



Gang-gang

APRIL 2019

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday 10 April 2019

7.30 pm

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

Jack Holland will first give a short Bird of the Month presentation on the “**Crescent Honeyeater**.”

Geoffrey Dabb will give the main presentation entitled: “**Hail to thee, Blithe Spirits! - an overview of our grassland birds, including a description of the large breeding influx in the recent summer at the Parkwood Road site, which attracted considerable observer interest.**”

As defined for the purpose, this group of 9 species (one introduced) includes larks, pipit, songlarks and grassbirds. The talk will discuss taxonomy, occurrence and identification issues - and contributions of authors and artists, from John Gould to Tim Low. Variable plumages will be considered, particularly in relation to the Brown Songlark, an interesting species and an irregular breeding visitor in our area. The female and young of this species present observers (and bird illustrators) with a serious challenge. Few good photos are available because the conspicuous male is the usual target of photographers.

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

The rainy/showery first and last weeks of the slightly over 4 weeks from 25 February covered by this column bookended a dry fortnight. While still warm for the time of year, temperatures have also gradually dropped. The effect of this on the birds in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) is unclear, with, as outlined below, species staying longer than usual, some leaving early and some around the usual time. Some altitudinal migrants also seemed to have come early, as did the start of the honeyeater migration.

Of the late-staying birds noted in my previous column, there have been no further reports of the **Brush Cuckoo**, **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Brown Songlark** during the reporting period, while the only **Rufous Songlark** report was of a quiet bird seen sitting on top of the shrubbery for a couple of minutes at the West Belconnen Pond by Michael Lenz on 1 March. The **White-winged Triller** has still been reported from 3 locations over the past month, the most recent being 4 and 3 birds, respectively, by Timothée Bonnet and David Dedenczuk

Continued Page 2



Regent Honeyeater

Shorty

Everyone welcome

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

from Naas Road on 24 March, very late for this species. There is no information as to whether there were both male and female birds present. There have also been late reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, with Chris Davey reporting one, possibly two, heard on the Belconnen Golf Course on 4 March, Alastair Smith one in Garran on the same day, and Shorty two in Farrer on 14 March.

Of the species usually leaving by mid-March, the **Dollarbird** has also stayed later than usual, with reports from around a dozen locations over the past month, the most recent being 1 bird at the Stoney Creek NR by John Hurrell on 19 March. Likewise the **Rainbow Bee-eater** has still been widely reported from around 15 locations, the most recent being 5 at Mulligans Flat by Patrick Wyllie on 22 March. The **Sacred Kingfisher** has been even more widely reported from over 30 locations, right up to the time of forwarding this column to the editors.

Of the birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April, the big surprise to me is that there has been only 1 report of the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, of a single bird by Kumiko Callaway at the Stoney Creek NR, on 2 March. Likewise the related **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** has been reported from only 3 locations, the most recent being by John Wombey from the Queanbeyan Riverside Corridor on 20 March. The **Pallid Cuckoo** has also been reported from 4 locations, most recently by Sarah Fieg at Callum Brae on 24 March. Their earlier than usual departure possibly reflects that it hasn't been a great spring/summer for cuckoos. The later staying **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** has been reported from 8 locations, the most recent being by Mark Carey at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 23 March.

The **Latham's Snipe** has been reported from around 6 locations, the most recent being by Sandra Henderson on 26 March from Stranger Pond, where a lone bird had been hanging around for several weeks. **Fairy Martins** seem to have already departed, with reports from around 4 locations only, the most recent being from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by Tod Spencer on 18 March. In contrast the **Tree Martin** was much more widely observed at over 20 locations, and was still present at the time of writing. Despite often being very quiet in March, the **Australian Reed-Warbler** has still been widely reported from around 40 locations, also still up to the time of forwarding this report to the editors. Likewise the **Leadend Flycatcher** was reported from around 20 locations, most recently from the Boboyan Road woodland by David Dedenczuk on 24 March.

In contrast to January and February, the **White-throated Needletail** has been much more widely reported than the related **Fork-tailed Swift**, from around 23 and 9 locations, respectively. The most recent of the latter was 1 bird at Uriarra Road by Lach Read on 9 March, with all of the other sightings being when they moved through the western side of Canberra on 5 March. Jean Casburn reported by far the most with around 200 from Narrabundah Hill. Earlier that afternoon I recorded my first ever of this species, hawking over my GBS site in Chapman. The most recent report of the **White-throated Needletail** is of 20 birds by Liam Manderson at the Fadden Primary School on 23 March, with the highest number being the 60 seen by Shorty in Symonston on 9 March. So please keep an eye out for these two species until early April, particularly but not only if there is rain around.



Nankeen Night-Heron (Tumut field trip)

Julian Robinson

On 14-15 March the **Eastern Koel** was still reported, including some ko-el calling, from many locations, such as from Hughes, Fraser, Wanniasa (including a female seen), Turner, Chapman, Kaleen, Kambah (a juvenile seen), Narrabundah (a pair still seen), Cook and Watson. However, they seemed to quieten down/move out soon after, with the most recent report available being of 2 in Watson by Ash Allnutt on 21 March. Pending further clarification of some possible double counting, I am aware of around 84 fledglings this season, similar to 2017-2018. The last one reported, probably an independent juvenile, was in Philip Veerman's garden on 18 March.

Of the "passage migrants" moving north from their breeding sites in the mountains, the **Satin Flycatcher** has been reported from only 2 locations, both still from their wet mountain breeding habitat. In contrast the **Rufous Fantail** has been reported from 8 locations, 4 of which were of birds moving through, including flitting through Kathy Cook's Wamboin garden on 23 March. Many flocks of partial passage migrants have also been reported moving through, including the **Red Wattlebird**, **Grey Fantail**,



Crested Shrike-tit (Tumut field trip)

Julian Robinson

Striated and **Spotted Pardalote**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Silvereye**.

Given the warm weather conditions, reports of the first migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** started earlier than I expected. Following those seen by the COG Wednesday walkers on 20 March (see separate report), over the next 3 days there were reports from Florey, Kambah, Duffy, Fadden, Goorooyaroo, Higgins, Weston, EPIC, Kaleen, Chapman, Page and Wamboin. Analysis by Martin Butterfield of the GBS data supported that this was on the early side, with the numbers usually rising in the GBS week starting 26 March. Checking of my column over the past 4 years indicates that only in 2016 were the first flocks reported earlier, from Duffy and Stromlo on 12 March. Small (<50) flocks were regularly reported from then until 27 March, when huge numbers were reported flying from the Brindabellas quite low over Uriarra Village.

Whether this year's early migration was triggered by an event such as the severe hailstorm Cooma had the previous weekend, which was said to be similar to a snowstorm on the ground, is unclear, migration did seem to stop after with several of the COG woodland surveyors reporting few, if any, over 23-24 March. However, on 27 March Lindsay Hansch reported a steady stream of mainly **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** over Jerrabomberra with flocks of up to 50 birds. As I've noted previously, his place is under one of the main current migration routes.

So watch out for flocks of these, and watch out too for the **White-naped Honeyeaters** that will join them from about mid-month (already a few have been reported), and gradually become the dominant bird in them towards the end of April. The **Noisy Friarbird** will also leave during April as will other species that are still being reported including the **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, and most of the **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails**. A number of the last two species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and the **Superb Parrot**.

Between 1600 and 1700 on 24 March, John Leonard counted over 60 **Superb Parrots** in Hughes, but could hear more calling in the distance up towards the Federal Golf Course, and he estimated there were probably more than 100 birds in the Hughes area that afternoon. There appeared to be large numbers of immature birds with them, and he



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Good birding, good food

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2 to 11 September 2019

**Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges,
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12 to 22 September 2019
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Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Yulara
for Sandhill Grasswren.

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2019
7/8 December 2019

Tasmanian bird and mammal tour
Bruny Island, Melaleuca, pelagic.
1 to 8 February 2020

Top End birding tour
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau.
10 to 24 May 2020

Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range NP
In two parts.
1 to 14 June 2020

Gulf of Carpentaria
19 June to 6 July 2020
Now includes Winton for Rusty
Grasswren.

The Pilbara birding tour
24 July to 2 August 2020

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observed their feeding behaviour in eucalypts, noting they have a very efficient sewing machine-like way of processing a leaf to get the lerps. They started at the proximal end of the leaf moving towards the distal, and just processing it through their beak, while cleaning off the lerps. These birds are probably associated with the known roost on the Federal Golf Course. Interestingly, after her presentation at the ANBG on 22 March, Laura Rayner indicated that the southside birds had tended to stay over winter north of the Lake. The report in my October 2018 column that 6 of the 7 observations in September came from the southside supports this, so it will be interesting to see if they overwinter there again.

Of the altitudinal migrants that move from the mountains but will stay here over winter, the **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater** have become well established in Canberra's suburbs and peri-urban areas in March, following the reports from these areas already during February. Of the usually later ones still to arrive, watch out for the **Flame Robin** moving into the open areas around Canberra (the first was observed at the Pinnacle on 25 March), and the **Rose** (a single report from the ANBG on 20 March) and **Pink Robins** (no reports so far). Watch out also for the **Crescent** (not reported so far) and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** (1 reported from Gigerline on 20 March), which are usually first seen during late April or early May, and the **Swift Parrots** migrating from Tasmania (none so far).

There have been further "unusual" birds reported in March. The most notable was the **Regent Honeyeater** photographed by Shorty at his bird bath in Symonston on 26 March. It was hanging around with a group of 3 **Red Wattlebirds** but they soon all left. The 2016-2017 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists it as a rare breeding visitor that has been recorded in about half the years since 1983. The October 2016 record in the ABR is the same as the most recent previous one in the eBird database, supporting that reports of this species, which is listed as endangered in the ACT, have been fewer in recent years than in the earlier ones.

Another notable sighting has been the **Lewin's Rail** first reported (with photos) from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by Lach and Steve Read on 5 March, with up to 2 seen here by a number of observers after this up to 20 March, as well as by John Harris at Forde Creek on 6 March. There were also reports from the former around 8-9 February, including one mist-netted during a **Latham's Snipe** trapping session. The 2016-2017 ABR lists it as a rare, breeding visitor, the most famous previous sighting being that in Commonwealth Park many years ago, where the soggy, boggy conditions created by a heavily dripping tap provided good conditions for earthworms, a favoured food.

Another unusual bird has been the report of a **Grey Goshawk** (grey morph), with photo, from the ANBG on 18 March. To my recollection, sightings of this species in the COG Aol have almost always been of the white morph. There have also been further reports of the **Black Kite** from 6 locations, of a total of 11 so far in 2019, supporting the view that it is being more commonly reported. There was a late report of a dead **Barn Owl** found in Woden, another species to look out for during winter. There have also been more reports of the **Musk Duck** at the Edgeworth Ponds in Coombs, and of the **Great-crested Grebe** on the Cotter Dam.

The **Little Friarbird** was also widely reported around the end of February/early March from 5 different locations, with up to 3 seen, several times in the presence of a much larger number of **Noisy Friarbirds**. There have also been further reports of the **Musk Lorikeet** from 3 locations. Finally, on 4 March Ned Johnston reported two **Cockatiels** seen flying and calling above the Lyneham High School Oval. He was first alerted to by their distinctive calls. They gave clear views allowing him to conclude they were definitely "wild type", even though it was likely that they were escapees. They were observed for about five minutes at the end of which a large group of **Red-rumped Parrots** chased them away.

Apart from the **Eastern Koel** mentioned above, there has been some continued breeding activity during the period. The following are reported in more detail:

On 26 February Anthony Overs posted that it had been a pretty good breeding season in his area in Hawker. Juveniles of 19 species had been observed on the bird bath, by themselves or with parent(s), including **Double-**



Lewin's Rail

Lach Read

barred Finch. Juveniles of 7 additional species had been seen in the yard, including **Rainbow Lorikeet** and **Grey Butcherbird**.

On 15 March Anthony posted that over the past weekend a resident pair of **Eastern Spinebills** appeared with two brand new young, their second brood for the season. The four birds were enjoying the profusely flowering correas, as well as the bird bath, with the young ones coming within a few feet of him. They have bred in my GBS site area too this year, and I was reminded how noisy the begging young can be.

On 1 March Con Boekel posted that he'd been watching some **Spotted Doves** in his Turner yard, trying to work out whether they were breeding or not. They were cunning, and it was not until he began trimming a hedge and twice flushed a sitting bird that he found the nest. That morning the broken halves of two eggs indicated that the stage of breeding had advanced. Con noted that breeding records are reasonably scarce for this species. I've recorded them more frequently than ever in my GBS site this year. They seem to have moved in as I'm not finding them in other places I used to, with overall numbers much the same, and no breeding ever confirmed.

On 3 March Beverley Richards spotted a pair of **Black Swans** with one cygnet and a pair of **Australian Wood Ducks** with about 4 ducklings on Lake Tuggeranong. While these ducks are well known autumn breeders and swans breed all year round, the lake was mostly covered with blue-green algae, and she wondered how the birds survived.

Following a tip off from a canoeist friend, on 10 March Steve Read checked out a row of willows on the Molonglo River about 400 m to the east of the SE corner of Tennant St Fyshwick. The calls of begging young birds could be heard at some distance from the river, together with the harsher calls of adults. Altogether he found five active **Australian Darter** nests along about a 100 metre stretch of the Molonglo, with 13 adults and 10 young. All nests were on horizontal branches of willows, over water. There was also a single flock of 23 **Little Black Cormorants** seen flying in, but no nests, although often there is a mix of them. Breeding would seem to be relatively minor compared with that downstream of the Tuggeranong Parkway Bridge that I reported on in my March column.

On 23 March at Red Hill Shorty came across a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** cleaning out a hollow, bringing out timber and dropping it to the ground. Further on he spotted a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** going in and out of a hollow. A **Sulphur-crested** then arrived and started to work on another hollow in the same branch. John Leonard pointed out that both species keep their eye on hollows all year round and continue to modify them in all seasons. So it wasn't necessarily a breeding record, but continued maintenance and asserting of rights to a hollow. On 22 March I saw a pair of **Galahs** doing the same thing at a hollow on Coleman Ridge. They seem to be there for much of the year, though I have never confirmed them breeding.

Finally as expected for autumn quite a few Mixed Feeding Flocks (MFF) have come to my attention. The one in my garden has been particularly active since mid-March and the over 10 species has included the **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, not often present. However, other than the migrating species mentioned above, no large single species flocks such as the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** seem to have yet been reported.

April is the last of the more than 3 month period when there is significant bird movement in the COG AoI. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants which usually leave in this month as mentioned above, for the remaining arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species flocks, 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

Help wanted for BIGnet conference 14-15 September

Over the weekend of 14/15 Sept, COG will host a gathering of representatives from bird clubs and bird interest groups in NSW/ACT, known as BIGnet. The network meets twice a year to discuss bird conservation issues and projects, and to share/exchange information. The venue is the Yarramundi Cultural Centre on Lady Denman Drive (meeting room in old museum site).

I am seeking assistance to support the event, which comprises a conservation discussion on Saturday morning (10.30-12.30pm), a presentations session on Sat afternoon (3/4 speakers), and a general business meeting on Sunday morning (around 9.30-12.30). Some of the jobs are:

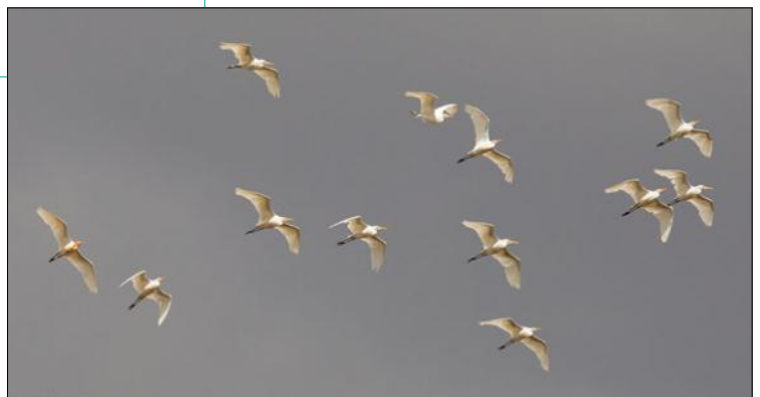
- taking and writing up minutes/meeting records for the conservation session (Sat am) and general business session (Sun am)
- helping with setting up tables and chairs at the venue on Saturday morning, and packing up on Sunday (approx. 12.30-1.30)
- organising catering - purchasing morning and afternoon tea supplies; setting out food, drinks, utensils for refreshment breaks; picking up lunches from a caterer
- on Saturday, someone IT savvy who can help set up the media system for the presentations session (there is a built-in system which we will be able to inspect and test, etc, nearer the time – COG will use its laptop)
- prepare a list of local accommodation suggestions for visitors (weblinks, inexpensive hotel/motel, caravan parks options)
- 2 or 3 bird walk leaders, to take visitors on early morning walks on Sunday (1.5 hours approx.), before the Sunday business session; somewhere near the conference venue is preferred, such as Arboretum, Molonglo River below Scrivener Dam, Aranda Bushland/ Black Mountain, ANBG (probably have 2 groups).

Please get in touch with me if you can help:

Jenny Bounds bignet@canberrabirds.org.au or phone me 62887802, or speak with me at the next COG meeting.

Cattle Egrets (Tumut field trip)

Julian Robinson



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Field Trip Reports

Saturday 9 to Monday 11 March – Tumut area

This is an area not regularly visited by COG. A local property on the Tumut River was offered as a campsite, and six people took advantage of an idyllic spot just metres from the water with an audience of curious cattle (fenced off from our campsite). One of the campers braved the very cold water for a quick dip each day. The remainder of the group stayed in town.

For day 1 we had the company and local knowledge of Tumut-based COG member Les, who conducts Birdlife Australia surveys in the area. We visited a number of his survey sites, did a drive-by of the very impressive infrastructure of the Talbingo Power Station, and saw some beautiful country. On one very quiet track, we were about to head back when we had the rare experience of having two **Superb Lyrebirds** take off on the hillside above us, and glide just over our heads to the lower slopes. Superb indeed! Sites visited included Cliffords Creek trail, Old Mountain Road, the Blowering Cliffs Walk, the Black Perry Lookout and, finally, an unsuccessful search for **Spotted Quail-Thrush** at Wereboldera State Conservation Area.

On the Sunday we started at the Thomas Boyd Trackhead, a great campground on the Goobragandra River. Four **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were sighted on the hillside opposite, and Ryu managed to see one of the birds break a substantial branch off a tree and carry it away. We then visited Bila Park in town, where the local flying foxes roost during the day, and we encountered a very small Red-bellied Black Snake on the path. The group moved on to a site on Shelley Creek where I'd seen **Nankeen Night-Herons** the previous week, and we were not disappointed, with eight birds (at least) sighted. Also at this spot we saw **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, a group of **Cattle Egrets**, and a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**. Doug noticed that the small bird pursuing the eagle was an **Australian Hobby**.

On the Monday morning we visited the Tumut Wetlands and Water Treatment Plant before heading home. Kirsty was the first to spot the **Crested Shrike-tits** along the Eucalyptus Walk, where we also found **Red-browed** and **Double-barred Finches**. The **Western Gerygones** I had seen the previous week were still around, and we got good looks at an immature **White-throated Gerygone** as well.

We saw or heard just over 100 species for the weekend, and discovered some great birding spots.



Sandra Henderson



Thomas Boyd Trackhead , Tumut area

Ryu Callaway

Harry & Irene, Great Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant,
Royal Spoonbill

Julian Robinson

Friday 15 to Sunday 17 March – Bournda NP



Participants camped at Hobart Beach in Eucalypt woodland and close to coastal swamps and tea-tree habitat. Unfortunately the weather was not kind to us and it rained most of the first day we were there. The forecast for the Monday was a 90% chance of 40-50mm of rain, so all participants decided to pack up and head home on Sunday afternoon. Despite that, we managed to find a total of 68 species.



After an aborted walk to Bournda Lagoon in the rain on Saturday morning we drove there in the afternoon to check for **Hooded Plover** but didn't find any. Then a drive around Wallagoot Lake to Turingal Head produced a few waterbirds with nice views of the lake mouth. Around camp we had sightings of **Brown Gerygone**, **Golden Whistler**, **Wonga Pigeons** and a **Rose Robin** nearby. **Bell Miners** were a constant source of bird call with good views down low.

Spotlighting on the first 2 nights yielded excellent views of Yellow Bellied Glider, Sugar Glider, Common Ringtail Possum, Common Brushtail Possum, 3 species of kangaroo/wallaby, a glimpse of a Bush Rat and a number of Peron's Tree Frog. Unfortunately no owls or nightjars showed themselves (or even called).



COG members at Bournda National Park

Yellow-bellied Glider, Next Page: Southern Emu-wren, White-bellied Sea Eagle



Kathy Walter

David Cook

The group walked the eastern edge of Wallagoot Lake to the mouth (although it is currently closed to the sea) and had great views of an obliging **Southern Emu-wren** and 2 adult and 2 immature **White-bellied Sea Eagles**. A number of waterbirds and terns were seen on the lake and sandspits, highlights including **Little** and **Caspian Terns**, and **Red-capped Plover** (new for some participants).

After packing up camp a few hardy souls headed for Merimbula for lunch and then the Panboola Wetlands. A café on the river produced views of **Bar-tailed Godwits** and thousands of blue soldier crabs. Panboola in the afternoon was quiet for birds but came up trumps with spectacular views of thousands of Grey-headed Flying Fox and 2 Red-bellied Black Snakes.



Other mammals included Red-necked Wallaby, Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Swamp Wallaby. So while the birding was a little bit limited by the rain, we did get some spectacular mammals.

Kathy Walter and John Goldie



Wednesday 20 March –Gigerline

Twenty-two members and guests gathered at Williamsdale for a walk to the Murrumbidgee River at Gigerline. The particular “target species” were **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** and **Brown Treecreeper**. Calls of both species were heard by some members who ventured a tad upstream at the Murrumbidgee.

The excitement began with a large flock of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** moving through the woodland just over the creek. By the time we left that area another ~100 birds, in flocks of 10 to 20 each, had been added to that count, and by the end of the outing my count was 402. As the birds were moving with purpose towards Burra there was low probability of double counting. A small number of **White-naped Honeyeaters** were along for the flight.

Several **White-throated Gerygones** were seen or heard and our final estimate of **Dusky Woodswallows** was 17 birds in several small flocks. One **White-throated Needle-tail** was seen and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** was heard. A number of other species were present in large numbers, especially in a mixed flock near a dam, including **Grey Fantail** (20), **Spotted Pardalote** (20), **Striated Thornbill** (15), **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** (6), **Brown-headed Honeyeater** (6) and **Rufous Whistler** (3).

Continuing the tradition for this walk, several extra species were recorded towards the end, or indeed during the bird call. The stand-out was a flock of 9 Varied Sittellas. This outing usually gives a high level of diversity and, with 53 species reported by various members of the group, today was no exception. A full birdlist is at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S54030903>

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 23 March – Booroomba Rocks to Mt Tennent

Eleven COG members and guests began the walk at the Booroomba Rocks carpark. **Yellow-faced**, **White-naped** and **White-eared Honeyeater**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Spotted Pardalote** and **Grey Fantail** all promptly revealed themselves by calling, and a few were seen. That was the pattern for the day - many heard, few seen.

Soon after we started along the track the first of the 6 to 8 **Superb Lyrebirds** was heard; none were seen, but at least one of the later ones had the decency to give us a good rendition of many of the birds we identified during our walk.

Striated Thornbill were not hard to hear, but were probably not seen by all members of the party, at least not well. The same could be said of **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Brown Thornbill**, of which there weren't many around. Most of the party had good views of **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Golden Whistler** and **Rufous Whistler** and we heard but didn't see **Striated Pardalote**, **Eastern Whipbird**, **Silvereye** and **Eastern Spinebill**.

Several calls presented us with interesting challenges. We decided that we were hearing a **Bassian Thrush** (rather than a Blackbird) and, after getting a not great view of a raptor flying away, but comparing the call to those on the apps, most observers thought it most likely a **Collared Sparrowhawk** (not a Brown Goshawk). A call, whose identification we weren't sufficiently confident to add a species to our list, may well have been a **Pilotbird**. One of the party believes they heard an **Australian Owlet Nightjar**.

After lunch at the Bushfold Flats Hut, several of the party had better views of species seen briefly or heard in the tall forest, such as **Red Wattlebird** and **Crimson Rosella**. We also saw 5 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** which had figured in the repertoire of the Lyrebird which provided us with a good sample of mimicry.

The open paddocks certainly made for easier viewing of **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Galah**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Magpie-Lark** and **Masked Lapwing**, but only a few saw the male **Scarlet Robin**. **Grey Butcherbird**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Weebill** finished off our day.

Perhaps lunch at Bushfold Flat, the first open area, was a bit late in the day for seeing the honeyeater migration, or maybe it was because it was a cloudy day that we noted only small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** flying while making contact calls.

Michael Robbins



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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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: February-March 2019

Sandra Henderson

February 18 – 24—Umbagog District Park, Latham

Where is it: off Florey Drive in Latham

The last time I visited this park on Ginninderra Creek was so long ago that I had no memory of it, so this time I managed to get myself very thoroughly lost, and walked several kilometres more than I'd intended. Observations from others on the subsequent Wednesday Walk confirmed the creek area was much more accessible (less reeds) when COG had visited some years ago. I visited on a very warm day, and the birds were very quiet (the Wednesday Walk a few days later was much more productive). The highlights of this recce were the water dragons, some quite large, sunning themselves on rocks in the creek. A **Leaden Flycatcher** was calling around the playground area, and a **Superb Parrot** was heard but not seen.

February 25 – March 3-Tumut Plains Road, Tumut

Another recce, this time for a weekend COG outing to Tumut.

As I drove along Tumut Plains Rd, several **Dusky Woodswallows** flew across the road, so I stopped to have a look. There were cattle yards beside the road, and Shelley Creek beyond, with some eucalypts and willows on the banks of the creek. Three **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were asleep on a branch of one of the gum trees. As I stood there, they woke and shuffled around, disturbing other birds I hadn't noticed. Within a few minutes I'd added five **Nankeen Night-Herons**, a **Great Cormorant**, and **White-necked** and **White-faced Herons** to the list. Apart from the woodswallows, a **Rufous Whistler** and a group of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were also active. The COG outing less than two weeks later also observed a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** being harassed by an **Australian Hobby**.



Yellow-billed Spoonbill

Sandra Henderson

March 4 – 10 -Tumut Plains Road, Tumut (camping spot on private property)

Six COG members camped at this idyllic spot right on the banks of the Tumut River, on a property owned by one of the people who comes along to the regular Tumut Wetlands surveys I (and a few other COG members) have been involved in for several years. The landowner had put up a temporary electric fence to keep his cattle out of the campsite, although we often had an audience – the cattle were quite curious about us. Across the river was a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** nest, and we saw both adult and juvenile birds on the property. There were plenty of birds within the immediate vicinity, including **Restless Flycatcher**, **Great Egret**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, **Pelicans**, **Dollarbirds**, **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, **Royal Spoonbill**, **Cattle Egrets** and **Black-shouldered Kite**. On the final morning, very early, a **Barking Owl** was heard across the river.

March 11 – 17 -Deakin (non-residential area)

On a Sunday morning I wandered around the area occupied by the medical facilities and numerous office blocks. Although I saw only 20 species, ten of those were various parrots, including **Superb Parrots** and **Gang-gang Cockatoos**. There were **Straw-necked Ibis** on the oval beside the Alfred Deakin High School and, apart from **Spotted Pardalote**, no small birds at all in the whole area.



Straw-necked Ibis

Sandra Henderson

March 18 – 24- Mt Stranger, Bonython

Where is it: there are several entry points on Ebenezer St in Bonython, although the one near No.5 is an access road (no public vehicle access) and by far the easiest. The Bicentennial Trail runs along one side of the reserve, so it is probably also accessible from that track.

I walked up to the trig near the communications tower and water reservoir, then wandered in a wide arc through the wooded area back to the entry. Some notes on a geocaching site mentioned lots of thistles, but I encountered almost none, although it is quite weedy. A **Satin Bowerbird** making strange calls led me astray for a while, but then I returned to the very large Kurrajong tree downhill from the trig and followed the trees around the slope. **Little Corellas** were playing among the cables on the communications tower, and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were perched on the railing of the water reservoirs. A noisy gang of **Pied Currawongs** was moving around the wooded areas – up to six birds at a time flying from tree to tree and ripping bark. The **Scarlet Robin** heard was closer to the river, near the edge of the reserve.

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 7 April – Narrabundah Hill – morning outing

Everyone is welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. This 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, depending on conditions and the species seen, possibly along most of the western one, and we'll 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 8:30 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning at the end of March/early April (Note this is the first morning when daylight savings has ended). 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.**

Jack Holland

Sunday 14 April – K2C - Bredbo region – day outing

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 **Brown Treecreeper**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists. 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 10 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210736.

Friday 19 – Monday 22 April – Round Hill – Easter camp

Registration has closed as this trip is now full.

Sunday 28 April – Jerrabomberra Hill – morning outing

Meet at 9am in the parking area off Halloran Drive in Jerrabomberra (close to Esmond Ave, on the opposite side of the road). We will walk on the well-maintained vehicle track to the summit of the hill. There is no need to register beforehand. Sandra Henderson

Saturday 4 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. **If you do not have binoculars, please let me know as COG can supply you with a pair to use on the day.**

Anthony Overs

Sunday 12 May -Late autumn mystery bus trip – day outing

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

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

Sunday 19 May – Square Rock

This outing is suitable for those who are able to walk 9 kms, at a birdwatching pace, in easy to moderate terrain, with a steady uphill climb, some steps and boardwalks. It will be cool by then, so ensure that you have layers of garments suitable for unexpected changes in the weather. It may be wet underfoot in places, so ensure that you have comfortable, sturdy footwear. We'll take our time and may still be out at lunchtime, so bring something to eat and water. Meet at the Kambah Village Shopping Centre at 8:15am so that we can organise carpooling. From Kambah it will take us about 40 minutes to drive to the Square Rock carpark. A couple of hyperlinks for you to look at:

<https://australianhiker.com.au/trails/square-rock/>

<https://www.thewalkact.com/square-rock-and-smokers-trail>

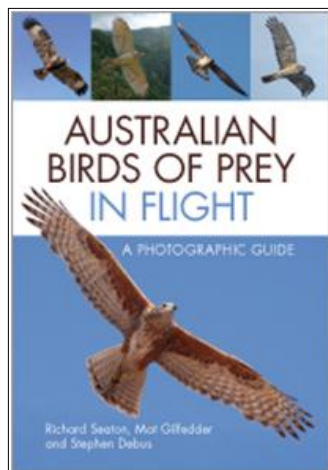
For enquiries and to book for this outing contact Lia Battisson by email: liabattisson@grapevine.com.au or mobile phone: 0412788791. Note that I'm away from 6 to 26 April, so please contact me between 27 April and 12 May.

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



Australian Birds of Prey in Flight: A Photographic Guide

Richard Seaton, Mat Gilfedder, Stephen Debus

Identify the eagles, hawks, kites and falcons flying high above you with this photographic guide. Birds of prey spend most of their time in flight and, when viewed from the ground, they are notoriously hard to identify. Individual species profiles describe distinguishing features and the text is supported by detailed images showing the birds at six different angles and poses, using photographs from many of Australia's leading bird photographers. Annotated multi-species comparison plates highlight key features that can help differentiate birds of prey in flight.

This book will provide a useful reference for identifying soaring birds in the field, and also while trying to identify images from your own camera.

Available March 2019. Members' price: \$30.

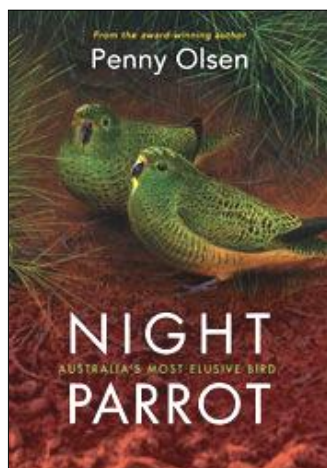


Australasian Eagles and Eagle-like Birds

Stephen Debus

Eagles are awe-inspiring birds that have influenced much human endeavour. Australia is home to three eagle species, and in Melanesia there are four additional endemic species. A further three large Australian hawks are eagle-like. All of the six Australian species covered in this book are threatened in at least some states (one also nationally). This book places the Australasian species in their regional and global context, reviews their population status and threats, provides new information on their ecology, and suggests what needs to be done in order to ensure the future of these magnificent birds.

Members' price: \$35.



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:

R Cant

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2019 edition:

Wednesday 24 April 2019

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG E-mail Discussion List

COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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

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

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

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Gang-gang is published on COG's website in PDF format, as well as being distributed in print format.

ISSN 2208-018X

