



Gang-gang

NOVEMBER 2018

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 14 November 2018

7.30 pm

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

The short presentation will be by COG member **Alistair Drake** entitled "**A trip through the Great Victoria Desert**". Alistair will show bird photos from a recent trip to Central Australia, including Alice Springs, the Great Victoria Desert, Eyre Bird Observatory, Coober Pedy, and Bon Bon Station.

The main presentation will be by **Rob Magrath** of the ANU Research School of Biology on "**Alarm calls and eavesdropping in wild birds**".

Most birds are vulnerable to predators, and in response many species have alarm calls that warn others of danger. Furthermore, many species convey detailed information about the type of threat, not merely that there is danger nearby, and individuals often eavesdrop on the alarm calls of other species, rather than just listening to their own species. Rob will consider the meaning of alarm calls and what information their own species and other species gather from these calls. He'll also consider the puzzle of how birds are able to recognise the alarm calls of other species, and their findings that birds are quick to learn 'foreign languages'.

Everyone welcome

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

Rainfall over the past 4 1/2 weeks to 27 October (this column has been written slightly early) has continued to be low, though somewhat patchy. While I have had 27 mm in Chapman, other areas have received far less; for example, the official rainfall at Canberra Airport for October so far has been 14 mm. It appears that the dry has been mainly responsible for one of the slowest starts to the spring migration season in the COG area of interest (AoI) that I can recall. The slow start is supported by Martin Butterfield who on 21 October noted on the COG chatline that, for the Carwoola area, close to 50% of the migrant species had arrived in the month after they were expected. As shown below, my monitoring of the eBird database confirms that generally species had not arrived or were only present in small numbers until it started to be more consistently warmer from about mid-October.

Kym Bradley posted that the first **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were beginning to arrive as she had sighted 6 of them on 27 September. While she noted it was

Continued Page 2



Eastern Koel

Christine D.



Rainbow Bee-eater

Harry Bluhm

earlier than last season (when it was the 8 October by her records), by that date there had only been one further record that I could find (2 of them at Gigerline on 6 October). By 15 October there were only 4 more locations, which had expanded to 11 by 25 October. The first **Dollarbird** was not reported until 9 October, and by 16 October there had been records from only 4 locations, which had expanded to 14 nine days later.

The **Leaden Flycatcher** has also been slow to arrive. While the first report was on 30 September, by 15 October it had been reported from only 5 locations, which then expanded to 17 by 25 October. Likewise, the related **Satin Flycatcher** was first reported on 2 October, but then not until 16 October, and with 4 reports in the Canberra area by 25 October, when there was also a report that a pair had reached its usual breeding spot in the mountains. There have been no reports so far of the **Rufous Fantail** or the **Cicadabird**, which are also usually observed as passage migrants on their way to the mountains. There has also been only one report so far for the **Brush Cuckoo**, another migrant species which prefers the higher areas of the COG Aol.

The **Eastern Koel** also seems to have been slow to arrive in numbers, even though Celia Hindmarsh first reported an early male giving both the ko-el and wirra calls in Rivett on 2 October. This early report was close to my place and on the afternoon of 9 October I followed up mainly ko-el calling from there and found 2 males in the small park about 300 m away. This is a favourite location in the area for Koels, and was the core area for 2 fledglings which spent over 3 weeks there in January/February. At least one male has stayed around since, mainly in that area, and has been heard daily since. Interestingly, apart from the odd wirra wirra early on, it has been all ko-el, including for long periods from before 5 am on 16 and 17 October, an indication that female Koels have yet to arrive in my area. On completion of this column I was only aware of reports from 7 other locations, with David Rosalky reporting

the first female calling from Deakin on 20 October, and another in Yarralumla on 27 October.

Despite it being still very dry inland, it does not look like it will be a good season for the **White-winged Triller** and in particular the **Rufous Songlark**. The former, for which there were 5 reports in my previous column, had been reported from only 10 locations by 15 October, and 20 locations 10 days later, indicative of a late onset. For the **Rufous Songlark**, for which there had only been 2 reports previously, there were only 4 further reports to 15 October, but 12 by the completion of this column. At the time of writing neither seemed to be present at Narrabundah Hill, a former stronghold for the latter. Surprisingly, in view of this, there have been three reports of the related **Brown Songlark**, the first relatively early from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 10 October. On 26 October there was a report of a **Channel-billed Cuckoo** calling at Carwoola. However, there have been no reports so far of the **Horsfield's Bushlark**, or for the **Black-eared Cuckoo** and **Red-backed Kingfisher** and other species that only come to the COG Aol in the driest of times.

So during November watch out for first arrivals of the three species mentioned above, as well as the other remaining spring/summer migrants still to arrive such as the **Rufous Fantail** and the **Cicadabird**.

Of the migrant species which had still not arrived in good numbers yet in my previous column, by 25 October the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** was reported from 14 locations during the period, the **Pallid Cuckoo** from 26 locations, the **Sacred Kingfisher** from over 20 locations, and the **Western Gerygone** from 12 locations, indicating that all, except perhaps for the last-named, are now well established. There have also been reports of **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows** from 16 and 11 locations, respectively. Some of these have been of birds that had appeared to have settled, at least for a while, an indication that, at least in some parts of the COG Aol, conditions are suitable for them to try to breed. However, on other occasions they have been of birds high overhead, especially during the stormy day on 21 October, indicating they were still looking for better conditions.

The **Superb Parrot** is also well established by now, reported from over 30 locations, including 7 from south of the lake. On 6 October I received a report of 2 flocks of about 50 **Superb Parrots** feeding in the gums and on the ground at the corner of Launceston and Devonport Streets Lyons about 6 am. My daughters found 16 still there around 5 pm, but only one further bird was seen there on 11 October, so it must have been a temporary food source they were exploiting. While they are certainly present south of the lake these days (though still not in my local patch), 50 together is a large number anywhere in the ACT, particularly when they should have been breaking up to start breeding.

Of the species which visit Canberra during the winter months, the **Swift Parrot** was last reported from the National Gallery and High Court on 30 September, and from Watson, where up to 20 birds were reported, on 3 October. In the rich COG tradition Con Boekel proposed to dub the latter spot as "Parrot Central", with observers enjoying a psittacine feast there of up to 10 such species. There were further reports of a single bird at Wybalena Grove in Cook on 6 October, two on the Belconnen Golf Course on 8 October, and one at Hackett Neighbourhood Oval on 15 October. I expect all will have made their long migration journey to breed in Tasmania by now.

There have been no further reports of the **Pink Robin** anywhere in the COG Aol, and only two of the **Rose Robin**, both in the mountains where they go to breed. Over the period the **Flame Robin** has still been reported from 2 peri-urban locations, with up to 3 reported from Campbell Park and 2 from Bibaringa. The **Scarlet Robin**, which doesn't move as far away to breed, has been reported from six such locations. In contrast the **Golden Whistler** was still reported from around 24 urban or peri-urban locations. This supports my view that it's usually the last winter altitudinal migrant to leave Canberra to breed in the mountains, where it was reported from only 4 locations, though the 'Breeding – all years' data under 'Bird Info' on the COG website does show breeding at 5 locations in Canberra itself.



Turquoise Parrot

Sandra Henderson



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

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26/27 October 2019
23/24 November 2019
8/9 December 2019

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www.philipmaher.com

The **White-eared Honeyeater** was reported from only about 12 peri-urban locations, and none from within Canberra itself. Interestingly the COG website data shows breeding at only 1 peri-urban location in Canberra. For the **Crescent Honeyeater** there have been only two reports from Canberra in the period, the last on 4 October from the ANBG, but interestingly also only 2 from the mountains to the west. There have been no reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** in the COG Aol during the period, but the **Bassian Thrush** was still reported from the ANBG on 27 October. There have been reports of the **Restless Flycatcher** from 4 very widespread locations in the period. So please keep an eye out for any of the above altitudinal migrant and other species that spend the winter period in Canberra during October.

Of the “unusual” species, by far the one that has attracted the greatest attention was the female **Turquoise Parrot** first reported by Ash Allnutt near the Fulica Hide on Jerrabomberra Creek on 5 October. This, a likely wild one due to its timid nature, turned out to be the most obliging one of this species in the COG Aol that I can recall, with many observers admiring it over the next week (it was last reported on 12 October). My experience is that it often doesn’t stay around long, and can recall it being reported in the COG Aol on a number of occasions over the years without anyone being able to find it again. The COG website breeding data lists it as a non-breeding vagrant/escapee, an occasional nomadic visitor from the eastern coastal areas. The ‘Distribution – all years’ shows reports from only 15 grid cells, most scattered around urban Canberra, but also 4 from Namadgi NP. Interestingly, HANZAB shows that, as well as being coastal, its range does extend well west into inland NSW, with its major distribution including the southwest slopes to the northwest of the ACT, where I have mostly seen the species.

On 24 October there was a report of a male **Turquoise Parrot** at a hollow in the main car park on the Googong foreshores, but this does not seem to have been confirmed. Another new “unusual” for 2018 has been the **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the adjacent Canturf farm. They were first reported on 28 September, with a maximum of 18 seen, with 16 still present on 22 October, and 2 on 27 October. The COG website data lists it as an uncommon, non-breeding summer migrant, but the most common of the Scolopacidae, which can be seen between August and April on some wetlands. There have also been reports of a **Tawny Grassbird** from here during October.

There were further sightings of the **Whiskered Tern** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands up to 10 October (with a late one at Googong on 17 October), as well as 5 **Red-necked Avocets** on 16 October, and of a **Black Kite** on 28 September. There was also a report of a male **Scarlet Honeyeater** from there on 3 October. In contrast to last year, there has not been a noticeable influx of this species, or for the **Red-capped Robin**, which has been reported from 8 locations during the period. There has also been a further report of the **Barn Owl**, this time at Belconnen, on 17 October.

While it has been a slow season I am aware of quite a bit of breeding activity. Most of this has been of common species but the following are worthy of reporting in more detail:

Three reports of the **Brown Treecreeper** breeding, two during the K2C survey reported elsewhere in this issue. On 27 September Kym Bradley posted photos of a very open nest on the top of a dead stump. The 3 eggs hatched and on 8 October she posted a short video of the very tame male bringing in food for the female to feed the chicks. On 12 October she posted a further video of the pair defending the nest site from a **Red-rumped Parrot** which had tried to claim it over the past few weeks.

A similar incident occurred during the COG outing to Percival Hill on 20 October when a pair of **Sacred Kingfishers** raided some **Striated Pardalote** nests (see report elsewhere in this issue). It is not clear to me whether they were trying to take over the nest site or take the eggs/young, with HANZAB mentioning “birds and their young” at the end of a long list of foods, so it is not their usual food.

Two reports of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** copulating in Ainslie. This grid cell is shown as having by far the greatest number of breeding reports of the 5 for which breeding was reported in 2017 in the Bird Info data on the COG website.

A late breeding season is supported by my finding of still 3 active **Australian Magpie** nests in a survey of the west side of Narrabundah Hill on 23 October, and 2 on Cooleman Ridge on 27 October, at least a fortnight later



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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.

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than when I would have expected them to have fledged. In support, Renée Ferster Levy reported a nest in one of the huge gums on Anzac Park East on 21 October, and chicks being fed must still have been quite small as she couldn't see them over the rim of the nest.

I did finally manage to locate an **Australian Magpie** nest in my GBS site which I thought was still being built on 27 September, but it soon became clear they were actually feeding and by 21 October two very short-tailed dependent young were located at least 30 m from the nest.

While as noted above the **Flame Robin** has been reported by a number of observers at Campbell Park, breeding there has not been confirmed. Michael Lenz noted that on 16 October he observed a pair of brown birds there. The male was giving a quiet song, but there was no indication of a nest or young, and all the food caught was consumed over 1.5 hours of his watching them.

In keeping with the slow breeding season, there have been some observations still of mixed feeding flocks (MFF) during October. Michael Lenz reported a MFF comprising of **Silvereyes**, **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Grey Fantails** and **Spotted Pardalotes** at the eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 5 October, and Steve Holliday noted a female **Satin Flycatcher** in a small mixed flock at Mulligans Flat NR on 23 October. An interesting report of a single species flock was by Lindell Emerton of a flock of at least 34 **Gang-gang Cockatoos** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 14 October. They flew in, quickly feasted in the Casuarinas at the path leading to the Fulica Hide, and promptly left as fast as they arrived heading downstream towards Kingston

So please keep up the reports for any late arriving summer migrants or unexpected arrivals from the dry inland, for the last departing altitudinal migrants mentioned above, and in particular for further breeding. As usual please ensure that all significant observations are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, postings on the COG Email Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia 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

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 30 September – private property at Kangiara near Boorowa

On a beautiful spring car 14 COG members were welcomed onto a wooded property on Lachlan Valley Way. The area has received several good falls of rain and the countryside was pleasantly green. The owners removed sheep from the land 12 years ago and have since planted over 8000 trees and shrubs, as well as adding several dams. Most of the property consists of well-established long-leaved box *Eucalyptus goniacalyx* on the upper rocky slopes and ridges, and yellow box *E. melliodora* and apple box *E. bridgesiana* on the lower slopes, as well as more open grassy patches. Shrubs have been densely planted along the property boundaries, except for the Boorowa River boundary which is lined with willows, reeds and the occasional eucalypt. Thus, the property stands in sharp contrast to the grazed and cropped land all around.

We spent a very pleasant 4 ½ hours birding, slowly building a list of 44 species. Highlights included a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** soaring above while 2 fluffy white chicks sat in a nest in a tree low down the slope; we were almost at the top of the slope so had a view into the nest from above, although at some distance away. The birds have two nesting trees on the property, only about 400 metres apart. The 2018 nest has not been used for several years, but this year the birds added sticks to an old nest and laid there. Other raptors seen included a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** and a **Collared Sparrowhawk**.

Some migrants had arrived, although in small numbers, including **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Australian Reed-Warbler**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-winged** and both **gerygones**.



COG members at Kangiara and Nankeen Kestrel

Harry Bluhm

We then adjourned for a barbeque lunch at a nearby home and spent a convivial couple of hours enjoying the hospitality of Kath and Richard whilst keeping an eye out for birds. The highlight was a visit from 3 **Superb Parrots** – what else would you expect so close to Boorowa, “Superb Parrot Country”? (Another 6 were seen on the highway soon after we left for home). We added 4 new species at the house, giving a total of 48 for the day.

Our thanks to Kath and Richard for the guided tour of their property and the delicious lunch.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 7 October – Harold’s Cross near Tallaganda

Nine members enjoyed a visit to private property at Harold’s Cross where we were warmly welcomed by Libby and Ian. As we enjoyed a cuppa on arrival, we began our bird list in the garden where flowering grevilleas and wattles attracted a variety of species and a **Superb Lyrebird** called in the gully. Libby then guided us on a walk through the property which has a permanent creek and tall, wet forest species such as ribbon gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), brown barrel (*E. fastigata*), messmate stringybark (*E. obliquia*), narrow-leaved peppermint (*E. radiata*) and black sallee (*E. stellulata*). The most common birds were **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Grey Fantails**, and **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, with most



COG Members at Harold's Cross

Tee Tong Teo

high in the canopy. **Satin Bowerbirds**, all green birds, were seen, as well as a bower carpeted with freshly gathered straw which was adorned with blue items.

When we stopped for lunch in the garden, honeyeaters obligingly came down low into the grevilleas and the bird baths, keeping the photographers happy and giving everyone their best views for the morning. A total of 35 species was recorded at Harold's Cross.

We then moved on to Lowden Forest Park in Tallaganda State Forest. It was early afternoon and the wind had picked up but we still managed to record 13 species in about 45 minutes. **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and **Golden Whistler** were new birds for the trip list, bringing the total to 38.

Many thanks to Libby and Ian for the invitation to their little slice of paradise and for their generous hospitality.

Sue Lashko



Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Tee Tong Teo



White-naped Honeyeater

Graeme Austin

Sunday 14 October – K2C surveys – Bredbo area

The spring K2C bird surveys were held on a gloomy, overcast morning with only intermittent mizzle to moisten the ground. The region received 20mm of rain the previous week providing some relief to the ongoing dry conditions. A total of 94 bird species was observed across the 19 properties. A highlight was the sighting of a **Pied Butcherbird** on Clearview Road. We first recorded this species during the surveys in 2016 just south of the ACT border, then again in 2017 south of Michelago. Locals have noted a pair in residence at Baroona Road for some time now, and a group of 5-6 were recorded in early September this year. Another highlight was a **Latham's Snipe** flushed from the edge of the large dam at Ingelara. This is the first record of this species during the surveys but dam edges are not a habitat we routinely survey. Latham's Snipe has also been recorded from the Baroona Wetland, just north of Ingelara. Of the threatened species, **Hooded Robin** was the most common robin, found at 4 properties. Only 1 **Scarlet** and 1 **Flame Robin** were reported. **Dusky Woodswallows** were particularly abundant, found on 13 of the 19 properties. **Brown Treecreeper** was recorded on 7 properties, including 2

breeding records. **Speckled Warbler** was found on 5 properties. **Diamond Firetail** was a bit harder to find this time, only reported from 2 properties. There was one record of **Varied Sittellas**. Of the other uncommon woodland birds, **Southern Whiteface** was found on 3 properties, **Restless Flycatcher** on 2, and **Jacky Winter**, a rarely recorded species, on 2 properties including one building a nest. There was no honeyeater movement; in fact the **White-naped Honeyeater** was not recorded at all. **Golden Whistlers** were also absent. Several summer migrants which have been slow turning up in the region, including **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Songlark** and **Sacred Kingfisher**, were recorded, but we did not find any **White-winged Triller** or **Dollarbird**. Thank you once again to the landholders for access, COG volunteers for their expertise and Bush Heritage for hosting us and providing lunch. The next surveys will be 14 April 2019.

Nicki Taws

Saturday 20 October – Percival Hill

The Percival Hill walk proved interesting, even dramatic, for the 15 folk who turned up for it. We started at the dam wall of Gungahlin Pond where people spotted 18 species while they were gathering. We then walked up the hill and south through the forest where conditions were noticeably dry and, for the first half hour, only the commonest species were encountered. This changed for the better when we reached the small dam with its denser forest and thicker undergrowth. A good birding spot, we saw several thornbill species, a **Grey Shrike-thrush** and, best of all, **Rufous Whistlers**. It was a good experience to spend about 10 minutes, not only seeing the whistlers, but also listening to them, a good learning opportunity for those wanting to identify their calls. Near the dam in clear view a **White-winged Chough** was sitting on its basin-shaped nest, obviously the only place on Percival Hill this season where mud was available.



White-winged Chough and Striated Pardalote



Tee Tong Teo

We then walked to the old growth remnant forest on the western side of the hill. A family of choughs were busy in the litter and it was interesting to observe the red eyes of the mature birds and the brown eyes of the others. There were juveniles in the group with the brownish down above their eyes. In the old trees, larger nesting holes were being utilised by **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Eastern Rosellas** and **Crimson Rosellas**, a pair of which were busily enlarging a hole. Smaller holes were occupied by **Striated Pardalotes**, which gave rise to the dramatic highlight of the morning.

A pair of **Sacred Kingfishers** were hunting in the trees. We saw them taking small lizards. They then turned their attention to the pardalotes. They were able to attack the nesting sites, and drive the nesting birds away to raid the nests. We watched this drama unfold for about half an hour, both mesmerised and saddened at the same time. We knew it was 'nature being red in tooth and claw' but it was sad to observe. Nevertheless, we all knew it to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, a unique bird-watching event which could never be planned but which rewarded those of us who had dedicated our Saturday morning to the hope of finding something interesting.

We walked down the hill to Ginninderra Creek which forms the eastern boundary of Percival Hill, returning via the creek to the dam wall. This proved particularly interesting because of the rare opportunity to see both **Australian Reed-Warblers** and **Little Grassbirds** in close proximity. The grassbirds were clearly distinguishable by the sparrow-like markings on their backs.

A total of 36 species was recorded on Percival Hill and there were several other LBBs (little brown birds) not definitely identified. Some birds were common to the list of 18 observed from the dam wall so that, merging the two lists, a total of 45 different species was recorded.

John Harris

Future Field Trips

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>

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.

Sunday 4 November – Barren Grounds Nature Reserve

This will be a morning walk to a fantastic birding spot which offers the possibility of seeing heath specialists such as **Ground Parrot**, **Eastern Bristlebird**, **Beautiful Firetail** and **Southern Emu-wren**, plus many other wonderful birds.

It will be a fairly easy 8 km walk through mainly heath and forest, and we may stop along the walk to look at wildflowers, butterflies and other wildlife. Please bring appropriate sun protection, water, morning tea and lunch.

We will meet at 8.30am at Barren Grounds so people can either drive from Canberra that morning or stay overnight near Barren Grounds the night before. For more information or to register for this walk, please contact me (chowchilla29@yahoo.com) as numbers will be limited. Please register your interest by Wed Oct 24.

Suzi Bond

Sunday 11 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

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

The workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also very welcome. While every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there usually is a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840) or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com.

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

Sunday 18 November – Wark’s Road, Brindabellas

Meet at Stromlo Forest Park at 8:00 am for carpooling. The plan is to drive to the junction of Wark’s Rd and Blundell’s Creek Rd. Possible birds include **Pilotbird**, **Rufous Fantail**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Satin Flycatcher** and **Red-browed Treecreeper**.

We will return to the Bull’s Head picnic area for an early lunch, and a second survey. **Spotted Quail-thrush** and **Superb Lyrebirds** have been reported from this site. We will return to Canberra by mid-afternoon. Bring morning tea, lunch, water and sun protection. There will be a limit of four vehicles – so please advise David by COB Friday 16 November if you wish to come along.

David Dedenczuk

Sunday 25 November – Wee Jasper

This outing will include a visit to private property, as well as a walk along part of the Hume and Hovell Track. Meet at Hall Primary School, Hoskins St, Hall, at 7.00 am for carpooling. Bring morning tea and lunch. Snakes should be out and about, so take the usual precautions with footwear and clothing, and carry a snake bandage. Please register with Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com

Sunday 2 December – Monga National Park

Inspired by trips led to this park by David McDonald, David Dedenczuk will lead a day outing to this area of wet forest just before the escarpment around 20 km east of Braidwood off the Kings Highway. Target species include **Red-browed Treecreeper**, **Superb Lyrebird**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Pilotbird**, **Olive Whistler**, **Bassian Thrush** and **Pink** and **Rose Robins**. Meet at 8.00 am in the Spotlight carpark in Queanbeyan, for carpooling. Suggested contribution to drivers from each passenger: \$10. Bring lunch and drinks. Registration for this trip is essential: please phone David Dedenczuk on 0417 222 154 or email ddedentz@bigpond.net.au

Saturday 8 December – Tuggeranong Horse Paddocks

Note change of date to Saturday. Meet for prompt 7am start at Gilmore Horse Paddocks at the top of Louisa Lawson Cres (near #53). Good site for **Brown Goshawk**, **Diamond Firetail**, a range of honeyeaters, and summer migrants including **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Rufous Songlarks**, and martins. After exploring the Gilmore Paddocks, if time and temperature permit, we will drive over to Macarthur Park Horse Paddocks and do a short walk there too.

Ryu Callaway

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**

New Places – September

Sandra Henderson

1 – 7 October

Harold's Cross (private property)

COG member Libby invited us out to her property near Tallaganda State Forest. Nine COG members made the trip. We spent some time wandering around the property before returning to the delightful garden for a very nice lunch. Despite fairly cool conditions on the day we recorded over 30 species, with the highlight being the **White-naped Honeyeaters** feeding in the wattles in the garden as we had lunch. Other small birds were coming to birdbaths around the garden.

<https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S49006100>

8 – 14 October

Baroona Wetland (private property)

The owners of one of the properties visited by Ryu, Kumiko and myself for the K2C surveys were participating in some planting at the wetland on the morning of our surveys, and invited us to drop by. The wetland is close to the Monaro Highway, just off Baroona Rd at Michelago. The star of the morning was the male **Musk Duck**, which, we were told, has been in residence for some time. The lack of a mate hasn't deterred him from displaying regularly. A **Masked Lapwing** was nesting on the small island in the water, with four eggs visible when the bird moved off the nest. Ducks, **Black-fronted Dotterels** and an **Australasian Grebe** were also around the wetland. The Wednesday walkers will visit this site in November, so check the website for details if you wish to join us.

<https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S49176318>

15 – 21 October

Western Foreshores, Googong Dam

The track around the western shore of Googong was the location for COG's October Wednesday walk. Some of us had been to the carpark to walk elsewhere in the vicinity, but the shoreline walk was new for most. The interesting birds began at the carpark, with a **Dusky Woodswallow** building a nest in the top of a wooden fence post (a great photo by Roman is included in eBird list). A single **Whiskered Tern** was sighted over the water by a couple of us before the start of the walk, but failed to reappear. One of the target birds was the single **Black-winged Stilt** seen by Martin on an earlier visit, and it was still pottering around. An impressive bird list of over 50 species for the morning!

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49244980>.

22 – 28 October

Oaks Estate

Following up on a suggestion from Don F., I visited the woodland on Underwood St at Oaks Estate, which is adjacent to a metal scrapyard. There were not a lot of birds around, so I drove a little way to a block along Copper Crescent with a (currently dry) stormwater pond which gives access to the fence along the railway. I walked along there for about a kilometre, and managed quite a nice list for the railway reserve. There are some temporary ponds along the way, probably created by excavations associated with nearby building works, so there is plenty of water. There were plenty of **Superb Fairy-wrens** in the shrubbery, along with **Double-barred and Red-browed Finches**. A group of **European Goldfinches** was also moving along the railway. One of the pairs of fairy-wrens was enjoying a session of mutual grooming (and more...). There were also five **Laughing Kookaburras** in the area. I did not count the birds in the Queanbeyan Sewage Works, which can be seen some distance beyond the rail line.

<https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S49382098>

Woodland Surveys- Spring 2018

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team had a fine and mild morning with no wind for the survey on Sunday 23 September. The total species count was down a little on the spring average at 52, but most sites reported reasonable numbers of birds. The large dam has very little water, so numbers of water-based species were very low. Many spring migrants were back with **Olive-backed Orioles** at a few sites, both **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, a few **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Pallid Cuckoo** the only cuckoo species recorded, and a number of small groups of **Grey Fantails**. One group of 6 fantails was bathing together with some **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** on the edge of a dam near the Woolshed. Highlights included a **Grey Butcherbird** nesting, **Superb Parrots**, several **Golden Whistlers** including a couple feeding in flowering Silver Wattle, an **Eastern Yellow Robin** (uncommon in the reserve), a **Brown Goshawk** on the eastern side, and all 5 species of thornbills; one site recorded four thornbill species during the count. **Yellow Thornbill** (also uncommon) was recorded at a site in the central part of the reserve. Only one site had **Rufous Whistlers** and the two birds were not calling. There was only one record of **Scarlet Robin** around the Woolshed environs. There were no **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** moving through and only one sighting of a **White-naped Honeyeater**. A **White-winged Triller** (not calling) flew in mid-morning and caught the attention as morning tea at the Woolshed was finishing up.

Goorooyaroo NR (north)

Nicki Taws surveyed the northern part of Goorooyaroo NR on a sunny but cold morning. The reserve was looking dry (understandably), but there is more grass cover and wildflowers than in many other reserves around Canberra. Perhaps there is better control of herbivore pressure than in other reserves. Bird activity was fairly busy with 48 species in total. Highlights for the survey were 2 male **Red-capped Robins** duelling, **Superb Parrots** at 2 sites and 2 **Southern Whiteface**, a species not commonly encountered in the surveys here. Most of the spring migrants were recorded: **Pallid** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, **Noisy Friarbird**, one **White-winged Triller**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Mistletoebird**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Rufous Whistler**. **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler** were still around but no **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Leaden Flycatcher** or **Rufous Songlark** were recorded. There were no **Yellow-faced** or **White-naped Honeyeaters**, only **Brown-headed** and **White-eared**, and one **Red Wattlebird**. The two raptor species recorded, **Brown Goshawk** and **Nankeen Kestrel**, were breeding, as well as **Striated Pardalote**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **White-throated Gerygone**, both rosellas and **Common Starlings**.

Goorooyaroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook surveyed the southern sites on Sunday 30 September, with a cool and clear start, but warming up fairly quickly. As has been the case on most recent surveys, the reserve was looking dry and overgrazed with very little in the way of spring wildflowers. A total of 47 species was recorded during the morning. The highlight was a **Tawny Frogmouth** found by Dave at site 4 which also hosted 2 **Grey Currawongs**. Raptors were represented by one, maybe two, **Brown Falcons** and a **Nankeen Kestrel**. **Speckled Warblers** were present in a couple of places, as were **Mistletoebirds**. Summer migrants included **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos**, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, and a **Noisy Friarbird**. The only indication of honeyeater migration was a group of 10 **White-naped** flying over. Surprisingly absent were such species as **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. Breeding records included a **Magpie** on a nest, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Superb Parrots** and **Eastern Rosellas** visiting hollows, and **Crimson Rosellas** copulating.

Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill did the survey on Saturday 22 September on a fine clear morning. Most sites were dominated, as usual, by **Noisy Miners**. There were quite a few **King Parrots** around, and several sites one or two **Common Bronzewing**s. There was a single **Brown Thornbill** at the **Noisy Miner** dominated site 2. That site also had a very sleepy and cold Shingleback lizard. A **Noisy Friarbird** was heard at site 4, sounding extremely agitated about something. The cause of the agitation was soon revealed as a **Brown Goshawk** flew over the site with the **Noisy Friarbird** on its tail. The goshawk eventually perched near a second, giving a nice record of 2 goshawks on site. Other species may have made themselves scarce. Site 5, which is outside the **Noisy Miner** zone was quieter than it sometimes is, but there was a **Mistletoebird**, a couple of **Grey Fantails**, and just outside the site a **Speckled Warbler**, a couple of **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, a flock of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** flying over; a **Grey Currawong** and some **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** were heard in the distance. There were 33 species in total but no cuckoos, gerygones, or orioles and not many thornbills – and no **Swift Parrots** either.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz and Robin Hide carried out the surveys of the 9 sites on the eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 3 October. It was overcast with light wind. It was notable that in many areas the foliage of smaller eucalypts had thinned out considerably, allowing them to see-through sites much further than usual, no doubt drought related. The grazing pressure from significant numbers of kangaroos has stayed very high. In total 44 species were recorded - 25 at sites and a further 19 in between. The most widespread species were again **Noisy Miners** (8 sites) followed by **Crimson Rosella** and **Striated Pardalote** (7 sites each). Spring arrivals included both gerygones, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallows** (but in reduced numbers compared to earlier visits to the area in mid to late September), **Grey Fantail** and **Mistletoebird**. Overall numbers of smaller bush birds were low, including one bird each of **Speckled Warbler** and **Varied Sittella**. One mixed feeding flock was encountered, comprising **Silvereyes**, **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Grey Fantails** and **Spotted Pardalotes**. A very quiet pair of **Red Wattlebirds** was building a nest in **Noisy Miner** territory. The female of a pair of **Brown Goshawks** showed an interesting transition plumage, from first to second year plumage.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on 27 September, a calm, fine morning. While the number of species, 41, was normal for a spring survey, the number of individuals within most species was quite low. Parrots were in good numbers and included **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Little Corellas**, and **Noisy Miners** don't seem to have suffered in the drought. However, of the small birds, only 4 **Double-barred** and 3 **Red-browed Finches**, and one **Southern Whiteface** were recorded. Even **Superb Fairy-wrens** were less evident than usual. There were very few migrants with just 2 **Tree Martins** and 4 **Dusky Woodswallows** and lots of **Grey Fantails**, but no cuckoos, orioles or flycatchers. It was a good morning for raptors, though, with a **Black-shouldered Kite** perched, a **Whistling Kite** flushed off the ground in one site and a **Nankeen Kestrel** in another site.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey on Saturday 22 September, in good weather conditions, mild, partly cloudy and with no wind. The reserve looked very, very dry; both the woodland patch the survey plots are in and the grasslands area had very low levels of grass, almost at soil level. There were some green spring shoots of spring forbs, etc, just showing (the rain spell a few weeks ago would have helped this). Bird abundance was not expected given the dry conditions, but the count ended at a reasonable 40 species (at the low end of spring, but not the lowest spring count). There were lots of rosellas of both species, poking around hollows, a few **Red-rumped Parrots** and some **Little Corellas**. **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** were recorded, the latter seen foraging close to the ground in eucalypt regrowth with a mixed flock of other birds. That flock included **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Speckled Warblers** and a single **Flame Robin**, a brown bird. This seems unusual for the spring survey, with it having been recorded previously only in the winter surveys and only near the grassland/woodland edge some distance away. There were a couple of small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** moving around the woodland, and several **Grey Fantails**. On the way out, a check was made for **Dusky Woodswallows** in the usual place they are seen in spring, but one bird only was heard and not located. There were also two **Tree Martins** and several **Welcome Swallows**, a pair of **Willie Wagtails** and a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** in this area on the grasslands/woodland interface. There were no whistlers heard. Several **Western Gerygones** were heard, but not **White-throated Gerygone**, interesting as the White-throated tends to be recorded more often there than Western. A **Brown Falcon** got the **Noisy Miners** agitated until it flew off.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battison surveyed on 22 September, a mild, still morning, with a little cloud about. Flocks of up to 18 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** flew over in a westerly direction, whilst just a few of them spent time in three of the sites, accompanied in one instance by **White-naped Honeyeaters**. Other honeyeaters observed were **Red Wattlebirds** and one lone **Noisy Friarbird**. Breeding observations included an **Australian Magpie** nest with young, a **Pied Currawong** putting in some effort to shape the bowl of its nest and a **Weebill** carrying a feather. **Rainbow Lorikeets**, **Common Mynas** and **Common Starlings** were still the predominant species at site 3. A **Spotted Dove** was heard near site 2 for the first time in Lia's recollection. Highlights, although they were not observed during surveys, were **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Golden Whistler** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**. In all, 27 species were recorded during the survey periods, with a further 8 species seen or heard elsewhere on the Hill.

Nass Valley rural property

Julie McGuinness did the survey on Sunday 30 September, a perfect spring day. The property was still, as expected, very dry, the understorey being a bit green, but again eaten right down. No plants were in flower as yet. A total of 36 species was observed - 25 within the sites and another 11 in between. Species in the largest numbers were **Striated Pardalote**, **Eastern Rosella** and **Common Starling**. Besides the latter, almost no ground-feeding small insectivores were seen. Breeding activity

seen was **Striated Pardalote** (two separate pairs inspecting hollows) and **Weebill** and **Tree Martin** nest building. Few migrants had yet returned, principally **White-throated Gerygone** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, as well as one each of **Noisy Friarbird** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**.

2018 Gang-gang Cockatoo nesting survey

During 2014 a most successful survey on the distribution of the [Gang-gang Cockatoo](#) in the ACT was held to celebrate 50 years of birding activities by the Canberra Ornithologists Group.

A student at the ANU is keen to develop the survey further by examining in more detail the birds' nesting requirements. COG members are asked to help by reporting breeding observations as a sighting on Canberra Nature Map (<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/>).

You will be asked to provide the information online:

Gender of bird observed— male, female or pair

Gang-gang behaviour

- Seen entering hollow
- Or looking into hollow
- Or chewing bark around hollow
- Or perched near hollow

Is this a repeat observation at this location?

List other species seen entering or inspecting hollow



Gang-gang Cockatoo in hollow

Chris Davey

A photograph is required for each sighting entered into Canberra Nature Map. The location and date is stripped from the image preferences. Once logged on click 'Add a sighting' on the top banner, then on the dropdown box click on 'Add a sighting'. Transfer your image, enter the abundance, then select 'Bird' then 'Parrot' then 'Calyptorhynchus fimbriatus (Gang-gang Cockatoo)', then supply the requested additional information.

If your camera or smart phone is not GPS enabled or you don't own one of these devices, please contact Michael.Mulvaney@act.gov.au and he will set you up so that you are able to add data.

The aim of the survey is to obtain multiple sightings on the use of a hollow that Gang-gangs have been inspecting. In this way information can be obtained on the hollows that have been successfully used by Gang-gangs for breeding and on those that have been unsuccessful and the reasons why. Therefore, please provide information each time you check the hollow whether Gang-gangs are present or not.

Surprisingly the 2014 survey did not definitely confirm the presence of any nest trees, and there are just three trees known in the Canberra area in which chicks have been reared. Locating further nest trees will help to better understand and conserve this species.

Clicking on the box on Canberra Nature Map that this is a nest site means that only the person reporting the site and the project administrators will know the location of a nest site.

Alternatively, information can be provided via email to chris_davey@aapt.net.au or kathy.eyles@anu.edu.au

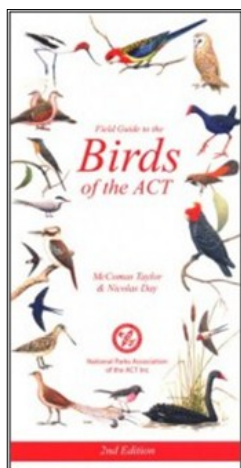
Chris Davey

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

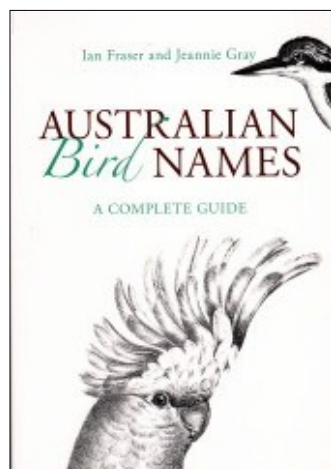


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

McComas Taylor & Nicolas Day

This revised second edition illustrates in colour the 217 birds likely to be seen in and around the ACT. It has easy-to-follow descriptions in a compact format. Only local birds are shown making this Field Guide much simpler to use than comprehensive national guides. McComas Taylor has been watching birds in Canberra for over 30 years and has written, broadcast and lectured on the subject. Nicholas Day is widely recognised as one of Australia's foremost wildlife artists.

Members' price: \$20.



SALE

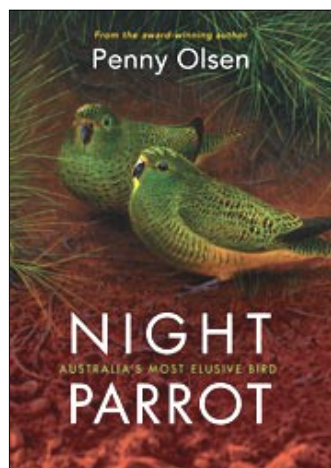
Australian Bird Names

Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray

2013 Whitley Award Commendation for Zoological Resource.

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

SALE PRICE \$30



Night Parrot: Australia's Most Elusive Bird

Penny Olsen

Night Parrot documents the competitiveness and secrecy, the triumphs and adventures of the history of the bird and its followers, culminating in the recent discovery of live birds at a few widely scattered locations. It describes what we are now unravelling about the mysteries of its biology and ecology and what is still left to learn. Complemented by guest essays, illustrations and photographs from a wide variety of sources, this book sheds light on Australia's most elusive bird.

Members' 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

2018-2019 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

G Bach
G Wood

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for December 2018 edition:

Wednesday 28 November 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.

COG information

President: Neil Hermes
0413 828 045
president@canberrabirds.org.au

Treasurer:
cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Secretary:
Bill Graham
cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary
COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz
lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

COG website

canberrabirds.org.au

COG Webmaster
Julian Robinson
cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

Membership Enquiries & Updates:
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for change of address or other details.

Gang-gang Newsletter
Editor: Sue Lashko
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Publication Sales
Kathy Walter
sales@canberrabirds.org.au

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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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