



Gang-gang

AUGUST 2019

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 14 August 2019

7.30 pm

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

This month there will be two presentations of roughly equal lengths.

The first presentation will be by **Jon Coleman**, who has recently moved to Canberra from Queensland, on: **"The Breeding Biology of Black Swans in Australia: A comparison between Queensland and the ACT"**.

Jon will present some of the results of his work investigating the breeding biology of Black Swans and will explain how he is now studying the Black Swans of the ACT to perform a comparative study between the two populations. He will discuss their movements, when they first pair and breed, and the different breeding strategies used to maximise their productivity. Of the 6 species of swan in the world, the Black Swan is one of the least studied, and the findings to date will be discussed in relation to northern hemisphere species which Jon has also been involved in studying.

The second presentation will be by well-known wildlife illustrator **Peter Marsack** on: **"Painting for the Australian Bird Guide"**.

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

Over the 4.5 weeks from 26 June covered by this column bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) has continued to be very quiet. This is probably because it has been very dry despite the otherwise mild winter with few heavy frosts. The **Dusky Woodswallow** has not found these conditions to its liking, as after regular reports of up to 6 birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands to 1 July, there has only been one further report, that of 3 birds by Deb and Rod R at the Tidbinbilla NR on 2 July. Likewise **Olive-backed Orioles** have only been reported from three locations, single birds up to 3 July by Shorty at Symonston, and on 9 July by Alastair Smith at the nearby Callum Brae, and a late report of 2 birds at Mulligans Flat NR by Patrick Wyllie on 27 July.

Of the species for which some birds usually overwinter, there have been no reports of the **Rufous Whistler** over the period, though the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and the **Grey Fantail** have still been reported from 9 and 17 locations, respectively, very similar to that in June. **Yellow-faced, Fuscous and White-naped Honeyeaters** have been reported from 7, 4 and 4 locations, respectively, all about half the number compared with June, even though they were still present at the time of writing. The **Superb Parrot** has

Continued Page 2



Blue-faced Honeyeater

Shorty

Everyone welcome

Peter will talk about the process involved in producing the original artwork for *The Australian Bird Guide*: three artists painting over 4,700 images. Why did this seem like such a good idea, how were the images painted, what challenges had to be overcome, and why did it all take so long? In the course of his talk he'll touch on the way the changing expectations of birders have driven changes in the nature and scope of field guides.

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

still been reported from 10 locations, over half compared with June, and with still 5 being south of the lake. The **Mistletoebird** has been reported from 6 locations, compared with 4 in June.

So it appears that despite the predicted warmest July on record, conditions have not favoured overwintering. Indeed of the spring summer migrants which mostly all move away, there have only been reports of the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** by Liam Manderson at Tidbinbilla on 29 June, and by Alastair Smith at Callum Brae on 9 July. As I've noted before this is the least migratory local cuckoo species. **Tree Martins** also either seem not to have fully departed or, more likely, have returned early, with a report of a single bird at the Jerrabomberra wetlands on 7 July, and then a series of reports from there of up to 4 birds from 19 July. There have also been reports of single **Fairy Martins** from there from 24 July.

The species listed above, as well as the **Australian Reed-Warbler** and other cuckoo species are usually the first to return to Canberra. If the warm weather continues this could be well before the end of August, so please keep an eye out for them and any other returning spring/summer migrant species.

Of the altitudinal migrants that spend winter in lower areas, significant numbers of the **Flame Robin** still do not seem to have moved closer to Canberra, with reports from 8 peri-urban locations (including a solitary female at their usual winter spot SW of Mt Arawang) of the total of 18 locations in the COG Aol. The **Rose Robin** has only been reported from 2 locations, the ANBG and Mt Majura NR, while there have been no reports of the **Pink Robin** since 11 June.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from just 4 locations, including the usual ANBG (but only late in July). The others were by Lachlan Read at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 17 July, in Lindell Emerton's Mawson garden on 21 July, and the male in my garden in Chapman, where it has been present from 23 June. Initially it was very quiet, just appearing for brief periods at the flowering banksia outside my TV room window, and it only started to give its contact-type call after about 2 weeks, when a female was also seen briefly. Though it mostly stayed in bushes less than 10 metres from this window, after this it became much bolder and fed much more often, though only for a few days towards the end did it give some typical "Ee-gypt" calls. I thought it had suddenly left on 22 July, but it has since been seen once quietly feeding again, and later calling loudly from a bare tree.

There have been reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** from 3 locations, at the Mt Majura NR by Sarah Fieg on 20 July, at Tuggeranong Hill by Andrew Reeson on 21 July, and by a number of observers from Narrabundah Hill, most recently by Kim Larmour on 19 July. There have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** over the period, or of the **Brown Gerygone**, and just 2 reports of the **Restless Flycatcher**, by Alastair Smith at Bibaringa on 18 July and by Sandra Lauer near Michelago on 22 July. As noted in the report of the COG Wednesday walkers elsewhere in this issue, the **Bassian Thrush** is present at the ANBG again this winter.

There have been further reports of "unusual" birds in the period, the most intriguing one being the **Powerful Owl** found dead at the base of a stringybark tree adjacent to the Hawker synthetic football field on 29 June, as posted on Canberra Nature Map. This follows a report of one photographed in an O'Connor back yard by Precocious Twitch on 27 June. It is interesting to speculate whether these were the same bird or just co-incidence. I suspect this species may be present but



Tree Martin

Noel Luff

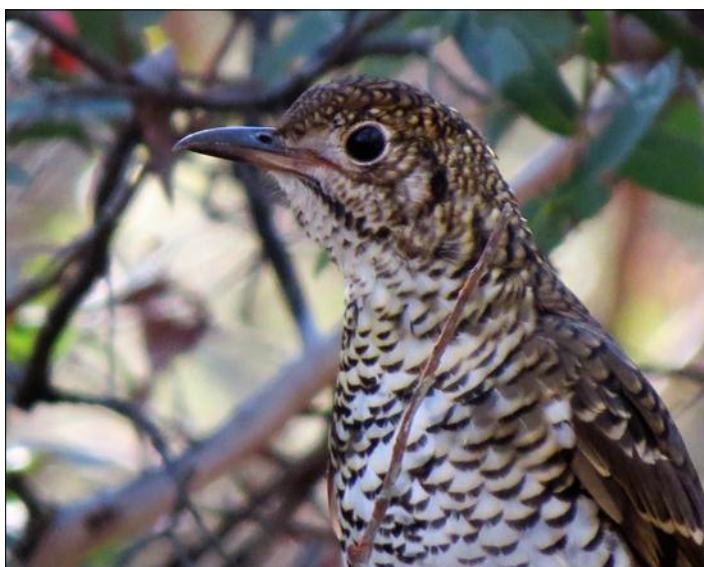
underreported in central Canberra following a series of observations at the ANU and Turner in recent years. Also reported has been a **Grey Goshawk** from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by a number of observers from 14-18 July. This was the grey morph which in my experience is less common one locally. This morph was also reported by Timothée Bonnet at the ANU on 2 July, while the white morph was photographed by Alastair Smith from nearby Black Mountain on 6 July.

There was a further report of a **Black Falcon** on Tharwa Drive by Deb and Rod R on 19 July, and a **Black Kite** by David Dedenczuk at Callum Brae on 6 July. A number of observers reported the up to 2 **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** present at Hall from 30 June to 6 July. Also present there feeding in a profusely flowering gum was a **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet**, while the **Musk Lorikeet** has continued to have been reported from Watson and Wanniasa. A number of observers also reported the **Azure Kingfisher** back at Point Hut from 29 June and 2 July.

Limited breeding has been brought to my attention. On 25 July Con Boekel posted that the **Bassian Thrush** at the ANBG may be breeding. A passerby had told him that he had seen a bird carrying 'half a dozen worms', and he then observed a bird feeding another but was not sure whether he was watching an adult feeding another adult, or an adult feeding a young bird. So something to look out for, the Bird Info data on the COG web site shows both "carrying food" and "nest with young" for July.

On 20 July Kym Bradley posted a link to photos of a male **Hooded Robin** attempting copulation with a female who wasn't ready. On 8 July Rob Parnell posted that two **Crested Pigeon** chicks had hatched a few days ago in the Narrabundah nest. **Australian Magpies** have been reported nest building from early July, and my local **Australian Ravens** have built a nest slightly higher and to the side of their former one, and are now sitting.

As a sign that the breeding season hasn't yet commenced in earnest, there have still been reports of mixed feeding flocks (MMFs) during the period. I encountered a very active one during my survey on Narrabundah Hill on 22 July, which consisted of over 8 mainly thornbills



Bassian Thrush

Sandra Henderson



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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Victoria

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Good birding, good food

South West Western Australia
2 to 11 September 2019

**Alice Springs, West MacDonnell
Ranges, Marla & Yulara**
12 to 22 September 2019
Now includes Marla (SA) for
Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Yulara
for Sandhill Grasswren.

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
1 to 14 June 2020 (2 parts)

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

New tour
The Pilbara birding tour
13 to 22 July 2020

The Pilbara birding tour
24 July to 2 August 2020 FULL

**Alice Springs, West MacDonnell
Ranges, Marla & Yulara**
7 to 17 August 2020

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

and allied species. Certainly the flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas** continue to be conspicuous on the median strips, or of the former on their afternoon Murrumbidgee River or Bullen Range.

I've also been noticing up to 8 **Satin Bowerbirds** coming through my GBS site in the evenings on their way towards the higher parts of Chapman/Coolleman Ridge, and nearby as it's getting near to sun rise I can hear many waking up as I walk my dogs. Also interesting has been a pair of **Laughing Kookaburras** often roosting in a large blue gum within my GBS site. This species has been only observed occasionally around my place since the January 2003 fires, but nearly a year ago up to 4 suddenly appeared and at least 2 have been regular since.

So please keep up the reports for any overwintering or early arriving spring/summer migrants, or the altitudinal migrants mentioned above, for signs of early breeding, for roosts and roost flights, and for the last of the MFFs or single species flocks. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings 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, posting on the COG e-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with 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



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COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2019

Yes, it is nearly that time of year again! This year's blitz, our fifteenth, will be held on the weekend of 26-27 October and we need as many participants as possible to conduct bird surveys across the whole of the ACT, in an effort to obtain as complete a snapshot as possible of the birds using the ACT mid-spring. As always, the details are on the COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au, under the header 'Observing and Reporting Birds'. The sites chosen for 2019 will be updated shortly. Please let me know, to blitz@canberrabirds.org.au, where you would like to survey. If you regularly survey particular spots, you would be the ideal person to put your hand up to survey them for the blitz. But also think about trying somewhere new as well, this year. As always I'm particularly keen to hear from competent 4WD volunteers to conduct surveys behind locked gates in Namadgi National Park. And yes, more than one person or group is welcome to survey the named sites – or others of your choosing – though it is particularly helpful if we can have takers for the named key sites first. I shall be at the next COG meetings if you would like to discuss your surveys.

Barbara Allan, Blitz coordinator

Field Trip Reports

Saturday 6 July- Kambah Pool to Red Rocks

Those who were early to the Kambah Pool parking area were welcomed by the call of a **Superb Lyrebird** and **White-throated Treecreeper**, and all fifteen in our party were graced with excellent views of a well coloured male **Scarlet Robin**. The **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were noticeable as specks of white in the trees on the Bullen Range and their vocal presence was rather more obvious. While at the parking area we also saw and heard **Weebill**, **Striated Thornbill** and **White-eared Honeyeater**.

On our way to the Lookout, above the 'crossing' rapid, downstream from Red Rocks, most, if not all, walkers also saw and/or heard **Eastern Spinebill**, **Grey-shrike Thrush**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Common Starling**, **Australian Magpie**, **Pied Currawong**, **Australian** and **Little Raven**, **White-faced Heron**,

Galah and

Eastern Rosella. At the lookout the route down to, and across the river, and beyond was viewed and discussed, and the only raptor of the day was seen, a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** that seemed to be trying to find a thermal west of Red Rocks.

The rest of the walk to Red Rocks was most notable for good views of a Wombat which, although looking healthy from the front, had obvious mange on its backside.

At Red Rocks there was much discussion about, but no sightings of the Peregrine Falcon. However, it was interesting to hear from COG members who had first seen them at Red Rocks 30 to 40 years ago, having visited the area before or around the time the first walking trail along the river was made.

Back at the

Lookout, seven walkers elected to scramble down to the river and attempt the rapids, two stopped halfway to have lunch, while five continued across and were very soon after rewarded by excellent views of a **Crescent Honeyeater** sitting at the top of a dead branch and hawking. Shortly after that, seeing some odd shaped poos, and looking

around, they noted an

Echidna. At the top of their before lunch climb they also saw three Wallaroos, one of which was a very dark brown. After lunch, the five,

elected to work their way up the valley directly north of the track to the top of the Bullen Range and then climb out to the track. They were rewarded for their efforts by hearing **Eastern Yellow Robin**, seeing and hearing a male **Golden Whistler**, seeing **Welcome Swallow**, and, as a finale before heading back to the river, they listened to a **Superb**



Scarlet Robin

Helen Cross



White-eared Honeyeater

Matthew Larkin



Crescent Honeyeater

John Bundock



Wombat

Matthew Larkin



COG members crossing back over the rapids John Bundock



Struggling up Bullen Range

Tee Ton Teo

Lyrebird further up the valley, perhaps a young one as the standard of mimicry didn't seem up to that of the bird heard near Kambah Pool, or the many at Tidbinbilla. Before crossing the river again they had good views of **Eastern Spinebill**, **White-faced Heron** and **Great Cormorant**, and once across the river, in the mistletoe in the casuarina near the bottom of Allen's Creek, they had excellent views of **Brown Thornbill**.

Michael Robbins

Wednesday 17 July – Australian National Botanic Gardens

Twenty-one members and guests gathered at the ANBG on a pleasant morning for a winter walk. Our first excitement was locating a male **Satin Bowerbird** displaying to his lady friend. She was later observed transporting leafy material to a nest almost directly above the bower, thus upgrading the breeding event from "display" to "nest building" - something to keep an eye on.

More excitement swiftly following with a sighting of a very cooperative **Bassian Thrush** feeding on the ground about 3m off the path in section 26. Somewhat later in the bushland above the boundary of sections 70 and 73 a second **Bassian Thrush** was noted – unusually flying up to a branch several metres off the ground. When that bird departed it was joined by another, making it a 3 thrush walk.



Satin Bowerbird— "Shake me like you mean it"

Duncan McCaskill

Eastern Yellow Robins were frequently seen, from the Sydney Gully upward, with a final count of 10 for the outing. As we came down outside the Rainforest Gully, a beautiful and very active male **Rose Robin** was seen. Honeyeaters were a tad light on for diversity, despite quite a lot of blossom, but we saw/heard decent numbers of **Red Wattlebird**, **New Holland Honeyeater** and **Eastern Spinebill**.

Overall we recorded 28 species which, with some of them being corkers, was a fair outcome for a mid-winter walk. As well as the Bowerbirds, breeding was also firing up for **Australian Wood Duck** (inspecting hollow) and **Australian Magpie** (nest building). A full list is at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S58239149>

Martin Butterfield

Sunday 21 July – The Pinnacle Nature Reserve

A baker's dozen of birdos gathered on a classic crisp and clear midwinter morning at the westernmost entrance to The Pinnacle Nature Reserve in Hawker. However, we were promptly reduced to an unleavened dozen by Barbara Allan's declaration that she wouldn't be coming with us, as she was a woman with a mission – a second look at the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater that has been hanging around in or near the reserve for the last couple of months.

Undaunted, the rest of us set off, having already recorded half a dozen or so species, including **Rainbow Lorikeet** and **Red-rumped Parrot**. Our first meaningful stop was a dense patch of flowering grevilleas that harboured three **White-plumed Honeyeaters** noisily contesting territorial possession as an **Eastern Spinebill** called in the background.

The reserve's ecological jewel – its largely unmolested patch of remnant Red Stringybark woodland – was quiet, as it tends to be during the winter, but the periphery yielded non-avian wildlife in the shape of a **Red-necked Wallaby** and a skulking fox that quickly made itself scarce.

Other highlights on our way to the Pinnacle summit included a female **Golden Whistler**, male **Scarlet Robin**, numerous **Weebills**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, a **Grey Shrikethrush** and a flock of 7 **White-winged Chough** close to one of their usual nesting spots. Our progress was closely observed for much of the way by a mob of around 40 **Eastern Grey Kangaroo**.

On reaching the summit, we were re-joined by Barbara, whose mission remained unfulfilled, but who had encountered upwards of 5 **Scarlet Robins** and one of the reserve's families of **Speckled Warblers**.

The walk back to the cars yielded little else of note, other than another male **Scarlet Robin** and a gnarled growth on the end of dead limb that had a number of the party convinced it was a perching owl (the resemblance really was uncanny). Some even claimed to have seen it move! Obviously one to keep an eye on. The final highlight was a flock of 8 **Straw-necked Ibis** gliding majestically over the parked cars as we parted ways.

The total count for the walk was 29 species (details available [here](#)). My thanks to Ryu Callaway for keeping a tally and posting it on eBird.

John Brannan

FINAL SECOND-HAND BIRD BOOK SALE

Birds of Polynesia, Panama and Peru and everywhere between.....

The final clearance of books from the library of the late Professor John Penhallurick will be at the next regular meeting of COG on 13 August 2019. It will be a final clearance of an eclectic range of interesting and common to rare bird books; including the full 16 volume mixed edition set of James Peters' Checklist of the Birds of the World.

Come along to get a few bargains.

John was a member of COG and a Past President and maintained the widely acclaimed Worldbird-info website. He passed away far too early with MND in 2014. Liz Penhallurick has kindly requested that proceedings from the sale of John's books be donated to the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund.

New Places: July 2019

Sandra Henderson

Nothing local this time – I'm on a five week trip in Queensland, and there've been a few places which have stood out. Unfortunately, since we were on a commercial tour, some locations can't be given, other than general locality. All are locations I've not birded in the past.

Nicholson River

Where is it? Out of Burketown just south of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

A magical spot we visited twice. One of the key species being sought was the **Purple-crowned Fairywren** – the largest of the fairywrens. We did not find full colour males, but these great little birds put on a great display for us – up to four at a time sitting in full view. Other species at the river crossing included **Lemon-bellied Flycatcher**, a pair of **Radjah Shelducks** with three ducklings, a **Channel-billed Cuckoo** calling as it flew over, **Azure Kingfisher**, a lovely full colour male **Purple-backed Fairywren**, a pair of **Buff-sided Robins**, **Yellow White-eyes**, **Northern Fantail**, **Arafura Fantail**, **Black-chinned Honeyeaters** (golden-backed form) and **Crimson Finches**.

Mount Isa

We visited a location close to Mount Isa hoping for a **Kalkadoon Grasswren**. Anyone who's gone after the grasswrens knows the search can be lengthy (and uncomfortable, since they, but not us, like spinifex!) After some time, we finally heard a suspicious little call and located a couple of the birds. While most of the party had great views of the 2-3 birds around a gully, at one stage Lia spotted a group of five on the road behind us. We saw no other birds of note in that location, but got back in the bus well satisfied. The following day was devoted to another of these tricky birds, the **Carpentarian Grasswren**. After some unsuccessful attempts, we located two of the birds on a private property. In the same area we also located **Black-tailed Treecreepers** – with six in all coming into view – very handsome birds indeed!

Lake Barrine Road, Malanda

Perhaps odd, because this was an incidental sighting, but a pair of **Pacific Bazas** was spotted by the tag-along vehicle's occupants. We spent quite some time watching the birds on the powerlines above our heads - the best views most of us have ever had of this species. The birds were diving into some roadside vegetation and picking off caterpillars, before flying back up to the power lines to eat them. They seemed totally oblivious to the nine observers wandering back and forth, even lying down on the roadside, trying to get good camera angles.

The Nerada Tea Plantation, Malanda

Not an intentional birding spot – we visited to see the family of Lumholtz Tree Kangaroos which inhabit a tiny patch of forest next to the visitor centre. Right at the gate to the property, within feet of the cars entering and leaving, two **Bush Stone-Curlews** stood/sat keeping an eye on proceedings.



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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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://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/discussion-email-list/> and trips page of COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/category/trips/>.

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.

Saturday 3 August – Lake Ginninderra beginners

This is the second of our bird walks for 2019 that is aimed specifically at beginners. Meet Anthony Overs (bookings essential on 0419202155 or anthony.overs@gmail.com) at 8.30am in the car park at the western end of Diddams Close on Ginninderra Peninsula (also known as Diddams Close Park). We will walk the shores of the peninsula around to the eastern side, then back to the car park along Diddams Close. We should be able to view several species of waterbirds up close, focusing on the identification features of the common species such as the various ducks, "waterhens" and cormorants. A variety of bush birds are also likely to be seen. Bring your binoculars and field guide. If you do not have binoculars, please let me know and you can borrow a pair from COG for the outing.

Wednesday 21 August – Hall

Tour Hall village and ovals. Meet at junction of Victoria and Gladstone Streets at 9am.

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 24 August – Burrinjuck

Note change of date. This will be a full day trip to Burrinjuck Dam, located 30kms SW of Yass. The intention is to spend the morning exploring Burrinjuck State Park on the dam foreshore. The Hume and Hovell Track passes through the park. After lunch, we intend to walk parts of Burrinjuck Nature Reserve. Target birds include **Wonga Pigeon** and the first returning migrants. Carpooling will occur from Hall with passengers contributing to petrol costs. Due to parking limitations, the number of vehicles we can take from Hall will be limited. Departure time from Hall will be 7.45am and anticipated return time to Hall is 3-5pm. Registration is essential - email roostcensus@canberrabirds.org.au. Final details will be sent to registered participants when finalised.

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**

Saturday 31 August – Lake Road, Bungendore

Meet at the entrance to Lake Road at 09:00. We will car pool and drive further down the road, then park at a convenient spot and walk from there. The outing will take about 2 hours and depending on the time we will visit Trucking Yard Lane for the Plumed Whistling-Ducks. The Lake Road swamp may contain water so if possible bring along your telescope and tripod. No need to register but shoes for walking along a dirt road are recommended. For the technically minded enter -35.2343 149.4104 into Google Earth to find the meeting spot. Drive time is about 40 minutes from Canberra via Mac's Reef Road.

For any queries please contact Chris Davey (MOB 0418 679 847)

Sunday 8 September – Callum Brae NR

Meet at the Narrabundah Lane entrance to the reserve at 9am. The walk is mainly on vehicle tracks and is around 6km total. Bring water and wear sturdy walking shoes. There have been over 150 species seen at Callum Brae, so we should end up with a good bird list. No need to book.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 14 September - Bluett's Block

Bluett's Block is one of the few remaining areas of natural bushland containing heath in the south of Canberra. We need to appreciate this wonderful heathland and varied habitat, where orchids can be found in the springtime and before the encroaching suburb of Denman Prospect makes an impact. I find that this is one of the best birding areas in all of the south of Canberra, for its seasonal diversity and for regular species such as **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Eastern Yellow Robin, White-throated Treecreeper, Scarlet Robin**, thornbills, whistlers, pardalotes, parrots and birds of prey. Especially in springtime, the well-groomed fire trail walks are ringing with birdcalls. Red-necked Wallabies and a few kangaroos are also seen when they thump away through Red Stringybark trees. There are also very fine views from the top of the hills all around Canberra.

The walk will commence at 8.30am. To get to the start of the walk, drive from Stromlo Forest Park for 2 km on Uriarra Road, at which point you will see on your left the end of a bicycle track which runs parallel to Uriarra Road. Park near the gate on the left hand side of the road. Please take care, as cars often travel along here very fast.

This will mostly be an uphill walk but we will take it in gentle stages to listen. Please wear sturdy walking shoes and bring water to drink. All are welcome and there is no need to book.

Jean Casburn

Sunday 22 September 2019 - Sherwood Homestead Complex

The Sherwood Homestead Complex is a European settler homestead site located on Uriarra Creek in the Blue Range Hut/Uriarra State Forest area. The homestead was occupied from 1863 to 1922. In September, the descendants of the daffodils planted there at that time should be in flower, a magnificent sight. More information on the Sherwood

Homestead Complex is available online at <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2015-661/default.asp> and <http://tinyurl.com/jtwlhev>.

Please rendezvous for carpooling in the carpark of the Stromlo Forest Park at 8.00 am. We will drive to the Blue Range Hut and do a circular walk from there, about 10 km total distance, a bit hilly. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$5. We expect to arrive back in Canberra early to mid-afternoon. Please bring your lunch and water. There are toilets at the start of the walk (Blue Range Hut) but not at the 'Sherwood' site.

For further information, please contact the trip leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, or email sherwood2019@canberrabirds.org.au.

Sunday 29 September – Namadgi Visitors Centre

Meet in the carpark at the Visitor Centre at 9am. We'll explore the woodland next to the visitor centre, stroll down to the river, and may cross the road to look at the lowest slope of Mt Tennent. There is no need to book.

Sandra Henderson

Woodland Surveys- winter 2019 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and a very small team surveyed on Sunday 30 June. After an overnight cold front and rain, conditions were on the cold side and breezy, no doubt contributing to one of the lowest totals of 30 species, the second lowest ever, the lowest being 27 species in 2004. A small number of sites had no birds in them, and birds in flocks between sites were scarce. Of interest were a group of 8 **Varied Sittellas** in the woodland patch around sites 1 and 2, **Scarlet Robins** at 3 sites, a couple of single sightings of **White-plumed Honeyeater**, one of **White-eared Honeyeater**, and **Golden Whistlers** calling in several places. A flock of 30 **Welcome Swallows** was active on the eastern side, north of the large dam, and some **Little Ravens** were also around there. Nineteen **White-winged Choughs** were recorded on the transect from the Western Ridge to the Woolshed base, and 3 **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** were seen heading to the north of the reserve. There were a few mixed flocks, but low in species and individuals – mainly **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, a few **Weebills**, and one record of **Brown Thornbill** at site 4 (which has a large patch of live and dead Silver Wattle). The water level on the large dam and the dam near the Sanctuary's main gate remain very low, so only 2 waterbird species, **Australian Wood Duck** and **Australasian Grebe**, were recorded. Thank you to those who braved the conditions

Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley, with Kathy and David Cook, did the winter survey on Sunday 23 June in cold and increasingly cloudy conditions. There was no small bird activity at most sites. Just 28 species were recorded overall, possibly an all-time low. Only two mixed flocks were encountered; the first of these contained an interesting range of species with **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, both pardalotes, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Varied Sittellas**, **Scarlet Robins**, **Weebills** and 3 species of **honeyeater** in small numbers (**Brown-headed**, **White-plumed**, **White-eared**). The second flock encountered had **Weebills**, many **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, two **Scarlet Robins**, **Speckled Warblers** and a **Grey Fantail**. The only raptor recorded was a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** which was visible for much of the morning.

Mt Majura NR

The Mt Majura woodland survey was conducted over a number of days (24, 25 and 27 June) by Kathy Walter and John Goldie. The weather was cool but mostly sunny and some light fog on the morning of 27th. Overall the sites were pretty quiet with a total of 25 species. A number of sites had very low numbers in the first 50m, but more birds in the 100m radius. Two sites had very small mixed flocks with 1 **Speckled Warbler** in each. **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Brown** and

Yellow-rumped Thornbills, Weebill and Superb Fairy-wren were seen in single sites with **White-winged Choughs** seen in two sites.

Majura Field Firing Range

Unusually, Paul Fennell started the survey half an hour later than usual, being at the first site, the Grenade Range, at 8:15. It was a beautiful winter's morning, bright and sunny, and almost still, with just the faintest hint of a breeze from time to time. However, all to little avail, since the birds were few and far between, making it probably the poorest return in all the years surveyed there with 24 species in or around sites and 4 between sites: **Superb Fairy-wren, White-winged Chough, Masked Lapwing** and **Australian Wood Duck**. A good sighting was the first bird seen on arrival, an **Australian Hobby** perched high on a dead tree overlooking the first site. After that it was all downhill, with only a few of the more common species seen at each site, including a lonely pair of **Grey Teal** on Mick's Lake (more like a puddle at the time), as well as a **Laughing Kookaburra**. **Weebills** were a little more prevalent than usual, and a **Scarlet Robin** was heard in the distance at one site, as were a couple of **White-eared Honeyeaters**. A single **Common Bronze-wing** zoomed through one site, while there were a couple of **Australian Magpies** here and there, with one or two **Spotted Pardalotes**, a few **Noisy Miners**, the odd **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, and a **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** heard far away.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz carried out the survey on Sunday 23 June. It was a cool morning with light to moderate wind and some cloud cover. Trees carried abundant foliage, but the ground cover was very poor at most sites. Bird activity, especially of small birds at the 9 sites and between sites, was very low. No mixed feeding flocks were encountered. Species numbers: 19 at sites and a further 11 elsewhere. No honeyeaters apart from **Noisy Miners** were found. The most widespread species were **Spotted Pardalote** (7 sites), **Noisy Miner** and **Crimson Rosella** (both at 6 sites) and **Weebill** (4 sites and several times between sites). Of note: 1 **Mistletoebird** (moved between 2 sites), and outside sites: 9 **Flame Robins** and 22 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**.

Newline

Sue Lashko began the survey on Thursday 27 June, in foggy conditions but it soon cleared to a fine and still morning. Newline was very dry with all dams empty, except for the one in Site 4. This no doubt contributed to the low number of small birds in most sites. **Rainbow Lorikeets** are well-established with records at 5 sites, with at least 20 birds seen, including one pair harassing a pair of **Galahs**. **Australian Wood Ducks** were quite vocal with 4 pairs seen together in one dead tree. The highlight of the morning was a mixed feeding flock in the front paddock where 52 birds flying from one tree to the next were counted: 14 **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, 18 **Weebills**, 2 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, 4 **Striated** and 12 **Spotted Pardalotes**, and one each of **Grey Fantail** and male **Golden Whistler**. A noisy mob of 42 **White-winged Choughs** out-competed the **Noisy Miners** in the paddock next to the quarry, and a flock of 25 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** meandered through, with some stopping to perch for a while. The morning's total of 31 species was unsurprising given the dry conditions.

Red Hill NR

Harvey Perkins and Stuart Harris did the survey on Saturday morning 22 June. Despite a slightly later start (7:45 am), it was still quite cool, and the wind was biting cold when it blew, but it did warm a little to a clear sunny morning. Bird activity was relatively low, both in diversity and total numbers. Only 25 species were recorded (down 14% on the 21 winter survey average of 29.2), 19 of them within sites and an additional 6 species between sites. Total individuals recorded (221) was down by 22% from the winter average of 283.4 (no doubt influenced by the distinct paucity of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** which are normally quite prominent in winter). A couple of small, loose feeding flocks of low species diversity boosted numbers of small birds (four thornbill species recorded), and included a total of three **Scarlet Robins**. A **White-plumed Honeyeater** near the restaurant car park was notable - only the fifth record for the Red Hill woodland surveys, all of single individuals, all in winter. **Grey Butcherbirds** and **Rainbow Lorikeets** continue to increase, both recording highest numbers to date (10 individuals for both species), but there was no encore by the **Pied Butcherbird** seen last survey.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French surveyed the woodland patch on Wednesday 26 June, starting at 9am when the reserve opened, a little later than normal. It was reasonable conditions for birds, not too cold, no fog or wind, just a little overcast early, then sunny. Most sites were fairly quiet in terms of numbers of birds, and most of the special/interesting birds were offsite, on the grassed rocky slope area between the grasslands and the woodland patch, with 6 **Flame Robins**, 2 **Scarlet Robins** and 3 **Southern Whiteface** enjoying the sun, and a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** perched nearby when they

entered the reserve earlier. Within the woodland, interesting birds were a **Scarlet Robin** at site 3, a **White-plumed Honeyeater** at site 4, a **Varied Sittella** heard at site 5, and a **Grey Currawong** heard near site 5 (unusual for this patch). One **Golden Whistler** was heard and there were a few small birds moving about in a couple of small flocks – **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, and **Superb Fairy-wrens**. Of interest were a group of 11 **Crested Pigeons** (usually only 2-3 there), and 15 **Australasian Pipits** around the bare ground of recently cleared rabbit warrens on the grasslands' edge. A not so good sighting was of 3 **Spotted Doves** resting in a dead tree near site 2. The total of 36 species was not too bad for a winter survey, when the species total can be in the 20s. At this location, the species total has varied over the years from mid-20s to mid-high 30s in winter.

Symonston area (Callum Brae NR, Isaacs Ridge NR)

Sandra Henderson surveyed in Callum Brae NR on 20 June, in very cold but otherwise pleasant conditions. The reserve was not open until 9am. The species count was only slightly below last year's winter survey (35 species this year, 38 last year). **Australian Wood Ducks** were in trees in quite a few places, with some very obviously checking out the hollows. Close to one of the dams, where there are some hollows used by cockatoos and corellas every year, two pairs of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and one pair of **Little Corellas** were sitting beside hollows and very loudly proclaiming their ownership. Near the quarry fence a large gathering of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Little Corellas**, **Galahs**, **Eastern Rosellas** and a single **Long-billed Corella** were feeding on the ground - about 150 birds in total. Close to the pumping station, a single **Mistletoebird** was heard - the mistletoe in that area is abundant and there appeared to be lots of ripening berries in some clumps. Throughout the reserve some of the rosellas were checking out hollows, and in the second site an **Australian Raven** was sitting close to one of the two old raven nests in a large eucalypt.

The survey of sites in Isaacs Ridge NR was conducted on 23 June, in cold and windy conditions. As reported from some other locations, small birds were very scarce, and the survey results generally were the poorest in this location. Only 11 species were seen/heard, with **Australian Ravens** the most numerous. A single **Grey Butcherbird** keeping watch over the dam sang for most of the survey there. In the second and third sites, usually not too bad for small birds, not a single little bird was found, and even larger birds were staying away, with only two **Australian Ravens** outside the site and a single **Red Wattlebird** and a couple of **Australian Magpies**.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

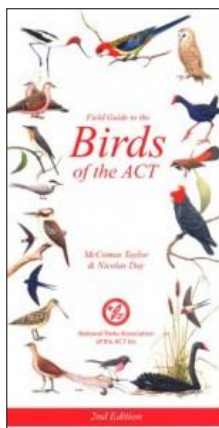
The Tuggeranong Hill survey was conducted on Wednesday 26 June by Lia Battisson on an overcast, cool and still morning. It was a very quiet morning, with very few small birds observed. Two sites managed five species, while others had less. There were only 25 species, including between sites, which is one of the lowest species counts in the last 10 years. The only bright spots in the morning were two pairs of **Scarlet Robins** and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**.

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

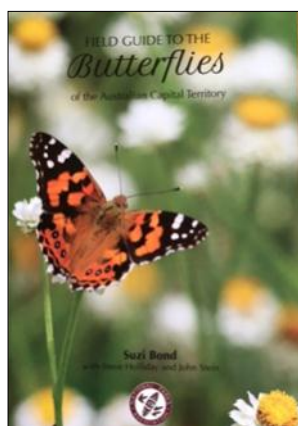


Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

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.



Field Guide to the Butterflies of the ACT

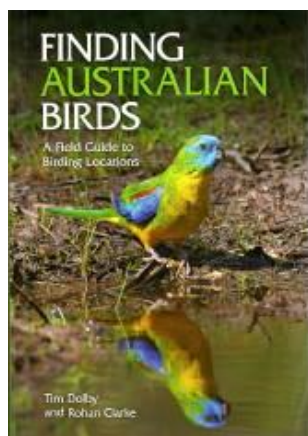
Suzi Bond, with Steve Holliday and John Stein

A beautiful book with detailed notes and photographs of the wide range of butterflies found across the Australian Capital Territory.

Dr Suzi Bond is a member of COG and a Visiting Fellow at the ANU where she researches the butterflies found in the ACT. Her research is driven by a fascination for our local butterfly fauna and a desire to better understand their populations and ecology.

With contributions from Steve Holliday and John Stein this book is a must for anyone interested in the butterflies of the ACT.

Members' Price: \$27.



Finding Australian Birds: A Field Guide to Birding Locations

Tim Dolby, Rohan Clarke

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

Member's price \$37.

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.

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- Institution: \$40
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S Stephens
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NEXT NEWSLETTER

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Wednesday 28 August 2019

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

ISSN 2208-018X

