



Gang-gang

MAY 2019

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

Wednesday 8 May 2019

7.30 pm

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

The short presentation will be by **Cassandra Taylor**, a Ph D student at the Research School of Biology at the ANU on “**Interactions between Australian bronze-cuckoos and their hosts.**”

Cassandra will give an overview of her proposed Ph D work, putting it in the context of what has already been done and how it will extend this work/answer some outstanding questions.

The main speaker will be **Constanza (Connie) León**, who has just completed her Ph D studies at the Fenner School for Science and the Environment at the ANU, on “**Exploring the social structure of a cooperatively breeding bird, the White-winged Chough.**”

Group-living animals are affected by both the physical and social environment they inhabit, influencing population dynamic processes such as reproductive success, survival and dispersal patterns; all of which ultimately shape the evolution of a species.

Continued Page 2

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

In the 4 weeks from 27 March covered by this column it was also warm for the time of year, particularly for the last week around Easter. The very good general rainfall at the end of March was followed by an almost completely dry April, until the storms on the afternoon of 22 April. While this was too late to affect the birds in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) over the period, the effect otherwise again seems to be unclear, with, as outlined below, species staying longer than usual, some leaving early and some around the usual time.

Of the late staying birds there was a report of a **Brush Cuckoo** by Alastair Smith from Kellys Swamp on 3 April. There was also a very late report of a female or immature **White-winged Triller** from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by Ryu Callaway on 18 April. Ryu had earlier alerted me to a report of another female from Googong on 25 March. While no further **Dollarbird** reports have been made, there was a late report of a **Rainbow Bee-eater** by Shorty at Symonston on 1 April. Up to two **Sacred Kingfishers**

Continued Page 2



White-winged Triller

Noel Luff

Everyone welcome

MAY MEETING *Continued from Page 1*

During her PhD Connie examined the social structure of White-winged Choughs (*Corcorax melanorhamphos*), a highly social species of Australian bird. Choughs are obligate cooperative breeders, meaning they must breed in groups to produce offspring successfully. She explored the influence of variable climatic conditions and urbanisation on the population genetics of choughs and the fitness consequences of varying levels of relatedness between group members. Connie used network analysis to investigate the social dynamics within cooperative groups, including the patterns of associations among individuals according to life history traits (age, sex), relatedness, cooperative efforts and personality.



White-winged Chough

Peter Fullagar

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

have been reported a number of times, all from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands area, the most recent being 1 bird on 20 April by Alastair Smith and Peter Milburn.

In contrast to the Brush, most of the other cuckoos seem to have left early with no reports of the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** since 2 March, or of the **Pallid Cuckoo** since 17 March. There have only been two reports of the related **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, one by Lucy Randall at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 31 March, and by Richard Allen of one moving through his Curtin GBS site around 9 April. While the last report on eBird of the **Eastern Koel** by Ash Allnutt in Watson was relatively early on 22 March, Mark Clayton informed me that Gil and Marion Pfitzner recorded a "black male" as it flew into a tree in their front yard in Evatt on 8 April. Also one of his banding trainees recorded one in Lyneham still calling "ko-el" around the end of March. However, the later staying **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, was still reported from 7 locations, the most recent being by John Francis at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 17 April.



Fan-tail Cuckoo (Narrabundah Hill field trip)

Geoff McVeigh

While there have been no reports of the **Fork-tailed Swift** since 9 March, there were still reports of single **White-throated Needletails** by David Dedenczuk at Narrabundah Hill on 7 April, and by Yarden Oren over Watson on 13 April. There have also been single reports of a **Latham's Snipe** by Jean Casburn at the Jerrabomberra Wetland on 5 April, and of a **Fairy Martin** at the West Belconnen Pond by Christine D on 30 March. In contrast there have been reports of the **Tree Martin** at 4 locations, the most recent being 5 birds at Bibaringa by Alastair Smith on 18 April. Likewise, and despite often being very quiet in autumn, the **Australian Reed-Warbler** has still been widely reported from around 10 locations, the most recent by Peter Milburn at the ANU on 18 April.

The **Leaden Flycatcher** also seems to have stayed later than usual, and was still reported from around 8 locations, most recently of 3 birds at the Gungoandra TSR near Bredbo by Lucy Randall on 14 April. However, the related **Satin Flycatcher** has been not been reported since 14 March, with no reports of it as a "passage migrant" through Canberra this autumn. In contrast single **Rufous Fantails** moving through have been reported from 4 locations, most recently at Coleman Ridge NR by John Hurrell on 7 April.



Rufous Whistler (Lanyon field trip)

Geoff McVeigh

As reported in my April column the honeyeater migration season seemed to start about a week earlier than usual and seemed to have peaked in the first half of April. As noted elsewhere in this issue the Narrabundah Hill COG walk on 7 April had the best morning so far of 6 outings to this spot to view this phenomenon. On the same day Lindsay Hansch reported flocks passing frequently all day over his place in Jerrabomberra, which I've noted previously is under one of the main current migration routes. On 8 April there were huge numbers passing over from 8:45 am, he saw streams of over 1000 birds and several of between 400 and 700. He also noted 3 **Australian Hobbies** had located themselves in the trees. They were perched low down and when a flock of honeyeaters arrived one of them would fly up and pluck one from the top of the tree, where the honeyeaters usually perched, before diving back into the tree, presumably for a quick snack.

Lindsay took a lot of photos to get an idea of flock composition which revealed most were **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** with about 20-25% **White-naped**. On the morning of 10 April Geoffrey Dabb noted continuous flocks; he estimated more than 12,000 birds in 2 hours. Early small flocks were nearly all **White-naped**, then these were about 25% of the larger flocks. It certainly seems to have been a good migrating season with reports of many birds passing through/over Campbell Park, Kambah, Casuarina Sands, the Pinnacle, and Dairy Farmers Hill at the Arboretum. However, on 17 April Lindsay Hansch posted that the honeyeater migration over Jerrabomberra seemed to have slowed down somewhat. There were still plenty of birds passing through but less frequently. He saw flocks that morning up to 400 birds, photograph sampling of which revealed around 85% were **White-naped**.

On 24 April Lindsay posted that he had seen none since 17 April, which appeared to have been the end of the migration over Jerrabomberra. There have been few reports since then. The unseasonably warm weather (mid twenty maximums and low teen minimums) may have been responsible, so please watch out for any further flocks of these, with the **White-naped Honeyeater** expected to be the dominant bird in



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2 to 11 September 2019

Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

12 to 22 September 2019

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Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Yulara
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Plains-wanderer Weekends 2019

7/8 December 2019

Tasmanian bird and mammal tour

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1 to 8 February 2020

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Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,
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1 to 14 June 2020

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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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and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

them. Watch out also for other flocks of migrating birds, during the second half of April many **Red Wattlebirds** flocks have been observed, the largest number being over 100 birds migrating over Michael Robbins place in Kambah on 17 April. On 18 April Philip Veerman also observed flocks of **Red Wattlebirds** (about 50 to 80) flying rather high going southwards over his nearby GBS site.

Of the species which usually leave during April, the **White-throated Gerygone** was still reported from 14 locations over the past month, most recently on 13 April by John Hurrell at the Coleman Ridge NR. Likewise the related **Western Gerygone** was reported from 7 locations, most recently 2 birds at Bibaringa by Alastair Smith on 11 April. Only a few of these are usually observed in the first week of April, so these have stayed slightly longer. The **Noisy Friarbird**, which often leaves by mid April, was still reported from over 25 locations, and was still present at the time of writing. Two species for which some birds will stay over winter, but most also leave by the end of April, are the **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Fantail**. Both have still been reported from many locations, and were still up to the time of writing, with the latter moving through in large numbers from mid March to mid April.

Some of the **Mistletoebirds** and the **Superb Parrots** will also stay over winter. The former has been reported from 5 locations over the past month, most recently from Mount Majura by Ash Allnutt on 16 April, but the latter has been reported from close to 30 locations. On 21 April John Leonard posted that the roost at the Federal Golf Course must still be active as they were still being seen and heard daily in good numbers around Hughes.

So continue to watch out for the above-named species, as well as the last of the migratory species to leave, the **Dusky Woodswallow** and the **Olive-backed Oriole**. The former was still reported from over 40 locations with some observers reporting them gathering in flocks and moving through or over. Most of this species usually leave by mid-May, but some may again delay their departure this season as they did last winter. The latter species is usually present in much smaller numbers, most of which leave by mid-May, but they have been regularly reported throughout recent winters. It was still reported from around 18 locations in the past month.

Of the later arriving altitudinal migrants that move from the mountains but stay here over winter, the **Flame Robin** has moved into the open peri-urban areas around Canberra, with reports from 9 locations mainly to the W and N of the city, the most being 11 birds seen by Alastair Smith at Bibaringa on 18 April. In Canberra the **Rose Robin** has only been reported from the ANBG, most recently a male was photographed by Richard Lane around 18 April, but there was also a report from one location in the mountains to the SW. There have been no reports so far of the **Pink Robin**. The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from the ANBG by Alastair Smith on 12 April, but the usually less numerous **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** has been reported from 5 locations in Canberra, in addition to the more usual Gigerline. On 23 April Marnix Zwankhuisen posted that the **Restless Flycatcher** was back in Tuggeranong. He suspected it is the same bird which hangs around the area every winter.

To date there have been reports of **Swift Parrots** having migrated from Tasmania from a surprising 9 locations. Unusual is that it has been mainly singles or small groups of birds (maximum of 6 at Callum Brae on 2 April), until 22 April when Liam Manderson reported a group of 13 birds flying around the car park and resting in a couple of gum trees feeding on lerps around the river at the Molonglo Gorge. They were around for more than an hour before he lost them, so possibly they may have at last found a food source around which they may congregate to exploit.

There have been further “unusual” birds reported in April. The most intriguing was the report of **Black-chinned Honeyeaters** on 31 March from the Rose Retreat, a private property near Jerangle, in the SE corner of the COG Aol. There were “Six birds, possibly more, in a tree with Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, very fast moving. The little black chin was obvious and the blue eye-ring was seen on one.” This species is not listed in COG’s 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR). However, it is included in the November 2017 update of the Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT on COG’s web site, where it is stated to be a non-breeding vagrant. It is marked as classified by COG as an ‘unusual’ bird in the ACT requiring the submission of Unusual Bird Report form. It is usually found inland to the W and NW



Swift Parrot

Geoffrey Dabb

of the ACT. Though I do recall some historical reports, I have found no information on its recent COG Aol presence. Interestingly, the eBird Australia map shows the closest other sightings this year are from Cowra.

Slightly less unusual was the **Blue-faced Honeyeater** seen briefly in a tree in Steve Holliday's Ainslie front garden on 10 April. The 2017-2018 ABR lists it as a very rare vagrant from inland districts for which there are records from 2006-2007 onwards, including 2 from Yass in 2017-2018. Up to 5 **Musk Lorikeets** have been regularly observed from the Wanniasa Hills Primary School, while a single **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** was reported by Timothée Bonnet at the ANU on 18 April. There has also been a further report of a **Cockatiel** by Christine D at the National Arboretum on 10 April.

The **Black Kite** has been reported from 3 locations, with the 11 photographed together at Macarthur horse paddocks by Liam Manderson on 13 April the most I'm aware of ever in the COG Aol, adding further support to the view that it is becoming more common. On 29 March John Leonard reported a **Black Falcon** on the Yass side of Murrumbateman. Many birders were able to observe the **Barn Owl** initially reported from the National Sound and Film Archives in Acton by Rebecca Coronel on 12 April. The next day it was found closer to Canberra City, and it was last reported from the National Gallery and High Court that day.

The **Lewin's Rail** has also been reported on 3 occasions from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, where there also have been several reports of an **Intermediate Egret**. There have also been more reports of the **Musk Duck**, with 8 at a full Lake Springfield off Nanima Rd to the N of Canberra by Terry Bell on 14 April, as well as 7 (all female/immatures with no lobes) seen on the Ingelara Dam to the S on the same day during the K2C surveys.

While we are over halfway through autumn, there have still been some very interesting breeding reports:

On 8 April Barbara Allan watched an adult **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** feeding a begging young in her garden in Page, and on 19 April Shorty reported that at Jerrabomberra Wetlands there was a begging young **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** being fed by its parents. Both seemed rather late in the season, though the Bird Info data on the COG web site indicates 3 previous records of dependent young in April.

On 20 April Philip Veerman heard a different from usual sound and there was a female **Satin Bowerbird** with three dependent young in his Kambah front yard. He did not see any actual feeding but the adult was plucking leaves, with clear begging behaviour and one of the young was very clumsy in climbing around the branches.

During my **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** roost surveys during mid April in Chapman, Rivett, Holder and Waramanga (see below) I have observed 4 instances of a single adult still feeding a dependent young. There have also been reports of begging **Yellow-tailed Cockatoos**, though in one case an adult female appeared to be doing so.

As an update of the breeding on the Molonglo River downstream of the Tuggeranong Parkway Bridge, on 8 April Rod MacKay reported there was still a small communal roost of around 20 **Australian Darters**, **Great Cormorants** and a lone **Little Pied Cormorant**. This included a **Darter** nest with 4 chicks being fed by a male adult bird, and a **Great Cormorant** nest with three young which appeared to be begging but were being ignored by the three adults present.

On 21 April Fleur Leary saw a pair of **Australian Wood Ducks** with one quite young duckling on Lake Burley Griffin. She thought it seemed quite late in the season, but as noted in my previous column these ducks are well known autumn breeders.

On 22 April John Layton noticed one or two **Welcome Swallows** flying in and out of a toilet block behind the Kippax shops. He found the commencement of a nest on a beam just below the ceiling, but doubted whether they would survive being removed by cleaning staff as they seemed to have been over several previous nesting attempts.

April is the peak time for Mixed Feeding Flocks (MFF) and many have come to my notice, often containing a significant number of **Grey Fantails**. As it dried out and warmed up the one in my garden seemed to have broken up, but picked up again during the storms on the afternoon of 22 April. Unusually there were 4 **White-plumed** and a **White-naped Honeyeater** amongst them, and even more unexpected were two **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters**, one of which often sat up beautifully outside my study window for over an hour.

Single species flocks have also started to form, including **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** with John Leonard observing 100 in Wamboin on 31 March. On 20 April I noticed the first **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** gathering, with around 40 on the Adelaide Ave median strip opposite the Thai Embassy, and shortly after 60 at the St Andrews Church corner of Canberra

Ave. I have also been keeping an eye on their three known roosts and one roost flight for this species in Weston Creek, with in mid April a total of around 265 estimated. About half of these were at the Holder one, where numbers were about 40% of those in mid March.

On 9 April Ryu Callaway checked the Fadden roost site for the first time in a few months. There were 290 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and 770 **Little Corella**, roughly the same as 2018. Martin Butterfield reported a large flock of **Silver Gulls** that roost on the roof carpark at Target in Civic. At around 2000 h on 16 April after several noisy laps of the city they landed there. Using photographs he counted 231 gulls in total, very close to the 240 birds Steve Read estimated on the re-flooded Kellys Swamp on the morning of 30 March.

So please watch out for any late-staying spring/summer migrants that usually leave in May as mentioned above, for the remaining arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any 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 chat line") 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

COG Members and friends, Lanyon field trip 31 March 2019 *Tee Tong Teo*



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Field Trip Reports

Narrabundah Hill, Sunday 7 April 2019

Twenty seven members and guests, including one from Scotland, joined me on this outing on a lovely still, fine morning with the high fog/cloud lifting before we started. We walked for about 1.5 km along the northern and about one third of the western boundaries of this reserve, and returned by the same route. The aim was to observe the honeyeater migration, as well as to find any altitudinal migrants and any late departing summer migrants.

It turned out to be easily the best morning for viewing the honeyeaters of the 6 trips I've now led here around this time since 2014. There were a few hundred as we walked along the N fence line, and more as we sat under the main migration route in the reserve for morning tea. However, the vast majority was when we were in the nearby open area around the nearly dry dam after that, with a continuous stream often flying very low above or beside the participants. A very conservative estimate was 2500 birds for the morning, nearly all **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, some of which stopped or were seen feeding elsewhere, allowing good views for the whole group. A few, mainly from their call, were **White-naped Honeyeaters**, usually early in the flocks, but on a least one occasion one was resting briefly at the top of a dead tree.

The species count was aided by a number of mixed feeding flocks, one a big one about 400 m into the walk dominated by **Grey Fantails**, at least 30 of which were seen on the morning. It also included a pair of **Scarlet Robins** (another pair was seen later, again by not all participants), a couple of **Double-barred Finches**, and a **Speckled Warbler**. Unfortunately not everyone saw these birds, but later under the honeyeater migration path most were able to see a pair of the last-named. This is also where some of the group saw a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, rarely seen in the reserve and a first for this walk, as were the **Mistletoebirds** first heard at this spot, but with later brief looks of a pair, and then better views at a young male bird.

Also unexpected was the sighting of 6 raptor species during the morning, including a **Little Eagle** circling high overhead, likely one of the Mt Stromlo birds, easily identified by its clear underwing pattern. A couple of **Australian Hobbies** were seen making a number of passes by, probably for the honeyeaters, and a **Brown Falcon** was seen sitting high in a dead tree at two different spots. I've rarely seen the last two in the reserve compared with the more expected **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Collared Sparrowhawk** and **Brown Goshawk** (the latter were both females) also seen flying over or past.

Late departing summer migrants included a couple of female **Rufous Whistlers** and a single **Noisy Friarbird** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, whereas altitudinal migrants included only a single (surprisingly) **White-eared Honeyeater** (again not seen by all) and a couple of immature **Golden Whistlers**, of which we



Scarlet Robin

Geoff McVeigh



Migrating Honeyeaters: **White-naped Honeyeater**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**

Marcus Hellyer

had better views. Lastly, to the delight of Colin our overseas visitor, a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** was found roosting close to their usual spot off the NW corner of the reserve.

The total of 50 species recorded was also higher than the between 42 and 49 (not including the low of 34 last year) we have counted on previous trips. Participants very much enjoyed the outing including the shade along the N fence. Special thanks go to Sue Lashko for agreeing to help lead the walk when the large number of participants became apparent, and to Sandra Henderson for keeping the bird list and entering this into eBird – this is always a difficult task with so many participants seeing and calling out different bird names.

Jack Holland



Tawny Frogmouth

Marcus Hellyer

Sunday 14 April – K2C surveys, Bredbo area

This is the tenth year of biannual K2C surveys in the Williamsdale to Bredbo area. This autumn's survey was held on a mild, partly cloudy morning and with 16 volunteers, 38 sites were surveyed across 19 properties. The undoubted highlight was a sighting of 4 **Swift Parrots** at one of our northernmost properties, the first record of the species for these surveys. Other Threatened species included **Dusky Woodswallow** (recorded at 8 properties), **Scarlet Robin** (7), **Diamond Firetail** (6), **Brown Treecreeper** (4), **Speckled Warbler** (3), **Hooded Robin** (2) and **Flame Robin** (1).

Other interesting sightings included 3 **Crested Shrike-tit**, 4 **Restless Flycatchers** together (probably a family group), a **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, and a **Pied Butcherbird** at Strike-a-Light, one of the southernmost sites. This species has become almost a regular in the last few surveys, reflecting a similar increase in observations in the ACT.

Honeyeater migration during the morning was somewhat subdued and only apparent at a couple of sites. Earlier in the week when the weather was more favourable about 2000 honeyeaters were counted in 20 minutes at one of the survey sites. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** made up about 90% of the flocks with **White-naped** 10%. A flock of 30 **Red Wattlebirds** was noted flying over one site. Many of the summer migrants appear to have left but those species that are later to leave or may overwinter included **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Tree Martin** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. It is heartening to see the development of revegetated sites to the point where they are starting to support a greater abundance and diversity of birds. Species recorded from revegetation in this survey included **Speckled Warbler** and **Hooded Robin**.

Thank you to the COG volunteers, the landholders and Bush Heritage for hosting us at Scottsdale Reserve and supplying the lunch. The next survey will be held on Sunday 13th October, completing 10 years.

Nicki Taws

Wednesday 17 April – Mt Pleasant NR

Sixteen members gathered at the summit of Mt Pleasant on a very pleasant morning. While waiting to start we enjoyed watching members of the Defence Forces doing reps up the hill. Surprisingly a number of those attending had never visited this site before.

Our route was a clockwise loop around most of the small Reserve. While there were some excellent old eucalypts with many nest hollows, there were also a number of weedy areas especially around the summit and close to Northcott Drive.

The initial bird-oriented excitement was hearing, and seeing fleetingly, some **Double-barred Finches** just below the summit, with a few more seen as we walked along Northcott Drive past ADFA. Small flocks of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** came over through the outing. The largest flock was 15 birds and the modal flock probably 6. The other possibly migrating honeyeaters were 6 **Red Wattlebirds**. It is possible that the 40 **Spotted** and 20 **Striated Pardalotes** seen were also migrating.

Not counting the big white Bald Eagle, we totalled 31 species for the trip.

Martin Butterfield

New Places: APRIL 2019

Sandra Henderson

Tharwa Bridge to De Salis Cemetery

This walk followed a 1.6km track along the river to the old cemetery for the De Salis family and employees. 25 species were seen along the way, including large groups of **Silvereyes** and **Common Mynas**. A very pleasant walk.

Renwick Drive woodland (Southern Highlands)

This is close to Mittagong, and is an unnamed woodland patch adjacent to a floodway. The track leading from the entrance at the roadside soon veers off into the bush and makes a wide loop through the area. 18 species were seen, including a female **Golden Whistler** which followed me for some distance. The floodway itself is quite overgrown, and the previous evening I had seen a **Black-shouldered Kite** hovering about 5m above the reeds for several minutes.

Kinleyside

I joined a walk organized for Heritage Week, and noted that in a group of about 30 people there were seven COG members! This was an opportunity to see an area not usually accessible to the public, since it is a private nature reserve bordering the suburb of Casey. The ACT Government is conducting research on some endangered species (such as the Golden Sun-moth) there, and Michael Mulvaney was on hand to explain the work being undertaken, while the lessee explained how the property is managed for conservation. 19 species were sighted. It is extremely dry at present, and will perhaps yield more bird sightings when conditions have improved.

Badja Firetrail (Deua National Park area, past Captains Flat)

This Native Plant Society walk started at Pikes Saddle and followed the firetrail to the Badja Trig, an out-and-back walk of 5km total. The trees along the vehicle track are quite magnificent, but there were surprisingly few birds. At one point numerous **Striated Thornbills** could be heard high in the canopy, and a flock of 15 **Red Wattlebirds** flew over. There are many **Superb Lyrebird** scratchings along the trail, and they were heard several times.



Tawny Frogmouth (Narrabunda Hill field trip)

Geoff McVeigh

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.

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.

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.

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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**

Wednesday 15 May—Riverside walk at Tharwa.

Meet at 9am at the gate at end of the bridge reserve in Tharwa, on the right of Tharwa Bridge if driving from Lanyon direction (instead of turning left as if going to sandwash and Namadgi, turn hard right off the bridge). We'll be walking on a vehicle track for about 1.5km, with good views of the river, and the log and rock structures creating fish habitat in the river.

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.



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Woodland Surveys– Autumn 2019 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 31 March, the 100th survey since starting in 1995. It felt like a June/winter survey, cold and breezy following the cold change over the previous two days. Birds at most sites were scarce, low in number except for site 4 north of the Woolshed which had an amazing 19 species in and around the site. Between sites there was quite a lot of bird movement, noticeably flocks of **Grey Fantails**, one of 15 birds, another 9 birds, plus both species of pardalotes and the usual assortment of smaller birds mixed in (**Weebills**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **Scarlet Robins**). However, there was little honeyeater movement, only two records of 2 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, and a single **White-naped Honeyeater**. Some spring/summer species were still around (**Rufous Whistler** and both **Gerygones**, and a lone **Olive-backed Oriole** moving through on the eastern side of the reserve. Winter species were also around, **Golden Whistlers** at several sites and **White-eared Honeyeater**. There were **Superb Parrots** in a couple of spots, including near the Forde main entry where we often find them, and a couple of **Little Ravens** (not common there). The big highlight was a pair of **Bush Stone-curlews** at their day roost site within one of our sites north of the Woolshed (this is a known territory for one pair of birds). Waterbirds were low in species as the key dams had little water. A total of 44 species for the survey (compared to the usual 50-55 species in autumn), but about average considering the absent water based species. Champagne flowed at morning tea to celebrate the occasion! Thanks to all who have contributed over the years.



Mulligans Flat NR survey team celebrate the 100th woodland survey

Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the autumn woodland survey on Sunday 24 March in reasonable conditions. It was mostly overcast and still, with the occasional period of light rain. 43 species were recorded, a reasonable return for autumn, with 31 of these noted during the 10 minute survey counts. The reserve was looking rather overgrazed and very dry, all dams had little or no water. There was a reasonable amount of small bird activity at some sites, with a couple of mixed feeding flocks encountered. These were mostly made up of pardalotes and thornbills. The most interesting sighting was a **Long-billed Corella**, the first for these surveys. Also of interest, 3 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** together, they appeared to be two adults with a

young bird. Colder weather visitors included a few **Golden Whistlers** and a **White-eared Honeyeater**. A number of summer visitors were still present in low numbers – **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated Gerygone** and an **Olive-backed Oriole**. A group of **Dusky Woodswallows** flew over at one point. No sign of honeyeater migration.

Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill did the surveys over two days. The first two sites on Sunday 24 March in heavily overcast conditions, postponing others due to persistent rain. The remaining 7 sites were surveyed on Wednesday 27 March in clear conditions. Most sites had few, if any, small birds. At site 1, it was looking like the only record would be a single **Noisy Miner**, but a flock of at least 15 King Parrots turned up before the end. **King Parrots** are now very common in the area. The normally bird rich site 5 was unusually quiet apart from a male Scarlet Robin calling loudly from the top of the tallest tree. On the way back from that site, some small birds were finally found - a mixed flock of **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow Thornbills**, Weebills, **Speckled Warblers**, **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Grey Fantails**, **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **Grey Shrike-thrushes** and a **Scarlet Robin**. The other observation of interest was a female Superb Parrot feeding on the ground with a flock of **Eastern Rosellas** at site 8, which is near the Majura water tanks. 23 species in total.

Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell reported it was a lovely morning on Monday 1 April, not a cloud in the sky, apart from the odd vapour trail, and no wind until a light breeze arose later. The recent rain had settled all the dust, but sufficient time had elapsed for the roads to dry off and not be muddy. It was not particularly prolific or exciting bird-wise with 30 species observed at the sites and a **Brown Falcon**, a **Superb Fairy-wren**, one **Chestnut Teal**, one **Common Bronzewing**, a Red Wattlebird, some **Crested Pigeons** and a single Australasian Pipit between the sites.

Some species of interest at the change of season were a couple of Rufous Whistlers, some **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Grey Fantails** and the passing of some small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. There were quite a few thornbills at different sites, including **Striated**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped**, and **Brown Thornbills**. Both **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** were in evidence in some numbers. **Scarlet Robins** were heard outside a couple of sites, but none seen. A couple of groups of **White-winged Choughs** were seen, plus a lonely **Pacific Black Duck** on one of the dams. Otherwise most of the water features were devoid of bird life.

As can be the case sometimes at this site, there were non-bird distractions, significant noise interference from a busy Canberra Airport between 8 and 9 am, some sporadic gunfire from a military contingent at the north end of the range, and a couple of scouts in the middle of “war games”, who seemed impressed when told the bird surveys had been conducted there for over twenty years.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz with Robin Hide carried out the autumn survey of the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 11 March (a little early due to travel plans). It was a fine morning with hardly a breeze. Since the summer survey, all eucalypts had recovered remarkably well and grown dense new foliage. But notably, the leaves were largely in pristine condition, only a few showed chew-markings from insects. This provided a clear indication that insects, and hence food for many of the smaller bush birds had been scarce. This was reflected in very low species numbers at the 9 sites and in the areas between sites: 22 species at sites, with only an extra 7 species to be added outside sites. Also the number of individuals of small birds was low. Most widespread were **Noisy Miner** and **Striated Pardalote** (7 sites), **Aust. Magpie** (6 sites) and **Crimson Rosella** (5 sites). Most other species were found only at 1 or 2 sites. The **Noisy Miner** was the only honeyeater. Several **Rufous Whistlers** and **White-throated Gerygones** were present, but only one or two records.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on Sunday 24 March, a very gloomy morning, the survey starting very slowly with very little bird call and very few small birds. The occasional shower and the dense covering of introduced African love grass added to the atmosphere. Conditions improved by about 9.30 and then there were two brilliant sites, one with 18 species and the other with 23 species, the latter being the only place with water at Newline. Here, a mixed feeding flock of **Grey Fantail**, **Rufous**

Whistler, Speckled Warbler, Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, Red-browed and Double-barred Finch, as well as **Weebills** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** flitting in and out of the flock which was centred around one tall eucalypt and the exotic shrubs beneath. The only sign of the honeyeater migration was a flock of a dozen Red Wattlebirds moving from the south-west to the north-east. Other migrants still present included 5 **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Rufous Whistlers**, 2 **Mistletoebirds**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** and **White-throated Gerygone**. Raptors seen were a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** and a **Collared Sparrowhawk**. The strangest siting of the day was a **Great Cormorant** perched in a dead tree in Site 6, before flying on towards the Molonglo River. A total of 40 species was recorded, above average for autumn.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French surveyed on Thursday 28 March, in fine, mild and still conditions with some cloud coming in by mid-morning. Ground conditions were dry and grass levels very low in the woodland, although the eucalypt re-growth at some sites since the last survey in early December, was noticeably taller (at one site hard to find the survey picket, it looked rather unfamiliar). On driving in through the grasslands, 2 **Flame Robins** (brown birds) flew and perched on stalks; this is rather early, Flames are rarely recorded on the autumn survey, more usually in June winter survey (only one previous survey record in autumn end March 2011). There were quite a few small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** moving around on autumn migration, and a few **Red Wattlebirds** doing the same, but it was quiet in terms of small birds in the woodland area further in, except for **Weebills** at most sites and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** heard at one site. The best site was site 2 in Blakelys Red Gum patch on the grasslands edge, with a **Western Gerygone** (late migrant), 3 **Grey Fantails**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, and **Willie Wagtail** amongst others, including a **Grey Currawong**, which is probably the first time for this species since surveys started there in 2005. Quite a few **Rosellas** of both kinds were around, **Red-rumped Parrots**, and four **King Parrots** at one site (no 3); very few of the large parrots such as **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, only one or two were heard. A late **Rufous Whistler** called briefly in the denser woodland patch. No **Scarlet Robin** or **Speckled Warbler** which are usually recorded on most surveys this time of year. **Common Starlings** were noticeable, and **Common Mynas** at some sites on the woodland edges. Total species count was 35, about average for autumn.

Symonston area (Callum Brae NR, Isaacs Ridge NR)

Sandra Henderson conducted the survey in Callum Brae NR on 27 March. The morning started off quite cold, but warmed up to be very pleasant. 39 species were seen in total, the majority of them in at least one of the six survey sites. **Galahs** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were plentiful, possibly just moving out of roost trees due to the cold start. **Spotted Pardalotes** and **Weebills** were very active and in groups of 6-8 birds. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were present in small groups. A single **White-throated Gerygone** was seen, and four **Dusky Woodswallows**. Three **Common Bronzowings**, not common in Callum Brae, were seen, two of them together in a survey site, the other sitting on the roof of the pump station with a **Crested Pigeon**. Four of the six dams in the reserve still had water, but the grass was very short and kangaroos very numerous.

Isaacs Ridge NR sites were surveyed on April 1, with an even colder start (3 degrees). There were 21 species seen/heard in the survey area, with the most numerous being **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Spotted Pardalotes** and **Crimson Rosellas**. There was a small but regular procession of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters over the reserve, most of them flying very high and only identified by call. No finches were seen, and only a single **Speckled Warbler**. At the conclusion of the actual survey Sandra walked through the reserve to Long Gully Rd (1.5km from the survey sites), picking up half a dozen species not in the surveyed area, including seven **Common Bronzowings**, and a flyover by nearly 60 **Little Ravens**. The dam in the survey area now has water, the small dam across from the Green Shed also has water, and the larger dam near Long Gully Rd is so overgrown with vegetation that it's not possible to see if there is water in it.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

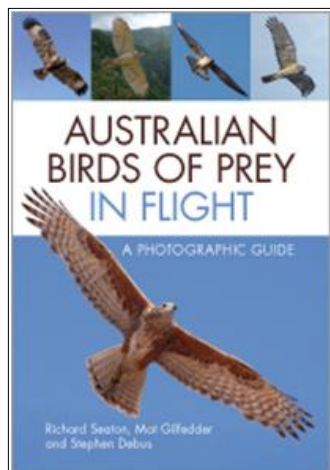
Lia Battisson surveyed Sunday 24 March, on a mild, still, overcast morning. The most widespread species were **Crimson Rosella** and **Australian Magpie**. A couple of small mixed feeding flocks were seen, comprising **Grey Fantail**, **Spotted Pardalote**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, and **Weebill**. **Spotted Pardalotes** on the move were heard in several places. A pair of **Scarlet Robins** and two **Speckled Warblers** were nice to observe, albeit between sites. Only one flock of 5 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** was seen, and that was in the nearby suburb. In all, 26 species were observed in sites, and a further 9 between sites, which is above average for autumn on Tuggeranong Hill.

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



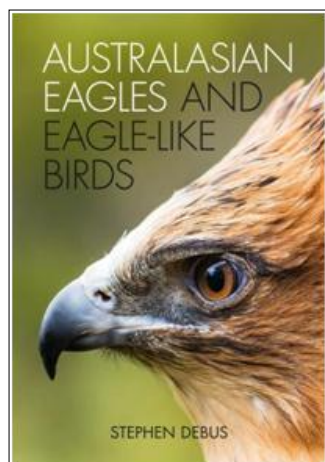
Australian Birds of Prey in Flight: A Photographic Guide

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.

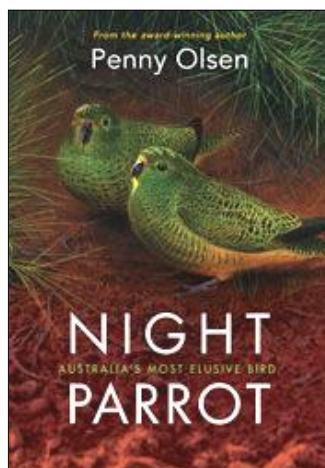


Australasian Eagles and Eagle-like Birds

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.

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2018-2019 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

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Y Li
T Exposito
J Hotchin
J Garrett
M Jenkins
C Harris

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for June 2019 edition:

Wednesday 29 May 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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