joining a number of other birdwatchers from the mid-north coast. The other highlight of the trip was during a brief morning tea stop at Ourimbah, when an immature **Australian Brush-turkey** wandered along beside our picnic table, with a **Yellow-throated Scrubwren** following it. In the same rest stop, a large python was making its way through a tiny garden bed in the middle of the carpark, with an appreciative audience of children and adults.

January Week 2 – Glendale Picnic area in Namadgi. Although I’ve birded around the Glendale Depot in the past, I’ve never stopped at the picnic area on the other side of the road just before the Depot turnoff. No surprises among the birds there, but a pleasant stop. As with nearby Glendale Depot, many **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were in the eucalypts.

January Week 3 – Condor Creek. Having been driven over the creek on many occasions on day tours with Ian Fraser, I decided to stop and have a look around. Fifteen minutes produced no outstanding birds, but it’s a spot I’ll probably stop at again, and I’ll venture further into the forest.

January Week 4 – Transgrid woodland, Parkwood. A spot in the ACT I had never previously been to, but I was spurred on by reports of a Brown Songlark in the area. It was not around when I was there, but there was a very large gathering of **Welcome Swallows** on the roadside electricity wires, and a family of **Dusky Woodswallows** with a spotty youngster posed nicely on a dead tree.

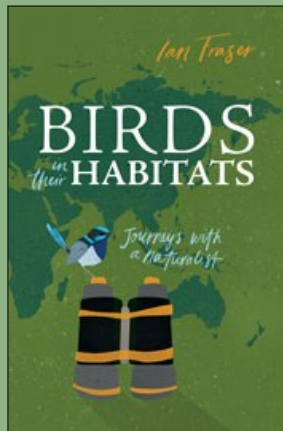
February Week 1 – Merimbula Beach. I’ve previously explored along the boardwalk at Merimbula, but on this visit I had time to walk along the beach and back around to the bridge. A group of **Bar-tailed Godwits** at the lake entry was nice to see, until walkers behind me with off-leash dogs (quite legal, unfortunately) frightened them off. The resident fur seal was frolicking among the moored boats. (The highlight of the Merimbula trip was sighting from the boardwalk two of the three juvenile **Striated Herons** I’d been told about.)

February Week 2 - Mount Mugga Mugga. Since I am now reluctant to park at Callum Brae, and instead park at Animal Services up on Mugga Lane, I noticed that there’s an entry into the Mount Mugga Mugga Reserve near the carpark. The first part of the walk was unremarkable, but the bush on the corner of Hindmarsh Drive and Mugga Lane was full of bush birds such as **Speckled Warblers**, various thornbills, **Grey Fantails**, **Rufous Whistlers**, honeyeaters, **Weebills** and **Superb Fairywrens**... I’ll have to go back to explore some of the other parts of this reserve.

February Week 3 – Warwillah Rd at Wanganella, near Deniliquin (mostly non-public area). This was a trip to investigate the Wanganella area in preparation for the COG Easter camp. Before checking out the accommodation, the property owner and I had a look at the dam he has created behind his house. There were about 50 **Black-tailed Native-hens** wandering through the vegetation at the water’s edge, and some **Rainbow Bee-eaters** overhead. A single **Musk Duck** had also taken up residence. On the short drive down to the campsite area, we flushed a couple of **Banded Lapwings** in company with a large number of **White-fronted Chats**. The trip produced a few new birds for my year list, including **Magpie Geese** at Lake Centenary in Temora – the first time I’ve seen them there.

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.

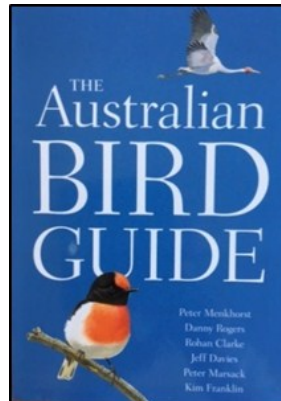
Informed by a wealth of historical and contemporary research, Ian Fraser takes the reader on a journey through four continents: from places as unfamiliar as the Chonos Archipelago of southern Chile and the arid Sahel woodlands of northern Cameroon to those as familiar as a suburban backyard. This is 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

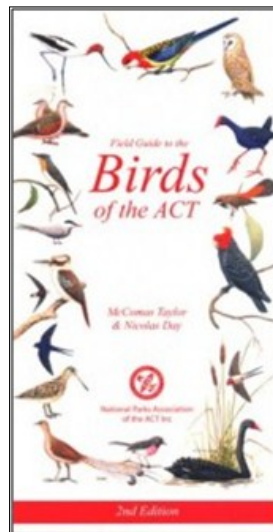


The Australian Bird Guide

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.

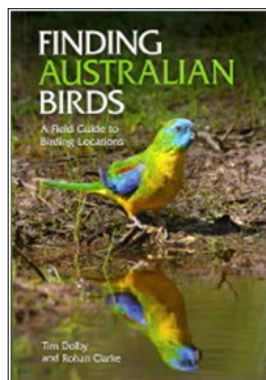


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

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:

B Richards
E Maher
A Cremin
B Brockett

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for April 2018 edition:

Wednesday 28 March 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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